

agreements that not only protect our corporations and protect our intellectual property and our copyrights because we recognize that those are significant aspects of our society and significant aspects of our economy, but I want to see America illustrate its values, what we stand for. At this time, especially in this country, what do we stand for?

I believe the citizens of this country stand for a strong commitment to our environment and a strong commitment to the working people, the average people who at this point in the world are being taken advantage of. We talk about free trade, but we do not talk about it when we are talking about the African farmer or when we are talking about labor and environmental standards.

I think it is time to even the playing field out, give our workers a chance, and let us start exporting what we stand for in this country and that is a commitment to the values and the freedoms that we have established over many years, and that is the environment and the labor standards. We have the political capital to do it; now we just need the political will to do it.

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, as our forces persevere in Iraq, working to stabilize and rebuild this country which has been devastated by a violent, oppressive regime for 35 years, we continue to be flooded in the press by charges of America being an imperialist empire. Such a charge is wrong.

The United States is indeed the lone super power in the world. However, this was not our goal. We now have the job that most countries do not want, and a burden that most are not capable of shouldering. We are requested to intervene in disputes affecting other countries. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, is urging the U.S. to deploy troops to Liberia immediately.

The fact remains that when security and influence is needed, it is the United States that is called upon to act. Given this fact, I continue to find it difficult to understand the charges levied against the United States, particularly with our involvement in Iraq. When we are facing a world where the majority of nations do not have the capability or the desire to ensure the safety and basic freedoms of individuals is not lost, we are then faced with a choice of whether or not to act.

As stated recently in the Atlantic Monthly, "The consequences of attack by weapons of mass destruction are so catastrophic the United States will have no choice but to act preemptively on limited evidence exposing our actions to challenge."

It is precisely that opportunity, to challenge a government's actions, that Iraq lacked for so long. Of course we read stories of protests in Najaf or other areas of Iraq. However, these protests represent the kind of free speech in a country for which less than 6 months earlier a person would have been greeted with a gunshot to the head. The fact is that the United States freed people that other nations outside of our coalition refused to do. These nations were content to continue to allow Iraq to descend into a culture of violence.

Today, the people of Iraq have the ability to choose a future of their own. We are helping them to rebuild, teaching them to police their citizens without torture, and teaching them to govern and rebuild a destitute economy. Yet we continue to encounter criticism of our efforts and strategy in a post-war Iraq, and the length of time to return the governing of Iraq to its people.

Let us look at history for a moment. At the end of World War II, it was believed that the occupation of both Germany and Japan would be brief. However, the reality was that Japan's occupation lasted over 6 years, and a directly military government in Germany lasted 4 years. Both situations faced humanitarian crises as a result of the war. Each nation's wealth was severely weakened, and a large percentage of each country's population was homeless; but reconstruction efforts resulted in functional democratic institutions. Constitutions were drafted with civil liberties that did not exist prior to the war in these countries. And today, both Germany and Japan are integral to the world economy and representative of the success of properly administered civil reforms. The situation in Iraq is not dissimilar.

Our troops do face a continued threat by terrorists, and security situations are very tense. But looking at our history, what Americans have accomplished in the past, how much more vast are our resources, our ingenuity and our compassion, we are making progress in Iraq. The new governing council may soon be recognized by the United Nations, small provincial governments are operating in smaller Iraqi towns, mass media is available where only state-run news previously existed. We are giving the Iraqi people a chance.

Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke before us recently. He said, "How hollow would the charges of American imperialism be when these failed countries are seen to be transformed from states of terror to nations of prosperity, from governments of dictatorship to examples of democracy, from sources of instability to beacons of calm." He went on to say, "Why America? The only answer is because destiny put you in this place in history in this moment of time, and the task is yours to do."

The United States did not ask for the world role in which we find ourselves.

The simple truth is we are the ones that are willing and capable to bring about a positive change in the world; and with help from our friends and patience from our citizens, we will do just that.

TRADE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, when you are in a deep hole in Washington, D.C., what do you do? You dig it a little deeper. That is what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are proposing with the Chile and Singapore free trade agreements.

The United States ran a record \$435.7 billion trade deficit last year, up from \$358.3 billion in 2001, and we are headed toward a new record this year. We have a failed trade policy. We are exporting millions of jobs every year while Americans cannot find work. But this one is even better. This is truly a groundbreaking agreement.

The Bush administration has gone further than the losers in the Clinton administration who pushed free trade and the Bush administration I and the Reagan administration, 20 years of failed trade policy in this country. This one is even better. We are going to export jobs and import workers. It has a little provision they snuck in, and Congress is not allowed any amendments in these trade agreements, that will actually import skilled workers to the United States. They are only coming on a temporary basis, only take away jobs on a temporary basis. We are going to export all those obsolete industrial jobs, they say. I think we need those industrial jobs, but that is the theory on that side of the aisle. They say do not worry, we will retrain people for these new jobs, the high-tech jobs, the skilled jobs.

Now the estimates are that we are going to export 3.3 million highly skilled high-tech jobs over the next 5 years. And under this trade agreement, we are going to import workers to do the few that are left here. This is really great. This is wonderful. What a great country.

Mr. Speaker, if the American people could only have a voice on this issue. They will not get a voice here in the House, and it is very unlikely they will get a voice in the United States Senate. We are exporting \$1.5 billion a day in U.S. wealth. We are continuing to drag down the economy.

The output of our economy over the last decade, according to credible economists, has been drug down by 35.2 percent over 10 years because of our trade deficit. What will this legislation do with Chile and Singapore, which is the forerunner for massive new free trade agreements all up and down

South America? It will actually accelerate that decline. We are already running a trade deficit with Chile, and it will grow greatly under this.

And with Singapore, yes, we had a little tiny trade surplus; but it is down by 50 percent in 1 year, and like with Mexico under NAFTA, we will be running huge and growing trade deficits with Singapore.

We cannot continue to run these deficits year in year out, export American jobs year in and year out, export America's industrial manufacturing base and continue to be a great economy. We are headed toward disaster here. In fact, the percent of our GDP that we are losing with these trade deficits is now exceeding the percent that Argentina was experiencing before their economic implosion or the Asian nations before their economic implosion.

Mr. Speaker, how long will people around the world continue to lend us money to buy foreign goods and undermine our own economy? This is absolutely absurd what we are doing here, and we are going to do more of it. Only inside the Washington, D.C. beltway would people look at \$500 billion trade deficits, loss of our manufacturing base, the importation of skilled foreign workers and say this is great for our country because one or two multi-national corporations that nominally are based in the United States, they probably do not pay taxes here, but still pretend they are American companies, will get a little bit under this agreement.

WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of debate going on here in Washington, D.C. over our reasons for going to war in Iraq. Yesterday, I had the privilege of meeting with some men I believe we should hear more from. They were Marines injured in Operation Iraqi Freedom currently being treated at Bethesda Naval Hospital, Marines like Mark Graunke, Jr., a staff sergeant who lost his left hand, three of his fingers and his left eye and took shrapnel in removing landmines in theater on July 8 earlier this month.

What Mark told me, Congressman, I am not a hero, I was just doing my job for the good old United States of America, and it was a privilege. Then I talked to another sergeant whose name I will omit, but a man who the Navy corpsman told me may not make it. He was flanked by his mom and his dad and the mother of his two children and he looked me in the eye, with tubes coming out, and he simply said, Congressman, the only thing I worry about is that we will pull out early and we will not finish the job and it will mean all of the sacrifices we made over there were for nothing.

Then there was Michael Jones who took an RPG shell in the leg, looked me in the eye and told me he was glad the man fired at him instead of the vehicle where five of his fellow Marines were doing a search. I said, Lance Corporal Jones, are you telling me you are glad you were shot with a rocket in the leg? He said, yes, sir, I am sure it saved lives.

These are all men that know one thing that the American people know, that freedom is worth fighting for, freedom is worth dying for. It was about the freedom of the Iraqi people and securing the safety and freedom of the American people that this President moved against a brutal tyrant in Saddam Hussein, who most assuredly coddled terrorists in his 30-year reign in Iraq, and admitted to the weapons of mass destruction and used weapons of mass destruction against his own countrymen and against his neighbors.

Mr. Speaker, these brave Marines currently being treated at Bethesda Naval Hospital taught me much, reminded me of much: that freedom is worth fighting for, freedom is worth dying for, and we will stay the course until we deliver freedom to the families and children and the legacy of Iraq.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into the RECORD an editorial that was in my local newspaper, the Asbury Park Press, on Sunday relative to the Medicare prescription drug issue; and I want to highlight a couple of statements that were made by that editorial.

It says, "Both Houses of Congress have passed what they describe as historic plans to extend prescription coverage to Medicare recipients. They are historic all right. They begin to chip away at one of government's most successful programs. Medicare has worked well for millions of seniors since its inception in 1966. Its administrative costs of 2 percent are far lower than those of private insurers. The notion that competition in the private marketplace will provide consumers with more choices, driving down the cost of drugs is a tired philosophy that has failed to deliver promised benefits in the areas of health care, transportation, energy and telecommunications. Providing extended coverage to their existing Medicare program would offer better benefits for less cost, be far more efficient and easier for recipients to use and be less prone to the vagaries of the marketplace, quick to abandon those that they cannot make a profit from."

[From the Asbury Park Press, July 13, 2003]

DRUG PLAN A PLACEBO

Both Houses of Congress have passed what they describe as historic plans to extend pre-

scription coverage to Medicare recipients. They're historic all right; they begin to chip away at one of government's most successful programs.

Rather than turning it over to HMOs and private insurers as the Republicans in Congress want to do, Medicare should be expanded to include an affordable, guaranteed prescription drug component, as Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., and others prefer.

Both the Senate and House versions of the bill are fatally flawed. Even the most vocal supporters of a prescription drug benefit have expressed severe reservations about the legislation, including the American Association of Retired Persons.

Among our many concerns:

Both bills fail to adequately address the problem of skyrocketing drug prices. A study released last week found that the price of drugs most commonly used by the elderly rose more than three times the rate of inflation last year. Because co-pays and deductibles under the proposed plans are pegged to the cost of drugs, coverage will become unaffordable unless spiraling prices can be brought under control.

The co-pays and deductibles are too high and the benefits too meager. The two versions would cover an estimated one-third of the annual cost of drugs up to \$4,500 and up to two-thirds of drug bills exceeding \$12,000. The version supported by Pallone would cover 80 percent of the costs.

The House version could dismantle New Jersey's Senior Gold and Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled programs and force seniors to enroll in far less generous plans run by HMOs and other private insurers. The Senate version, the lesser of two evils, would allow for the continuation of Senior Gold and PAAD.

The House bill does not guarantee coverage in areas where private firms are unwilling to write policies.

Employers are likely to reduce retiree benefits, leaving millions with less coverage than they have today. According to a Congressional Budget Office estimate, 37 percent of retirees with employer prescription drug coverage would lose it.

The substantial coverage gaps are confusing and are likely to discourage enrollment in the program.

By allowing highly subsidized private insurers to offer supplemental benefits, relatively healthy people will be drawn to private coverage, losing their choice of doctors and increasing costs to taxpayers.

Medicare has worked well for millions of seniors since its inception in 1966. Its administrative costs of 2 percent are far lower than those of private insurers. The notion that competition in the private marketplace will provide consumers with more choices, driving down the cost of drugs, is a tired philosophy that has failed to deliver promised benefits in the areas of health care, transportation, energy and telecommunications.

Providing extended coverage through the existing Medicare program would offer better benefits for less cost, be far more efficient and easier for recipients to use, and be less prone to the vagaries of a marketplace quick to abandon those it can't make a profit from.

The two bills on the table are driven more by politics than a sincere desire to give seniors the affordable, life-saving and life-enhancing drugs they deserve. Seniors and senior organizations should insist that their elected representatives hold out for a comprehensive program that offers real relief, not just a placebo.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair