

am amazed—and I was speaking with a gathering of community college students who have focused on this as well—that in the name of “welfare reform,” we are now saying to many single parents—most of them women, and many of them in our community colleges—they have to leave school and take a job. In other words, this is the bitter irony: They are on the path to economic self-sufficiency and yet we are telling many of these parents, these women, “You have to leave college; you can’t complete your education; you must take this job, because these are the work force participation requirements.” It may be a \$6-an-hour job with no benefits; and a year from now they are without health care coverage, they are worse off than they are now, as are their children.

That is outrageous. So I am going to have an amendment for student exemption for these adults who are in school trying to complete their education so they can reach economic self-sufficiency, so that any State that wants to can at least say, look, we want to exclude these parents who are in school from the work force participation requirement. That makes a lot of sense if we are interested in these mothers and children being able to do better.

The second question I want to raise for colleagues is—and I don’t know if this will be an amendment on this bill or not, but as long as we are talking about education, which is what we are going to do with the Coverdell bill, and trying to do better for children—how come we cut food stamp benefits by 20 percent? The majority of the beneficiaries are children from families making under \$7,500 a year.

As I travel around the country, it all has to do with the questions you ask. It all has to do with whether you are willing to listen. It all has to do with what communities you are willing to visit. I find a lot of teachers telling me that a lot of their students can’t do well because they come to school hungry. Why in the world did we cut the major safety net program for the working poor, the primary recipients, by 20 percent by the year 2002? I think we need to revisit that question.

Mr. President, there is another issue that I want to raise that may be an amendment, or may not be, which is that it is impossible to focus on education and children doing well without focusing on the adults or the adult. The two variables—to wear a kind of political science hat for a moment—that have had the greatest impact, or the two primary causes of whether a child does well in school or not, the two most important factors—that is the word I am struggling for—are the educational attainment and the income status of the parent or parents.

Well, if that is the case, I think we ought to start asking the question, if we are looking at the learning gap in our country and what children do well and what children don’t do well, what about so many of these communities—

and William Julius Wilson, a great sociologist, has written about this in his book called “The Disappearance of Work”—what about these communities where there are no jobs, even with the economy humming along as it is? What about many of the ghettos and barrios in rural areas where there are no jobs, and the parents or parent can’t find employment, can’t find a job at a decent wage? What is the connection between the economic status, the job status of the parent or parents, and the educational achievement of the children?

I think that, at the very minimum, we ought to ask labor and the Department of Education to do a study of this and come back and provide us with some evidence. I will tell you that I think we will find a very strong correlation. And I will tell you that I am all for work. In fact, I think the most important policy goal is to make sure that when people in America work full-time, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, they are not poor. I can think of a variety of different things we ought to do to make sure that happens. We also ought to look in a lot of communities where people live where there are no jobs at all, nor is there transportation to get into the suburbs where those jobs do exist.

I say to my colleagues, this is not just an urban issue; this is a big rural issue as well. I look forward to when the Coverdell bill comes out to the floor. I look forward to the debate and discussion.

I see my colleague from Missouri on the floor. I don’t want to take any more time. Before Senator ASHCROFT takes the floor, I was talking about the importance of getting a resolution on China, urging the administration and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights that we ought to take a position on the violation of human rights in China. I know my colleague is a strong supporter. I say to my colleague that we are going to have tremendous support on an up-or-down vote. I am urging the administration today to please move forward. That was the other agenda item for me.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ASHCROFT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a fellow from my office, Neil Kulkarni, be allowed privileges of the floor during the pendency of morning business and my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Minnesota for his kind remarks. I do share his concerns on human rights in China.

STATEMENT MADE BY U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise to address the disturbing comments made yesterday by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Apparently emboldened by his recent agreement with Saddam Hussein, Annan stated on ABC’s “This Week” that the United States would have to consult with the Security Council before launching military strikes against Saddam Hussein.

He stated:

If the United States had to strike, I think some sort of consultations with the other members would be required.

Let me state categorically that the United States does not require the permission of the United Nations to use our military forces in the pursuit of our national interests. Nor does the United Nations have any authority to require that the United States use our military forces if it would seek to deploy them.

The United States has never, at any time, ceded to the United Nations any power to require the deployment of American forces against the wishes or the judgment of the United States, nor have we ceded to the United Nations any power to forbid the use of our military force.

Mr. President, the comments by Secretary General Annan over the weekend are indicative of a growing arrogance of a United Nations that has grown accustomed to dictating American foreign policy toward Iraq. With U.S. policy toward Iraq in drift over the last 6 years, Secretary General Annan was able to take the lead in dealing with Saddam’s provocations. What has the United Nations achieved? Has Saddam been punished? Have his weapons of mass destruction been destroyed?

On the contrary, Saddam is stronger today than he was before instigating the crisis 4 months ago. He is better off across the board militarily, politically, and economically. He has blocked weapons inspections and moved weapons technology and equipment for several months. He has won greater prestige in the region and in the Arab world generally. He will be allowed to sell more oil. There is growing talk of dismantling the rest of the sanctions regime.

The administration has compared Saddam to Hitler, but the President’s policies are laying the groundwork for another Munich in the Persian Gulf. Saddam is the chief terrorist of a terrorist government whose weapons of mass destruction threaten the United States and our allies in the Middle East. The administration seems pleased, however, to make concessions to Saddam through the United Nations. More oil sales and a politicized inspection regime for Presidential sites in Iraq have meant victory for Saddam.

Mr. President, the absence of Presidential leadership on Iraq has not served the United States well in the