

between the modern American farmer and ancient Sumerian who worked the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Both were responsible, indeed farmers throughout history have been responsible, for their countries and the progress of civilization.

It has been said that in the last reckoning, all things are purchased with food. This was true in the cradle of civilization, and it holds true now.

Today American agriculture is this country's largest industry. Agriculture accounts for a full 16 percent of our current gross domestic product; 355 billion dollars' worth of food and fiber were produced this past year. That is more than any other industry.

And so it is especially important that we learn the lessons taught by the successes and failures of the past. History is awash with the remains of societies that failed to maintain their soil, who let it succumb to erosion, who let the channels that fed it get choked with silt. The ancient city of Babylon, 2,600 years ago developed a productive agriculture. It allowed their civilization to grow to 17 million people and a remarkably diversified society. King Nebuchadnezzar even boasted that because he developed a great productive agriculture the rest of his society excelled. But eventually agriculture and farmers became a lesser priority in that country, and it ultimately failed. Farmers abandoned the farms and eventually the city collapsed.

Another example is the Promised Land of the Sinai Peninsula. Moses called it "the land of milk and honey." Farm production and conservation were neglected and eventually only dregs of fertile soil remain at the bottom of narrow valleys.

But there are also successes. Societies with plans promoting farmers and farming survived and flourished. For the last 1,000 years, farmers in the French Alps with an eye toward conservation have terraced hillsides in a dramatic effort to prevent soil loss, resulting in continuously fertile soil, fertile agriculture, and abundant production.

□ 1830

In this country the Dust Bowl of the 1930's affected over 150,000 square miles of fields in areas of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado. For 6 years, drought and blinding dust storms were constant. The fertile ground of much of the Great Plains was stripped and deposited in drifts over millions of acres. Farms were buried and families fled. The counties of the Dust Bowl lost nearly 60 percent of their population through migration.

The cause of this ecological disaster was largely the result of an overuse of the land. Following World War I, high grain prices enticed farmers to head for the Plains. But those high prices didn't last. As the wheat prices fell, the farmers became financially stressed and looked for short-term gain by planting more wheat. The long-term advantages

of strip cropping, summer fallow and other conservation measures were abandoned. In fact, by 1930 farmers had planted three times as much wheat as they had in 1920. To a large degree, the extra planting was an act of desperation to survive. Soil conservation suffered.

The drought began in 1933; the overuse made the land vulnerable to the winds that followed in 1934. Farmers continued to harvest what little of their crops they could, often driving their tractors in conditions so blinding that they couldn't see their radiator caps, much less the fields they worked as the fertile topsoil blew away. When wheat prices hit bottom during the Great Depression, more and more farmers abandoned their farms.

In 1933 President Roosevelt started a Federal program to limit production in order to help keep farm prices stable and encourage special farming techniques like contour plowing, crop rotation, and terracing that kept soil on the farm and kept it fertile. However, prices stayed low and poor farmers continued to leave the land. In 1936 the Agriculture Adjustment Administration was created to promote soil conservation by issuing checks to farmers who adopted acreage reductions and wind controls on their farms.

In the United States Congress we're now engaged in a great agricultural debate. We're deciding what proper Federal agricultural policy should be. It is important that the American people understand that agricultural programs had been designed to encourage a continuous but slight over-production. A hidden goal has been to keep enough farmers and ranchers producing so that an abundant supply would result in not only lower food and fiber prices in this country, but exports of low-priced commodities to assist in our balance of trade. Huge stores of grain were held by Government to be sold when farm prices went "too high."

Since the time of the first Dust Bowl we have enticed farmers to become more and more dependent on Government subsidy programs. As we move to a more market-oriented farm policy, it is important that we phase out subsidies smartly. Research and technology is needed to conserve water and topsoil, increase the efficiency of pesticides and fertilizers, and maximize yields. Farmers must ultimately make a profit if they are to continue to produce for today's needs and preserve productive land for tomorrow.

American consumers now spend 9.5 percent of their take-home dollars for food. With that 9.5 percent, they are able to buy the best quality, lowest-priced food in the world. In our haste, we cannot undermine the agricultural base that made our country strong. We must not forget our own history. New Federal farm policy needs to help assure a strong agricultural industry.

REPUBLICANS CARE MORE ABOUT MILITARY CONTRACTORS THAN THOSE WITH THE AIDS VIRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCKEON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. WOOLSEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week my best friend's son died. He was 33 years old, HIV positive, and died from cancer—considered an opportunistic disease related to HIV.

Also last week, this House voted to invest \$9 billion more than the President and the Secretary of Defense wanted, for bombers, missiles, and star wars.

I wonder how my best friend's son would have felt about that if he were still alive today. I wonder how he would have felt had he known that the new Republican majority were going to take money away from AIDS research and put it into wasteful military pork.

Mr. Speaker, what are the values of this body? Where are our priorities? The cold war is over, but we are spending billions of dollars on additional B-2 bombers and Trident D-5 missiles.

The war rages on for AIDS patients and their families, but we are taking their weapons away. Congress has placed an arms embargo on the most vulnerable people in this Nation, all because the Republican leadership cares more about military contractors than those who have contracted the AIDS virus.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL, AND REDUCING THE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. FOLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would first like to talk about an issue of feeding the hungry in our Nation's Capital. I would like to thank my colleagues for the overwhelming response to our Dear Colleague letter, for the donations of sweet potatoes that were distributed to their office.

I would like to especially thank the gentlemen from Louisiana, CLEO FIELDS and RICHARD BAKER, for their work with the Sweet Potato Council of the United States, who gave each Member of Congress two cans of whole sweet potatoes. Mr. FIELDS and Mr. BAKER generously donated three cases of sweet potatoes for the hungry. The sweet potatoes will be given to D.C. Central Kitchens, a local not-for-profit organization that provides 2,500 meals a day to men, women and children in area shelters and feeding programs.

Over 100 offices of the Members of Congress have donated so far. It has been so successful that we hope to repeat this again. Several offices have donated additional items. Every item is much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my staffer, Jennifer DelVecchio,

who came up with this idea. Many times people come by our offices and bring us small tokens or some products from back home. When we get such abundant products, some of which sit on our shelves and go to waste, she thought it only appropriate that we reach out and help those in our Nation's Capital, that the food really go to use for those who truly need our help.

Again, I would like to congratulate my colleagues in Congress for supporting this very, very worthwhile project.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak for a moment on something that I think really needs reform in the United States Congress. Yesterday in the Committee on Science I had the good fortune of striking what I considered wasteful spending in Congress. Twenty-five thousand dollars was allocated to gas-cooled nuclear technology, which has been underway for over 30 years. The Department of Science, the Department of Energy, all conclude that this proposal is going nowhere, that commercial application of this gas-cooled technology is going nowhere.

The President's budget for three times has consistently voted against it. The Senate turned it down in 1993. However, somehow the \$25 million has shown up in House appropriations. I won an amendment 25 to 15 to strike this \$25 million from the budget.

Today in the committee, however, Mr. Speaker, one of the Members decided \$25 million is too much to pass up, and offered an amendment which was successful, to transfer that \$25 million to another program.

There is a problem here in Washington, and the problem is people in Congress cannot get their hands out of the wallet, out of the checkbook of our Nation's taxpayers; that every dollar that is on the table, any dollar that is missed by an appropriator, any dollar that is offered up as sacrifice for deficit reduction, is instantly claimed as found money, so they say "Let us get every cent of that \$25 million and find something else to spend it on."

Mr. Speaker, I can only reach in my pocket so deeply to find the very few dollars that are in it. Every dollar I come out with is my dollar. However, in this institution, the dollars are somebody else's. The card that we vote with is the world's most expensive credit card. We stick this in the machine and we can spend billions of dollars without any consequence.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat appalled when this Congress cannot come up with a mechanism that when a Member offers a deficit reducing formula to save the taxpayers money, that saves money from wasteful spending, that we cannot take that money and earmark it and lockbox it away to bring down the Nation's deficit. It is clearly one of our greatest problems. It clearly is driving up the cost of credit for consumers.

Clearly, the cost of credit for buying a home today, a 30-year mortgage, 7½

to 8 percent, would be brought down over 2 points if we get the Federal Government's appetite for credit to be minimized, and the private sector would then see relief for the average consumer.

However, no, not in this body. I see money, I spend money. I see money they do not want, I will spend it over here. Mr. Speaker, I say to the Members who are listening to this, they need to clearly reflect on what our priorities are. I think we should be in a race to see who can save the most money.

The prior speaker suggested that the Republicans are only interested in voting for bombers and missiles and are not concerned with AIDS and other issues. This Member of Congress voted against the B-2 bomber. This Member of Congress does indeed support increased funding for AIDS research, because I think the cost to the taxpayers will be exacerbated by the cost of AIDS in our community.

Mr. Speaker, it is not fair to characterize all Republicans as mean-spirited, only interested in defense and not interested in social services.

RESCISSIONS, BUDGET, AUTHORIZATIONS, APPROPRIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Texas, [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, rescissions, budget authorization, appropriation. Mr. Speaker, I imagine the American people are wondering what holds up in the U.S. Congress, what is the job and the tasks of those that would represent us.

We have heard these words: rescission, budget, authorization, and appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to an issue of great importance, not only to the people of my Houston district, the 18th Congressional District, but to the entire country. It is interesting, Members will hear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle chastise, criticize, and disjoint the pleas of the American people. What they will claim is that this particular Congress is filled with nothing but special interests, special interests here, special interests there, special interests over there.

I would simply say that this Nation is not filled with special interests, it is filled with special aspirations. We want to be inspired and challenged. We want to dream. We want a Nation that is not on the brink of a recession. We want economic enhancement and development.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply say, as we begin to look at this process—rescissions, budget authorization and appropriation—why do we not understand what the special aspirations are of Americans?

I would simply say that this young lady, possibly an honors graduate, sim-

ply wants an opportunity for higher education; or would you say that she does not deserve it? I would venture to say if she is typical, she has about 70 percent student loans that have to be paid back, and we understand that we must make sure and ensure that we have a system that ensures that recommitment back to the student loan program, and maybe only 30 percent scholarship. She is typical of the student in America today: hardworking.

Many campuses that I go and visit in my district alone, which is only an example, whether they are the Houston Community College, whether it is a 4-year college in Chicago, IL, or maybe a private college in Atlanta, GA, there are hardworking students there. All they simply want is an opportunity and a chance.

What do we have out of this process of rescissions, budget, authorization, and appropriations? Cutting student loans, not for fiscal responsibility, which I have standing to be here, because I voted for a balanced budget, but we do not have our interests and our goals and our focus right.

When we go to the House floor and begin to talk about deadbeats in America, does that include those citizens who have fallen upon tragic hard times in Oklahoma City? Does it include those who have faced tragedy and loss in Florida, with the weather and hurricanes? Does it include those individuals and citizens in California suffering in the recent earthquake just about a year ago or so?

America is a country of people. It is people with aspirations. Yes, we should balance the budget, but what are we doing? During the rescissions process, which is taking back money, it seemed that we could find nowhere else to cut but summer jobs. That seems like someone would be able to stand up and talk about "Oh, another handout." I argue vigorously not, for summer jobs, which must include the partnership of corporate America, give young people the opportunity to work. It gives them the culture of work. It allows them to have an understanding of what work is all about.

Although these particular youngsters are not necessarily real, they do symbolize what is good about America, the fact that we have children who have an opportunity to grow up strong, hopefully healthy, like many of the babies and young people and elementary school youngsters that I see in Wesley Elementary School or Turner Elementary School or Peck Elementary School or Pleasantville Elementary School, located in the 18th district, along with the wonderful elementary schools in the North Forest Independent School District, and Ailine, and parts of Ailey.

□ 1845

It simply exhibits that we have as a responsibility in this Nation to be fiscally responsible but to take care of our children.