

structured expressly to keep Gen. Abacha in power. In effect, they acknowledged the contradiction between our Nigeria policy and the political realities there.

Virtually none of the institutions that would allow for a free and fair election—an independent electoral commission, an open registration process, or open procedures for the participation of independent political parties, for example—have been put into place. Repression continues unabated: political prisoners remain in prison, the press remains heavily constrained, and the fruits of Nigeria's abundant natural resources remain in the hands of Abacha's supporters.

Unfortunately, I fear the President's remarks may have done real damage already, by indicating to Gen. Abacha and his cronies that if Abacha were to take off his military uniform, throw on civilian clothes, and win an election, it would be OK with the United States. I fear the United States has explicitly agreed to accept a wolf in sheep's clothing!

Well, lest anyone get the wrong idea, let me say that I believe, and I hope most of my colleagues believe, an electoral victory for Abacha would hardly represent a transition to democracy. It would be totally unacceptable. I hope that President Clinton will clarify the policy of the United States with respect to Nigeria soon. It is high time the policy review that began nearly two years ago is completed, so we do not have this alarming confusion.

Nigeria must know that anything less than a transparent transition to civilian rule will be met with severe policy consequences.

Finally, I emphasized to the President that the United States should make support for Africa's organizations of civil society a higher priority. These groups do courageous work to promote human rights standards and to monitor their governments' compliance. Accordingly, U.S. officials must speak out publicly when these courageous people are abused by their governments. I have urged the President to take the opportunity to highlight the vital work being performed by a broad range of civil society organizations, including those facing government repression.

Mr. President, I was concerned last December when some news reports following Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to Africa included statements by U.S. officials that it would be unfair to hold certain African governments to "Western" standards of personal and political freedom. Not only does this contradict stated U.S. policy, it is a condescending, unnecessary and dangerous concession to make to African governments that flout human rights.

A clear message on democracy and human rights is especially important as the U.S. works with African nations to strengthen their economies. Economic growth is crucial to any nation's

success, but the U.S. must ensure that as it helps to foster economic development, it also fosters political and personal freedoms. Not only does the U.S. have a moral obligation to promote human rights, Africa's post-colonial history shows us that African nations with long-term democratic rule are also the nations with the best long-term economic performances. Freedom fosters prosperity.

The respect a government shows for human rights can tell us whether that regime will respect its neighbors, its trading partners, and the world community at large. A government that does not respect the rights of its people cannot be trusted to honor a trade agreement or a treaty, much less the rule of law in general. This is as true for Nigeria as it is for China.

The common thread running through our Africa policy must be the U.S. commitment to democracy and human rights. Without this commitment, true peace cannot take root and economic growth will ultimately falter. Now more than ever we must make clear our commitment to democracy and human rights, both to governments working toward these goals, and, more importantly, to those repressive regimes that are not.

Mr. President, I welcome the energy the Clinton administration has devoted to Africa and to U.S. policy there. I look forward to working with the President in the future to capitalize on the momentum that will certainly be created by this most historic trip.●

TRAGEDY IN CENTRE COUNTY

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to pay my respects to several young people who recently lost their lives in a cabin fire.

Two weeks ago, 11 friends from Northumberland and Lancaster Counties planned a weekend retreat at the Wehry family cabin. The site of many memorable family gatherings, the newly remodeled cabin seemed to be the perfect setting to eat, play cards, and enjoy rural Centre County's outdoor recreation. On Sunday morning, March 22, the friends' fun-filled weekend came to a devastating end. The "mansion in the mountains" caught fire at 5:20 a.m. All of the 11 friends died in their sleep from smoke inhalation.

Each of these young people was special in his or her own right. A quiet girl, Toni Wehry wanted to be a teacher. Amanda Wehry was bright, outgoing, and popular. Tyrone Wehry, who was working for the House Republican caucus in Harrisburg, planned to pursue a career in politics. Warwick High School's former basketball star, Erik Gray was learning to be an electrician. Nicholas Berkey was lovingly described as a dependable young man who was saving money to buy a house. The versatile James Giliberti enjoyed martial arts, music, and finance; he had planned to invest in an IRA this year.

Kip Snyder is remembered as a prankster who pitched for the Line Mountain High School baseball team. Chad Hain, who enjoyed hands-on technical work, had a promising career in carpentry. Quiet and sensitive, Jason Herrold was studying business administration at Susquehanna University. The Wiest brothers, Toby and David, owned a paint ball supply store. By all accounts, the vivacious Toby and the pensive David were best friends.

Friends and neighbors have rallied to console the victims' families. Well wishers tied blue and gold ribbons—Line Mountain High School's colors—to telephone poles, lampposts, and front doors. These poignant memorials hang beside Easter decorations. Students at Line Mountain High signed banners in the auditorium to bid their friends farewell. Signs expressing words of comfort and encouragement hang in the windows of local businesses. One reads, "Now they're in God's cabin."

Mr. President, words cannot describe a parent's grief upon the death of a child. I ask my colleagues to join me in extending the Senate's condolences to the victims' families. Our prayers and heartfelt sympathies go out to them.●

TRIBUTE TO DAVID MURRAY

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to David Murray, a well known and certainly well regarded patient advocate at the Veterans' Administration (VA) in White River Junction who is leaving the great state of Vermont to relocate to the state of Washington. Although I question why anyone would willingly opt to move from the most beautiful state in the union, I must concede that Washington state is probably a close second in terms of beauty and quality of life.

I certainly wish Dave well as he embarks on this exciting venture, though life at the Veterans' Administration hospital will never be quite the same without him. Each day he goes beyond the call of duty in his never-wavering advocacy for veterans. He provides veterans and their families with their crucial link to understanding and moving through the system. Dave is probably the most sought after person at the VA and I would venture a guess that he receives more "pages" in one hour than most VA doctors receive in an entire day.

Service is a word that Dave knows well. He served honorably in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, continued his federal service for the next 20 plus years culminating in his current job as Patient Advocate at the VA hospital in White River Junction. He is a member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion and involved himself in his community as a boy scout leader. It is my understanding that Dave, when he's not working or wearing one of his many service