

nuclear secrets, then this is a great system. But if other Members are like me and the majority of Americans, then they are very, very concerned. What are we thinking? How do we lose nuclear secrets? They show up magically behind a Xerox machine, a Xerox machine that has already been searched twice? And everybody is supposed to feel good about the fact that they did not leave the building?

Maybe there was not espionage. We do not know that yet. But what we do know is there is total incompetence, and we as Congress cannot have much confidence in the way our nuclear secrets are being guarded. I think it is incumbent on this Congress to put pressure on the Department of Energy and the Secretary of Energy to make some very, very drastic changes to get this addressed, because we simply cannot misplace nuclear secrets.

Just think about the time frame: from as long as April 7 to May 7 they were unaccounted for; and then from May 7 to June 1 no one even told the Secretary of Energy they were gone. Yet not one person has been fired because of that. This is an outrage. This is scary.

This is not partisan rhetoric. I am glad to say a number of Democrats, including the ranking member of the committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), has said the Keystone Kops are guarding our nuclear secrets. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) has passed a letter which has been signed by 50 Democrats saying fire the University of California, who is involved in the security of that. I probably would have signed that letter, given the opportunity.

So I am glad to see that this is not getting trapped into some situation where it is Republican versus Democrats, because when it comes to the security of the United States of America, it does not matter what party we are a member of; it only matters that our shores are secure and safe. So I just wanted to bring that up, Mr. Speaker.

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

(Ms. MCKINNEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ON USEC DECISION TO CLOSE PORTSMOUTH

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, a very sad and tragic thing happened today, and I think the American people need to know about it. But before I explain that in detail, I would like to give a little history regarding this occurrence.

From the mid-1950s, there have been two facilities in this country that have

produced enriched uranium, first of all for our nuclear arsenal and, more recently, for fuel for our nuclear power plants. Approximately 23 percent of our Nation's electricity is generated through nuclear power, and most of the fuel that generates that electricity is produced in these two domestic plants.

A couple of years ago, this Congress and the administration unwisely decided to privatize this vital industry. At the time of privatization, the private company was obligated to continue to operate these two facilities through the year 2004. Today, this privatized company and their irresponsible and parasitic leadership and their board of directors decided to close one of those two facilities. I would like to share with my colleagues why that is so unwise and so unacceptable.

We know what happens to our country when we are overly dependent upon foreign sources for energy. We see that in the high gas prices that we are all experiencing today. What will it be when 23 percent of the electricity in this country is dependent upon foreign sources?

To their credit, the Department of Energy sent an emergency letter to the director of the United States Enrichment Corporation and the members of the board of directors today explicitly asking them not to take this action. I would read from the letter from Under Secretary Gary Gensler. He said, "I am writing to urge you and the other members of the board not to vote to initiate a plant closing at today's board meeting."

In addition to this letter, Secretary Richardson sent a very strongly worded letter to this CEO and to the members of the board asking that they not proceed. Unbelievably, unbelievably, this industry, which was privatized less than 2 years ago, and has very definite public policy purposes and obligations, decided to thumb their nose at the Department of Treasury and the Department of Energy, the governor of Ohio, multiple Members of this House, and Ohio's two Senators and they proceeded to vote to close this vital facility.

USEC's announcement that it will seek to close this facility is unwise, unwarranted and unacceptable; and I serve notice that I will fight this plant closure with every fiber of my being. The thousands of working families in my part of Ohio who depend on this industry for their livelihood deserve better from this government and from this corporation. For generations these brave men and women have sacrificed for our national security, and now they are being abandoned by a USEC management that is driven more by short-term profit and self-preservation than by common sense.

USEC appears to be dead set on decimating America's ability to produce the fuel that supplies 23 percent of our Nation's electricity. There is a clear solution to this problem, however. I will introduce legislation in this Con-

gress to direct the Federal Government to buy back USEC and to continue operating both the Portsmouth, Ohio, and Paducah, Kentucky, plants.

I am also calling for an Inspector General investigation into this decision and into USEC's privatization. It is becoming more and more apparent that national security, energy security, and thousands of hardworking southern Ohioans are suffering as a result of the decisions of this corporation. I cannot overstate my anger at this decision or my ironclad commitment to protect our workers and to make sure that all responsible parties are held accountable.

Earlier today, after USEC made this announcement, Secretary Richardson responded, and I read from his response. He says, "I am extremely disappointed by the United States Enrichment Corporation's decision to close the uranium enrichment plant in Portsmouth, Ohio. First and foremost, I am very concerned about the effect of this closure on the workers. They deserve better treatment than they are getting from USEC."

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter. I call it to attention of this House, and I am submitting for the RECORD additional documents relating to this topic.

[News Release from Congressman Ted Strickland, June 21, 2000]

STRICKLAND STATEMENT ON URANIUM PLANT CLOSURE

WASHINGTON, D.C.—USEC's announcement that it will seek to close the Portsmouth Uranium Enrichment Plant is unwise, unwarranted and unacceptable. I will fight this plant closure with every fiber of my being. The thousands of working families in our part of Ohio who depend on this industry for their livelihood deserve much better. For generations these brave, hard-working men and women have sacrificed for our national security. Now they are being abandoned by a USEC management that is driven more by short term profit and self-preservation than by common sense. USEC appears to be dead set on decimating America's ability to produce the fuel that supplies 23 percent of our nation's electricity. There is a clear solution to this problem: I will introduce legislation in Congress to direct the Federal Government to buy back USEC and continue operating both the Portsmouth and Paducah plants. I will also call for an Inspector General investigation into this decision and USEC's privatization. It is becoming more and more apparent that this is simply a case of insider enrichment for USEC's management—enrichment at the expense of national security, energy security and thousands of hard-working southern Ohioans. I cannot overstate my anger at this decision or my ironclad commitment to protect our workers and make sure that all responsible are held accountable.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY,
Washington, DC, June 21, 2000.

Mr. JAMES R. MELLOR,
Chairman of the Board, USEC, Inc., Bethesda,
MD.

Mr. WILLIAM H. TIMBERS,
President and Chief Executive Officer, USEC
Inc., Bethesda, MD.

DEAR MESSRS. MELLOR AND TIMBERS: I have received Mr. Timbers' letter dated Friday, June 16, 2000, in which he wrote to inform Treasury that the Board of Directors, of