

Worker accounts: all worker accounts would be owned by the worker and invested through pools supervised by the government. Regulations would be instituted to prevent people from taking undue risk. Until an account balance reaches \$2,500, a worker would be limited on the kind of index investments they could make; and after the balance reaches \$2,500, they would have more flexibility but only investing in safe accounts as determined by the Secretary of the Treasury.

The fairness to women's provision that we put in this bill: for married couples, account contributions would be pooled and then divided equally between the husband and wife. So whatever the husband and wife would be eligible to invest would be added together and divided by two so each spouse would have the same in their individual account. Second, it would increase surviving spouse benefits to 110 percent of the higher-earning spouse's benefits. Third, stay-at-home mothers with kids under 5 would receive retirement credit. In other words, we are saying for a spouse that stays home with those young kids, they can have those years credited at the average for the other years.

In conclusion, Social Security solvency, the Retirement Security Act has been scored by the Social Security Administration actuaries to keep the program solvent. There would be no increases in the retirement age, changes in benefits for seniors or near-seniors, or changes in the Social Security COLA.

Mr. Speaker, there are only 24 Members in the House and Senate that have ever signed onto a bill. We need to move ahead and save this program.

AMERICA DESERVES STRAIGHT TALK ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this administration is well known for spinning the truth, a very polite term for a lamentable practice. For example, over two-thirds of the American public think that Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis have some linkage to the attack of September 11, when, 2 years after the fact, there remains no evidence, despite the efforts of the administration to rhetorically connect these events.

The administration's habit of using misleading language is at its worst with the environment. Their Clear Skies Initiative will actually permit dirtier air. Relaxation of the New Source Review rules will inhibit the intent of the Clean Air Act, which 30 years ago gave a reprieve to the dirtiest coal fired plants, a reasonable time to come into compliance. The New Source Review rules were designed so that when plants modernize, new anti pollution technology must be put in

place. Instead, the agencies have kept these aging dinosaurs in use because, simply, they make more money.

Rather than enforcing the Clean Air Act as previous administrations have done to encourage the industry, President Bush now proposes that these old plants continue to be grandfathered permanently. Changes to the New Source Rules announced last month will allow plants to make a 20 percent investment each year without triggering the New Source Rule. There is no reason for them to ever come into full compliance.

Because of the prevailing winds, the pollution is not just in the vicinity of the plant or in that State that allows it to operate. The effects are concentrated, particularly in the New England States. And attorneys general in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, as well as some midwest States like Wisconsin and Illinois are lining up to challenge this rule in court.

Yesterday, the President was in Michigan to promote his Clear Skies Initiative; but he had the audacity to appear at one of the Nation's dirtiest power plants in Monroe, which is responsible, we are told, for approximately 300 premature deaths each year.

The Detroit Free Press points out that the mercury emissions at that plant have gone up over the course of the last 2 years, and this Clear Skies Initiative will allow more mercury emissions than simply enforcing the current law.

The President attempted to paint to this as a jobs-creation issue; but local labor leaders pointed out that when the Monroe plant owner, Detroit Edison, found out that the New Source Review rules were going to be relaxed, they promptly stop their efforts to install pollution controls required by law and fired 800 union workers who had been installing them. Lost jobs, dirtier air, health problems for thousands.

The pending energy bill should be an opportunity to rectify these problems with cleaner air, reducing the dependence on foreign oil and maybe even protecting the power grid recently proven vulnerable. Instead, we currently have a grab bag of incentives for special interests that shortchanges efficiency, continues reliance on expensive imported foreign oil, and delays the day of reckoning for electrical power to clean the air and a more fuel-efficient auto industry.

It is not too late for the administration and the Congress to deal meaningfully with two or three of these items that would actually help the American public. It is not just protecting the environment and the health of our citizens; it is a matter of long-term economic stability and security at a time when we have almost 140,000 American troops in and around Iraq in no small measure to secure Middle East oil.

The Bush administration should be straight with the American public about the economic, environmental, and security consequences. Rather

than a misleading photo-op, we should work for the meaningful environmental progress that America deserves.

VICTORY'S PRICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized during morning hour debates.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, a generation from now Iraq will either be a thriving democratic ally of the United States, or an enemy of unimaginable hatred, ruled by a violent government of, for, and by international terrorists.

A generation from now the battle of Iraq, now the central component of the war on terror, will have succeeded or have failed. America will have won or lost; and our brave heroes who gave their lives there will have sacrificed for virtue or died in vain.

The toppling of Saddam Hussein's status in Firdos Square will have been the dawn of an age of Middle East freedom and stability, or it will have been the cruel joke that ushered in an era of unspeakable terror in the region.

There is no middle ground. Freedom and terrorism cannot co-exist. This struggle between good and evil will be decided by victory or surrender, in security or in shame.

And the terrorists understand the stakes. That is why they swarmed like scorpions into Iraq. They know that their true enemy is not our weapons, but our own will. And thankfully, so does President George W. Bush. That is why he spoke to the Nation last week and announced his request for additional funds to prosecute the war.

The question now before us is whether we realize, as the terrorists do, that the separate stand they are making in Iraq is the last best hope for their evil ideology.

Mr. Speaker, our mission in Iraq is not related to the war on terror. It is the war on terror. The enemy has chosen to make his stand right there. And if victory is our aim, we must not yield until the last terrorist in Iraq is in a cell or in a cemetery. Whether it costs \$87 billion or \$187 billion, our absolute victory in the war and the peace is worth any price, because without victory, there will be no survival.

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If we are to take the war on terror seriously, we must spend what it takes to win. Critics and candidates may measure wars by the dollars that they cost, but the American people will measure this war, as we did in World War II and the Cold War, by the lives it saves, the evil it destroys and the freedom it preserves.

ADMINISTRATION PLAYING FAST AND LOOSE WITH THE FACTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

MCGOVERN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly and disturbingly clear that the Bush administration is not being truthful with the American people. From the economy to the environment to the war in Iraq, too often members of the administration play fast and loose with the facts.

They said their massive tax cuts for the wealthy would produce thousands of new jobs. In fact, we have lost not thousands but millions of jobs.

They pledged that no child would be left behind, when, in fact, their education budget fails to live up to its promises and many children are being left behind.

They say there is no real evidence of global warming when, in fact, the vast majority of the scientific evidence disagrees, and it is absolutely stunning to see how hostile this administration is to our precious environment.

On foreign policy it is even worse. For example, in a television interview over the weekend, Vice President CHENEY rejected suggestions from Democrats, Republicans and people around the world that perhaps a different approach is needed in Iraq. The Vice President insisted that the administration's Iraq policy is a rousing success, but after hundreds of American casualties, billions of American taxpayer dollars, zero weapons of mass destruction and facing a long-term occupation of Iraq, that does not seem like the definition of a rousing success.

Before the war, the administration said it would cost between \$50 and \$100 billion. Mr. Speaker, we now know that the cost of the war in Iraq is at \$166 billion and counting.

According to the Washington Post, the Vice President pointed to Iraq's prewar possession of 500 tons of uranium as evidence of their reconstituted, to use his word, nuclear program. The reality is the material was low-grade uranium that could not be used for weapons without sophisticated processing that Iraq could not do.

Perhaps most disturbingly, the Vice President and other members of this administration continue to cloud the issue regarding the link between Iraq and the terrible tragedy of September 11.

The Vice President on Sunday insisted that the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda "involved training, for example, on biological and chemical weapons, that al Qaeda sent personnel to Baghdad to get trained on the systems."

According to a report in today's Boston Globe, however, those claims are based on the hearsay of a terrorist, have never been verified, cannot be proven, and are questionable at best, and Mr. Speaker, I would put the full story of the Boston Globe in the RECORD at this point.

[From the Boston Globe]

CHENEY LINK OF IRAQ, 9/11 CHALLENGED

(By Anne E. Kornblut and Bryan Bender, Sept. 16, 2003)

WASHINGTON.—Vice President Dick Cheney, anxious to defend the White House foreign policy amid ongoing violence in Iraq, stunned intelligence analysts and even members of his own administration this week by failing to dismiss a widely discredited claim: that Saddam Hussein might have played a role in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Evidence of a connection, if any exists, has never been made public. Details that Cheney cited to make the case that the Iraqi dictator had ties to Al Qaeda have been dismissed by the CIA as having no basis, according to analysts and officials. Even before the war in Iraq, most Bush officials did not explicitly state and Iraq had a part in the attack on the United States two years ago.

But Cheney left that possibility wide open in a nationally televised interview two days ago, claiming that the administration is learning "more and more" about connections between Al Qaeda and Iraq before the Sept. 11 attacks. The statement surprised some analysts and officials who have reviewed intelligence reports from Iraq.

Democrats sharply attacked him for exaggerating the threat Iraq posed before the war.

"There is no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein had anything to do with 9/11," Senator Bob Graham, a Democrat running for president, said in an interview last night. "There was no such relationship."

A senior foreign policy adviser to Howard Dean, the Democratic front-runner, said it is "totally inappropriate for the vice president to continue making these allegations without bringing forward" any proof.

Cheney and his representatives declined to comment on the vice president's statements. But the comments also surprised some in the intelligence community who are already simmering over the way the administration utilized intelligence reports to strengthen the case for the war last winter.

Vincent Cannistraro, a former CIA counterterrorism specialist, said that Cheney's "willingness to use speculation and conjecture as facts in public presentations is appalling. It's astounding."

In particular, current intelligence officials reiterated yesterday that a reported Prague visit in April 2001 between Sept. 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi agent had been discounted by the CIA, which sent former agency Director James R. Woolsey to investigate the claim. Woolsey did not find any evidence to confirm the report, officials said, and President Bush did not include it in the case for war in his State of the Union address last January.

But Cheney, on NBC's "Meet the Press," cited the report of the meeting as possible evidence of an Iraq-Al Qaeda link and said it was neither confirmed nor discredited, saying,

"We've never been able to develop any more of that yet, either in terms of confirming it or discrediting it. We just don't know."

Multiple intelligence officials said that the Prague meeting, purported to be between Atta and senior Iraqi intelligence officer Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani, was dismissed almost immediately after it was reported by Czech officials in the aftermath of Sept. 11 and has since been discredited further.

The CIA reported to Congress last year that it could not substantiate the claim, while American records indicate Atta was in Virginia Beach, Va., at the time, the officials said yesterday. Indeed, two intelligence offi-

cialists said yesterday that Ani himself, now in U.S. custody, has also refuted the report. The Czech government has also distanced itself from its original claim.

A senior defense official with access to high-level intelligence reports expressed confusion yesterday over the vice president's decision to reair charges that have been dropped by almost everyone else. "There isn't any new intelligence that would precipitate anything like this," the official said, speaking on condition he not be named.

Nonetheless, 60 percent of Americans believe that Hussein probably had a part in attacking the United States, according to a recent Washington Post poll. And Democratic senators have charged that the White House is fanning the misperception by mentioning Hussein and the Sept. 11 attacks in ways that suggest a link.

Bush administration officials insisted yesterday that they are learning more about various Iraqi connections with Al Qaeda. They said there is evidence suggesting a meeting took place between the head of Iraqi intelligence and Osama bin Laden in Sudan in the mid-1990s; another purported meeting was said to take place in Afghanistan, and during it Iraqi officials offered to provide chemical and biological weapons training, according to officials who have read transcripts of interrogations with Al Qaeda detainees.

But there is no evidence proving the Iraqi regime knew about or took part in the Sept. 11 attacks, the Bush officials said.

Former senator Max Cleland, who is a member of the national commission investigating the attacks, said yesterday that classified documents he has reviewed on the subject weaken, rather than strengthen, administration assertions that Hussein's regime may have been allied with Al Qaeda.

"The vice president trying to justify some connection is ludicrous," he said.

Nonetheless, Cheney, in the "Meet the Press" interview Sunday, insisted that the United States is learning more about the links between Al Qaeda and Hussein.

"We learn more and more that there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda that stretched back through most of the decade of the '90s," Cheney said, "that it involved training, for example, on [biological and chemical weapons], that Al Qaeda sent personnel to Baghdad to get trained on the systems."

The claims are based on a prewar allegation by a "senior terrorist operative," who said he overheard an Al Qaeda agent speak of a mission to seek biological or chemical weapons training in Iraq, according to Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement to the United Nations in February.

But intelligence specialists told the Globe last August that they have never confirmed that the training took place, or identified where it could have taken place. "The general public just doesn't have any independent way of weighing what is said," Cannistraro, the former CIA counterterrorism specialist, said. "If you repeat it enough times . . . then people become convinced it's the truth."

Mr. MCGOVERN. Before the war, we were told that Iraq possessed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. Today, the administration is singing a very different tune. They now talk about Iraq "maintaining the capability to develop" those weapons. Maintaining the capability to develop? Is that what passes for proof in the Bush administration?

There are those who occasionally attempt to give straight answers. Larry Lindsay gave an accurate prediction of how much the war would cost. He got

fired. General Shinseki told the truth about how many troops would be needed in Iraq. He has been replaced.

In the Bush administration, it seems loyalty to the party line is more important than candor.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about important issues here, issues of war and peace, life and death. The American people deserve to know the truth. They deserve straight talk, not some intentionally muddled rationale created for political purposes. They deserve a lot better than they are getting from this administration.

AMERICORPS' OVERENROLLMENT AND QUESTIONABLE ACCOUNTING RECORDS

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 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, just as freedom and liberty are interwoven into the very fabric of our Nation, so too is the American pastime of volunteering. Recently, AmeriCorps' backers have been seeking an additional \$100 million in supplemental funding, but I believe we should look carefully at their request.

AmeriCorps was not able to place anywhere from 20,000 to 37,000 employees, volunteers, and this is based upon a statement from them, the Save AmeriCorps Coalition, on September 4, because of its own muddy accounting records and overenrollment. Basically, what they did was overhire 20,000 plus volunteers without authorization.

Of further interest, during the August recess we learned of the distribution of cash bonuses to 265 senior staff at the parent agency, which is the Corporation for National Community Service, CNCS. While the amounts are nominal to their overall budget, what is disturbing is the apparent lack of judgment from CNCS officials. This Congress has been engaged in over a year's worth of hearings and legislation on corporate misbehavior and disproportionate executive compensation in ailing companies. The public expresses outrage over such private sector firm actions and demands that Congress investigate and would probably refer to emergency funding, in the example of such firms as we have been examining, as a bailout. CNCS should be subject to no less scrutiny and adhere to no lower standards.

Some of us question Federal funding of community service in the first place. AmeriCorps pays people to volunteer. Remuneration in exchange for choosing to contribute one's time, energy and/or money would seem to belie the very definition of the word "volunteerism."

This country does indeed have many needs. Thankfully, through the work of volunteers, many of those needs are met and fulfilled every day. Americans share their hearts, weekends, muscles and wallets in a multitude of activities.

To this end, a recent exhortation by the Save AmeriCorps Coalition should be mentioned here. This is what they say, "Our generation is volunteering at unprecedented rates, making vital contributions to communities across the country through AmeriCorps. This opportunity, however, is at risk. Drastic cuts in Federal funding will result in the reduction of critical services for children, the elderly and hundreds of organizations that rely on AmeriCorps volunteers."

If AmeriCorps is suggesting volunteerism might collapse in the United States, one might forgive our skepticism. Reflect that America has relied on the contribution of volunteers for centuries. AmeriCorps has existed for all but a decade, whereas our Nation's charitable sector thrived since before its creation.

After visiting America for the first time, the French social commentator Alexis de Tocqueville said, "I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and in getting them voluntarily to pursue it." He wrote this in his book *Democracy in America*.

Further, analysis published in October 2003 in the Reason magazine article on AmeriCorps quantifies that according to AmeriCorps' and Bureau of Labor Statistics' numbers on volunteers both as members of AmeriCorps and as Americans on their own, "AmeriCorps cuts then represent about four-tenths of 1 percent of total American volunteer hours."

Even those of us who see the benefit in some Federal role in civic service question some of the endeavors in which AmeriCorps volunteers over the years have participated. While some of the activities undertaken by AmeriCorps members may be meritorious, AmeriCorps also has a history of participating in some activities of questionable value.

That these programs may be described as worthy to some, while questionable to others, might be a needless debate at all were not the taxpayers who are being charged in the first place for this volunteer work. For a decade now, members on both sides of our aisle have sought to legislate whether AmeriCorps members could spend time with political activities, campaigns, faith-based initiatives or unions. If the Federal Government were not involved in what should be a personal preference in the first place, we would not have to have these discussions in the first place. Any American, go volunteer where he or she wants, end of message.

Let us celebrate the pure volunteerism that occurs in our communities every day. Let us encourage it to flourish just as it was 200 years ago, selflessly and generously, from the heart.

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE FAILED PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to address the tragic situation in the Middle East and the failed peace process. It is obvious to all that the continued dispatching of these so-called suicide or homicide bombers into civilian Israeli targets like buses and restaurants is intended to prevent any peaceful resolution of the Palestinian problem.

For any peace process to work, both parties involved must want peace. The Palestinian Authority and Mr. Arafat have demonstrated that they do not want to end and they are unwilling and incapable of preventing this ongoing violence against Israeli civilians.

The repeated call by Mr. Arafat for martyrs by the millions, reiterated by him again last week, should be a stark reminder to us all that we cannot work with him or the beliefs he represents. There can be no real peace when these are the sentiments of this man's heart. Let us not delude ourselves.

Ariel Sharon's primary responsibility, and the primary responsibility of the Israeli government, above and beyond everything else is to maintain the safety and security of its people. While the opinions of European ministers, the U.S. Government and our State Department are important, they are not more important than the lives of women and children.

Now is the time to acknowledge that Oslo has been a terrible failure and the road map is not working. Hundreds of Israelis are dead and buried as a testimony to this fact. Many more are left to face a lifetime of painful disability.

I feel strongly that the Israeli government should be supported in doing whatever it takes to protect its people. If this includes expelling Arafat so be it. If it includes completing the fence, so be it. Whatever is necessary to defend itself and protect its people.

Our State Department was recently quoted as saying that expelling Arafat will not be helpful. I strongly disagree. It may prove to be very helpful. It might end these attacks on Israeli civilians, and what is more, it could be very helpful to the Palestinians themselves.

Since Arafat's return in 1993, the Palestinian economy has shrunk by 70 percent, while at the same time the Israeli economy has doubled. There is widespread corruption and no freedom of speech in the Palestinian-controlled territories. Any Palestinian who openly criticizes Arafat or the Authority's policy is killed. Removing this man and the evil and corrupt regime around him could be the best thing for the peace process.

I know I do not stand alone in these sentiments and that a majority of this House, the Senate and the American