American economy. Yesterday, the Washington Post contained a front-page story on oil prices hitting the lowest level in 10 years. And while to many of my colleagues this may sound like good news, I would like to take just a moment to remind everyone that there are, as usual, two sides to every story.

For the Kansas oil industry, this recent drop in prices is devastating and could result in substantial job loss for the State's oil industry. Most important, however, is the potential loss in infrastructure for domestic oil production in the future. Kansas produces over 40 million barrels of oil, and the oil industry supports around 15,000 jobs in our State.

Historically, Kansas has produced almost 6 billion barrels of oil to fuel our domestic economy. But with the recent drop in prices of crude from about $16 a barrel to about $10.75, this industry is in danger. For Kansas, it is a simple proposition that it is not just the reduction in price but this means we are plugging wells that rarely are put back into production.

Our dependence in this country on imported oil continues to grow. According to the Department of Energy, crude oil imports were over 7.7 million barrels a day in the last 4 weeks. This has a tremendous impact on our balance of trade. And we must keep in mind that imported oil comes at a significant price. The United States spends over $250 billion annually for the Department of Defense, with a large amount of those resources devoted to the Middle East.

I am certainly a strong supporter of our Armed Forces and recognize the value of defense spending. However, when we are spending billions of dollars in defense money to protect imported oil, we might question what we are doing to protect the basic infrastructure of our domestic oil supply. At this time, it is clear that, while we will protect our international suppliers, we do little to protect or even to promote our domestic oil production.

Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas industry has long been an important and fundamental sector of the economy of the United States. It is time that we in this Congress recognize that this industry is important and we work to ensure its survival for the future.

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

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York addressed the House, Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. EWING addressed the House, His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

A TRIBUTE TO SARAH HEGARTY

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

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a brave young woman from my District who passed away on Monday, just a few weeks after receiving a three-organ transplant.

Sarah Hegarty was a remarkable young woman with hope and promise for the future. She spent the last 2 years of her life simultaneously isolated from the life she lived so vibrantly and immersed in friends and family offering love and support for her throughout her ordeal.

Her family has been saddened by the loss of a loved one at such an early age, but they also have been enriched by the strength and courage Sarah displayed and the support their community has given them.

Though she was only 17, Sarah lived a full life. She was a starting guard on the Divine Savior Holy Angels High School 1996 State Championship Basketball Team. She was an all-conference soccer player. She was an integral part of life at her school, and her friends stayed by her side during 2 years of surgery and hospital stays.

Sarah's classmates at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School conducted several spiritual services for Sarah during her illness. They carried with them a tape of the service conducted just before her latest surgery and played it for her in her hospital room. Sarah's classmates found solace in the services and used the services as a means to pay tribute to her.

On Tuesday, as the Nation celebrated St. Patrick's Day with parades and the wearing o' the green, the students at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School celebrated the life of a classmate, a teammate, their friend, Sarah Hegarty. A writer for our local paper described the service quite appropriately as a remembrance of ''someone with whom they had walked the noisy courts of triumph into the quiet corridors of pain.''

On the day she died, Father Larry Gillick, a friend of the family, visited her and relayed his thoughts of the struggle both Sarah and her parents endured. He said, ''She is a fighter, two years of this suffering; what parents won't do. Amazing love.''

That is what it is, Mr. Speaker, amazing love. I can only offer condolences and the best wishes from myself and my family to Sarah's parents, Dolly and Jerry; her brother, James; and her sisters as they begin down the long road of healing. I know Sarah will be missed, and I am confident that her life made an impact that will always be remembered.

AMERICA HAS A CRISIS OF THE SOUL

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, today America is enjoying a great economic time. We are setting record after record on the New York Stock Exchange. This is a reflection of the confidence that the average investor has in the market.

Likewise, many retailers are enjoying a prosperous year because consumer confidence has increased and we Americans are buying more. Unemployment is at the lowest level in 20 years. Things just look good on the outside, but on the inside America has a crisis of the soul.

The statistics are staggering. Drug abuse is increasing, especially for younger Americans, making our society more dangerous, more susceptible to robbery, car jacking and gang-related crimes.

Child abuse has increased, as broken homes try to mend themselves with new relationships; and, too often, it is a stepparent that is the initiator of the abuse. Children are so vulnerable to an adult, and far too often the one parent fails to protect the children from another.

Spouse abuse has increased. Often women who are physically unable to defend themselves are the victims.

Divorce rates are also a high percentage of marriages. Many people choose not to honor the commitments they made on their wedding day; and, too often, it is the children that suffer. Often quietly, they suffer through retreating into their rooms filled with the darkness of insecurity.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, America is experiencing a crisis of the soul. Culturally, we have turned from the virtues that built a great Nation, virtues like hard work, honesty, integrity, faith in God, respect for our neighbors, both men and women, regardless of race or religion. Now we seem adrift in an ocean of quiet pain and suffering, abused children that never make the news, abused spouses that never make the news unless it is the most violent of cases, broken homes, broken dreams, broken promises, broken commitments, broken commitments to ourselves, our families, our country, and our God.

How can we return to that fullness our soul desires? How can we rebuild our families? How can we make America better?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe each of us know in our hearts what is right and what is wrong, and each of us have to make choices that are the right choices. For, if we fail, our country fails.

So I would like to challenge my colleagues and my fellow Americans that we return to the virtues that built a great Nation: honesty, integrity, hard work, honoring commitments, faith in God, treating our fellow man as we would treat ourselves.