CELEBRATING DEMOCRACY IN TAIWAN: INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIEN

HON. TOM LANTOS
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, June 9, 2000

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the peaceful and democratic transition of executive power in the Republic of China on Taiwan. On May 20, 2000, the presidential inauguration of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leader Chen Shui-Bien marked the culmination of decades of political, social, and economic reform. Chen’s ascent to power—the first President not a member of the long dominant Kuomintang (KMT) party—is only the latest illustration of the democratic culture that characterizes Taiwan in the twenty-first century.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Taiwan reflects the principles envisioned by Dr. Sun Yat-sen when he led the successful movement to overthrow the Chinese emperor and the undemocratic imperial system nearly ninety years ago. While the times after Dr. Sun’s victory initially were tumultuous—civil wars, World War II, the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, and the establishment of the Republic of China on Taiwan—they strengthened the Taiwanese people and forced them to overcome obstacles that stood in the way of their freedom and prosperity. By the 1970’s, Taiwan had become a thriving marketplace of industries, ideas, and culture. It exported products to all corners of the globe and won the respect of the largest and most vibrant free market economies.

In recent years, economic justice has been mirrored by the flourishing of social justice, human rights, and democracy. During the 1980’s Taiwan’s leaders lifted restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. As these constraints were eased, the openness of political debate grew exponentially. Competitive local and regional elections were first held in 1980, followed by the development of opposition parties and Taiwan’s first competitive presidential election in 1996. The victor of that election, President Lee Teng-hui, received a mandate to continue his principled efforts to liberalize Taiwanese society.

Mr. Speaker, these progressive reforms seem likely to thrive under the leadership of President Chen Shui-Bien. The son of a farm laborer, he excelled in his studies and became a prominent defense attorney. During the early 1980’s, Chen began providing legal assistance to opposition leaders, and this eventually led him to enter politics in a more active capacity. This was not a simple calling during the pre-reform years. Chen, the editor of a dissident magazine, was arrested in 1983 and served time in jail. He was then betrayed on a trumped up libel charge brought by a government politician. He persisted, however, and he eventually served as a DPP member in the Legislative Yuan and later as the mayor of the capital city of Taipei. His success in the latter role prompted Time Magazine to name him as one of the 100 most promising young leaders of the 21st century.

President Chen’s inaugural address offered clear evidence of his commitment to the liberalization and political openness of the Republic of China cannot and will not remain outside global human rights, and democracy. During the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights, and the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. The Republic of China cannot and will not remain outside global human rights. The Republic of China back into the international human rights system... We hope to set up an independent national human rights commission in Taiwan, thereby realizing an action long advocated by the United Nations. We will also invite two outstanding non-governmental organizations, the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International, to visit Taiwan in a fact-finding mission so as to help us measure the extent of human rights and make the Republic of China into a new indicator for human rights in the 21st Century.

Mr. Speaker, as the founder and co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, I applaud President Chen’s determination to stand up for justice and civil liberties. I am also confident, Mr. Speaker, that Taiwan under the leadership of President Chen Shui-Bien will continue to work for peace with the Mainland in the years to come. Chen has pledged to continue negotiations with China and increase economic and social cooperation across the Taiwan Straits. He realizes that understanding—not violence and conflict—offers the promise of ending the tension between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China.

As Chen explained to an Asian Wall Street Journal reporter last April, “Pursuing lasting peace in the region is not only our highest goal, it is also the moral responsibility of the leadership.”

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in offering wholehearted congratulations to President Chen and the people of Taiwan for their commitment to peace, democracy, and human rights.

FAREWELL TO PAGES

HON. DALE E. KILDEE
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, June 9, 2000

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal gratitude to all of the pages who have served so diligently in the House of Representatives during the 106th Congress.

We all recognize the important role that congressional pages play in helping the House of Representatives operate. This group of young people, who come from all across our Nation, represent what is good about our country. To become a page, these young people have had to overcome a number of obstacles. They have ventured away from the security of their homes and families to spend time in an unfamiliar city. Through this experience, they have witnessed a new culture, made new friends, and learned the details of how our Government operates.

As we all know, the job of a congressional page is not an easy one. Along with being away from home, the pages must possess the ability to balance demands for their time and energy. In addition, they must have the dedication to work long hours and the ability to interact with people at a personal level. At the same time, they face challenging academic schedule of classes in the House Page School. I am sure they will consider their time spent in Washington, D.C. to be one of the most valuable and exciting experiences of their lives, and that with this experience they will all move ahead lead successful and productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, as the Democratic Member on the House Page Board, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this group of distinguished young Americans. They certainly will be missed:

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