

by an airstrike . . . as this loose nukes disaster unfolds and the options for dealing with it narrow, the world does nothing”.

That is a much more imminent threat.

Secondly, we are not convinced that containment has failed. I can quote from an authoritative source. These are the words of the Prime Minister himself in November 2000: “We believe that the sanctions regime has effectively contained Saddam Hussein in the last 10 years. During this time he has not attacked his neighbours, nor used chemical weapons against his own people”.—[Official Report, Commons, 1/11/00; col. 511 W.]

Nor has he done either in the past three years—since that statement.

Another authoritative source said: “Through a process of inspection and verified destruction, the UNSCOM inspectors have demolished more weapons capability than was destroyed by the allied forces during the Gulf war”.—[Official Report, Commons, 17/2/98; col. 900.]

Those are the words of Robin Cook, then the Foreign Secretary. Even much more recently, it has been restated more than once that containment has proved more effective in destroying weapons of mass destruction than any war at any time in the past few years. The third issue is whether we believe that the peaceful options have been exhausted. Again, I quote from two unimpeachable sources. The first is the Congressional Research Service of the United States Congress, which said: “In meetings with Blix and ElBaradei in Baghdad on February 8 and 9, 2003, Iraqi officials handed over documents on anthrax, VX, and missile programs . . . On February 10, Iraq notified the UN that it would permit overflights of American U-2, French Mirage, and Russian Antonov aircraft”.

Let us add to that the report in the Independent today, which said: “Mr. Blix said the details of the weapons”—

I have described when they were handed over to the inspectors—“were ‘positive steps which need to be explored further’. Asked if there was any indication by the Iraqis of ‘substantive progress or proactive co-operation’”, which are exactly the requirements mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Symons, Mr Blix, a man of few words, replied, “Yes”. That was only yesterday. We on these Benches are not persuaded that all peaceful options have been exhausted. We point, not to illusions or statements by Members on these Benches, but to clear and unimpeachable sources such as the Congressional Research Service and the chief inspector, Mr Blix himself. None of this would matter so much if the consequences of war were less serious than they are. I wish to say a few words about them. First, the Financial Times states: “The coalition of the willing, sounds ever more like a coalition of the reluctant”.

Huge pressures are being brought to bear, not least on moderate Muslim countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and others, to subscribe to being part of an alliance to destroy the Iraqi regime. Those countries have protested over and over again that they do not wish to be involved in the war.

Let me give two examples. There was a great deal of controversy over Turkey because it was argued that it had been refused Patriot missiles as a result of a disagreeable coalition between France and Germany. It later emerged that Turkey had never asked for Patriot missiles or for any of the other equipment that was sent to it. Turkey had asked for consultation under Article 4 of the NATO treaty. It had not invoked Article 5, which is the article concerning mutual defense. Even now, Turkey is driving a colossally hard bargain. Members of the House will have seen that one part of the bargain is

that Turkey should be allowed to bring 55,000 troops into northern Iraq—the Kurdish area, much of which is protected by a no-fly-zone—a situation which, at the very least, is likely to foment great anger and, at worst, could lead to civil war and the disintegration of Iraq. It has also—incidentally, almost—helped to destroy the real prospect of a united Cyprus entering the European Union some time in the next seven or eight years.

The International Crisis Group—I declare an interest as a board member—has discovered that there is tremendous public concern about the possibility of a war against Iraq in the Middle East. In its report, it states: “ICG interviews throughout the region, in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria, indicate that there exists wide and deep scepticism about US motives”. That may be unfair, but it is a fact that we have to take into account when deciding whether the price of war is too high. It also emphasizes the importance of pursuing every other possible alternative.

I need not add the special complication of the wretched situation in the Middle East, referred to in another place yesterday by that distinguished and brave Member of Parliament, Gerald Kaufman, as the daily almost casual slaughter of Palestinians by the IDF and the daily almost casual slaughter of Israelis by terrorists from the West Bank and Gaza. We cannot pretend that this is not a desperately serious complication. With great respect to the noble Baroness, Lady Symons, she and I both know that the reason why the UN resolutions are mandatory on Iraq, and not mandatory on Israel, which has also broken many of them, is because the United States refuses to agree to their being made mandatory on Israel.

I have the greatest respect for the Prime Minister. He has virtually ripped himself into pieces trying to hold the Administration in the United States to the UN process. He is the reason why George Bush went to the United Nations: I pay the Prime Minister great credit for that. But the distinction I have just drawn between Israel and Iraq shows all too clearly that it is not the Prime Minister who is in the driving seat. It is concern about who is in the driving seat that underlies much of the scepticism.

I do not need to mention at length the possible humanitarian consequences of a war. That has been done effectively by the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford. But they are extreme. One has only to consider the desperate plight with regard to food. According to a leaked UN document, 30 per cent of children under five will be at risk of death from malnutrition if the war lasts more than a week or so. There are also warnings about cholera and many other extreme diseases. The warnings come from a United Nations leaked document, called the “Humanitarian Consequences of the War”.

Before I come to my conclusion, I shall say in the words of a famous politician whom many Labour Members of this House will remember, “You don’t need to look at the crystal if you can read the book”.

What is the book? The book concerns Afghanistan. I shall quote again from two sources, the first of which is The Times of 13 February, which states that “large parts of the country are once more on the verge of anarchy”.

An article by the senior fellow at the American Council on Foreign Relations—I declare an interest as a member of its international advisory council—states: “Basic security and stability have still not been achieved”. Worst of all, when the President drew up his budget for 2004, he forgot to put even a penny for the reconstruction of Afghanistan into it. Paul Krugman, of the New York Times, states: “The Bush team forgot

about it. Embarrassed Congressional staff members had to write in \$300 million to cover the lapse”.

So much for Afghanistan, already largely forgotten, coming back to anarchy, and neglected by the international community.

I conclude with two thoughts. First, there is clear evidence that the obsession with Iraq is drawing us away from what should be our first priority, which is to attack international terrorism. For that we need the widest possible support. I shall not go on quoting, but it was President Jimmy Carter who said a few days ago that the obsession with Iraq had essentially diverted the American Administration from concern about terrorism. There is more evidence that we are beginning to neglect the remnants—not dead remnants, but live ones—of Al’Qaeda in many other parts of the world. Finally, there is a fundamental thought, to which my colleague Lord Wallace of Saltaire will address himself. There is undoubtedly among European opinion, including the United Kingdom, more than 80 per cent opposition to a war without UN support and considerable opposition to a war even with UN support. That does not reflect anti-Americanism, except perhaps among a small minority. Many of us regard America as one of the most enterprising, imaginative, democratic and open societies in the world. What it reflects is concern with an Administration propelled to some extent by what I can only describe as a fundamentalist Christian and fundamentalist Jewish drive that is almost as powerful as fundamentalist Islam itself. The Administration has set aside the structures of the multilateral community by removing themselves from treaties and conventions, by refusing to sign the Kyoto agreement or agreeing to the biological weapons convention being resumed, and now by embarking on nuclear plans that threaten even the nuclear proliferation treaty. It is who is in the driving seat that frightens many of us; certainly not that great country the United States.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PAUL D. WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues, Representatives PATRICK KENNEDY, JIM RAMSTAD and many others, to introduce the Paul D. Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA) in the House. This bill, well named in memory of a dearly missed Congressional colleague and mental health advocate, ends a major barrier to mental health care by providing full parity in the health insurance coverage of mental illness with physical illness. It is time to heed the call of the 54 million Americans who suffer with the effects of mental illness every day of their lives and change this pernicious form of discrimination.

While the MHPA has received substantial bipartisan support in Congress and is supported in concept by the current administration, there remains a chorus of naysayers; primarily business lobbyists and insurance industry representatives. This chorus chants that this bill removes substantial flexibility by mandating the type of health benefits to offer. Yet examination of the facts refutes their contention. The bill does not require employers to

offer mental health coverage or cover specific mental health services, it excludes parity for substance abuse and out-of-network services, and businesses with less than 50 employees are exempt. Flexibility is not impaired.

The chorus of naysayers chants that this legislation would significantly raise health benefit costs and make these benefits too expensive for employers to offer. Again, examination of the facts refutes their contention. A recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projection estimated that passage of this bill would increase group health plan premiums by an average of 0.9 percent. Similarly, a PricewaterhouseCoopers analysis of the bill projected a 1 percent increase in costs or an average of \$1.32 per month per plan enrollee. These projections are consistent with the actual findings in states that already provide for full mental health parity by law and the experience of the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program that instituted parity for both mental health and substance abuse benefits in 2001. This approximate 1 percent increase is a small price to pay to increase mental health access and end discriminatory mental health insurance coverage practices. Furthermore, this increase in costs does not take into account the experience of several large employers (e.g. Delta Airlines) that found that increased access to mental health benefits led to decreases in other areas of health care costs and decreased employee absence.

In exasperation, the naysayers then chant that this bill covers an excessively broad range of psychiatric conditions which will open the door to the dubious complaints of the "worried well" and lead to over utilization and excessive cost. These contentions deny the reality that the bill requires parity only for those services that are "medically necessary" which is defined by the plan or issuer's criteria. In fact, symptoms that do not cause "clinically significant impairment or distress" will not be covered.

Thus, in retrospect, the concerns of this chorus are not supported by the data. Then, what can be the origin of this resistance to mental health parity?

A thousand years ago, people displaying symptoms of mental illness were stoned or burned at the stakes. The stigma attached to the mentally ill continues today in a more latent, but no less malicious form. It manifests itself by the employer who finds reasons not to hire or the apartment owner who is less likely to lease to the mentally ill. And, I believe it is manifesting itself in this excessive opposition to the efforts of the mentally ill to obtain treatment.

It is time to overcome the stigma associated with mental illness and put an end to this form of discrimination. It is time for the Administration to take an active role in supporting this bill that facilitates access to mental health services for those in need. It is time for Congress to enact the Paul D. Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act. I am pleased to join with my colleagues to again support this long overdue improvement in our health care system. I urge its speedy passage.

THE RENEWABLE FUEL EQUITY ACT

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, today, along with my colleague from Colorado, MARK UDALL, I am reintroducing the Renewable Fuel Equity Act of 2003. The energy crises that struck California in 2001 and resonated across the country taught us many lessons—one of which is the need for our country to expand and diversify the production of energy from renewable resources.

Solar, wind, hydro power, biomass, and geothermal energy are each potentially enormous energy resources and every state has renewable resource potential. Unfortunately, existing renewable energy resources are not spread uniformly across the country. The current tax law creates regional and technological inequities by failing to provide uniform benefits for all renewable energy resources. For example, the Section 45 production tax credit, enacted in 1992, has spurred significant new investment, but it only applies to wind power facilities. Since its inception, the production tax credit has added thousands of megawatts of wind power to our electricity grid. Imagine the impact on our communities if the production tax credit was available to all renewable energy technology.

Clean power production provides greater reliability for our electricity system while promoting cleaner air and water. In addition, according to the Energy Information Agency, expanding renewable power production helps reduce the risk of future price increases for electricity.

Today, renewable power sources provide consumers reliable power that is cost-effective over the long run. Unfortunately, their high, initial capital costs discourages investment in renewables. Providing tax incentives for new renewable power production can make the difference.

The federal production tax credit has demonstrated its effectiveness in spurring investment in new wind power generation. The Renewable Fuel Equity Act would expand this proven incentive to all of the renewable energy resources—wind, biomass, incremental hydro power, solar and geothermal.

For smaller power systems, particularly those not connected to the grid, the production tax credit is not an effective stimulus. Under current law, it does not apply to off-grid systems, and it is too complex for small businesses to use. To address this situation, our bill would make a 20 percent investment tax credit available to all small renewable technologies as an alternative.

Investment in new renewable power is good for the economy and the environment, and providing these tax incentives will spur new investment without cutting Treasury revenues. Studies by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and others indicate that expanding tax incentives for new renewable power systems are likely to have negligible net costs for the Treasury. This is because renewable power plants are so capital intensive they already pay significantly higher federal income taxes on the power produced.

As the 108th Congress begins the debate over a national energy policy, I believe pro-

duction and investment tax credits for renewable fuel sources are an important component of any comprehensive policy. Exploiting our renewable fuels is one of our safest, cleanest and most effective ways of ensuring our nations energy independence. I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting renewable fuel development by cosponsoring this important bill.

RECOGNIZING LACEY McELROY

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Lacey McElroy, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 1619, and in earning the most prestigious honor of the Gold Award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement attainable in girl scouting. To earn the gold award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, (1) Earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, (2) earning the career exploration pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, (3) earning the senior girl scout leadership award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, (4) designing a self-development plan that requires assessment of ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote girl scouting, and (5) spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a girl scout gold award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her gold award project, Lacey organized an infant and child book drive for early reading programs.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Lacey McElroy for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of the gold award.

TRIBUTE TO OPRAH WINFREY

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of Black History Month, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many accomplishments of distinguished African-Americans in Mississippi's Second Congressional District.

Today I rise to pay tribute to Ms. Oprah Winfrey. Ms. Winfrey was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi in 1954. Due to her father being in the service, Ms. Winfrey was raised by her grandmother.