

On Easter Sunday, surrounded by fresh spring flowers, pretty Easter dresses and baskets of brightly colored Easter eggs, we again see Spring in its best light. We see it in the light of renewal and hope. We see it in the amazing story of Private Jessica Lynch of Palestine, WV. The State of West Virginia, and the entire nation, rejoices in her safe recovery. Her homecoming will be a day to remember forever. My thanks, and the Nation's thanks, go out to the brave and honorable Iraqi nationals who risked so much to bring her aid and the daring service personnel who rescued her.

Mr. President, a poem that I memorized long, long years ago reminds us all of how we are touched by the presence of others:

A Persian fable says:

One day a wanderer found a piece of clay,
So redolent of perfume
Its odor scented all the room.
"What are thou?" was the quick demand;
"Art thou some gem of Samarcand?
Or spikenard rare in rich disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?"
"Nay, I am but a piece of clay,"
"Then whence this wondrous sweetness,
pray?"
"Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose."
Sweet parable! And will not those
Who love to dwell with Sharon's rose,
Distill sweet odors all around,
Though low and mean themselves be found?
Dear Lord, abide with us, that we
May draw our perfume fresh from thee.

Mr. President, the rose that has perfumed this humble piece of clay is my wife Erma. In 49 more days, God willing, we will celebrate 66 years of marriage. It has not all been a level voyage. There have been ups and downs, as there will be in every marriage, but they have been good years, filled with many Easter mornings.

And now, as I look forward to watching my great-grandchildren hunt for their Easter eggs in the green grass, I am grateful for the opportunity to see so many generations grow up. My sense of hope for the future is redoubled, as it is each Easter time.

It must have been at Easter time when William Jennings Bryan penned those words from "The Prince of Peace:"

If the Father deigns to touch with divine power the cold and pulseless heart of the buried acorn and to make it burst forth from its prison walls, will he leave neglected in the earth the soul of man, made in the image of his Creator?
If he stoops to give to the rosebush, whose withered blossoms float upon the autumn breeze, the sweet assurance of another springtime, will He refuse the words of hope to the son of men when the frosts of winter come?
If matter, mute and inanimate, tho changed by the forces of nature into a multitude of forms, can never die, will the imperial spirit of man suffer annihilation when it has paid a brief visit like a royal guest to his tenement of clay?
No, I am sure that He who, notwithstanding his apparent prodigality, created nothing without a purpose, and wasted not a single atom in all his creation, has made provision for a future life in

which man's universal longing for immortality will find its realization.

I am as sure that we live again as I am sure that we live today.

So my sense of hope for the future is redoubled, as it is each Easter time. That is the beauty of Easter, because that typifies the glorious promise which is ours and which the Saviour gave to us. That question, which was asked in the Book of Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" is answered—answered—by Easter.

I recall, in the Book of John, Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus and said: "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth, still wrapped in his grave clothes. And Jesus said: "Loose him, and let him go."

So in the midst of war there is life. In the midst of uncertainty there is faith. After each winter, there is spring.

Mr. President, I wish you and all of our colleagues a glorious Easter. May we ponder upon its meaning, and upon its reason, and upon its promise for us.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CUBA'S CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it had been my intent earlier in the week to come and share with my colleagues some thoughts on the recent crackdown on human rights activists in Cuba. I was unable to do it, so before we adjourn for the Easter Passover recess, I want to take a few minutes to express my thoughts on the recent events in Cuba, and to express in the strongest terms possible my sense of outrage over what has happened.

Cuban President Fidel Castro recently initiated severe and repressive measures in an attempt to silence pro-democracy activists on the island nation of Cuba. I rise to denounce in the strongest possible terms those actions. The arrests and show trials of these individuals are well beyond acceptable norms of governance today, and they call into question the very legitimacy of the Cuban state. It speaks volumes about that state's legitimacy when its citizens are denied an opportunity to dialog with the Government authorities about the future of their nation, its political institutions, and its practices.

Over the last 40 years, there have been ebbs and flows with respect to the extent of political space granted to human rights activists and independent journalists by Cuban authorities. Last year, in the runup to the visit of former President Jimmy Carter to Havana, there was a perceptible

loosening of restrictions on civil society activities. And the Cuban people exhibited a genuine interest in and motivation toward making the most of this newly found political space. When President Carter was in Havana, he was permitted to address the Cuban people, live and uncensored, on Cuban national television. At that time, he rightfully acknowledged the ongoing democratic grassroots activities on the island symbolized by the so-called Varela Project, headed by Oswaldo Paya. This important grassroots organization has already gathered more than 20,000 signatures on petitions in support of democratic reforms.

Thanks to President Jimmy Carter, the activities of Mr. Paya are now known not only to the international community but to the Cuban people as well.

Representatives of the Varela Project presented a petition with over 11,000 signatures to the Cuban National Assembly, calling on the Assembly to act on some vital democratic issues, including free speech and free press, economic liberalization, and the release of political prisoners. While I understand that the National Assembly has responded to the Varela petitioners, it has done so in a narrowly, legalistic manner that misses the larger political issues that deserve serious consideration by Cuban authorities.

It speaks volumes that thousands of ordinary Cubans have been willing to publicly petition their government seeking change. I for one had hoped that the Cuban people's expressed desire for democratic initiatives would prompt further liberalization of the Nation of Cuba. In fact, if the Castro government abided by its own constitution, this might very well be the case.

Instead, over the past several weeks, my colleagues, my fellow Americans, and the global community have witnessed the Castro government's abrupt and repressive retaliation against Cuban grassroots democracy activists, independent journalists, economists, and other dissidents. On trumped up charges of allegedly "working with a foreign power to undermine the government," the Castro government is attempting to undermine the will of its own people, in my view, and about 75 Cuban dissidents have now been arrested and convicted.

Opposition political party leader Hector Palacios has already received 25 years in prison, and his wife, Gisela Delgado was also convicted. Civil rights advocate Oscar Elias Biscet is expected to be sentenced this week. Economist Martha Beatriz Roque, who has been consistently critical of President Castro's handling of the Cuban economy—and rightfully so, I might add—which happens to be in dire straits, received 20 years in prison for merely doing that. Three others met the same fate, including dissident independent journalist Raul Rivero, independent magazine editor Ricardo Gonzales, and economist Oscar

Espinosa Chepe. Indeed, up to this point, there have been 57 convictions, with sentences ranging from 6 to 28 years.

And, I must say that after examining these tragic cases, it comes as no surprise that although Mr. Paya has not yet been arrested, 42 of the 74 people arrested in these crackdowns are participants in the Varela Project.

Even more troubling is that these trials have been and are continuing to be conducted in a Havana courtroom closed to international diplomats and foreign journalists. I strongly believe that this atmosphere of authoritarianism is indicative not only of the lack of substantial evidence against these individuals, but these trials' lack of domestic and international legitimacy.

For many years, I have strongly supported United States engagement of Cuba. I have worked to dismantle the myriad of restrictions on American interaction with that nation, including those on trade and travel. Once again, let me state for the record my belief that our 40-year long isolationist policy towards Cuba has played, unfortunately, a major role I believe in keeping the government of Fidel Castro in power. It has allowed the Castro regime to blame U.S. policies for the lack of food and medicine in Cuba and has created a siege mentality which has allowed repression to flourish under the guise of national sovereignty. For those reasons I continue to believe that U.S. policy needs to change to some degree.

However, my support for United States engagement of Cuba should not be mistaken for support of the Castro Government or for the reprehensible tactics it resorts to in order to suppress popular dissent with its policies.

It is a curious thing, indeed, that prior to these recent actions by Cuban authorities, there was growing support in the Congress and in the Cuban American community in particular for more engagement with Cuba. It leads me to speculate whether President Castro's recent persecution of prodemocracy and human rights activists is not designed to chill efforts in the United States to engage more actively with the island.

I call upon the Castro Government to take immediate steps for the release of its political prisoners, to stop the persecution of Cuban dissidents, and to show respect for and abide by the Cuban Constitution and the will of the Cuban people. Fidel Castro has always said that the Cuban Revolution liberated the Cuban people from tyranny and oppression. The events of the last few weeks would indicate just the opposite. Many of the actions that the Castro regime has taken in recent months, particularly against democratic activists and independent journalists make it crystal clear that tyranny is still the order of the day in Havana under Fidel Castro. It is time for Cuban authorities to drastically re-

verse course and allow the Cuban people to have a voice in their governance. Then and only then will the Cuban people be truly liberated from tyranny.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ROD PAIGE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we recently heard a wonderful address by Senator BYRD when he talked about Easter and expressed his views about it. He did so as a believer. This is a great and wonderful free country, and we are able to express our views.

I wish to take a few moments to comment on some of the attacks from the left on a comment recently made by Secretary of Education Rod Paige.

Secretary Paige is a great educator, a great man. I am so impressed with him. When he took over the Houston County school system in Texas, only 37 percent of the students were passing the basic Texas test. In 5 years, by bringing on discipline, accountability, a rigorous testing program, not accepting failing schools and being intolerant of them, and being intolerant of educators who were not performing, he doubled the number of students passing that test. As he told me, in the fourth or fifth year, he got a little extra money, but basically he achieved those results without extra money in the Texas State school system.

I believe he is a tremendous man. He loves those children. He loves the children more than he does the bureaucrats and the educators. He wants to know if they are learning, and he cares about them. He cares about their values. He cares about whether or not they are becoming better children, not just smarter children.

The complaints arose from a story published in the Washington Post which misquoted the Secretary. This is what the quote was in the Washington Post, quoting Secretary Paige:

All things equal, I would prefer to have a child in a school that has a strong appreciation for the values of the Christian community, where a child is taught to have a strong faith.

First of all, a lot of Americans believe that. Lots of Americans believe that. I submit a majority of Americans believe that. But, this is what a tape recording of his question-and-answer interview demonstrates that he actually said:

Question:

One final question, Mr. Secretary. We're hearing a lot in Christian colleges and universities about Christian world view edu-

cation. Do you have any comment on that? What do you think about that?

Answer:

No, I have not heard enough about that to formulate a view. So I'll probably need to pass on that one.

But they did not let him get away with that. You know how they press.

Question:

Given the choice between private and Christian or private and public universities, who do you think has the best deal?

Secretary Paige answered:

That's a judgment, too, that would vary because each of them have real strong points and some of them have some vulnerabilities, but you know, all things being equal, I'd prefer to have a child in a school where there's a strong appreciation for values, the kinds of values that I think are associated with the Christian communities so that this child can be brought up in an environment that teaches them to have strong faith and to understand that there is a force in their lives.

So the Secretary of Education basically was saying he would like to have a child in a school where there is a strong appreciation for values, and those values are sometimes associated with the Christian communities. So that brought the left up in arms.

That is what we are too often reduced to in this country, that one is not able to express those kinds of ideas. So we are at the point now where we question whether or not the words, "In God We Trust," should be on the wall of this Chamber. There they are, several inches high, right over the main door to this Chamber.

Are we going to rip that down? Take down the Ten Commandments that are in the Supreme Court building? Have no prayer at football games at graduation? That pretty well has been taken care of. I remember when former President Jimmy Carter's Attorney General, the wonderful Griffin Bell, was asked about litmus tests for judges, and he responded without hesitation. He had left office at that point or he probably would have caused a controversy. He said: I tell you we ought to have a litmus test. Nobody should be a Federal judge who does not believe in prayer at football games.

We cannot say "under God" in the pledge now according to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. They struck down the Pledge of Allegiance. They are not happy with the Boy Scouts because they teach values and they believe in disciplining personal behavior. We certainly cannot do those things in school, the left says.

So what we are asking for, it seems to me, or at least the hard left is, elimination of any reference to moral or spiritual values in public life in this country, and I do not think that is how we were founded.

Secretary Paige has dedicated his entire career to promoting children and promoting diversity, making sure that all children of all ethnic groups and all faiths have access to the best possible education. Yes, he is a man of faith. He is a man of conviction. He is a man of character. Those are good reasons for