

was a little more money coming in than was necessary to pay out benefits, politicians in this city made popular decisions to expand the benefits. Every time there was less tax money coming in than required to pay out those expanded benefits, Congress and the President would increase the Social Security tax on working Americans. Actually since 1971, Social Security, taxes on these working Americans, has been increased 36 times. More often than once a year since 1971 we have increased the rate or the base on the Social Security taxes. We started out taxing 1.5 percent on the first \$3,500. Now it is 12.4 percent on the first \$68,000.

I would like to suggest as I conclude this, Mr. Speaker, that Social Security in its current configuration is not a good investment. The National Tax Foundation estimates that anybody that retires after the year 2000 will receive back between a negative ½ percent and a negative 1½ percent on the money they and their employers put into Social Security. So if you could take some of this money and allow as an option some of the younger workers to invest in any return that is going to be greater than that kind of negative return in Social Security, then we are much better off.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is so vitally important to preserve Social Security that we forget the rhetoric and get down to business. We get down to the nitty-gritty of the alternatives of how we are going to make it work. I mentioned when we started the program in 1935 the average age of death was 61. Today the average age of death at birth is 74 years old for a male, 76 years old for a female. But if you are lucky enough to reach the retirement age, then on the average you are going to live another 20 years. There are fewer and fewer workers supporting more and more retirees. Hopefully voters, Mr. Speaker, will demand of the people running for office this fall that they have suggestions on how to proceed with this very serious problem of keeping Social Security solvent.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Bishop Eddie L. Long, Senior Pastor, New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus, we come before You and claim Your promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14. "If My people, who are called by My name shall humble themselves, pray, seek, crave, and require of necessity My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land."

We as a Nation stated in our Declaration of Independence through our Founding Fathers, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights. . . ."

Lord, the fact that our Founding Fathers declared that nothing we do, or will do, as leaders and citizens of this Nation is legal without God being the foundation of this government is significant. We must turn and legitimize ourselves through repentance so that this Nation can be led into spiritual and earthly clarity as to why it was created. We understand that when You, as Creator and the Founding Father in creation, created fish, You called them from water, yet, in order for them to live, they have to stay connected to the water. When You called trees and vegetation, You called it from the ground. And in order for that to live, it had to stay connected to the earth. When You created us, You called us out of You, and we must stay connected to You that we might have life.

Therefore, God, allow us, along with all creation, to reconnect ourselves into Your Divine, harmonious flow of life, that we would hear from heaven, and our land would be healed. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Chair's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. MCKINNEY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 740

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 740.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT TO NATIONAL SUMMIT ON RETIREMENT SAVINGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to the provisions of section 517(e)(3) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following participant on the part of the House to the National Summit on Retirement Savings to fill the existing vacancy thereon:

Mr. Jack Ulrich from Pennsylvania.

There was no objection.

DRUGS ARE A GROWING NATIONAL CRISIS FOR OUR CHILDREN

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, few in this body would argue that a more worthy cause for Federal funds exists than the fight to keep our Nation's children off of drugs. However, a six-year professional study released yesterday reveals that we are not winning the war on juvenile drug use.

In fact, a dozen other recent studies have all come to the very same conclusion, that, overall, America's efforts just do not deliver on its promise to teach kids to resist drugs.

According to this latest study, last year alone, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on "feel-good" programs that have apparently had little or no effect on our kids.

Mr. Speaker, this is a growing national crisis that is too important to ignore, too important for our children's future, and too important for us to fail.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about laying blame or pointing fingers, it is about correcting mistakes. The young people in this country are our future, and it is our duty to see that they grow up in a world free of the scourge of drugs.

BORIS YELTSIN NEEDS COUNSELING, NOT MONITORING

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, in 1993, Boris Yeltsin fell off a stage in Germany. In 1994, Boris could not get off his plane in Ireland. In 1996, Boris came up missing for 7 consecutive days, unexplained, before an election. In 1997, he forgot about a meeting with Vice President AL GORE. Yesterday, he fired his entire cabinet. The White House says they are monitoring it.

Mr. Speaker, is Boris Yeltsin a victim of El Nino, too? Let us tell it like it is. This guy is not exactly the head of Kiwanis International. Boris Yeltsin has his shaky little finger on the button of one of the world's most massive nuclear arsenals.

I say monitor this, Boris Yeltsin does not need monitors. Boris Yeltsin needs Alcoholics Anonymous. I say let us save our foreign aid and let us send some counselors over to take care of this guy. I yield back 1 day at a time the balance my time.

THE OVRETTE PROGRAM IN HONDURAS: A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share another tragic story of human rights violations abroad, this time in the country of Honduras.

For more than 34 years and with millions of dollars, women of Honduras have been victims of an overzealous population control movement. They have been subjected to sterilizations and mass contraceptive pill distribution without caution or required exams or information, funded entirely by U.S. taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, now we find that these Honduran women have been the subjects of a human experiment, this time with the Ovrette contraceptive pill, which has been used without any information about its potential side effects to the women taking the pill.

Instead of warning women that the effects of the pill were undetermined and that it should not be taken while breast-feeding, the USAID-led effort chose to strongly push the use of the pill among the women. At the same time, the government decided to monitor unsuspecting women to see what the effects of Ovrette might be.

To make matters worse, while this was going on, Ovrette was not even registered with the proper authorities, as is the law.

Mr. Speaker, this would not take place in America. It should stop in Honduras.

THE MORAL DEFICIT

(Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, in 1993 when I decided to run for

Congress, there were many reasons why I felt I should get involved in the political campaign. One of the main reasons was my concern over the national debt and deficit spending. My wife and I did not want to see our two children faced with a mountain of debt that would eventually destroy their future.

Now, just 5 years later, it is with a lot of relief and thankfulness that Congress has been able to balance the Federal budget. But today we are faced with a problem that is even greater and more destructive than runaway debt.

My children and the children of this Nation are faced with a society that is experiencing a moral deficit. Eighty-four percent of the American people say their biggest concern is the decline in the traditional moral values.

Mr. Speaker, if we give our children the richest economy in the world but a society that is morally bankrupt, what have we gained? Some would say, but it is the economy, stupid. But I disagree, because good economies come and go, but for a Nation to survive as history has proven over and over again, patriotism, courage, fidelity, honesty, and public and personal character must be the foundation on which it stands.

ELIMINATE THE MARRIAGE PENALTY TAX

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, since 1969, the Federal tax code has penalized 21 million couples annually, not for getting divorced, not for having children out of wedlock, not for shacking up, but for getting married.

When a couple gets married, they are taxed at a higher rate than if they were still single or divorced. The marriage penalty for the average couple is \$1,400. Now this may not seem like much to some, but with an additional \$1,400, an average couple could pay the electric bill for 9 months, pay for 3 or 4 months of day care, pay for a 5-day vacation at Disneyland, pay four or five payments on their minivan, eat out 35 times, purchase 1,053 gallons of gas, and purchase 1,228 loaves of bread.

It is immoral that our tax code discriminates against marriage. We have a tax code that discourages marriage and encourages divorce. Reforming a tax code will restore equity by ensuring that working couples are treated no differently when they get married than they were before.

THE JASON PROJECT

(Mr. FARR of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I stand here before you recognizing that at last night's Oscars the Titanic swept away with 11 awards. It is a fitting occurrence because this is the

year of the oceans. Right now, something more exciting is happening across this country and around the world than anything that was ever put on the big screen. That is what is going on in our classrooms around the United States called the Jason project.

It was started by the man, Bob Ballard, who found the Titanic. He has dedicated his services to science and to education where children at this moment are speaking to scientists that are on the floor of the ocean live. Those scientists are in California and Bermuda, and they are talking back and forth, and students interact with it.

So in this year, the International Year of the Oceans, we have to celebrate that. We also celebrate it, because it is our own money that Congress has put into NOAA and put into the Navy that has helped sponsor this project.

This show goes on all week. And if you are here in the Nation's capital, visit the National Geographic, where the show is live right now. So the Year of the Oceans is get into it. Get into it.

THE OVERWHELMING TAX BURDEN

(Mr. JONES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, we are now just 22 days away from April 15, tax day. As this dreaded day approaches, now, more than ever, Americans are struggling with an unbelievable tax burden.

On top of their already busy daily routine, the citizens of this Nation are having to file through the 8 billion pages of forms and instructions that the IRS sends out each year. Laid end to end, these forms would stretch 28 times around the Earth.

It is past time to reduce this tremendous burden. The American people want, need, and deserve tax relief. I hope that people throughout this Nation will contact their Representatives and encourage them to begin a national debate on how best to create a fairer, simpler tax system for the American people.

LIBERALS VERSUS CONSERVATIVES

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I often hear from liberals that the labels "liberal" and "conservative" do not mean much anymore. I think that is total nonsense.

One way to distinguish between liberals and conservatives is to look at how a liberal views taxes versus how a conservative does.

A liberal will do everything in his power to make it difficult for others to become rich. A conservative will do everything in his power to help others become rich.