

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GINGREY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TURNER of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### CALLING ON CASTRO TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to once again express my concerns regarding the inhumane treatment of political prisoners in Cuban jails.

Almost exactly 1 year ago today, Castro began his devastating crackdown on Cuba's pro-democracy movement. Knowing that his actions would be overshadowed by world events in Iraq, Castro took the opportunity to arrest over 70 nonviolent human rights advocates, pro-democracy leaders and independent journalists. Inside of a month, the detainees were tried, sentenced, and locked away in Cuban prisons.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to call attention specifically to the plight of 20 of the prisoners arrested in the crackdown last year. These 20 dissidents, many in their 50s and 60s, are suffering from advanced illnesses, and in many cases are being denied medical care. They suffer from a variety of serious health problems, including kidney disease, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and extreme weight loss; and many of their conditions have worsened.

I would like to relay the account of one specific prisoner, Oscar Espinosa Chepe, a 63-year-old economist sentenced to 20 years in the crackdown. Espinosa is suffering from advanced cirrhosis of the liver and has lost over 40 pounds since being jailed. In a recent interview with *The Washington Post*, his wife, Miriam Leiva, says of his condition, "They are killing these people. I am convinced he was taken out of our little house for a death sentence which is supposed to be slow and painful. I do not know if I will be able to see him tomorrow or next month, or if they will just come to me and say, 'You may come and visit his grave.'"

Leiva gave her husband's account of a cell, stating that it has no windows or running water and that the lights are left on 24 hours a day. She states that her husband is unable to eat and has a fungal infection covering both of his legs.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated account of one prisoner. Many similar stories of neglect and subhuman conditions have been reported by prisoners themselves and through their families.

Several prisoners who suffered heart attacks before being jailed are now suffering from worsening heart disease because of the lack of medical care. Another prisoner now requires a kidney transplant because prison conditions have further damaged his already weak kidneys.

And chances are, more stories like this are going to continue to come out of Cuba's jails. You see, about half of the 75 jailed in the crackdown last year remain in so-called "punishment cells" that measure only 3 feet by 6 feet, have no ventilation or running water, are subject to the extreme summer heat, and are infested with insects and rats. And even those prisoners who enter jail healthy will likely face health problems in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, as expected, Castro continues to deny the Red Cross and other human rights organizations access to these jails. He remains defiant about the arrests even as Cuba's relationship with friendly nations continues to deteriorate.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in calling on Castro to immediately release the most gravely ill prisoners and to grant the Red Cross immediate access to Cuban jails. It is critical that Congress not stand by and allow these human rights atrocities to continue and allow Castro's mistreatment of his prisoners to go unchecked.

A year ago when this crackdown occurred, there were many of my colleagues, some who actually are sympathetic to Castro, who came down to the floor and expressed outrage over what was going on with these prisoners. I am just afraid that a year passes and now all of a sudden there is not much mention or thought about them because people tend to forget. The bottom line is that the situation is growing worse and Castro has not shown any interest in doing anything to turn the situation around. I think it is important that we continue to speak out and point to the prisoners' plight, lest they be forgotten.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SOUDER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia

(Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HENSARLING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### BSE TESTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the most troubling aspect of the first case of mad cow disease is what it revealed about the cattle industry and the United States Department of Agriculture. It revealed that the USDA is not just protecting the food supply, but it is also actively promoting the cattle and meat packing industry. How well are these competing priorities balanced?

Well, the mad cow episode has exposed holes in the food safety chain. It has revealed that the USDA's policy was not one of comprehensive testing, but rather a limited sampling of a few thousand. Of the over 30 million cattle slaughtered last year, only a few thousand of these 30 million were tested for mad cow disease.

Beef, we found out, quickly disappears into the vast distribution network and is mixed with the remains of thousands of other cattle. These consolidated batches of meat are then distributed far and wide, which makes them difficult to recall, almost impossible to trace.

Currently, there is only one laboratory owned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture located in Ames, Iowa, that performs testing on meat to detect mad cow disease. The techniques used in this laboratory require several days to complete. The public is rightly concerned. Maybe the reason we have not discovered mad cow disease until this past December in the United States is because Americans have been eating the evidence.

There are responsible members of the beef industry that want to test their cattle and many consumers who want to buy this tested beef. The tests exist today that can be done quickly, cheaply, easily, and close to home. The cattlemen are willing to pay for it; customers consider tested beef worth the cost. So what is the problem? Well, our

Department of Agriculture and the large beef producers do not want it tested. The \$27 billion meat packing industry does not want the possibility that private testing would challenge the Bush administration's position that mad cow disease is not a problem.

An article on the front page of today's Wall Street Journal details many of these responsible cattle producers' frustrations with the current Department of Agriculture policy. It recounted how David Luker, who owns Missouri Valley Natural Beef, wants to pay to test his beef in order to satisfy the demands of his customers. The USDA, however, will not allow it.

The USDA's laboratory refused to test his cattle, insisting that the beef supply is safe, and just take our word for it. When Creekstone Farms Premium Beef said it wanted to build its own laboratory to test for mad cow disease in order to get back into the Japanese market where all cattle are tested, the USDA responded by saying anyone testing without the USDA approval, which they will not give, would face criminal charges. What is wrong with this picture?

President Bush's friend and benefactor, "Kenny Boy" Lay, is walking around free after gross mismanagement of Enron, which devastated workers and cost American investors billions of dollars, yet the Bush administration is now prepared to press criminal charges against people who merely want to test to ensure that the beef they are producing is safe.

There are four testing firms in the United States that make rapid diagnostic kits that can tell in a matter of hours whether a cow is infected. These kits are widely used in both Europe and Japan where testing is pervasive, and as I mentioned in Japan, where it is universal. Yet here, the administration will not allow these tests to be used on American cattle. This is not just an issue about mad cow disease, which is admittedly rare, we think, and we hope will stay that way. It is an issue of consumer choice and consumer protection. This is an issue of treating Americans like grown-ups and supplying them with information they can count on regarding food safety.

If the administration was as concerned with the public interest as it is with special interest, we would have much higher testing standards in place at this point, and we would not be stopping responsible members of the industry from giving what many consumers want.

Mr. Speaker, food safety is a key ingredient for a livable community where our families are safe, healthy, and economically secure. I hope the public will be heard on this important issue as this year progresses.

#### BUSY TIME IN WASHINGTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, it has been a busy 14 days here in Washington. We began with the President of the United States, according to the Los Angeles Times, explaining how the export of jobs is beneficial to the economy. Two days later, he was followed up by the chairman of the President's Economic Advisory Council, Mr. Gregory Mankiw, who explained to the other body that we have to face that in a global economy, it is inevitable that there will be a loss and shortage of jobs. I am not able to give the precise details of the reaction of the committee that heard that testimony.

And then thereafter the distinguished chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Mr. Alan Greenspan, explained that even though we are hemorrhaging money, the deficit is growing, the surplus has disappeared, and we have to do something about it, that this legislative body is going to have to put its foot down.

Where, the question arose, should we end the tax cuts for the upper 1 percent in our American system? No, he said, not only was that probably good, but that it should be made permanent. Then pray tell us, Mr. Greenspan, where would this reduction come from? Well, it would come from looking into Social Security. It is time we realized that perhaps these benefits are excessive and that they are being paid out too early. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Greenspan.

My dear colleague, who is unfortunately not on the floor, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BURNS), touted the benefits of the Leave No Child Behind Education Act, a bill that I thought was pretty important. It was explained to me by Members on my side of the aisle in both the Senate and the House, the same provisions that he described that were going to be so excellent. But the problem, we are underfunding the bill by \$8 billion a year.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I move to the recent problems in the western hemisphere, and I will include for the RECORD a number of statements about Haiti and what we ought to do about it.

The long and short, of course, is that we have an obligation to support the resolution introduced by the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) to determine what the truth is about Haiti and that we have an independent bipartisan commission on Haiti to find out whether we impeded democracy or indeed contributed to the overthrow of a democratically elected government; what were the circumstances that brought about the alleged resignation and what was the role of the United States Government in bringing about the departure; and to what extent did the United States impede efforts by the international community, and especially the Caribbean community, CARICOM, to prevent the overthrow of an elected government in Haiti.

□ 2045

What was the role of the United States in influencing decisions regard-

ing Haiti at the United Nations Security Council, and was there U.S. assistance provided in the personnel or weapons for the forces that were used against Haiti?

These are just a few very important questions that kind of coincide with some destabilization efforts going on in Venezuela, where the democratically-elected President is undergoing a very serious set of difficulties, that it looks like, it is said, it is being reported, that the United States, believe this or not, is having a role and something to do with the destabilization.

I yield to the distinguished member of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I just want to applaud the gentleman for his leadership over the years in terms of issues surrounding Haiti. Let me just conclude by asking a question. I know the gentleman does not have time to respond.

Presumably elections are going to be held in Haiti. Has Secretary of State Powell or the White House communicated to the gentleman when they anticipate those elections to be held? And if so, is there anything in the gentleman's knowledge that would impede President Aristide from returning from wherever he is and running once more for the President of that devastated, poor country with such a tragic history?

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the documents I referred to earlier.

MARCH 9, 2004.

#### TRUTH COMMISSION—THE RESPONSIBILITY TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT HAITI

DEAR COLLEAGUES: Today we will introduce a resolution calling for an independent commission to uncover the facts about the Bush Administration's involvement in the recent coup d'etat in Haiti. There are questions that Members of Congress need answered regarding this Administration's involvement:

1. Did the U.S. Government impede democracy and contribute to the overthrow of the Aristide government?

2. Under what circumstances did President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resign and what was the role of the United States Government in bringing about his departure?

3. To what extent did the US impede efforts by the international community, particularly the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, to prevent the overthrow of the democratically-elected Government of Haiti?

4. What was the role of the United States in influencing decisions regarding Haiti at the United Nations Security Council and in discussions between Haiti and other countries that were willing to assist in the preservation of the democratically-elected Government of Haiti by sending security forces to Haiti?

5. Was US assistance provided or were US personnel involved in supporting, directly or indirectly, the forces opposed to the government of President Aristide, and/or United States bilateral assistance channeled through nongovernmental organizations that were directly or indirectly associated with political groups actively involved in fomenting hostilities or violence toward the government of President Aristide?