demanding quid pro quo from our allies—and aid recipients—in this hemisphere.

Take Mexico, as an example. If we are going to bail them out, then we expect them to join us in squeezing Fidel Castro out of Havana. The same applies for our European allies, who have benefited greatly from American support against the tide of aggression in Europe. Even now, these allies are keeping Fidel Castro's corrupt regime—a mere 90 miles from our shores—afloat with trade and tourism. In this context, it is scandalous to think that the United States went out of its way to support a new Spanish pro-Castro leader for NATO.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the administration will finally take off the rose-colored glasses and take a close look at the man they have chosen to extend a helping hand to. Ultimately, I think any meaningful examination will produce an understanding that Fidel Castro isn't a man to trust or to bargain with. That reality should be the basis of any United States policy in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Missouri asked me what I would recommend as a Member from Florida. I would recommend getting serious with the embargo. I would recommend that we remember that Fidel Castro is the problem, and, if you do not know that, you should not be dealing in Cuban foreign policy matters.

SOUL WILL LEAD US INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I have always felt very strongly that if someone showed me their leader they had shown me a part of their soul. I think that is true of nations. When they show you their leader, they have shown you their soul, if that leader has been democratically designated, with a small D, obviously.

But knowing that, I have been very troubled watching what has been going on in this Presidential primary. If what I am saying is true, then what kind of a soul have we got in the United States and in this great Nation, this great Nation built on the premise that we may have all come here in different boats but now we are in the same boat and we bloody well better figure out how we work together. Is that over? Is that day gone? Are we going to try and emulate Bosnia?

On the one hand, I get very serious and very concerned about this. On the other hand, I must say as a Democrat, with a large D, I enjoy it. I kind of decided, now show me your shirt and I know who you are backing. If you wear a flannel shirt, we know who you are backing. You are obviously backing Mr. Alexander. If you wear a silk or custom-made shirt, you are obviously backing the gentleman from New York, Mr. Forbes. If you come in with a stuffed shirt, you are probably backing the majority leader. And if you come in with a brown shirt, I think we know who you are backing, too.

So it has become kind of the shirt war. We can watch these shirts, and we can kind of tell whose side they are on. As I say, if it were not our Government, it could be really funny. There are some days when I think our President is the luckiest guy in the world. How could he do better than have this all surface in the primary? There are other days when I absolutely panic and say, but wait a minute, wait a minute. This could come to fruition.

Over this break I had the great, great honor of addressing a pluralism conference in Belfast. I always wear my grandmother's wedding ring. My grandmother was married in Derry, Ireland. And as you know, Ireland has been cursed by a resurgence of the troubles, as they say euphemistically. And there we were with the University of Ulster and the Dublin City University cohosting this era of pluralism, trying to bring back the peace, thousands of people in the streets trying to bring back the peace, trying to recapture the momentum, to put this to an end.

Of course my colleagues can imagine, I was absolutely barraged by questions. What in the world is going on in your country? You want to stand there on solid ground and say, you know, we have gone through lots of pain, we have got all sorts of scars from trying to be a pluralistic nation, but, my goodness, we have got all sorts of benefits, too. And basically the bottom line is we know we cannot go around pitting one group against another group.

Yet, they are watching that happen in their newspaper, and they are all scratching their heads saying, wake up, America, what is the matter? First thing you know, you are going to transfer the troubles right back over to your country.

So I think it is a time that all of us have to realize we have been treating politics like consumers, that what really happened in 1994 is that many people did not vote at all. They felt, well, if I do not like them, if they are not 100 percent correct, then I am not going to encourage them. That may work for being a consumer, but it does not work in civics. If you do not vote for somebody because they are not perfect and, heaven forbid, none of us are, then you are still going to have to live under whoever does win.

So you may vote for your imperfect friend and end up with someone who takes the country right off the cliff or in the absolute wrong direction.

So I am hoping all of us start making these distinctions between consumerism and civics, we start getting a little more serious and stop looking just at their shirts and look at their souls. It is their soul that will be governing this country for the next 4 years, if any of them find themselves in that White House. It is their soul that is going to reflect upon us and on our future and lead this great country into the 21st century.

As we end this century, which was known as the American century, I get goose bumps thinking about it. What will the 21st century be known as? Will we no longer be a player? Will we all be pitted in fighting against each other? I certainly hope not. But I think those are the very, very serious thoughts all Americans must engage in as we watch this Presidential primary continue to unfold.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would inform our guests in the gallery that public displays of approval or disapproval are not permitted.

CREDIT CARD USE BY FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GEKAS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, as everyone in the world knows, the Congress of the United States has been living on a credit card for many, many years now, decades. As a result, we have a huge national debt, and annual deficits that impinge upon the standard of living of every American. Well, now there comes to light that part of the credit card problem is in the Government itself.

Starting sometime in 1993 or 1994, apparently Federal agencies have been allowed to issue credit cards to employees who have to do travel and other work for that particular agency. We have learned through a report by the inspector general in the U.S. Department of Commerce that these credit cards have been used not just for travel for governmental purposes but also for jewelry, for liquor, for online computer services, for a variety of things never contemplated for Federal employees to use, to be used in obtaining.

What does this mean? It means that we have a credit card system in play that is being abused and is costing taxpayers money. We did not make this up. This came from an investigation of the inspector general. We have learned that some 500 of these accounts, credit card accounts, had been used for these extraneous purposes, to get extra cash at an ATM facility, to purchase jewelry and liquor. Was that contemplated by the taxpayers of the United States, to give carte blanche, a credit card to Federal employees to spend as they wish?

Some would defend the system and say, well, we have a credit card system, that means faster service and less costly ticket buying, et cetera. But is it worth it when we have all these other abuses that we are discussing?

Here is what the executive summary says from this audit report:

Numerous employees have misused the government travel charge card. Such abuses included excessive unpaid charges, use of the card for personal purchases''—which I have just mentioned—''and questionable automatic teller machine advances. A primary reason for the abuse is a lack of management and oversight by agencies.

That is the key phrase that has prompted action on the part of some of us to try to end this drain on taxpayers' resources at a time when we are crying for tightening up the budget and making sure that we do not overspend or abuse the taxpayers' moneys in so many questionable ways.

The other portion of the report that is astounding to me is that when some of this was brought to the attention of the agencies, like in the Office of the Secretary of Commerce, the coordinator, I quote: ''The coordinator in the Office of the Secretary gave us oral explanations for some of the questionable accounts but told us that because of other pressing duties, she did not have sufficient time to provide written explanations.''—meaning that nothing was effectively accomplished to curb these abuses, buying jewelry on credit cards?

How does that help the Secretary of Commerce's jurisdiction exercise its duties? How does that help the taxpayers back in the homelands who are working hard every day to do their job and try to pay their taxes so that the Government can keep on buying jewelry with credit cards? This kind of explanation, if they do not have time to provide written explanations, has got to come forth in a series of hearings which we plan to hold on this very same subject.

One other thing that is pertinent here that should be known, also coming directly from the inspector general's report, is that the blame for all of this goes on how these credit cards were issued, to whom they were issued, what instructions were given, what controls were put in, what arrangements were made with the credit card company to make sure that jewelry and online computer services and liquor could not be purchased on the retail level, those facets of control were never put into place.

So what will these hearings have? I plan to hold one hearing or more if necessary in my Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law to determine how they were issued, what controls were put on. I have introduced a bill, to start off with, to abolish the use of credit cards by Federal employees. We are going to start from there if we are successful and work back to see if any credit cards can be properly used.

THE DEBT CEILING AND WELFARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I want this afternoon to talk about two issues that are related. The first one is whether the Republicans are going to try to use the debt ceiling as leverage instead of passing a clean debt ceiling bill. I read this morning there were two different sets of advices coming from within the majority ranks. One was use it as leverage for what is called a change in entitlement programs. The second that came from our colleague from New Jersey, who said, ''It is playing with fire. When it comes to this Nation's financial reputation, the stakes are simply too high. We must abandon any strategy of confrontation and resolve this critical issue in the spirit of cooperation.''

I hope the majority will heed the advice of the second person. The Republican Party was badly burned by their misguided efforts to shut down the Government with the CR but more importantly the Nation was hurt when I was in the district the last several weeks, I met among others with representatives of veterans organizations who told us the appeals process was already way behind and with the shutdown it became even more delinquent, to the terrible detriment of the veterans of this country.

Second, I want to talk about one of the issues that might be tied to the debt ceiling and that relate to welfare reform. This country badly needs it. It is clear, I think, from the experience of last year, it can be achieved only on a bipartisan basis. In the last session, the Republicans tried it on a strictly partisan route. They produced a bill that did not effectively link welfare to work, and it would have hurt kids. It missed the mark by carrying out the true national interest in welfare reform, breaking cycles of dependency and helping children in the welfare system, not by punishing them but by moving their parents from welfare to work.

There was no attempt, none whatsoever, to work out differences on a bipartisan basis with Democrats in the House—we do want welfare reform—or with an administration that has been active for years on this.

A hearing was held last week in the Human Resources Subcommittee, on which I sit. Two Governors, among others, presented the NGA proposal. We discussed with the Governors a number of concerns about their proposals.

First of all, their contingency fund, it is not going to protect against a recession. In the recession of the early 1990's, AFDC funding increased over $6 billion in 3 years. The provisions of the Governors' proposal would have much less than that, in fact a third of that over 5 years.

The maintenance of effort provisions in the Governors' proposal need to be looked at further. The way they have crafted that, the result could be a far larger proportion of Federal as compared with State dollars, a substitution of Federal dollars for State moneys including in child care and overall far fewer dollars available to implement welfare reform.

Welfare reform must be driven by moving people off of welfare into work. A rebalanced partnership to achieve this does mean more State flexibility, but it must be combined with State accountability and effectiveness.

A third provision that needs much more work relates to fair and equitable treatment of families receiving assistance. There is a broad reference in the NGA proposal, but much more work is clearly needed to ensure that provisions are enforceable and that there are procedural safeguards for individual families seeking assistance.

Likely on Medicaid the Governors' proposal would sever the assurance that when families, when people move from welfare to work, there is health care coverage for their kids.

Fifth, on food stamps, the proposal of the NGA would undermine the Food Stamp Program as a safety net for the children who are covered today.

There is also a clear need to review provisions in the NGA document on child care, child welfare, SSI and, clearly, benefits for legal immigrants. These concerns and others will be spelled out in more detail tomorrow in the testimony on behalf of the administration by HHS Secretary Donna Shalala.

The Governors stated in their testimony last week, and I quote, that it is imperative that the congressional process be bipartisan. The House Republicans have a clear choice. They can make a good-faith effort to discuss concerns on a bipartisan basis and attempt to work out differences, or they can proceed as they did last year and as they are beginning to do this year acting on a strictly partisan basis.

I finish with this. If the majority searchers for a political issue, then the outlook for welfare reform is, indeed, dismal. But if the search is for a new structure that reflects where the mainstream of America is, the outlook is more promising.

CASTRO'S ACT OF MURDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as the international community now knows, this past Saturday Cuban tyrant Fidel Castro once again demonstrated his brutal nature after his thugs shot down two United States civilian planes belonging to the humanitarian group, Brothers to the Rescue, killing four innocent young men including American citizens.

Knowing of the long track record of repression and cruelty that the Castro regime has exhibited against the Cuban