

ROYCE) knows how to reach across the aisle, and I applaud him for his leadership and his humanity. He knows of my love and interest in Africa. That transcended any label of Republican or Democrat.

As chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, Mr. ROYCE put together a trip so that we could see firsthand what was happening. It was done in a 5-day period. The wheels never stopped rolling. There were a handful of House Members on the trip and also someone that the gentleman from California brought along by the name of Don Cheadle, who was recently nominated for a Best Actor Award for his part in the movie "Hotel Rwanda." It is galvanizing when one sees that movie, because it is so reminiscent of what is going on today. It went on 10 years ago in Rwanda. But in that film one sees with their own eyes with chilling accuracy what we saw on the ground in Chad. It will become an instrument of good, and for that we should be grateful.

I have been to Africa many times. I have seen the pandemic of AIDS. I lived in Africa as a doctor and as a psychiatrist. I know about the suffering and the emotional trauma from a tragedy of global proportions.

What we saw there was an old story. Here are 18,000 people living in makeshift houses in an area. There are 250,000 of them in Chad, having come across the border from Sudan. They have no running water. They have no toilets; they have latrines. Water has to be brought in by truck. You see old people, you see young people with amputations from having been bombed by the Sudanese Government. You see people who are there sick, crying, having no schools for the kids and no health care, or very little health care, all created by a regime that refuses to deal with the issue.

Now, we sat, many of us, on the floor of this House during the whole Rwanda experience. We watched it happen, but we kind of closed our eyes. We would not see what we were seeing. It could have been prevented. Everyone in this body ought to have to see that movie and see what happens when the United States, rather than leading, sits on its hands. We say we are a leader in the world. Well, there is a situation out there today that requires us to act.

Now, unfortunately, Chad is almost the poorest country in Africa. Sudan is a little bit better because they have oil. But these people living in Darfur are not involved in the oil. They are hundreds of miles away from it. So they become sort of irrelevant to the strategic purposes of this country.

If we are going to be a humanitarian country, and we want people to understand that we care, we have to act when we see things like this in spite of the fact that it has no economic value to us.

In the days ahead I am sure others will talk about this. America has been a leader and will be again. It is the right thing to do. We should act now.

□ 1400

CONGRESS WILL NOT ACCEPT A SOCIAL SECURITY FORMULA BASED ON RACE OR GENDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, if any of my colleagues were watching Meet the Press on Sunday, they may have seen a truly remarkable thing. The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) proposed that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. If we take the distinguished chairman at his word, he is proposing overt race and gender discrimination by the government.

Apart from raising serious constitutional questions, this shocks the conscience. My colleagues can read excerpts from the transcript of his statement on Meet the Press in press clippings across the country and in Tuesday's Roll Call.

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) said, Congress "needs to examine how many years of retirement you get based on your race and you ought not to leave gender off the table because that would be a factor."

Tim Russert, who seemed a bit taken aback by this, asked THOMAS, "So if someone is a woman and they live longer, they would get less per year?"

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) confirmed that is what he wants Congress to consider.

Then Russert asked, "Do you think Congress, Mr. Chairman, would accept any formula that said that people should be treated differently because of their gender or race?"

I can answer that question and I believe that I speak for many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that the answer is a very strong no. We will never accept a Social Security formula based on race or gender.

I am confident that many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this issue find this idea as repulsive as I do. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. It goes against fundamental constitutional principles of equal protection. Congress must, and I believe will, repudiate it.

Social Security is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age; and all workers are entitled to its benefits, regardless of gender or race. Its formulas currently are race and gender neutral and must remain so for all time, I believe.

Regardless of what projections we each believe in for the long-term outlook of the trust fund, we must surely agree on the basic proposition that all retired workers are entitled to this essential government safety net without regard to gender or race. The chairman's proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us, those who need Social Security most, and that is wrong.

He proposes to cut every woman's annual Social Security benefits because

statistically women live longer than men, and that is just plain backwards. What are retired women supposed to do, live at a lower level of income payments than men?

On the contrary, women need Social Security even more than men do. We are a long way from closing the wage gap. We are currently 79 cents to the dollar, and that translates into an even wider pension gap. Retired women workers are twice as likely as men to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support and to depend on Social Security benefits to keep them out of poverty.

According to Joint Economic Committee figures and the National Women's Law Center, women are 60 percent of Social Security recipients at age 67 and three-quarters of the recipients at age 85 or older.

Hispanic women, for example, live the longest of all as a group. The gentleman from California's (Mr. THOMAS) logic would cut their benefits most. Yet more than half of retired Hispanic women depend on Social Security for 90 percent of their income and without it would live in poverty.

The chairman also proposed to adjust benefits based on race, and this is mindboggling. I am at a loss of words to explain how outrageous it is to propose basing any government benefit based on race.

Let me just remind the distinguished gentleman from California that the Constitution requires the Federal Government to treat persons of all races equally. His proposal raises very serious constitutional questions and undermines our moral commitment to our society in which all are treated equally, regardless of race.

I wish I could call the chairman's statements on Sunday ill considered and not serious, but that was not the first time the chairman has proposed such a policy, and I call on my colleagues to not accept it.

I am circulating a letter to the President of the United States. I will place it into the RECORD. I urge my colleagues to support it and to send a strong message that basing any type of Social Security benefits on race and gender is unfair and just plain wrong. I will also add in the RECORD additional statements and some comments from around the country that have been in major papers.

JANUARY 26, 2005.

NO, MR. PRESIDENT, CONGRESS WILL NOT ACCEPT A SOCIAL SECURITY FORMULA BASED ON RACE OR GENDER

DEAR COLLEAGUE: We expect you were as shocked as we were to hear Ways & Means Chairman Thomas again propose on "Meet the Press" Sunday that Social Security benefits should be allocated based on race and gender. Cutting Social Security benefits to women and minorities—the retirees who need them the most—is wrong, unfair, unjust and fundamentally anti-American. We will not accept a formula that has such unfairness as its centerpiece.

We will be sending the attached letter to the president asking him to repudiate Thomas' proposal by taking his outrageous proposal to base Social Security benefits on

race and gender off the table. Please contact Eleni Constantine with Rep. Maloney at 5-7944 by 6 p.m. today if you would like to sign the letter.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY,
Member of Congress.
FRANK PALLONE, JR.,
Member of Congress.

JANUARY 26, 2005.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
President,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We were appalled to hear Ways & Means Chairman Bill Thomas propose Sunday on "Meet the Press" that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. Chairman Thomas said that Congress "needs to consider how many years of retirement you get based on your race" and that women should receive fewer benefits each year because they tend to live longer than men. Asked if Congress would accept such an idea, Chairman Thomas didn't seem to know the answer.

The answer is "No," Mr. President. We, the undersigned members of Congress, will not accept a Social Security formula that is based on race or gender. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. We call on you to repudiate it. We request a meeting with you to give you our views in person and receive your response.

Cutting benefits to those who need them most is counter to the core principles on which Social Security was founded. That great program is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age—and all workers are entitled to its benefits regardless of gender or race. Social Security's formulas are race and gender neutral and must remain so. To propose that women should receive fewer benefits because they tend to live longer denies benefits to retired women workers who depend on them to survive and is fundamentally wrong. To advocate that minorities should receive different benefits on the basis of their race is repugnant in a society that has renounced racial discrimination and where all men are equal before the law.

Chairman Thomas' proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us. Retired women workers are twice as likely than men to live below the poverty line and to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support. For African-Americans, Social Security cuts the poverty rate from 59 percent to 21 percent.

Yesterday was not the first time Chairman Thomas has proposed basing Social Security on race and gender, but it was the first time he made clear on national TV that he will advance this outrageous agenda in the Congress. It is time to make clear that Congress will not accept it. Nor should you or your Administration, Chairman Thomas' proposal goes against everything this great nation stands for. It is counter to our deepest moral values. We call on you to renounce clearly and unambiguously any change to Social Security benefits premised on race or gender.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN MALONEY,
Member of Congress.
FRANK PALLONE, JR.,
Member of Congress.

THE NATIONAL DEFICIT

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

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate that my first address

to this body should be on a large subject, and there are few subjects larger than our national deficit.

The latest reports are forecasting a record \$427 billion deficit, the largest budget deficit in our Nation's history. \$427 billion is an amount so enormous that it is practically impossible for many to put it in context.

The simple fact is that we are spending more money than we are bringing in, and this is digging a hole that we are going to have a hard time getting out of.

This financial irresponsibility is punishing the prosperity for our future generations. When we are unable to pay our bills, we pass that burden on to our children and grandchildren, strapping them with a deficit that grows higher each day.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to run record deficits is dangerous, it is irresponsible, it is reckless; and we have a solemn responsibility to do better than this.

Every time we spend more money than we have or every time we borrow some record amount, we are trading short-term gains for long-term pain.

Before I was elected to Congress, I served 14 years on the Athens-Clarke County Commission. During that time I never once voted to increase taxes, and that is a record I am proud of. Not only that, I put together a perfect record of voting for balanced budgets, year after year; and that is also a record I am proud of.

On the commission, we kept taxes low, we kept the budget balanced, and we made the most out of the people's money. We treated the people's money the same way that working families and small businesses manage their money, we lived within our means.

We always kept one eye on the bottom line and one eye on the road ahead. When we made investments, we invested in the long-term future. When we borrowed money, we borrowed for long-term interests, not simply to pay that month's light bill.

Mr. Speaker, if working families can live within their means, or if a small city council of just 10 members can find a way not to spend more than they have, then the United States Congress ought to be able to do the same thing. It is not rocket science. It is just fiscal common sense and good government public service.

We have many commitments: we must continue to support our troops in the war on terror; we must keep the promise of Social Security; we must find ways to lower the tax burden for all of our working families. But we have to start keeping those commitments by using only the money that we have, without raising taxes and without forcing our children and grandchildren to pay our bills.

As we settle into the 109th Congress, we must commit ourselves to a sound policy of deficit reduction. I hope that my colleagues in the House will join me in working together to bring a new

era of fiscal responsibility to this legislative body.

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.)

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

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

AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY OF INTERVENTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, what if it was all a big mistake? America's foreign policy of intervention, while still debated in the early 20th century, is today accepted as conventional wisdom by both political parties.

But what if the overall policy is a colossal mistake, a major error in judgment? Not just a bad judgment regarding when and where to impose ourselves, but the entire premise that we have a moral right to meddle in the affairs of others?

Think of the untold harm done by years of fighting, hundreds of thousands of American casualties, hundreds of thousands of foreign civilian casualties and unbelievable human and economic costs. What if it was all needlessly borne by the American people?

If we do conclude that grave foreign policy errors have been made, a very serious question must be asked: What would it take to change our policy to one more compatible with a true republic's goal of peace, commerce and friendship with all nations? Is it not possible that George Washington's admonition to avoid entangling alliances is sound advice even today?

As a physician, I would like to draw an analogy. In medicine, mistakes are made. Man is fallible. Misdiagnoses are made, incorrect treatments are given, and experimental trials of medicine are advocated. A good physician understands the imperfections in medical care, advises close follow-ups and double-checks the diagnoses, treatment and medication. Adjustments are made to assure the best results.

But what if a doctor never checks the success or failure of a treatment or ignores bad results and assumes his omnipotence, refusing to concede that the initial course of treatment was a mistake? Let me assure my colleagues the results would not be good. Litigation