

avoided the present situation. What did my grandparents do when faced with the perils of pioneer life at the turn of the century? What did my parents do when they were faced with hard times prior to and during the depression of the 1930s?

The accounts of their struggles are fresh on my mind. I listened intently as they described how drought, rust and low prices nearly pushed them over the edge. Only hard work, hope, determination and a strong faith sustained them. Faith in God and in a society that would ultimately rescue America from a bad situation. They endured and persevered. And with the help of federal farm programs at the last, even prospered.

This came at a time when the world seemed to care about its food supply and those who produced it. As time passed and a degree of prosperity continued some became frustrated with the aspect and methods of supply management. A bit of arrogance told some that we no longer needed any help from the federal government and that we could handle things now.

The commodity traders, food processors and exploiters of the ag sector of our economy could now have their way. Congress listened to the wrong people—those whose interests were not supportive of farm families. A non farm bill called "Freedom to Farm" was crafted and passed over the objections of our rural congressional delegations. This, along with the years of crop disease, bad foreign trade policies and apathetic citizens, all contributed to our present situation.

Our country has never experienced overall hunger. Many European countries have, and they appreciate and protect their agriculture producers. We have been scolded for not being efficient. We have been told to produce more—we have. We have been told to market smarter—we have. We have been told to expand—we have.

None of this helps without a equitable price. In the Legislature we have attempted in a small way to address the problems with the proposals forwarded by the Commission on the Future of Agriculture. Nearly all proposals have been defeated by the Republican majority.

What now? Do we in the North Dakota Legislature turn our backs on the No. 1 industry in our state and let what is left crumble further? Or do we put some plans forward to help solve the problems at the state level? It may already be too late to ask Congress for help given the demographics of our rural/urban population split. Are we going to offer any hope that we are willing to save agriculture as we know it?

It is too late for some of us. But it is still not too late for North Dakota. We must use what we have left of this session to get to the business of supporting rural families and communities.

#### THE PRESENCE OF SQUALENE IN SICK GULF WAR VETS SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to address an issue of critical importance to many of our constituents. Over a year ago, my office was contacted by several veterans and others who were concerned about reports that the presence of antibodies for squalene had been discovered in blood samples of sick Gulf War veterans.

How could squalene antibodies show up in the bodies of Gulf War veterans? Squalene is a component of adjuvant formulations used in some experimental vaccines but not in any licensed vaccines. It has not been licensed.

An adjuvant is a toxic substance incorporated into a vaccine to accelerate, enhance or prolong specific immune responses.

After my initial inquiries, I determined that it would be prudent to ask the GAO to conduct an investigation to determine the facts surrounding these disturbing reports.

With over 100,000 of our Gulf War era veterans suffering, I believed it was imperative that we provide them with the truth regarding this issue. If there was nothing to substantiate the assertions, then we should be able to report those findings back to the veteran's community and move on with the search to provide them with the best possible treatment for Gulf War illnesses.

GAO's report, recently released to me, is very disturbing and raises an increased number of serious questions. Its title, "Gulf War Illnesses: Questions About the Presence of Squalene Antibodies in Veterans can be Resolved," indicates that we can get to the truth about squalene.

The GAO report's conclusion is troubling and demands immediate attention. The GAO recommended that the Department of Defense should act now to expand on the research already conducted. The GAO found that independent research had been undertaken using valid scientific measures, which has found the presence of squalene in sick Gulf War vets.

They interviewed the dedicated immunologist who headed the project and the respected lead researcher from Tulane University in New Orleans who developed the test which provided these results. Their inquiry led them to vaccine experts who confirmed the validity of the methods used.

After a thorough investigation, the GAO determined that the quality of the independent research demands, demands that the Department of Defense aggressively pursue these findings.

Specifically, the report states that DOD should conduct research designed to replicate or dispute the independent research results that revealed the presence of squalene antibodies in the blood of ill Gulf War veterans. If DOD's research affirms the presence of these antibodies, additional research must be conducted, designed to assess the significance of that finding.

The Department of Defense response to these recommendations has been unconscionable. They have stated that since they did not use squalene as an adjuvant during the Gulf War, there is no reason to test for it at this time. That is ducking the issue completely. They are willing to wait possibly for a year or more until the research is published to determine whether or not it warrants further review.

Considering the suffering of so many of our brave men and women who are living daily with the painful consequences of their service to our Nation, I cannot comprehend the DOD's reluctance. Over \$100 million, \$100 million, has been spent on investigating Gulf War illnesses, with little success. Surely, we can find a few thousand dollars to replicate or dispute the research results. We owe the veterans the truth.

Recently we have seen journalistic investigations examining this issue. Additional concerns have been raised by Gary Matsumoto in Vanity Fair and Paul Rodriguez of Insight Magazine.

We must exercise our constitutional oversight role to unravel this mystery and provide a clear presentation of the facts.

I have asked the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to hold a joint hearing regarding the results of the GAO report. I believe it is essential to hear firsthand from the GAO investigators and obtain answers from DOD officials and others under oath to many of the questions that remain outstanding.

It is imperative that DOD cooperate. We must find the truth wherever the next step leads.

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

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

#### REPORT FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take a few minutes tonight. I know via C-SPAN that this is going to be very hard for the people at home to read but I think it shows a tremendous problem that we have in our foreign policy and how that policy is being carried out.

I want to just read it verbatim. What this is is listings taken directly from the U.S. Department of State's 1998 Human Rights Practices Report.

The Department of State is required by law to assess human rights violations ongoing in countries that we have dealings with.

There are two countries here that are listed, and we have significant involvement, ongoing today, with these two countries. If I may, under country A, this government's human rights record worsened significantly and there were