

ironic that the Vice President made these remarks at an event sponsored by a group called the Frontiers of Freedom. Asking hard questions and demanding answers from your government is one of the very foundations of freedom, but DICK CHENEY seems to consider it borderline treason.

Well, shame on him and shame on him for implying that criticism of this war amounts to criticism of the brave men and women in uniform who are on the front lines. The fact is there was exaggeration, manipulation, and down right deception in the run-up to the war. There is report after report of the Bush administration ignoring or downplaying serious misgivings in the intelligence community about the weapons of mass destruction case.

It has been well confirmed that the Vice President himself visited CIA headquarters to lean on analysts and to make sure that they were reaching "right" conclusions.

Then there are the Downing Street memos, which claim the intelligence was being fixed around the policy. The Vice President claims that it is a few opportunists who are raising questions about trumped-up intelligence.

Well, guess what, Mr. Vice President, for more than half of the American people, there is a belief that the administration deliberately misled us into war. As the New Republic points out, that is not a few opportunists, more like a few million American citizens. Actually, more than 150 million who do not believe the President and his team told the truth.

What you are seeing is a desperate White House losing its ability to shape public opinion and consequently twisting the truth beyond recognition. This push-back is a clear sign that the wheels are coming off. By roughly a 2 to 1 margin, Americans have lost confidence in the Bush Iraq policy. A majority thinks we need to reduce our troop levels. Before Thanksgiving, 79 Senators voted for an amendment that indicates an interest in moving forward towards full Iraqi sovereignty in the year 2006, and demands more accountability from the administration on the conduct of the war.

And recently, my good friend and esteemed colleague from Pennsylvania, Mr. JACK MURTHA, a Marine Corps veteran with strong defense credentials, came out for bringing our troops out of Iraq.

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But instead of engaging in an honest dialogue with him, the first reaction from the other side of the aisle was to resort to fearmongering and character assassination. Representative MURTHA was subjected to the most vile and devious accusations. He was compared to a prominent al Qaeda terrorist. He was said to be emboldening our enemies. It was implied that he was a coward. And then the majority resorted to a gimmick, a cheap stunt distorting Mr. MURTHA's words in an attempt to gain

political advantage. I wish that those on the other side of the aisle were half as honorable as they are clever. The American people deserve better. Our troops deserve better than this. They deserve a thorough, substantive, honest debate on the war, not a bill that could not be amended, not a bill brought to the House floor for no other reason than partisan gamesmanship.

Mr. Speaker, a group of Democrats has written a discharge petition to bring the Iraq debate to the House floor, to bring it through legislation around a piece of legislation called Homeward Bound, H.J. Res. 55, to bring it to the House floor so that we can have the debate we need. This discharge petition will allow 17 hours of debate on the Nation's Iraq policy. And unlike the sham bill presented by the majority in response to Representative MURTHA's call to the end of war, it would be brought up under an open rule, a rule that allows amendments to be introduced. I urge my colleagues to sign the discharge petition, allow for a real debate.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 7, 2005.

The Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I have the honor to transmit herewith a facsimile copy of a letter received from Ms. Caren Daniels-Meade, Chief, Elections Division, State of California, indicating that, according to the unofficial returns of the Special Election held December 6, 2005, the Honorable John Campbell was elected Representative in Congress for the Forty-eighth Congressional District, State of California.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk.

BRUCE MCPHERSON, SECRETARY OF
STATE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
Sacramento, CA, December 6, 2005.

The Hon. KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MS. HAAS: This is to advise you that the unofficial results of the Special Election held on Tuesday, December 6, 2005, for Representative in Congress from the Forty-eighth Congressional District of California, show that John Campbell received 41,450 or 44.7 percent of the total number of votes cast for that office.

It would appear from these unofficial results that John Campbell was clearly elected as Representative in Congress from the Forty-eighth Congressional District of California.

To the best of our knowledge and belief at this time, there is no contest to this election.

As soon as the official results are certified to this office representing votes cast in all 268 precincts established for this election, an

official Certificate of Election will be prepared for transmittal as required by law.

Sincerely,

CAREN DANIELS-MEADE,
Chief, Elections Division.

SWEARING IN OF THE HONORABLE JOHN CAMPBELL, OF CALI- FORNIA, AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from California, Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL, be permitted to take the oath of office today. His certificate of election has not arrived, but there is no contest, and no question has been raised with regard to his election.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER. Will the Representative-elect please take the well.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California appeared at the bar of the House and took the oath of office, as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter. So help you God.

The SPEAKER. Congratulations, you are now a Member of the 109th Congress.

WELCOMING THE HONORABLE JOHN CAMPBELL TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, when our former colleague, Mr. Cox, was nominated by the President to become the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, it obviously created an opening in one of the most beautiful congressional districts in the entire country in Southern California; and we are very pleased that our new colleague who has just been sworn in, JOHN CAMPBELL, was elected.

JOHN CAMPBELL has an extraordinary history in California. As I look around the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, at our colleagues, very few of them actually have roots in California. The fact of the matter is JOHN CAMPBELL has roots that extend deeper than, frankly, anyone that I know. Our State is a little more than 150 years old; and yet in 1860, the year that Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, JOHN CAMPBELL's great grandfather was elected to the California State legislature. So 145 years later, we have JOHN CAMPBELL now coming to serve in the United States House of Representatives, to me the greatest deliberative body known to man.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of our colleagues from California, from both sides of the aisle, it is a great privilege and honor for me to congratulate and to welcome our new colleague, Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL.

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

(Mr. CAMPBELL of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Speaker, thank you all. Thank you, Congressman DREIER.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, to thank my family first for their support and their coming here today. I wish to thank the people of Orange County for the confidence that they have placed in me to have this very honored position. And I look so forward to working with all of you on the many issues that we have coming ahead of us.

I feel so the history as I stand here, what this building, what this room means and what it has held and what it has done. I only hope that I can do honor to those who have served before us here, and that I will help with all of you to do justice to those whose futures we serve.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, the Chair announces to the House that in light of the administration of the oath to the gentleman from California, Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL, the whole number of the House is 434.

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

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

THE BLAME GAME

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim my 5 minutes at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, our country faces major problems. No longer can they remain hidden from the American people. Most Americans are aware the Federal budget is in dismal shape. Whether it is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or even the private pension system, most Americans realize we are in debt over our heads.

The welfare state is unmanageable and severely overextended. In spite of hopes that supposed reforms would re-

store sound financing and provide for all the needs of the people, it is becoming more apparent every day that the entire system of entitlements is in a precarious state and may well collapse. It does not take a genius to realize that increasing the national debt by over \$600 billion per year is not sustainable. Raising taxes to make up the shortfall is unacceptable, while continuing to print the money needed will only accelerate the erosion of the value of the dollar.

Our foreign policy is no less of a threat to us. Our worldwide military presence and our obsession with re-making the entire Middle East frightens a lot of people both here and abroad. Our role as world policeman and nation-builder places undue burdens on the American taxpayer. Our enormous overseas military expenditures, literally hundreds of billions of dollars, are a huge drain on the American economy.

All wars invite abuses of civil liberties at home, and the vague declaration of war against terrorism is worse than most in this regard. As our liberties here at home are diminished by the PATRIOT Act and the national ID card legislation, we succumb to the temptation of all empires to neglect habeas corpus, employ torture tactics and use secret imprisonments. These domestic and foreign policy trends reflect a morally bankrupt philosophy, devoid of any concern for liberty and the rule of law.

The American people are becoming more aware of the serious crisis this country faces. Their deep concern is reflected in the current mood in Congress. The recent debate over Iraq shows the parties are now looking for someone to blame for the mess we are in. It is a high stakes political game. The fact that a majority of both parties and their leadership endorsed the war and accept the same approach toward Iran and Syria does nothing to tone down the accusatory nature of the current blame game.

The argument in Washington is over tactics, quality of intelligence, war management and diplomacy, except for a few who admit their tragic mistakes were made and now sincerely want to establish a new course for Iraq. Thank goodness for those who are willing to reassess and admit to these mistakes. Those of us who have opposed the war all along welcome them to the cause of peace.

If we hope to pursue a more sensible foreign policy, it is imperative that Congress face up to its explicit constitutional responsibility to declare war. It is easy to condemn the management of a war one endorsed, while deferring the final decision about whether to deploy the troops to the President. When Congress accepts and assumes its awesome responsibility to declare war as directed by the Constitution, fewer wars will be fought.

Sadly, the acrimonious blame game is motivated by the leadership of both

parties for the purpose of gaining, or retaining, political power. It does not approach a true debate over the wisdom or lack thereof of foreign military interventionism and preemptive war.

Polls indicate ordinary Americans are becoming uneasy with our prolonged war in Iraq, which has no end in sight. The fact that no one can define victory precisely, and most Americans see us staying in Iraq for years to come, contributes to the erosion of support for this war. Currently, 63 percent of Americans disapprove of the handling of the war, and 52 percent say it is time to come home. Forty-two percent say we need a foreign policy of minding our own business. This is very encouraging.

The percentages are even higher for the Iraqis. Eighty-two percent want us to leave, while 67 percent claim they are less secure with our troops there. Ironically, our involvement has produced an unusual agreement among the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, the three factions at odds with each other. At the recent 22-Member Arab League meeting in Cairo, the three groups agreed on one issue: they all want foreign troops to leave. And at the end of the meeting an explicit communique was released: "We demand the withdrawal of foreign forces in accordance with a timetable and the establishment of a national and immediate program for rebuilding the armed forces that will allow them to guard Iraq's borders and get control of national security."

Since the administration is so enamored of democracy, why not have a national referendum in Iraq to see if the people want us to leave?

After we left Lebanon in the 1980s, the Arab League was instrumental in brokering an end to that country's 15-year civil war. Its chances of helping to stop the fighting in Iraq are far better than depending on the U.N. NATO, or the United States. This is a regional dispute that we stirred up but cannot settle. The Arab League needs to assume a lot more responsibility for the mess that our invasion has caused. We need to get out of the way and let them solve their own problems.

Remember, once we left Lebanon suicide terrorism stopped and peace finally came. The same could happen in Iraq.

Everyone is talking about the downside of us leaving, and the civil war that might erupt. Possibly so, but no one knows with certainty what will happen. There was no downside when we left Vietnam. But one thing for sure, after a painful decade of killing in the 1960s, the killing stopped and no more Americans died once we left. We now trade with Vietnam and enjoy friendly relations with them. This was achieved through peaceful means, not military force. The real question is how many more Americans must be sacrificed for a policy that is not working? Are we going to fight until we go broke and the American people are impoverished? Common sense tells us it's time to reassess the politics of military intervention and not just look for someone to blame for falling once again into the trap of a military quagmire.

The blame game is a political event, designed to avoid the serious philosophic debate