

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of our colleagues from California, from both sides of the aisle, it is a great privilege and honor for me to congratulate and to welcome our new colleague, Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL.

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

(Mr. CAMPBELL of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Speaker, thank you all. Thank you, Congressman DREIER.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, to thank my family first for their support and their coming here today. I wish to thank the people of Orange County for the confidence that they have placed in me to have this very honored position. And I look so forward to working with all of you on the many issues that we have coming ahead of us.

I feel so the history as I stand here, what this building, what this room means and what it has held and what it has done. I only hope that I can do honor to those who have served before us here, and that I will help with all of you to do justice to those whose futures we serve.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, the Chair announces to the House that in light of the administration of the oath to the gentleman from California, Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL, the whole number of the House is 434.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCAUL of Texas). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

THE BLAME GAME

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim my 5 minutes at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, our country faces major problems. No longer can they remain hidden from the American people. Most Americans are aware the Federal budget is in dismal shape. Whether it is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or even the private pension system, most Americans realize we are in debt over our heads.

The welfare state is unmanageable and severely overextended. In spite of hopes that supposed reforms would re-

store sound financing and provide for all the needs of the people, it is becoming more apparent every day that the entire system of entitlements is in a precarious state and may well collapse. It does not take a genius to realize that increasing the national debt by over \$600 billion per year is not sustainable. Raising taxes to make up the shortfall is unacceptable, while continuing to print the money needed will only accelerate the erosion of the value of the dollar.

Our foreign policy is no less of a threat to us. Our worldwide military presence and our obsession with re-making the entire Middle East frightens a lot of people both here and abroad. Our role as world policeman and nation-builder places undue burdens on the American taxpayer. Our enormous overseas military expenditures, literally hundreds of billions of dollars, are a huge drain on the American economy.

All wars invite abuses of civil liberties at home, and the vague declaration of war against terrorism is worse than most in this regard. As our liberties here at home are diminished by the PATRIOT Act and the national ID card legislation, we succumb to the temptation of all empires to neglect habeas corpus, employ torture tactics and use secret imprisonments. These domestic and foreign policy trends reflect a morally bankrupt philosophy, devoid of any concern for liberty and the rule of law.

The American people are becoming more aware of the serious crisis this country faces. Their deep concern is reflected in the current mood in Congress. The recent debate over Iraq shows the parties are now looking for someone to blame for the mess we are in. It is a high stakes political game. The fact that a majority of both parties and their leadership endorsed the war and accept the same approach toward Iran and Syria does nothing to tone down the accusatory nature of the current blame game.

The argument in Washington is over tactics, quality of intelligence, war management and diplomacy, except for a few who admit their tragic mistakes were made and now sincerely want to establish a new course for Iraq. Thank goodness for those who are willing to reassess and admit to these mistakes. Those of us who have opposed the war all along welcome them to the cause of peace.

If we hope to pursue a more sensible foreign policy, it is imperative that Congress face up to its explicit constitutional responsibility to declare war. It is easy to condemn the management of a war one endorsed, while deferring the final decision about whether to deploy the troops to the President. When Congress accepts and assumes its awesome responsibility to declare war as directed by the Constitution, fewer wars will be fought.

Sadly, the acrimonious blame game is motivated by the leadership of both

parties for the purpose of gaining, or retaining, political power. It does not approach a true debate over the wisdom or lack thereof of foreign military interventionism and preemptive war.

Polls indicate ordinary Americans are becoming uneasy with our prolonged war in Iraq, which has no end in sight. The fact that no one can define victory precisely, and most Americans see us staying in Iraq for years to come, contributes to the erosion of support for this war. Currently, 63 percent of Americans disapprove of the handling of the war, and 52 percent say it is time to come home. Forty-two percent say we need a foreign policy of minding our own business. This is very encouraging.

The percentages are even higher for the Iraqis. Eighty-two percent want us to leave, while 67 percent claim they are less secure with our troops there. Ironically, our involvement has produced an unusual agreement among the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, the three factions at odds with each other. At the recent 22-Member Arab League meeting in Cairo, the three groups agreed on one issue: they all want foreign troops to leave. And at the end of the meeting an explicit communique was released: "We demand the withdrawal of foreign forces in accordance with a timetable and the establishment of a national and immediate program for rebuilding the armed forces that will allow them to guard Iraq's borders and get control of national security."

Since the administration is so enamored of democracy, why not have a national referendum in Iraq to see if the people want us to leave?

After we left Lebanon in the 1980s, the Arab League was instrumental in brokering an end to that country's 15-year civil war. Its chances of helping to stop the fighting in Iraq are far better than depending on the U.N. NATO, or the United States. This is a regional dispute that we stirred up but cannot settle. The Arab League needs to assume a lot more responsibility for the mess that our invasion has caused. We need to get out of the way and let them solve their own problems.

Remember, once we left Lebanon suicide terrorism stopped and peace finally came. The same could happen in Iraq.

Everyone is talking about the downside of us leaving, and the civil war that might erupt. Possibly so, but no one knows with certainty what will happen. There was no downside when we left Vietnam. But one thing for sure, after a painful decade of killing in the 1960s, the killing stopped and no more Americans died once we left. We now trade with Vietnam and enjoy friendly relations with them. This was achieved through peaceful means, not military force. The real question is how many more Americans must be sacrificed for a policy that is not working? Are we going to fight until we go broke and the American people are impoverished? Common sense tells us it's time to reassess the politics of military intervention and not just look for someone to blame for falling once again into the trap of a military quagmire.

The blame game is a political event, designed to avoid the serious philosophic debate