

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I voted against going to war in Iraq when Congress voted on this in October of 2002, and I am opposed to sending more troops there now.

President Bush has said that he is going to listen mainly to his commanders. I wish he would listen to Specialist Don Roberts, 22, of Paonia, Colorado, now on his second tour in Iraq, who told the Associated Press, "What could more guys do? We can't pick sides. It's almost like we have to watch them kill each other and then ask questions."

Sergeant Josh Keim of Canton, Ohio, also on his second tour said, "Nothing is going to help. It is a religious war and we are caught in the middle of it."

Saddam Hussein was an evil man, but he had a total military budget a little over two-tenths of 1 percent of ours, most of which he spent protecting himself and his family and building castles. He was no threat to us at all.

But even before the war started, *Fortune Magazine* had an article saying that an American occupation would be "prolonged and expensive" and would make U.S. soldiers sitting ducks for Islamic terrorists.

Now we have had more than 3,000 young Americans killed, many thousands more wounded horribly, and have spent \$400 billion and the Pentagon wants \$170 billion more. Most of what we have spent has been purely foreign aid in nature: Rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, giving free medical care, training police, giving jobs to several hundred thousand Iraqis, and on and on.

Our Constitution does not give us the authority to run another country as we have in reality been doing in Iraq. With a national debt of almost \$9 trillion, we cannot afford it. To me, our misadventure in Iraq is both unconstitutional and unaffordable.

Some have said it was a mistake to start this war, but now that we are there we have to "finish the job" and we cannot "cut and run." Well, if you find out you are going down the wrong way down the interstate, you get off at the next exit.

Very few pushed as hard for us to go to war in Iraq as did syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer. Last week, he wrote that the Maliki government we have installed there cares only about making sure that the Shiites dominate the Sunnis. And he wrote, "We should not be surging American troops in defense of such a government," Krauthammer wrote. "Maliki should be made to know that if he insists on having this sectarian war he can well have it without us."

There is no way we can keep all of our promises to our own people on Social Security, veterans benefits, and many other things in the years ahead if we keep trying to run the whole world.

As another columnist, Georgie Anne Geyer, wrote more than 3 years ago, "Americans will inevitably come to a point where they will see they have to

have a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe."

We should help other countries during humanitarian crises, and we should have trade and tourism and cultural and educational exchanges, but conservatives have traditionally been the strongest opponents to interventionist foreign policies that create so much resentment around the world. We need to return to the more humble foreign policy President Bush advocated when he campaigned in 2000.

We need to tell all these defense contractors that the time for this Iraqi gravy train with its obscene profits is over. It is time to bring our troops home, Mr. Speaker.

I wrote that in a column that ran last Friday in Tennessee's highest circulation newspaper, the *Nashville Tennessean*, but let me just add this: William F. Buckley, who has often been called the Godfather of Conservatism, wrote about 1½ years ago, "A point is reached when tenacity conveys not steadfastness of purpose but misapplication of pride."

Mr. Speaker, we cannot win a civil war between the Shiites and the Sunnis. There can be no victory for us in such a war.

Mr. Speaker, as a teenager I sent my first paycheck as a bag boy at the A&P grocery store as a contribution to the Barry Goldwater campaign. I have been a staunch conservative since high school. This war in Iraq went against every conservative position I have ever known. We need to return Iraq back to Iraqis and start putting our own people first once again.

WE CAN TRANSFORM COMMON DREAMS INTO THE COMMON GOOD

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we each have our heroes. Gandhi is one of mine. Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Those are words to live by and a philosophy to guide us in making laws that affect the American people.

I have been elected as a subcommittee chairman in the new Congress, and I think the American people and my House colleagues deserve to hear something about my vision about that responsibility.

I am elected to chair the Human Resources Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee. Human resources is really about America's safety net. This subcommittee has jurisdiction over many vital social and economic programs that support the American people. They are key portions of the Social Security Act, which include unemployment insurance, temporary assistance for needy families, supplemental security income, and programs to protect vulnerable and assist disadvantaged

children. I don't think the present subcommittee name "Human Resources" really conveys the mission of that committee or the urgency, so we have decided to change the name to the Subcommittee on Economic Security and Family Support.

In one sentence, here is my vision of what this subcommittee can do in service of the American people: We can transform common dreams into the common good, and we have a social responsibility and a moral imperative to do it. We should at least begin an effort to cut poverty by 50 percent, and I intend to try.

Millions of Americans, many in families where both parents work, live in poverty today. That should be unacceptable in the richest nation in the world. The millions of children who go to bed hungry tonight, abandoned, abused, neglected, or just plain forgotten, it is a shame. We have got to remember. We have got to say to these children, "You are not alone, and we will help." We can inspire innovations in child welfare for children in kinship care, for foster parents, for case workers, for family court workers, and countless other unsung heroes in America. "We thank you for your service to the children and your communities and your family, and I don't think it is unreasonable to expect that your government does its part."

I am not standing here as a Democrat. Good ideas don't begin with a political party label; good ideas begin with a commitment to something bigger than ourselves but involving all of us. It is the common good. No child should be alone in a country as compassionate as ours. We can start there, and then debate the ideas and programs that can deliver the common good. We can vow to cut poverty in half.

Just 2 days ago, we stopped to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. Let's not forget something Dr. King said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." That applies to every nation on earth, including the United States. The richest nation on the earth is poorer for every American who lives in poverty. There is work to be done, and we cannot deny it. We can make America the nation where social and economic justice applies to everyone regardless of their economic circumstance.

We admire the visionary work done by leaders who have come before us. These leaders believed we have an obligation to assist Americans who lose their job through no fault of their own. In the 21st century, changes wrought by a global marketplace should challenge us to reexamine and strengthen the support for American workers. Anyone who loses their job, especially an older worker, knows what I mean. America is a nation founded on the common good. It is the fundamental basis of this country, and every caring family, we take care of each other.

The safety net committee I chair is woven out of the social fabric that created America. We have been handed the

responsibility and an expectation to do good. It is far too convenient to bash the government and blame it for all our ills. In America, the people are the government. I think the people expect and deserve a government that acts in their name and on their behalf in a way that reflects the hope and promise America has meant for over two centuries.

America's future is in our hands, and it is within our power to nurture, heal, and defend. That is my mission, and that is the mission of this Congress. The safety net is ours to weave and ours to protect. We must do it.

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

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

WE MUST ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, as the House begins its work in the 110th Congress, we must address the issue of gun violence. Congress has a responsibility to make sure violent criminals cannot legally purchase guns. I am not proposing any new laws or a ban on buying guns. Instead, we must help our States enforce current laws that prevent criminals from buying guns.

The NICS system, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, is the database used to check potential firearm buyers for any criminal records. In large, NICS has been a very good success. Since 1994 more than 700,000 individuals were denied a gun for failing their background check. However, the NICS system is only as good as the information in its database.

Mr. Speaker, 25 States have automated less than 60 percent of their felony convictions into the NICS system. In these States, many felons won't turn up on the NICS system and would be able to purchase a gun with no questions asked.

In 13 States, domestic violence and restraining orders are not accessible through the NICS system. Common sense would dictate that you don't sell a gun to somebody that has a restraining order. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

On March 8, 2002, Peter Troy purchased a .22 caliber semiautomatic rifle. His own mother had a restraining order against him as a result of his violent background. It was illegal for him to purchase a gun, but he simply fell through the cracks. Four days later, Peter Troy walked into Our Lady of

Peace Church in Lynbrook, New York, opened fire and killed two innocent people. Peter Troy had no business buying a gun, and the system created to prevent him from buying the gun failed.

We must fix the NICS system. That is why I introduced H.R. 297, the NICS Improvement Act. This legislation would provide grants to States to update the NICS system. States would be able to update their NICS database to include felons, domestic abusers and other violent criminals. We need the NICS Improvement Act to become law, and we need to pass more bills like it.

These ideas impose no new restrictions on gun owners, but give the government the tools to ensure existing laws are effective and enforceable. In fact, the NICS Improvement Act already passed the House in the 107th Congress by voice vote. Last Congress, a Judiciary subcommittee passed the measure. Unfortunately it did not get to the full committee.

This is commonsense gun legislation that we can all agree on. This bill will save lives while not infringing on anybody's second amendment rights.

Mr. Speaker, I call on Congress to act quickly on H.R. 247. If we can prevent tragedies like this happening throughout the country, we could save lives and enforce the laws already on the books.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring one other subject up. This country is facing a shortage of blood. I would encourage all people in this country to give blood. It is easy, it is painless, and it can save someone's life.

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

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

IRAQ WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, we did not need to invade Iraq. From the beginning, I found President Bush's stated reasons for the Iraq war unconvincing. Now we know they were also untrue.

At the time the decision was being sold to Congress, I was unable to get any level of assurance that there was a workable plan for victory. There weren't answers to questions like, "What is the strategy for stabilization after the military victory?" or, "What is the exit plan?"

The American forces were to be greeted by grateful Iraqis bearing flowers, but I was never able to learn what plan B was if this rosy scenario did not prove out. Now we know there was no plan B.

I voted against the war in Iraq, but even though I opposed the invasion, I never dreamed that the President's policies and course of action would be as disastrous as they have been for Iraq, for the Gulf region and for America.

I think the real question America now faces is what is the least catastrophic end to this debacle, and how can we obtain it. Answering such a question would include options of utilizing diplomacy in the region as recommended by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. It would include America calling upon neighboring States to take strong measures to avoid a spread of the conflict beyond Iraq as that nation disintegrates into tribal and sectarian violence. The Saudis are aware of the peril and Iran is aware of the prospects.

But President Bush has once again offered a proposal based on wishful thinking instead of the unpleasant reality. Having been the cause of the destabilization of Iraq, America has a moral obligation to take what steps are possible to obtain new stability. But wanting to create stability within Iraq and being able to accomplish that goal with U.S. military forces is not the same thing. That is why I have decided to cosponsor Representative John Murtha's resolution directing the redeployment of our troops at the earliest practicable date while maintaining a quick reaction U.S. force and an over-the-horizon presence of U.S. Marines in the region. Like Representative MURTHA, I feel like the solution to the war in Iraq is a diplomatic one.

America is a country that doesn't take disappointment well. Our culture is one where the phrase "failure is not an option" just makes sense. That attitude has served us well historically in science, industry and war. But it can also lead to problems and to decisions based on wishful thinking instead of on facts.

Political leaders don't want to be the ones to bring the bad news to an American public raised on the phrase "failure is not an option." Some even suspect that the President's escalation plan may have as a goal running out the clock so the next President will be the one who has to deliver the bad news.

Right now I think another American phrase is better for this situation: When you are in the hole, the first thing to do is stop digging.

It is time to stop digging. Sending in more troops is not going to bring stability to Iraq because the primary problem between the Iraqis is political, not military.

We are not going to be met with flowers by the Iraqis today, or probably ever. More than 60 percent of the Iraqi public believes it is a good thing to attack and kill Americans stationed in Iraq. We have to accept that we are part of the problem in Iraq, not part of the solution.

Real leadership deals with the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. And