There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican conference, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 20) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 20

Resolved, That the following Member be, and he is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

Committee on Appropriations: MR. GOODE.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER OF COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to clause 2(b) of Public Law 98–183, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following member to the Commission on Civil Rights on the part of the House to fill the existing vacancy thereon:

Dr. Abigail N. Thernstrom, Lexington, Massachusetts.

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

EXPLANATION OF PROCEEDINGS OCCURRING DURING JOINT SESSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House for 5 minutes to speak about what took place here in joint session today and to talk about what has led us to this point.

Today, here in this Chamber, we had a joint session to count the electoral votes; and, of course, there were some of us, mostly represented by Members from the Congressional Black Caucus, who chose to come to the floor in an attempt to object to the acceptance of the electoral votes from Florida. We did that, despite the fact we understood the rules. We knew that in order to object, we had to have in writing the objection, signed by both a House Member and a Member of the Senate.

We did not have one Member of the Senate who had signed any objection, but we came to the floor of this House and we said to the Vice President, who presided over the joint session, each time that we objected we said that, no, we did not have a signature from a United States Senator, that we only had our signature, we had the signatures of some of our colleagues, and we had the support of our constituents.

It was important for us to do this. It was important because we have just experienced one of the most traumatizing and devastating elections, particularly as it played out in Florida, that this country has ever been involved with.

□ 1345

I would like to cite to you some of what happened in Florida that has caused us so much concern. I am going to quote from an article that was done by Laura Flanders. I will not be quoting all of the article, but I will be submitting the rest of this for inclusion in the RECORD.

On day one after the election, there was a story in the Florida papers about an unauthorized police roadblock, stopping cars not a mile from a black church-turned-polling-booth. NAACP volunteers reported being swamped with complaints from registered voters who found it impossible to vote. They heard stories of intimidation at and around polling places; demands for superfluous ID; people complained about a pattern of singling out black men and youth for criminal background checks, and in call after call, would-be voters complained they had been denied language interpretation and other help at the polls.

By now it is clear that overwhelmed election workers made a mass of mistakes, but those mistakes were laced through with some clear intent to suppress some votes.

A full 3 weeks after the election, The New York Times finally took a serious look and reported that, anticipating a large turnout in a tight race, Florida election officials had given laptop computers to precinct workers so they would have direct access to the State's voter rolls, but the computers only went to some precincts and only one went to a precinct whose people were predominantly black. The technology gap in the no-laptop precincts forced the workers there to rely on a few phone lines to the head office. Voters whose names did not appear on the rolls were held up, while workers tried to get through on the phone, for hours, or until they gave up.

For those who voted, there was another technology glitch. Mr. Speaker, 185,000 Floridians cast votes that did not count. Theirs were the ballots that had been punched too few or too many times, or were otherwise flawed. Flaws too, seem to have followed race lines. In an election that turned on a few hundred votes, Floridians whose ballots failed to register a mark for President were much more likely to have voted with computer punch cards than optical scanning machines. In Miami Dade, the county with the most votes cast, predominantly black precincts saw their votes thrown out at 4 times the rate of white precincts. According to the Times, one out of 11 ballots in predominantly black precincts were rejected, a total of 9,904.

Urban, multi-racial Palm Beach, home of the infamous butterfly ballot and Duval, where candidates' names were spread across 2 pages despite what the published ballot had shown, produced 31 percent of Florida's discarded ballots, but only 12 percent of the total votes cast in Duval, which has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the Nation, more than 26,000 votes were rejected, 9,000 from precincts that were predominantly black.

Many Floridians who found themselves ''scrubbed'' off the voting rolls were not purged accidentally, reports Gregory Palast for Salon.com. Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris paid a private firm, ChoicePoint, $4 million to cleanse the voting rolls, and the firm used the State's felon-ban to exclude 8,000 voters who had never committed a felony. ChoicePoint is a Republican outfit. Board members include former New York Police Commissioner Howard Safir, and billionaire Ken Langone, chair of the fundraising committee for Mayor Giuliani's aborted New York Senate bid.

I cannot complete all of what I would like to share, but I will be submitting this for the RECORD. Let the record show that we were here today, that we participated and we voiced our objection, and the fight will continue for justice and equality. People were disenfranchised, and that must be stopped and corrected.

The erroneous data wasn't their doing, ChoicePoint complains, the names came, raw, from the state of Texas. They were supposed to be reviewed locally, but they were distributed un-reviewed. African Americans dominate. (The 8,000 wrong names were ''a minor glitch'' ChoicePoint told Palast; a glitch fifteen times the size of the Texas Governor's lead.)

As for that election morning police checkpoint, near Tallahassee, Robert Chamber, a Black resident, told the Guardian UK he knew what it was about: ''putting fear in people's hearts. . . . '' The Florida panhandle is home to the largest concentration of neo-confederate white supremacist groups in the US. But this problem is no neo-nazi plot—it's racism of the institutional, not the exceptional kind, and even more devastating than the statistics has been Democratic leadership's silence. While African Americans in huge numbers know there was massive voter fraud, harassment and intimidation a la Jim Crow, the Democratic Party's white top-dogs have resolutely refused to talk about voting rights, race or racism—Why? For fear it will hurt them in the court of public opinion? Among white swing voters and southern Democrats? Already hurting in all of those places, they're trifling with one of the few solid voting blocks they've got left, (Blacks, Latinos, Jews.)

The NAACP came out strong, the weekend after the election, holding public hearings and gathering 300 pages of legally sworn testimony from 486 people who say they were denied their right to vote. With the Congressional Black Caucus the NAACP wrote to Janet Reno seeking a Justice Department investigation into possible violations of the Voting Rights Act. That was back on November 14th. Since then, the Gore campaign has filed dozens of lawsuits—not one deals with violations of voting rights. The Justice Department has initiated what officials go out of their way to characterize as a preliminary inquiry, not an investigation. (Alligator-wrestler Reno is scared to stir the waters in her home-state, where she's hoping to retire any day now, some say.)

The Gore team has chosen to try to eke some votes out of three counties with manual counts, and to make much of butterflies and chards, but nothing of race. (Recently, Gore told a reporter he was ''very troubled'' by the ''serious allegations.'' That's it.) His racist denial of the seriousness of racism makes nonsense out of US politics.

The Electoral College is a tool of racism. As Yale's Akhil Reed Amar wrote in the New York Times, ''the College was designed at

the founding of the country to help one group—white Southern males—and this year, it has apparently done just that.''

In the years after the forced-end of slavery, former slave states like Florida imposed those felon-disenfranchisement laws, precisely to disempower freed-but-impoverished Blacks. The political parties crafted the statewide primary system into what amounted to a white-man's private club to keep the newly enfranchised under the old establishment's control. Then came literacy tests and poll taxes—voters had to keep their tax-receipts on file—anything to keep electoral power in white hands. For an idea of what those tackling literacy tests faced, consider: under Jim Crow, Florida required that textbooks used by the public school children of one race be kept separate from those used by the other—even in storage.

After the 1965 Act was passed, states did everything they could to dilute Black influence. Winner-take-all systems, or absolute majority vote requirements were embraced to keep black candidates from winning over split fields of white candidates in local races—in just the same way as winner-take-all works in the presidential contest. More offices were filled by appointment. Legislative and congressional district lines were redrawn to keep black voting strength submerged.

None of this requires looking back very far: the same House Speaker, Tim Feeney, who wants the Florida legislature to select a Bush slate of Electors no matter what the vote-counters count, suggested reintroducing literacy tests just two weeks ago: ''Voter confusion is not a reason for whining or crying or having a revote,'' said Feeney. ''It may be a reason to require literacy tests.'' (Palm Beach Post, 11/16.)

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who may well be the final arbiter of which votes get counted and which (white) man gets the White House, is William Rehnquist, a segregationist from way back.

In 1962, Republican activist William (then ''Bill'') Rehnquist was the leader of Operation Eagle Eye, a flying squad of GOP lawyers that swept through polling places in south Phoenix to question the right of minority voters to cast their ballots. As Dave Wagner reported in the Arizona Republic last year, Rehnquist defended keeping African Americans out of stores and restaurants in Phoenix. In 1964, at the Bethune Precinct, (which was 40 percent Hispanic and 90 percent Democratic) Rehnquist and Operation Eagle Eye activists challenged every Black and Mexican voter's ability to read the Constitution of the United States in the English language (then a requirement.)

The result, according to one witness, was ''a line a half-block long, four abreast . . . They wanted people to become frustrated and leave.'' In his testimony to a US Senate hearing on his appointment to the Supreme Court, Rehnquist denied that he officially challenged anyone's right to vote. Just as today's defenders of Bush, argue that voter error, not bias, disproportionately shrank the counted vote, Rehnquist argued that he broke no rules, he was just following the law.

Trying to wage politics in the US while tiptoing around racism is like sidestepping an elephant. It's dangerous, it's not smart, and it won't work, What suppresses the Black and minority vote suppresses the Democratic and liberal-progressive vote. The majority of white male voters haven't pooled Democratic since 1964 and only women of color create the gender gap for Gore. Yet the unequal distribution of resources and bias that created a practically apartheid voting system in Florida was sustained by the Democratic Party—who approved of the process, try as they might to blame the Governor's cronies. And Democratic pro-drug war, pro-death penalty, pro-felon disenfranchisement policies stoked the racist atmosphere in which this election was held.

The conditions are ripe for a pro-democracy movement. A moment, at least: this is it. Some things have changed in the nation since 1964, and when the pubic has heard (or seen on CSPAN) the witnesses who gave the NAACP testimony, they have been shocked. Voter protests in Florida have built a multi-racial coalition, that is advocating the kind of electoral reform the whole nation could get behind. Among their demands: a non-partisan election commission, standardized voting procedures and federal enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. Add to that, the longer-term structural changes some advocate: instant run off voting, or some form of proportional representation, so that small parties (and minority constituencies) could build support for their issues without throwing elections to their foes.

The public has seen the Electoral College in its worst light: for the first time, the tyranny of a minority may contradict the popular will. Perhaps something will come of the shared experience of disenfranchisement. But not if we don't talk about what's at the root of it: racism. Not ''the system,'' but this particular, racist one. And those who've been marginalized must occupy the center. People of color are central to why our electoral system is set up this way; likewise, they must be at the heart of any movement for real democracy. We can get rid of the racism, but only if we all shove that elephant out at once.

[IMPORTANT NOTE: The views and opinions expressed on this list are solely those of the authors and/or publications, and do not necessarily represent or reflect the official political positions of the Black Radical Congress (BRC). Official BRC statements, position papers, press releases, action alerts, and announcements are distributed exclusively via the BRC-PRESS list. As a subscriber to this list, you have been added to the BRC-PRESS list automatically.]

RECEIVING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL BALLOTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I follow my colleague, because I believe it is important to speak to the real authority of this Nation, and that is the people of the United States of America, as I as well speak to my colleagues. I believe that this day should be further enlightened with an explanation of the reason of the objection in opposition of some reasons of the House of Representatives.

First, let me acknowledge something that is very dear to me: my choice to be a member of the United States Congress and the people's House is a purposeful choice. That choice is because it is, in fact, the people's House, the body closest to the American people, to touch and feel them and to understand them. For that reason, as a Texan, I went to Florida and spent almost the entire month of November interacting with Floridians, young people, minorities, working people, and the elderly. And to a one, they expressed to me their consternation, their concern, their fear, that they had not voted correctly, or that they were thwarted and prohibited from voting.

So as I reflected on this very important day; in fact, January 6, 2001, a day in years past that most Americans never realized in presidential elections that on this day, as ordered by statute, we are to come here and to affirm the electoral college.

But as I rummaged, if you will, or ran my fingers through the Constitution of the United States, I found the words of Alexander Hamilton, and they say, ''The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged, for among old parchments or musty records, they are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature by the hand of the divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.''

So I felt obligated passionately, without regard for political reprimand, to come forward and to voice my opposition to the inaccurate and the unjust count in the State of Florida. There are voiceless people throughout this Nation in States all across this country who believe that their votes were not accurately counted. Today, in order to do that, I presented to this body a letter signed by Members of the House without a Senator to suggest that I would object to the inaccurate count in Florida, as well as the violations of the Voter Rights Act of 1965.

Additionally, I submitted a motion to delay, because what is required, or what we should have, is a quorum. That means that all of my colleagues should have been able to secure the appropriate time to be able to be here. I respect them. I know that they have responsibilities in their districts. So my motion would have delayed this vote, until a quorum could have been achieved, for both the House and the Senate. Because I would remind my colleagues that in this place, it is the people's House and every single American should have had the right of having their representative here. I wanted to give my colleagues the chance to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the diplomacy and the decorum of the President in this instance, the Vice President of the United States, AL GORE. I cannot thank him enough for the way he presided over these proceedings, and I understand his overruling my objections. But in so doing, I must say to my colleagues that even as he overruled it because of the Rules of the House, I stand here today to put on record the fact that it is important that we acknowledge the existence of the Voter Rights Act of 1965, which affirms the right of every U.S. citizen to cast their ballot and have that ballot counted and be protected without compromise and without regard to the voter's race.

Mr. Speaker, this is a task for the Federal Government, because Federal guarantees and Federal elections are at stake. That is why on the very first day of this new body, I put into the record H.R. 60 and H.R. 62. I am serious