

A HERO TO THE MEXICAN COMMUNITY

(By Ester Martinez Estrada, Santa Teresa High School)

No words I can write can describe how Cesar Estrada Chavez dedicated his heart and soul to love and justice as we all know.

He was a leader that influenced strongly on rights.

A man that went out there and suffered with others day and night.

Cesar Chavez supported nonviolent actions on their part. For he declared, "truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice," and this came from his heart.

Farmworkers gathered in his demonstrations and his strikes to unite the true Mexican pride.

A pride no Mexican individual can hide.

They came together for the security of justice in peace.

They came together with strength to see their work environment rights be released.

They came together to rise out of the fields and stand up and never sit 'till they were treated with respect and good pay.

They came together to revise their situation and at least get minimum wage.

Cesar Chavez joined hands with his line of Mexican blood without fear.

Cesar Chavez led the Mexican community hoping their aim and dream was near.

For they all knew that they had to start today for the sake of the future's eye.

Together and always together they had to rise.

Together they all struggled and prayed.

Together they knew justice would serve one day.

Cesar Chavez and his fellow farmworkers came out of nowhere and bewildered all on their way to their destination.

Without the help of Cesar Chavez, injustice would have gone on for generations.

Cesar died peacefully in his sleep and is now up in heaven.

He symbolized the brown pride and that strength of respectable love.

Now is the time Mexicans can stand proud and say, "My bond is Cesar Estrada Chavez and no one can ask why."

CESAR CHAVEZ

(By Anthonette Peña, Silver Creek High School)

As a young boy, Cesar Estrada Chavez experienced the hardships of being the son of a migrant farm worker. As his family worked in the crops, they learned hoe to survive in the harsh conditions such as lack of shelter, money, and even food. Racism was also an issue that affected his life. Although his family were third generation Americans, because his ancestors are Mexicans, he was classified as a second-class citizen.

After working with the Community Service Organization from 1952 until 1962, he then moved on to found the National Farm Worker's Association. Under the NFWA, he organized nationwide boycotts of grapes, wine, and lettuce in an attempt to pressure California growers to sign a contract which would increase the farm worker's pay and provide them with a minimum amount of safety, Cesar Chavez became a symbol of hope for the people.

In particular, youth can look up to Cesar Chavez as a role model because it is at this point in our lives that we want to take an active role in mending society's flaws and begin to stand up for what we believe it. However, many of us are unsure of the role we should play and how far we are willing to go to stand by our decisions. As children, we had the vision of making a difference and had dreams of leading a successful life. At

this age, reality begins to take its toll and we realize that if we really want to make a difference and lead a successful life there are things which we must do to accomplish these goals. Like Cesar Chavez, we must be willing to put ourselves on the line and uphold our principles and defend our sense of morality.

Cesar Chavez was a man who was not only determined, but courageous as well. "The only way is to keep struggling," he says. "Fighting for social justice is one of the most profound ways in which a man can say yea to man's dignity, and that really means sacrifice. There is no way on this earth in which you can say yes to a man's dignity and know that you're going to be spared some sacrifice."

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT
OF 1995

SPEECH OF

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4) to restore the American family, reduce illegitimacy, control welfare spending, and reduce welfare dependence:

Mr. HORN. Mr. Chairman, all parties to this debate acknowledge that our current welfare system is flawed to the point of indefensibility. It is a program that, despite the initial good intentions of its founders, has spun out of control to the point where it now generally keeps too many people who are economically poor, and ensures that their children will likely end up economically poor as well.

We have a welfare system that rewards not working, instead of working. We have a system which, if not directly encouraging out-of-wedlock births, is certainly guilty of providing the oxygen needed to spark illegitimacy into a full-fledged fire. We have a welfare system which has led to the dissolution of the family, which has pushed the father out of his duty and responsibility to provide for his children, and then heaped sin upon error by ensuring that critical child support payments are not collected. We have a welfare system which perpetuates a degrading and intergenerational economic dependency. We have a welfare system which has forgotten the need for personal responsibility and undercut the American ethic of rewarding those who struggle to better themselves. Instead, we provide sustenance to those who are content to do nothing to improve their own condition. That must change. That will change. H.R. 4, The Personal Responsibility Act, is designed to do just that.

Nothing like our discussion over how to reform our failed welfare system reveals the ideological chasm which exists in this House. Those opposed to the Republican-led welfare reform effort have leveled accusations that this bill goes too far, that it is too extreme, that it is mean-spirited, that it attacks children, that it makes cuts in welfare spending to make room for tax cuts for the rich. Such attacks are to be expected, wrong as they may be. They come from those whose compassion is so misguided that they are willing to perpetuate failure in face of the fear that the changes we propose may place at risk those who already live in poverty. Thus, we hear claims of acceptance

of the need for change without a commitment do anything to reform our truly warped system.

We hear claims of the need for more funding, without a commensurate willingness to attack the social pathologies which underlie and are reinforced by our welfare system. Yes, we need to preserve our sense of compassion, our commitment to help those who are temporarily unable to help themselves. But compassion must come with common sense. It must be coupled with a sense of vision and recognition of the need for change. Defending what has not worked is not acceptable public policy. We must conclude that spending dollars is not the same as creating solutions. A handout does not help. It perpetuates the dependency of the person seeking help. And that cannot be construed as doing someone a favor.

The campaign to paint Republicans as pillagers of the school lunch program is egregious in its deliberate falseness and intent to mislead. Of course, the opponents of this bill fail to mention that spending on the WIC Program and the school nutrition program will be increased every year for the next 5 years. The school lunch program will rise 4½% each year. These opponents fail to accept that, at some point, simply throwing more money at a problem does not work. However, on a range of issues, reasonable people may differ. The democratic process we have in this House is designed to ensure that those differences are explored and debated, and then voted upon.

What makes this an important bill is that it forthrightly addresses the two major issues in the welfare debate: work and illegitimacy. This bill ends the entitlement now current enshrined in law that mandates cash payments even to those who refuse to work. In its place, tough work requirements are enacted. By the year 2003, 50 percent of the one-parent families caseload will be required to be working. By 1998, 90 percent of two-parent family welfare recipients must be working. All welfare recipients must be working after 5 years, and the States have the option of making that 2 years if they so choose. Contrast this to the current system, in which 65 percent of the 5 million families on welfare will be on welfare for 8 years or more, where the average length of stay for people on welfare at any given time is 13 years. Those statistics are unacceptable. Time limits and the teaching of skills so one can become self-sufficient are an integral part of ensuring that welfare dependency comes to an end.

On the issues of illegitimacy, this bill is equally clear-headed. Mothers under the age of 18—commonly known as teenagers—who have a child out of wedlock will be ineligible for Federal assistance. Thus, we end the perverse rewarding of children having children. Likewise, we prohibit the payment of additional benefits for children born to families already on welfare. The taxpayer has no responsibility to provide additional levels of financial support to those who cannot support themselves before they choose to bring another life into the world. Finally, no cash payments will be allowed for mothers who refuse to help establish the paternity of their child.

Certainly, there will be instances when the result of these changes will seem punitive, but this step must be taken if we are to put an end to children bringing into the world other children for whom they do not have the wherewithal to care. Today, this new family is left unable to cope for itself and is caught in a

cycle of dependency, bereft of the education, the work training, the skills, and the resources to become self-supporting. How can anyone claim that putting an end to this reward is harmful of children? I, for one, feel that we do a great disservice to the lives of children by encouraging illegitimacy than we do by taking steps to reverse this unsustainable, cruel tide.

The last major point of contention is the return of control of the welfare system to the States through the use of block grants. Opposition to these block grants reflects a philosophy of Federal control, that believes at its core that States cannot and should not be trusted to attend to the needs of their own residents. It is a philosophy that I reject. We have built a Federal system that dares to presume that administrative rules and a bureaucracy based in Washington, DC, have all the answers to the localized, individualized problems in States ranging from California, to Maine, to Mississippi. The failure of the current system reveals the fallacy in that notion.

The existing welfare system proves that the creation of new program after new program is not an answer that works. In contrast, this bill takes the reverse tack of consolidating the numerous welfare programs into several targeted block grants. These dollars would be returned to the States, with important but minimal Federal standards, to be used in the manner that the States regard as the most efficient. I believe that the States will be more fully able to adjust their welfare programs to the particularized needs without having to come to the Federal Government to get approval to take the necessary action. An approach that gives power to those closest to the problem is one that will work.

Mr. Chairman, great change inevitably is accompanied by great controversy. Such is the case with this bill. But if we are to reverse the course of failure, if we are to refocus the welfare program to one that requires work, one that no longer rewards out-of-wedlock births, one that requires fathers to participate in the financial well-being of their children, one that gives States the freedom and resources to develop welfare programs that are compatible with the welfare needs they see, one that helps restore a sense of values to our welfare system, then we must be bold.

We can quibble around the edges. We can argue about funding levels. But the solution to obvious failure is not to perpetuate the system responsible for that failure. Instead, we must change course and seek answers in new and innovative approaches. This bill does that. And that is why H.R. 4—the Personal Responsibility Act has my support.

ON HOW THE REPUBLICAN CONTRACT WITH AMERICA HELPS AMERICA'S SENIORS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 1995

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as we reach the end of the first 100 days of the session, it is fitting that the grand finale of the Contract With America honors our senior citizens by easing the burdens older Americans now face.

For instance, the comprehensive tax bill, which we approved by a substantial margin

yesterday evening, includes a substantial reduction in the Social Security earnings test, which unfairly penalizes seniors for working to supplement their Social Security benefits.

If the November elections taught us anything it was that the American people want to see their fellow citizens begin to take more responsibility for their personal circumstances. Many seniors want to do just that, but have been hindered from doing so by the Social Security earnings test.

The earnings test was instituted during the Great Depression when the Federal Government wanted to encourage older Americans from remaining in the national work force and occupying much-needed jobs. Despite the fact that this provision is clearly obsolete, it continues to be an unfair penalty to industrious seniors.

Essentially, seniors who earn more than \$11,280 a year face a supplemental tax of 33 percent on that income. This is in addition to the 7.65-percent FICA withholding tax and a 15-percent Federal income tax, bringing a hard-working, low-income senior's tax burden up to nearly 56 percent.

How many times have we all heard from constituents who acknowledge that they cannot survive on the meager Social Security benefits they are due? We cannot earnestly encourage these people to work to supplement these benefits while simultaneously taxing them at a highly unfair rate.

Furthermore, the earnings test deprives the American workplace of the talents and knowledge of our most experienced laborers.

The Contract With America, through H.R. 1215, increases the threshold at which the earnings test kicks in to \$30,000 in annual income over a 5-year period.

While this does not represent perfect resolution on this issue, it is a step toward equity in the workforce. In fact, I would encourage my colleagues to continue to work toward a full repeal of the earnings test, such as that represented by Representative HOWARD COBLE's H.R. 201, of which I am a cosponsor.

In addition, the tax relief bill includes a full repeal of the 1993 Clinton tax increase on Social Security benefits over a 5-year transitional period. In the mid-eighties, Congress instituted a tax on 50 percent of the Social Security benefits received by seniors earning \$25,000 as individuals or \$32,000 as couples.

Many of you voted against this tax—as I did—recognizing it as a double taxation on seniors who had taken the initiative to plan and save for their retirement. However, instead of repealing this unfair and counter-productive tax, President Clinton pushed through Congress in the first months of his administration—and over the vote of every House and Senate Republican, I might add—an increase in this tax.

The Clinton tax package allowed 85 percent of the Social Security benefits received by seniors making only \$34,000 per year to be counted as taxable income. This runs entirely contrary to the pact between the Federal Government and seniors which the Social Security program is supposed to represent.

Seniors involuntarily turned over portions of their hard-earned paychecks to the Federal Government as a safety net for their retirement. They should not be taxed on this meager nest egg when they most need it and when many of them are living on fixed incomes.

I immediately introduced legislation to repeal the Clinton Social Security tax, but it was unfortunately stonewalled. I am very pleased that the Republican Contract With America includes a full repeal of President Clinton's unfair tax and that we have had the opportunity to relieve seniors of this burden.

The tax cut bill also makes great strides toward improving the provision of long-term care for seniors. Specifically, the bill provides a \$500 non-refundable eldercare tax credit to families caring for a dependent senior in their home.

Currently, 12.5 percent of our Nation's population is aged 65 and older. By the year 2030, when baby boomers peak in their golden years, fully one-fifth of our population will be in this age bracket. Already, American families nationwide have been faced with the difficult decision of how to best care for an aging parent or relative within their financial means. As society ages, more and more families will face this dilemma.

Many aging adults, particularly those suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementia, cannot lead a quality life without assistance and constant care. Often the full-time attention and individualized care these men and women require can only be found in a nursing home facility or in the privacy of their family home.

Providing the care at home can be costly and time-consuming. However, this sort of personalized care is preferable to many families, especially since it affords a terrific opportunity to solidify the family unit. Children can learn so much from the knowledge and experiences of their grandparents. And having a loving family around does a world of good for an ailing senior.

Last year, the Alzheimer's Association reported that more than one-half of all working Americans have either provided long-term care for their friends or relatives or believe that it is likely in the near-future. The Contract With America's eldercare tax credit will go a long way to help these well-intentioned people meet the needs of their loved ones.

The tax cut bill includes other improvements in the long-term care market as well to make it easier for seniors and their families to purchase long-term care insurance. In 1990, seniors aged 65 and older faced a 43 percent lifetime risk of requiring nursing home care. By 1992, the cost of such care was approximately \$30,000 per year.

Too frequently, seniors are caught between a rock and a hard place as they get older and need this more constant medical attention. Private long-term care insurance as it currently exists is often too costly to be comfortably within reach and Medicaid assistance is only available if they spend down their savings.

This measure provides seniors and their families with the financial incentives they need to save for quality long-term care. For instance, it: First, gives long-term care insurance the same preferable tax treatment as accident and health insurance, second, excludes up to \$200 per day in long-term care benefits from taxable income, third, excludes employer-provided long-term care coverage from taxable income, fourth, allows long-term care expenses to be treated equal to medical expenses as an itemized tax deduction, fifth, excludes withdrawals from IRAs and other pension plans for the purchase of long-term care