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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 3, 1998.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAN MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for 5 minutes.

CONGRESS SHOULD NOT SAY "NO" TO THE STUDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I will take my whole 5 minutes, but I do have a few things that I would like to point out.

Washington, D.C., has some very, very good schools, has some exceptionally good public schools, and it has some exceptionally good private schools. Unfortunately, the city also has some exceptionally bad schools where we have too many young children that are caught in circumstances

that would almost say they have no opportunity for anything but failure.

Those of us that have met these children have understood what one always understands when one meets a child: This is a very, very special and precious person. We have seen too many cases of children that have the ability, that have the energy, that have the hopes and the dreams that are coupled with the same on the part of their parents and punctuated with prayers for a better opportunity for this child, for us to turn our back on these children.

Mr. Speaker, we will bring to consideration for this body again a bill that would allow scholarships for choice for those families that are disadvantaged so they, like so many more wealthy families, particularly here in D.C. and across the country, could exercise their opportunity to take their child out of a school that is failing that child and move that child to a school where the child will have their hopes and dreams and abilities recognized and nourished.

We have people that oppose this. They oppose it for ideological reasons; they oppose it for institutional reasons; they oppose it for reasons that, quite frankly, I do not understand.

One prominent Senator said, "D.C. parents and ministers and local leaders have made it clear that they do not want vouchers." Another prominent Member of this body made the point, "I think I can say with confidence that the people I represent would deeply resent the imposition of vouchers." That was the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). "I think I can say with confidence that the people I represent would deeply resent the imposition of vouchers."

What is a voucher? We say to people, we make available to you the opportunity. You can choose or you cannot choose to accept that opportunity for your child.

On October 13, 1997, the Washington Scholarship Fund announced the avail-

ability of 1,000 new scholarships for children that are disadvantaged by being stuck in failing schools. By the deadline last Saturday, 7,573 children applied. One out of every six children eligible for these scholarships applied.

Mr. Speaker, D.C. parents are making the effort.

Let me talk about this a moment. I have had the opportunity to work with the D.C. Scholarship Fund. I have met these parents. I have met these children. I have seen those that have already had the scholarships that have moved to the other schools. I have seen them brighten up and seen them do better. I have seen children that might have been stuck forever with failure emerge and shine.

What child is not precious enough that they ought to have this opportunity? How can somebody's heart be so cold as to say we deny that?

This is not taking money away from the other D.C. schools. The voucher program that we are putting forward says we will add additional money beyond that which is already available to the City of D.C., which has, if not the highest, certainly the second or third highest per capita student budget for their school system of any city in the Nation. And yet, with all that they already have, we have children that are not being well served by the schools; and we are saying, in addition to that money, let us put some more vouchers in place for these little children.

Mr. Speaker, this is a little thing in Washington. The numbers here are very big. The President has got a \$1.73 trillion budget. He has got all kinds of things in that budget, all full of good intentions. Big heart. Something for everyone.

We are saying drive off these Capitol grounds two blocks, three blocks. See the children that do not have the opportunity that children in my district in Texas have to walk to school safe in neighborhoods that are safe; to be with

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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H103

friends in school and to be proud of their school; to learn and understand and be appreciated and, yes, on occasions, disciplined so that they can successfully learn.

Then I ask my colleagues to tell me if they meet these children, they meet these parents, they see these opportunities, that they can have a heart that is so closed, cold, and a mind that is so closed, a dedication to a union so strong or a perversion of priority so cruel that they will say "no" to these children.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot do it. And it is not just because I have met the children. I do not think anybody can do that. And I have to say I deeply regret the callous expressions of sentiment that I read from the two Members of Congress whose quotes I opened this discussion with. I hope that something will touch their heart for these children.

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I am glad I have the opportunity to follow the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), my colleague from Texas and Majority Leader.

I think there is such a diversity in what we can talk about because both the Majority Leader and my Republican colleagues' solution to our education problems is vouchers. Let us give vouchers to a small number of children instead of fixing the big problem.

That is the difference that I want to talk about today. Let us fix public education. Let us not abandon it. Let us not take away and give vouchers for a small segment, 7,500 that the gentleman talks about, when we have thousands that need help. I do not want to abandon public education and only help a few.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I join a lot of my Democratic colleagues today saying let us fix the problems rather than saying that vouchers are the solution. That is not a solution. That is a short-term, one-time solution for one child.

Let us talk about the millions of children that are in public education. Public education educates millions of children around the country, compared to what private and church-based education can do. There is just not enough private and church-based education to do what they want to do. We need to fix the problems for the millions and not the few; that is what is important today.

My children went to public schools in Texas in an urban environment, and now they attend a public university in Texas. The image that people may have that in Congress a lot of our children

go to private schools, that is just not true. Students can get an adequate public education in public schools as well as they can in private schools. It takes parental involvement, it takes dedicated teachers, and it takes business-community partnerships.

President Clinton last week in his State of the Union talked about some of the new initiatives that we need to do, including preparing children for the future. The President and Members, whether it be President, Member of Congress, a doctor, lawyer, engineer, business owner, whatever, that is our job as a Member of Congress and leader of our country, to be able to prepare the children who are in school now, whether it be in the D.C. schools or the schools in my district in Houston, Texas.

One of those initiatives that he talked about is the Head Start program. The President committed to Head Start for one million children, expanding it to one million children. I know in Harris County our Head Start program for a number of years has had problems, but we are fixing it. They serve now over 5,000 students, needy preschoolers.

What we are doing now with the help of both the independent school districts in our community, with Health and Human Service employees and the staff that are helping, we have an interim provider providing the service for 70 percent of those children. We are going to fix it even more by providing a long-term solution for those children in Head Start; and we need to expand it, whether it be in Harris County or all across this great Nation.

We are fixing our problem locally, but we also need to make sure that the funds are there for those children when we can expand it. Head Start works. It works to give children, when they show up at that kindergarten or the public schools or first grade, that same start, that same opportunity as those children whose parents could afford pre-kindergarten programs.

President Clinton proposed a lot of other great programs for expanding education and making sure that the next generation of Americans can stand in the place that we do and a lot of our colleagues do, to take over the job that a lot of us do here on the floor or also in lots of businesses and places all across the country, including reducing the class size to 18-to-1.

In Texas, we reduced our class size in the 1980s for kindergarten through fourth grade by mandate that the schools could not have more than 22-to-1 in kindergarten through fourth grade. I would like to see that on a national basis.

Again, it is tough to pay for it and tough to have facilities; and that is another thing that the President asked for. For the first time, we will actually see the Federal Government helping with facilities construction. It is great to talk about lowering class size, but we have to have buildings, and we have

to have teachers. We have to have Federal assistance. Not a great deal of money, because it is not going to help any one district, but it will help leverage a lot of our districts that are having trouble providing facilities.

Also, he talked about the 100,000 new teachers, if we are going to have smaller class size, 100,000 new teachers helping our children. That is preparing for the next generation of our country, not just a quick fix to have vouchers for a small group of children who are fortunate enough to have a voucher.

Another one of the President's proposals was the Education Opportunity Zones. The Department of Education would select 50 high-poverty urban or rural districts who use high standards of tests for their children, provide the help to teachers and students and schools who need it, prevent students from falling behind by ensuring quality curriculum and teaching and also end social promotion.

I think that is something on this floor that we can probably agree upon on a bipartisan basis. We do not need to continue to promote someone if they are not making the grade in their current district. We are not doing that child a favor.

There are so many good things that I could talk about. I look forward to engaging my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in really dealing with education issues.

BAILOUT OF THE IMF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to call my colleagues' attention to an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal this morning called "Who Needs the IMF?" It is written by George Schultz, who is the former Secretary of State under President Reagan; Mr. William Simon, who was Secretary of Treasury under Presidents Nixon and Ford; and Mr. Rifen, who is a former Chairman of Citicorp/Citibank.

The American taxpayers are being asked to bail out the IMF, and I believe they are being taken advantage of.

□ 1245

The bailout has been organized by the IMF fund to which the United States has contributed roughly 18 percent of the IMF's reserve fund. The IMF, as of 1996, there was about \$210 billion in the reserve fund. The United States has been liable for approximately \$47 billion of this. This fund has responded to the East Asian financial crisis by nearly liquidating its assets. Thailand has received \$17 billion in bailout money; \$40 billion has been handed to Indonesia, and South Korea has been given a staggering \$68 billion in funds. The total cost of this bailout amounts to more than 14 percent of East Asia's gross domestic product.