HONORING THE MEMORY OF HARRIETTE GLASNER

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 9, 2002

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the memory of Mrs. Harriette Glasner.

For those of us who have dedicated our lives to progressive causes, we have suffered a great loss with the passing of South Florida legend Harriette Glasner. Mrs. Glasner founded ten major social, cultural and human rights organizations. Among those she founded or co-founded are the Palm Beach County chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, as well as the Urban League. For fifty years, Mrs. Glasner dedicated her life to the betterment of our society.

Harriette Glasner worked tirelessly for the desegregation of schools and colleges, lending financial assistance as well as her time and energy to the legal fight. She was also an early campaigner for the expansion of women's rights. Along the way, she founded the area's first Planned Parenthood office. Well-known among people active in the civil rights movement, Harriette truly never gave up and never gave in. Generations of South Floridians owe her a debt of gratitude. Her determination to fight for the rights of the poor and underprivileged and minorities have made our state and nation better places to live.

I knew Harriette Glasner through our work with the ACLU and the battles for integration. I will always remember her kind heart, keen intelligence and her selfless devotion to the many causes that have made our nation the great place it is today.

Mr. Speaker, while Harriette's passing will leave a huge hole in the front line of many progressive battles, I know the gap will be quickly filled by people who loved and respected her and are determined to continue the fights she started. That is the best tribute that can be offered for this life very well lived.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN REPOSITORY SITE APPROVAL ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam Speaker, today the House will vote on H. Res. 87, which will allow the Department of Energy to move forward in the process of licensing Yucca Mountain as a repository for nuclear waste. Although I realize we must find an answer for storing all of the Nation's nuclear waste, including that in Wisconsin, I oppose this resolution for several reasons.

Over the last two decades, there have been thousands of shipments of nuclear waste on the highways and railways that crisscross America. If Yucca Mountain is granted a license to receive nuclear waste, the number of shipments could increase exponentially. This is particularly troubling because the proposed routes will pass through 44 states and over 700 counties—passing near our schools, churches, and homes, including possibly in my district. While there have been few accidents when moving waste through the U.S. to date, increasing shipments by the thousands will only increase the probability of a devastating catastrophe. The events on September 11 have shown that anything is possible, and that common mishaps are not the only aspects we should take into account when examining safety and security concerns.

Throughout the debate over Yucca Mountain, numerous questions have been raised about the lack of sound science that went in to deeming the site safe. Very early in the testing process, the DOE retroactively changed the rules for site eligibility after it became apparent that the original rules could not be met for Yucca Mountain. Ever since, the credibility of the scientific standards and evidence has gotten progressively worse. Three federal agencies have released reports about Yucca Mountain—all three reports have expressed doubts and grave concerns about the suitability of the site.

The General Accounting Office (GAO), which is the investigative office of the federal government, indicated there are more than 293 unresolved technical issues with Yucca Mountain, including how quickly the containers will leak radioactive waste, the amount and speed of water flowing through the waste area, and the likelihood of volcanic activity. The GAO has yet to get answers to the majority of these questions. I believe we have no choice but to make certain we base this decision on sound science. Nuclear waste is the most dangerous substance we have ever created and will be deadly for thousands of years. Future generations depend on us being absolutely sure Yucca Mountain is safe, and science has not concluded that as yet.

Despite the scientific uncertainties of storing and shipping nuclear waste, there has been a sense of urgency to move forward with a decision on Yucca Mountain. Unfortunately, I believe this urgency has been fueled by politics—not by policy concerns regarding nuclear waste. The Nuclear Policy Act amendments of 1987 eliminated alternative sites, and billions of dollars have been devoted to Yucca Mountain. I believe some legislators may feel there is no turning back because of the tremendous federal resources that have already been invested in the project. Money concerns should not come before any policy that could threaten public safety.

Furthermore, DOE Secretary, Spencer Abraham, has also said that a permanent site for nuclear waste will promote energy security by removing a roadblock to expanding nuclear power. This also leads me to believe that the sense of urgency is not driven by an understanding of the properties of the Yucca Mountain site, but rather larger-scale issues regarding America's overall energy policies. Approving Yucca Mountain could lead to an unfettered expansion of nuclear power at a time when I believe we can be promoting other energy sources—like renewable and alternative energy technologies—that do not have harmful bi-products and the potential for devastating long-term effects on the health of our environment and on our families.

Overall, I believe Congress is rushing to make this decision regarding Yucca Mountain a decision that our future generations may have to live with for thousands of years. It is inevitable that storing nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain will continue to be a contentious issue over the next several years as technical details are sorted out. It is my hope that an expanded national debate on this issue will eventually lead to a final decision based on the merits of sound science, rather than on political arguments or larger-scale energy policy issues.

AMERICA'S EDUCATIONAL STRENGTHS

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 9, 2002

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, in the Outlook section of the Washington Post for Sunday, May 4, Gerald Bracey, has an interesting article which makes a point that I have long thought an important one—namely, that while it has become fashionable to denigrate the quality of public education in America across the board, our country has consistently led the world economically in part because we have done so well in precisely those areas of the economy where an educated workforce is the greatest asset. And as Mr. Bracey points out, those who have argued that our entire public educational system is failing have consistently argued that is would undermined our economic performance, undeterred by the fact that our economic performance has been so good.

As Bracey's article points out, ''in the early 1990s, as the economy tanked and a recession set in, many variations of a 'lousy-schools-are-producing-a-lousy-workforce-and-it's-killing-us-in-the-global-marketplace' could be heard. But these slackers somehow managed to turn things around. The American economy: 'back on top was the way the New York summed up the turnabout in February 1994 well, if the schools took the rap when they went south, surely they would be praised when the economy boomed, right? hardly.' ''

As Mr. Bracey notes, we do have problems with our school systems, particularly the inequality in which many of our schools in the urban and in some rural areas fall far below standard. Clearly we have to do a better job of helping the educational system overcome the social problems that contribute to the educational difficulties that many students face, and it is our obligation as a society committed to fairness to do far more here, both in and out of school. But the general point remains—if our school system overall was doing such a poor job, it is hard to understand how our economy could be doing so well in the areas where education is key. Because this question is so central to our deliberations, I ask that Mr. Bracey's article be printed here.

WHY DO WE SCAPEGOAT THE SCHOOLS?

(By Gerald W. Bracey)

There's no pleasing some people, even when they get what they want. So why do we keep listening to them?

For almost 20 years now, some of our most prominent business leaders and politicians have sounded the same alarm about the nation's public schools. It began in earnest with that 1983 golden treasury of selected, spun and distorted education statistics, ''A Nation At Risk,'' whose authors wrote, ''If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we retain in world markets, we

must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system. . . .'' The document tightly yoked our economic position in the world to how well or poorly students bubbled in answer sheets on standardized tests.

And it continued in September 2000, when a national commission on math and science teaching headed by former Ohio senator John Glenn issued a report titled ''Before It's Too Late.'' It asked, rhetorically, ''In an integrated, global economy . . . will our children be able to compete?'' The report's entirely predictable answer: Not if we don't improve schools ''before it's too late'' (emphasis in the original report).

So you might think that these Chicken Littles would be firing up their fax machines and e-mailing everywhere to report the following hot news from the World Economic Forum's ''Global Competitiveness Report, 2001–2002'': The United States ranks second in the organization's Current Competitiveness Index, trailing only Finland.

The CCI isn't just another survey. It is a sophisticated rating system derived from a wide variety of economic and other factors, including education data. And the World Economic Forum (or WEF) isn't some minor league player. Its annual conference draws a cross-section of the planet's most powerful political and business leaders—including some of the people so concerned about America's schools.

But the naysayers haven't trumpeted the CCI ranking. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if, sometime soon, a leading member of Congress or the business community declares that we must reform our educational system to maintain our competitive edge—or best those pesky Finns.

'Twas ever thus. Schools often takes the hit for bad turns of events, but somehow never get the credit for upturns. Remember 1957? The Russians launched Sputnik, the first man-made satellite to orbit Earth. When people asked how we could lose the race to space, public schools were an easy target. Life magazine ran a five-part series on the ''Crisis in Education.'' Major universities assumed the role of rescuers to develop modern, challenging textbooks. In 1969, America put a man on the moon, a destination that the Russians—with their allegedly superior scientists—never reached. Did a magazine declare an end to the ''crisis'' in education? Do pigs fly?

I don't mean to suggest, of course, that America's public schools are perfect. The dreary state of some urban and poor rural school systems is well documented. But I've been following the angst over our competitive capabilities since the 1983 report, and I've noticed the same pattern. In the early 1990s, as the economy tanked and a recession set in, many variations of ''lousy-schools-are-producing-a-lousy-workforce-and-it's-killing-us-in-the-global-marketplace'' could be heard. But these slackers somehow managed to turn things around: By early 1994, many publications featured banner headlines about the recovery that later became the longest sustained period of growth in the nation's history. ''The American Economy: Back on Top'' was the way that the New York Times summed up the turnabout in Feb. 1994.

Well, if the schools took the rap when the economy went south, surely they would be praised when the economy boomed, right? Hardly. A mere three months after the Times story appeared, IBM CEO Louis V. Gerstner Jr., wrote an op-ed for the Times headlined ''Our Schools Are Failing.'' They are failing, said Gerstner, because they are not producing students who can compete with their international peers.

The bashers have kept up their drumbeat. Intel CEO Craig R. Barrett, Texas Instruments CEO Thomas Engibous, State Farm Insurance CEO Edward Rust and then-Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson all took to the nation's op-ed pages in 2000 and 2001 to lament the threat that our education system poses to our competitiveness. Gerstner made an encore appearance on the Times op-ed page in March, expressing his continuing concern that our schools will ''limit our competitive position in the global marketplace.''

None of these fine gentlemen provided any data on the relationship between the economy's health and the performance of schools. Our long economic boom suggests there isn't one—or that our schools are better than the critics claim. But, there is a broader, more objective means of looking for any relationship. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) provides test scores for 41 nations, including the United States. Thirty-eight of those countries are ranked on the World Economic Forum's CCI. It's a simple statistical matter to correlate the test scores with the CCI.

There is little correlation. The United States is 29th in mathematics, but second in competitiveness. Korea is third in mathematics, but 27th in competitiveness. And so forth. If the two lists had matched, place for place, that would produce a perfect correlation of +1.0. But because some countries are high on competitiveness and low on test scores (and vice versa), the actual correlation is +.23. In the world of statistics, this is considered quite small.

Actually, even that small correlation is misleadingly high: Seven countries are low on both variables, creating what little relationship there is. If these seven nations are removed from the calculation, the correlation between test scores and competitiveness actually becomes negative, meaning that higher test scores are slightly associated with lower competitiveness.

The education variables in the index include: the quality of schools; the TIMSS scores; the number of years of education and the proportion of the country's population attending college (these two are variables in which the United States excels); and survey rankings from executives who, the World Economic Forum claims, have ''international perspectives.'' The WEF ranked U.S. schools 27th of the 75 nations—not exactly eyepopping, but given all of the horrible things said about American schools in the past 25 years, perhaps surprisingly high. (The United states looked particularly bad in one WEF category; the difference in quality between rich and poor schools. We finished 42nd, lower than any other developed nation. That is shameful in a country as rich as ours.)

So, if 26 nations have better schools, how did we earn our No. 2 overall competitiveness ranking? The WEF uses dozens of variables from many sectors, and the United States rates well across the board. One important consideration is the ''brain drain'' factor. Our scientists and engineers stay here, earning us a top ranking in this category. No other country, not even Finland, came close on this measurement.

But what really caught my eye were the top U.S. scores on a set of variables that make up what the WEF calls ''National Innovation Capacity.'' Innovation variables are critical to competitiveness, according to the WEF. Ten years ago, the competitive edge was gained by nations that could lower costs and raise quality. Virtually all developed countries have accomplished this, the WEF report asserts, and thus ''competitive advantage must come from the ability to create and then commercialize new products and processes, shifting the technology frontier as fast as rivals can catch up.''

Innovation is itself a complicated affair, but my guess is that it is not linked to test scores. If anything, too much testing discourages innovative thinking.

American schools, believe it or not, have developed a culture that encourages innovative thinking. How many other cultures do that? A 2001 op-ed in The Washington Post was titled ''At Least Our Kids Ask Questions.'' In the essay, author Amy Biancolli described her travails in trying to get Scottish students to discuss Shakespeare. She found that they weren't used to being allowed to express their opinions or having them valued. I had the same experience when I taught college students in Hong Kong. Years later, I mentioned this to a professor in Taiwan who said that even today, ''professors' questions are often met with stony silence.''

We take our questioning culture so much for granted that we don't even notice it until we encounter another country that doesn't have it. A 2001 New York Times article discussed, in the words of Japanese scientists, why Americans win so many Nobel prizes while the Japanese win so few. The Japanese scientists provided a number of reasons, but the one they cited as most important was peer review. Before American scientists publish their research, they submit it to the scrutiny—questioning—of other researchers, Japanese culture discourages this kind of direct confrontation; one Japanese scientist recalled his days in the United States, when he would watch scholars—good friends—engage in furious battles, challenging and testing each other's assumptions and logic. That would never happen in Japan, he told the Times reporter.

Japan's culture of cooperation and consensus makes for a more civil society than we find here, but our combative culture leaves us with an edge in creativity. We should think more than twice before we tinker too much with an educational system that encourages questioning. We won't benefit from one that idolizes high test scores.

It could put our very competitiveness as a nation at risk.

TRIBUTES TO HARRY STEPANIAN, WALTER McNAMARA, LARRY JAKUBOWICZ, AND MARTY GANNON, CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS FIREFIGHTERS

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 9, 2002

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Harry Stepanian, Walter McNamara, Larry Jakubowicz, and Marty Gannon, firefighters from the town of Clinton, Massachusetts who have announced their retirement after many years of dedicated service.

These men put their lives on the line every day to protect the citizens of Clinton. Because of their efforts through the years, many lives and a great deal of property have been saved, whether it was from entering a burning building or performing as an Emergency Medical Technician.

The town of Clinton is very fortunate to have an outstanding fire department. As we all know—and as the tragedies of September 11th reminded us—the job of a firefighter is not an easy one. It takes a special person to perform the duties required of firefighters. That duty involves risking their lives every day.