

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,