



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 150

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JULY 19, 2004

No. 100

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. NUNES).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, July 19, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DEVIN NUNES to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

IRAQI HANDOVER: GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, while we were in our districts late June and early July, celebrating the anniversary of our independence day, we handed over to the citizens of Iraq the gift of their independence, 2 days early no less.

Barely on anyone's radar screen, sovereignty passed from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the new Iraqi provisional government. By most barometers, except for the naysayers of

this administration, this was a big success. In the United States, we kept our word of giving the Iraqi people back their country. On Wall Street, in Asia and in Europe, the stock markets rallied. Gas prices continued their slide down: Average gasoline prices tumbled 7 cents a gallon from mid June to mid July, according to the new report from AAA. But to whom was this triumph most important? The free Iraqi people.

As I say, there are naysayers who likely did not celebrate this good news: The radical Islamist world, terrorists, al Qaeda, and a few political partisans. To them, it is not about Iraq, the people, it is about the President they want to see fail.

On what grounds do I say this? Well, on Monday, June 28, CNN heard Wendy Sherman, a former State Department counselor in the Clinton administration, say "I hope we have turned a corner, but obviously I think we need a change in presidents to really change the corner."

The President overthrew a brutal dictatorship, he arrested Saddam Hussein, he has since handed him over to Iraqi courts, restored or built new infrastructure, and set up a provisional government within 1 year following the attacks, and we need a change in the Presidency? Mr. Speaker, if you had to pick a team, would you rather play with those who see victory or those who see defeat?

Now, back to the Iraqi people. A recent poll of 2,200 Iraqi households by an Iraqi firm shows that half of Iraqis interviewed believe Iraq is headed in the right direction; 65 percent think they will be better off; 73 percent believe the handover of authority to the interim government will improve the current situation.

The Iraqi people now enjoy an administrative law system with sovereignty, justice, and rights of free expression, justice, thought, and conscience. That such optimism abounds following dec-

ades of tyranny, war, and terror reminds me of a speech by a citizen of a former colony of the British empire at its waning days, spoken at their handover, a citizen who made an impassioned plea for his countrymen to march into the destiny before them and create a land of democracy and freedom. That was August 14, 1947, by the eventual prime minister, Mr. Nehru, when he gave his speech on the granting of Indian independence.

Of course, there are spectacular differences, Mr. Speaker, between the two countries and the situation. India was a colony of another nation, not a sovereign country; whereas, Iraq has been hostage to an internal tyrant of their own blood and nationality. However, the mood of a nation and a people on the cusp of a new day, standing in the sun on their own, with the blessings of the free world, is somewhat transferable.

Mr. Nehru's entire speech is inspiring and lyrical, but there are two particular passages I find applicable to the handover the world is watching now. Nehru begins, "A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."

Mr. Speaker, the Iraqis too are the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finding utterance, and I wish them the joys and the blessings of liberty. And I close with this uplifting benediction of Mr. Nehru's. "To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom, and democracy."

Nehru admonished his fellow Indians that it would not be enough to work for peace within India's border, or the border with Pakistan, but that to be truly

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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