

thanking everybody and grinning, and you had to admire him for his command of the occasion.

A man who is desperately ill and on his way out of public life stages a dinner that raises money for a scholarship fund for teachers. Bruce Vento is a man of great bravery and devotion and foresight who represented us nobly in Congress, whether we knew it or not.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Oct. 11, 2000]

#### HE WORE A BLUE COLLAR AND A WHITE HAT

Rep. Bruce F. Vento's last Christmas card pictures a smiling, healthy appearing grandfather at a baseball outing with the little folks. There's no hint of his lofty position as a member of Congress from Minnesota's 4th District. The card is an ordinary photo holiday greeting hand-signed simply with "Bruce." The image is a wonderful one for remembering Vento, who died Tuesday at age 60 of lung cancer.

Vento was a straightforward man, rooted in St. Paul from first to last. He was a talker and a fighter, a partisan and a patriot, a union man and sophisticated scientist. Vento was the only congressman a generation of 4th District residents has ever known. He was first elected in 1976 and served 12 terms.

In the majority and as a powerful chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands for more than 10 years, Vento reached the peak of his national influence on the future of the country's wild places. His work there resulted in protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of public land—ranging from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to the Minnesota National Wildlife Refuge—and the enactment of more than 300 laws preserving the environment.

He served as chair of the House Task Force during the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s. Vento was a champion for programs to shelter the homeless, for human stewardship in the natural world. Vento's last major legislative accomplishment was the special Hmong citizenship law signed by President Clinton this year.

When Vento announced in February that he was ill with mesothelioma, the bread he had cast on the waters started coming back. The cards and prayers, the honors and affection, Vento said, were at first surprising and overwhelming. From personal cards, much like his simple Christmas greetings, to the renaming of East Consolidated as Bruce F. Vento Elementary School, the community Vento served hoped to express respect and gratitude. That respect will live on through a scholarship fund established in Vento's honor for college students who intend to become science teachers. It also will live on in a trail named for him in recognition of his enthusiasm for bicycling.

He accepted the affection with grace and dignity, while never losing the trace of whimsy that accompanied Vento the Substantial Man. He was given to dark business suits lightened by ties that said not all of life is serious. During the height of the Snoopy on Parade frenzy in St. Paul this summer, for instance, the congressman appeared at the Minnesota AFL-CIO Convention wearing a Snoopy tie.

Vento's public career began as a teacher, extended into service in the Minnesota Legislature and then nearly 24 years in Congress.

Although Vento was a technical master of the art of lawmaking in such arcane specialties as banking reform, he remained deeply committed to the kind of public service where working for ordinary families' dreams and hopes was more than a biennial cam-

paign slogan. It was a high calling, well-answered by Bruce Vento.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Feb. 3, 2000]

#### A MAN OF THE PEOPLE—BRUCE VENTO'S LEGACY ETCHED BY SERVICE

As U.S. Rep. Bruce Vento of St. Paul takes on the challenges of treatment for lung cancer caused by asbestos, the affection of the people he has served in the East Metro area is sure to be returned. Ours included.

May the best of medical care and the best of wishes from the many people he has supported in tough times help Vento prevail in this campaign to regain his health.

Vento, who has been commuting to work in Washington since 1977, announced Wednesday he will retire at year's end and is undergoing cancer treatment.

Vento has served the Fourth Congressional District of Minnesota, the natural world, the hard-pressed communities of the homeless, the young and the needy with a personal passion to improve the quality of life. He has gone about his work always with great heart and mastery of the arcane art of legislating.

Vento is an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era. His reliable fidelity to ideals and to people who get their hands dirty at work will be missed. To this day, his resume always notes that he worked as a laborer, a mail-room clerk for this newspaper, a shop steward and a teacher before getting a job that put him in charge of more vast stewardships. Those include oversight of all America's public lands and helping to rescue the financial system from the ruin of the savings and loan debacles.

Vento's career in Congress, and before that in the Minnesota Legislature, represent an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era. He knew what private-public partnerships were before the concept became a sound bite for the ambitious. And he has never been afraid of a fight when the issue and the people matter deeply.

The Reagan and Bush administrations were the source of frustration for the man from the Fourth. When the Democrats were thrown into the congressional minority in 1994, Vento found new rules but always kept his eye on the prize of Democrats retaking the reins. He noted with each election how much the Republican majority had narrowed. This year, Vento will not be in the equation for a Democratic House. Larger things have taken over. But his mark will stand fast.

An afternoon with only the sounds of the paddle dipping, the wind wafting and the birds singing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the melody Bruce Vento makes in the woods of a public policy. So is the animated, personal Vento chatting with all comers at the Labor Day picnic.

Godspeed, Congressman Vento.

[From the Hill, Feb. 8, 2000]

#### GODSPEED, CONGRESSMAN VENTO

The premature departure from Congress of Rep. Bruce Vento (D-Minn.) because he has been diagnosed with lung cancer will deprive the House of Representatives of one of its most dedicated, effective and popular members.

Vento, who is retiring in December after 24 years in Congress, stunned and saddened his colleagues and his St. Paul district when he disclosed last week that he has a type of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. His doctors at Minnesota's famed Mayo Clinic have recommended an aggressive course of treatment that will make it impossible for him to run for a 13th term.

The 59-year-old St. Paul lawmaker's announcement that he will end a 30-year public service career, which began when he was elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1971, triggered an outpouring of tributes and prayerful concern from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. President Clinton and Vice President Gore, who came to Congress the same year as Vento, also issued statements of praise and concern.

None was more poignant than that from his fellow Minnesota Democrat, Jim Oberstar, who noted, "I lost my wife, Jo, to breast cancer, so Bruce's disclosure that he too is fighting cancer hits close to home. Bruce has spent the past 24 years in Congress fighting for working people, and now he is in a fight for his life."

Even though they often clashed over the issue of federal control of northern Minnesota's pristine Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Oberstar called Vento "a dear friend of mine" and "an exceptional public servant."

Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa), chairman of the Banking and Financial Services Committee on which Vento serves, praised him for his leadership on federal banking policy. He called the former high school science teacher and union shop steward "a citizen/legislator: an educator who came to Capitol Hill and gave Congress a civics lesson."

But Vento's greatest legislative achievements have been those he made as chairman and later ranking member of the Resources Committee's Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee. "I cannot think of another person who has done more to protect America's national parks," said the Sierra Club's executive director, Carl Pope. "Protecting our nation's natural heritage is a passionate love for him."

Vento's hometown newspaper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch—where he once worked as a mailroom clerk—called him "an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era" who exemplified "an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era."

Noting that Vento will not be part of the Democrats' fight to regain the House, the newspaper added a poetic tribute: "Larger things have taken over. But his mark will stand fast. An afternoon with only the sounds of the paddle dipping, the wind wafting, and the birds singing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the melody Bruce Vento makes in the woods of public policy. . . . Godspeed, Congressman Vento."

#### CORRUPTION SCANDAL ENGULFS INDIAN GOVERNMENT

#### HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the world has been shocked by the recent news stories about a corruption scandal that has engulfed the Indian government. Already, the president of the ruling BJP and the Defense Minister have been forced to resign after they were caught taking bribes from two internet news reporters posing as arms dealers in regard to a fake defense contract. The opposition is calling for the government to resign.

The resignation of Defense Minister George Fernandes is no loss for friends of democracy. Mr. Fernandes is the man who led a meeting in 1999 with the Ambassadors from China, Cuba, Russia, Libya, Serbia, and Iraq aimed

at putting together a security alliance "to stop the U.S." This meeting was reported in the May 18, 1999 issue of the Indian Express.

Those of us who have been following Indian and South Asian issues are not surprised. The Indian Government has demonstrated many times before how deeply it is infected with corruption. In India, people have come up with a new word for bribery. They call it "fee for service." It has become necessary to pay a fee to get government workers of any kind to deliver the services that they are mandated to provide. In November 1994, the newspaper *Hitavada* reported that the Indian government paid Surendra Nath, the late governor of Punjab, \$1.5 billion to generate terrorist activity in Punjab, Khalistan, and in Kashmir as well. This is in a country where half the population lives below the international poverty line. Forty-two percent of the people live on less than a dollar a day and another forty-two percent live on less than \$2 per day.

In India, corruption is endemic as is tyranny against minorities. Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and others have been subjected to violence, tyranny, and massive human-rights violations for many years. Christian churches have been burned. Priests have been killed, nuns have been raped, and many other atrocities have been committed with impunity. Muslims have been killed in massive numbers and the ruling party has destroyed mosques. The Indian government has killed Sikhs. Religious pilgrims have been attacked with lathis and tear gas. This is just a recent sample of the atrocities against minorities in India.

Mr. Speaker, India is a significant recipient of American aid. Why should the taxpayers of this country pay taxes to support the corruption and tyranny of the Indian Government? There is, however, something that America, as the world's only superpower, can do about it. America can stop sending aid to India and support self-determination for the people of Khalistan, Kashmir, and Nagalim. Let us take these steps to free the people of the subcontinent from corruption and brutality.

Mr. Speaker, I insert into the RECORD an article from the current issue of *The Economist* about the latest Indian Government bribery scandal. I commend it to all my congressional colleagues who care about spending our foreign aid dollars wisely.

[From *The Economist*, Mar. 24, 2001]

#### INDIA'S CORRUPTION BLUES

THOUGH IT MAY WELL SURVIVE THE LATEST CORRUPTION SCANDAL, THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEADING PARTY IN THE GOVERNMENT IS BADLY DENTED

Fatalism is ever present in India, and the government in Delhi seems to be hoping that a popular belief in the inevitability of corruption will help it survive the biggest scandal of recent times. That hope seems well founded. But whether the government will regain the authority it needs to pursue its two main initiatives—economic reform and peace in Kashmir—is much more doubtful.

The uproar over the release of videotapes last week showing top politicians and officials taking bribes from two Internet news reporters posing as arms dealers has reached a noisy impasse. The defence minister, George Fernandes, has resigned, though he remains "covenor" of the 18-party ruling National Democratic Alliance. The NDA has lost one member, the Trinamul Congress party of West Bengal, but remains sure enough of its majority to dare the opposition to bring a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

The opposition, equally sure of its minority, has declined. Instead, it has blocked parliamentary proceedings for a week, relenting long enough only to allow money to be voted for the state to continue functioning.

Both sides have converted an occasion for shame into one for self-righteousness. Sonia Gandhi, leader of a suddenly alert Congress party, vowed at its plenary meeting in Bangalore to "wage every war" to "ensure that this country is liberated from the shackles of this corrupt, shameful and communal government". But she herself was wounded when her own personal assistant came under investigation in a separate scandal. The prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has blended penitence with defensiveness. He has promised a judicial probe into the allegations, and a clean-up. But, in a television address on March 16th, Mr. Vajpayee reserved the word "criminal" to describe the hurling of allegations, not the behaviour alleged.

It is true that *tehelka.com*, the enterprising website that armed its reporters with cash and spy cameras, used surreptitious means to persuade a variety of officials, generals and politicians to accept a total of 1.1m rupees (about \$24,000) in bribes and gifts. It is also true that some of the most serious allegations made against Mr. Fernandes and Brajesh Mishra, the prime minister's top aide, among others, are unsubstantiated gossip. But they have concentrated discussion on how many more heads will roll and when.

The real import of the tapes is the evidence they give that corruption is the norm, not the exception, at every level of public life. This does not surprise Indians, who are expected to bribe everyone, starting with traffic policemen. India is beset by what some call a crisis of governance, which compromises nearly every public service, from defence to the distribution of subsidised food to the generation of electricity. *Tehelka.com* has simply rubbed Indians' faces in it.

Politicians, in honest moments, admit this. Kapil Sibal, a prominent member of Congress, says "the system is thoroughly corrupt." Pramod Mahajan, the minister of information technology and a member of Mr. Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), thinks the voters face a choice "not between good and bad. It is between bad and worse."

With turpitude so common, removing one group of parties from power would not solve the problem. Given a chance to fight political corruption, Parliament usually ducks it. It now wants to shear the Central Vigilance Commission, the main body implementing anti-corruption law, of its role overseeing investigations of politicians.

The problem begins, says N. Vittal, the central vigilance commissioner, with the 40% of the economy that is unaccounted for. Indian democracy runs on this murky money. The total cost of a campaign for a parliamentary election has been estimated at 20 billion rupees (around \$430m), which is often paid for by undeclared donations of the sort proffered by *tehelka.com*. Reformers such as Mr. Vittal want such donations to be declared and made tax deductible. Some also want the Election Commission to give the voters information about candidates' criminal backgrounds, as Delhi's High Court has directed. But that reform may also be stopped: the government has appealed against the decision. No one in power seems to back the promised cleaning.

Mr. Vajpayee's immediate concern is the fate of his closet advisers, widely resented for accumulating power in the prime minister's office at the expense of other ministries. On March 19th, Mr. Mishra and N.K. Singh, his top economic adviser, called a press conference to defend themselves against claims that they had improperly influenced decisions on deals in telecoms,

power and, in Mr. Mishra's case, defence equipment. Pressure for their dismissal, from some of Mr. Vajpayee's best friends, is mounting. A fiercely right-wing ally of the BJP, the Shiv Sena, is calling for their heads. And although the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (Association of National Volunteers), ideological big brother to the BJP, has withdrawn its calls for their removal, it has done so only for fear of destabilising the government.

The departure of Mr. Mishra and Mr. Singh would probably blunt the government's drive for economic reform. Even if they stay, Mr. Vajpayee will have trouble enacting the most controversial but valuable elements of the reforms announced along with the budget last month. These include privatisation and making labour law more flexible. The labour reform requires the approval of Parliament's upper house, where the government lacks a majority. The crisis may also strengthen the home ministry, thought to be more reluctant than the prime minister's advisers to make gestures to separatists in Kashmir. If Mr. Vajpayee survives the *tehelka* scandal, he may begin to ask himself what, exactly, he is in power for.

#### COMMEMORATING DOCTOR'S DAY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTRY DOCTORS

HON. ASA HUTCHINSON

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2001

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate March 30, Doctor's Day, and the essential role that the medical profession plays in our country. Although we all visit doctors regularly, many times we fail to properly recognize their dedication to keeping us healthy.

I grew up in rural northwest Arkansas, where small-town doctors have historically played an especially important role in health care. In fact, the community of Lincoln, Arkansas, is home to one of only two museums in the United States dedicated to the country doctor. The Arkansas Country Doctor Museum educates the public about the heroism of country doctors in Arkansas and preserves the history of medical practice in the Ozarks.

On this day when we remember the importance of the medical profession, I would like to salute the role that these country doctors have played in the well-being of our nation. We often remember these country doctors for their warm bedside manner and their home visits, but we cannot forget that they were involved in the welfare of entire communities and often sought higher medical education to better serve their patients.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me today in honoring the great tradition of country doctors throughout our country. I submit into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a copy of Dr. Anthony DePalma's article "Y2K: A Legacy of the Country Doctors," which appeared in the December 1999 Journal of the Arkansas Medical Society.

[From the Journal of the Arkansas Medical Society, Dec. 1999]

Y2K: A LEGACY OF THE COUNTRY DOCTORS  
(By Anthony T. DePalma, MD)

On Friday, May 14, 1999, a memorable millennium medical moment celebrating the