



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 144

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 1998

No. 83

House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. 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 not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader and minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) for 5 minutes.

CONGRESS MUST NOT TURN A BLIND EYE TO CHINA'S ABUSES

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, human rights activist and former political prisoner, Harry Wu, was interviewed on "This Week." When asked about America's relations with China, and specifically asked about President Clinton's assertion that one must accept the administration's position towards China or be seen as a backwards isolationist, Mr. Wu responded by stating, "President Clinton said if you disagree with my engagement policy, that means you want to apply isolation. This is too cheap to argue. Okay, today there is nobody talking about isolation. Between isolation and engagement there is something in the middle."

Mr. Speaker, what Mr. Wu may not understand as a recent arrival in the United States of America is what actually underlies the China policy not only of this administration but also of many in this Congress.

Why do we continue to embrace a regime that this President called the "Butchers of Beijing" just a few years

ago? Unfortunately, it is because of America's obsession with finance. Our obsession with finance and a Dow Jones over 9,000 points, absolutely mesmerizes politicians who are led to believe they can get away with anything, so long as the Dow is doing well and the economy is clicking along while constituents personal incomes are rising.

The soaring Dow also mesmerizes the wizards of Wall Street, who have been stumbling over each other acting as apologists for the butchers in Beijing. One CEO has said there is actually more democracy in China than in America because, after all, more Chinese vote. The Wall Street Journal reported one defense contractor firm that sent their engineers over to China to train Chinese engineers how to make their jet fighters more competitive with American jet fighters.

Well, unfortunately, I think we are making a grave mistake. I think we are turning our back on the idea that America is the last great hope for a dying world, whether it is us turning a blind eye to the horrors of Sudan where Christians are persecuted, and turning a blind eye simply because we want an oil pipeline over there. Or whether it is turning a blind eye to the Buddhists being brutalized in Tibet because we do not want to, after all, offend China. Or whether it is this China MFN debate where we find out that the Communist Chinese are funneling money to America to influence our elections.

We hear nothing but silence because, after all, we do not want to offend the next great export market for the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is regrettable. And I think this false choice that we must somehow either believe in pure, unadulterated free trade with the Communist Chinese regime or risk being isolationists is a false choice that is very dangerous.

Those of us that are opposed to MFN with China are being attacked not only

by the President but by lobbyists downtown. BIPAC, a business PAC, has sent an angry memo around talking about backward isolationist Republicans who are not "business friendly."

I am distressed that we are being attacked because of our concern with a regime that is the most oppressive in the world; because we have concerns with a regime that has killed 60 million of their own people since 1949; because we are concerned about a regime that continues to export nuclear technology to Pakistan and Iran; because we are concerned with a regime that continues to steal America's intellectual property; because we are concerned with a regime that continues to abuse human rights; because we are concerned with a regime that continues to persecute hundreds of thousands of Christians and Buddhists and other people seeking religious freedom.

Let us reexamine our China policy.

Russell Kirk once said, "No matter the volume of its steel production, a nation which has disavowed principle is vanquished." And Winston Churchill, when asked about the current state of his party in the 1950s said, "The old conservative party, with its religious convictions and constitutional principles, will disappear and a new party will rise . . . perhaps like the Republican party in the USA . . . rigid, materialistic, and secular, whose opinions will turn on tariffs and who will cause the lobbies to be crowded with the touts of protected industries."

Mr. Speaker, let us hope that does not happen to the Republican Party of the 21st century.

AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT: GIVING VOICE TO WORKERS

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

□ 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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Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and support those in my district and around the Nation who are joined together in labor unions to promote workers' rights.

In our free market economy and free enterprise system, freedom for workers means the right to choose a representative and have a voice in their wages and their working conditions. Unions provide and organize an effective means for workers to join together to solve problems and participate in discussions regarding their wages, better benefits, safer working conditions, and better opportunities.

Workers should make their voices heard. Today they celebrate such right. I sincerely hope they have a fair hearing; that people in our Nation will, in fact, listen.

Union organizing is supposed to be a right guaranteed by law; however, in many instances employers have directly interfered with worker organizing efforts. The atmosphere of intimidation in many workplaces makes joining a union difficult, if not impossible. This is, of course, unacceptable. It is time for employers, communities, and legislators to support the right of workers to organize.

Unions perform a vital function in the lives of working families. Despite a booming economy, some workers cannot even remember the last time they got a raise. As the unionized share of the work force has declined, income inequity is increasingly dramatic. At a time when U.S. corporations are making record profits and the economy is strong and stable, it seems unreasonable that working people must struggle and too often losing in efforts to make ends meet.

American workers, the most productive workers in the world, deserve to share in the bounty of our economy. The benefits and the path to achieve such justified improvements is through union membership within the labor movement, the same folks who brought us the 40-hour work week and, that is right, and importantly the weekend off.

In fact, union negotiating does not just help those members that belong to that labor union. It helps our society in general and has promoted fair wages, fair taxes, and justice throughout our society. Unions attack all wage gaps, the discrepancy between executive pay and that of workers, income differences for women and for people of color, for the disabled, they fight discrimination and actively promote equal treatment and opportunity for all the workers in our society.

Because better pay and conditions help achieve a more productive work force, union workers earn an average of 33 percent more than nonunion workers and are much more likely to have health and pension benefits, the tools that we need to take care of our family.

Today, the simple justice of joining a union and the self-help and freedom to

gain a fair wage is a big problem. In countless organizing campaigns, a majority of workers have clearly voiced a desire for union representation. However, more often than not they are obstructed by their employer's antiunion campaigns. Antiunion consulting industries are booming. It is a big business, guiding employers to manipulate the law and distort the intent in order to stall the organizing process, harass it, threaten and terminate workers who are trying to organize and achieve an exclusive representative, a union.

Mr. Speaker, all this is done with minimal, if any, penalties. In fact, the process is so cumbersome that it generally takes years before violations are even rectified. I have seen this happen firsthand in my own State of Minnesota this past year. Employees at the Metrodome Sheraton Hotel began an organizing drive with huge worker support. In fact, 80 percent of the workers, 112 workers of the 140 workers, signed cards supporting a union. But they had to have an election.

The Sheraton management in turn began a high-pressure campaign to put an end to the organizing and defeat the vote. They paid an antiunion consultant \$300 an hour to assist them in their task. Management inundated the workplace with antiunion literature; offered pay raises to employees who promised to go along with the company and vote against the union.

Worst of all, the company repeatedly brought small groups of employees into rooms, where the heat was turned up to almost unbearable levels. Workers were lectured for hours about the evils of unions. They got paid for sitting there. They could not speak up or talk back. They could not ask questions. This is in America and this is legal in labor union elections today.

Mr. Speaker, this tactic of course worked. This election was lost by these workers, these hotel restaurant and housemen that worked at the Sheraton Metrodome in Minnesota. Amazingly, this type of antiunion campaign is neither illegal nor uncommon. Eight out of ten private sector employers hire professional consultants when faced with organizing efforts in their business. They do not want workers organized. They do not want workers in a union. They do not want workers to have such rights accorded in law.

Of course, this tactic works. The result is the frustration and intimidation of workers. In the case of the Minneapolis Sheraton, despite overwhelming support at the beginning of the process, the employees voted not to elect an exclusive representative this past May. But this was an election stacked against the workers and their right to have a union.

Mr. Speaker, a strong labor movement helps all Americans. Let us listen today as these voices are raised of working people across this country.

It is our job as elected leaders to ensure that the national and state laws allow our constituents to enjoy the fundamental values of

democracy—freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. That includes, under law and custom, the long honored right to have a voice in their wages and working conditions. When workers are denied that voice, they no longer share in the wealth that they create. The health worker can't afford to be treated at the clinics and hospitals in which they labor. Auto workers can't afford to buy and drive the cars they make.

Congress needs to show support beyond voting positively upon labor issues. We can use our leverage to ensure that the rights and interests of America's labor force are advanced, that working families are accorded dignity and respect. Moreover, we have the obligation to make sure that the employers, policies, and laws that shape this relationship are just and workable.

Workers have the right to fully participate in the political arena. However, today the political voice of labor and working families faces the prospect of being silenced. Frankly, big business has the economic leverage to elect candidates who put the interests of corporations first. Corporations outspend labor unions 17 to one in lobbying efforts and other types of political involvement. We have to support labor organizations, so that they have a fair chance to support the candidates who will amplify the voices, views and concerns of the worker and working families.

Unfortunately, in Washington, DC, too much time and energy is focused on controversy, personalities, and political rhetoric. The everyday struggles of working families are often glossed over and shifted to the back burner. Or worse yet, under the guise of reform turned inside out, further limiting and stripping the worker of the limited rights they today hold. It is time to do the right thing, by respecting laborers and their rights, and truly listen to their concerns. On this day, the day for workers to make their voice heard, I speak for Minnesota working families, and working families across the nation, to recognize and support the right to organize. I encourage all of my colleagues to consider the successes and heartaches of those who are trying to join together in this crescendo to make their voices heard.

VETERANS TOBACCO TRUST FUND ACT OF 1998

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 want to talk about a very important issue that affects all of our veterans. There has been a great deal of discussion about veterans and tobacco-related illnesses. My purpose this morning is to acquaint Members with legislation I plan to introduce this week.

Mr. Speaker, the measure I intend to introduce is entitled the Veterans Tobacco Trust Fund Act of 1998. What this would do is guarantee that a portion of any funds that are received from a national tobacco settlement law, if it occurs, be dedicated to health care for veterans. Very simple.

Many might argue that not one veteran was coerced into smoking. My response to that assertion is that many