

to expel the widow of missionary Graham Staines from the country, and now they are harassing Mrs. Khalra. This is Indian democracy in action, and it is not pretty.

There was one eyewitness to the kidnapping of Jaswant Singh Khalra, a man named Rajiv Singh Randhawa. Last year, he was arrested in front of the Golden Temple in Amritsar for trying to hand a petition to the British Home Minister. In light of repeated incidents like this, India should be embarrassed to proclaim itself "the world's largest democracy."

Mr. Speaker, the United States should not sit idly by and let these acts of repression go on without consequences. Our government must immediately press for the release of Mrs. Khalra and the 52,000-plus Sikh political prisoners currently being held without charge or trial in India, as well as the thousands of other political prisoners of other nationalities. All of them must be released. If they are not, I urge them to secure their release by running for political office from their jail cells.

In addition, America should stop its aid to India and support an internationally-supervised vote on the political status of Punjab, Khalistan, of Kashmir, of Nagalim, and of all the countries seeking their independence. Remember that India promised in 1948 to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir, a promise it has not kept. It is time for India to start acting like a democracy. This vote would be a good way to start.

Mr. Speaker, I have here an Urgent Action Request from the Canadian branch of the World Sikh Organization demanding the immediate release of Mrs. Khalra. It was brought to me by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. I would like to place it in the RECORD to show my colleagues the real workings of Indian democracy.

URGENT ACTION REQUEST

OTTAWA, NOVEMBER 3, 2001.—The World Sikh Organization requests your immediate assistance to procure the release of Mrs. Laswant Singh Khalra and six other human rights activists and lawyers who were arrested by the Indian police on November 2, 2001. It is known that these individuals were arrested to prevent their participation in political events in Punjab, and to prevent public protest. Mrs. Khalra's husband, Jaswant Singh was the lead investigator who uncovered illegal cremation grounds maintained throughout Punjab by police. Mr. Khalra and Mr. Jaspal Singh Dhillon both leaders of the Human Rights Wing of the Shiromani Akali Dal were arrested, and presumably tortured by the very same Punjab Police they sought to prosecute. Mr. Khalra was tortured to death, and now Mrs. Khalra and six others have been arrested under a charge of "threat to the peace".

Soft-spoken and peaceful, Mr. and Mrs. Khalra visited with Canadian and American politicians, including Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien to apprise them of ongoing oppression in Punjab. Providing evidence of the disposal grounds for thousands of unidentified Sikhs murdered by Indian officials with the support of central government, Mrs. Khalra has been an outspoken activist since the murder of her husband. Nonetheless the central Indian government has been seeking general amnesty for the police officers involved in the cremation grounds and thousands of other illegal executions. Since the

early nineteen eighties thousands of Sikhs have suffered illegal arrest, detention, torture, and murder at the hands of state and government officials. Arresting human rights activists like Mrs. Khalra and lawyers involved in important human rights cases, once again prevents public scrutiny of the realities of present day Punjab. Recently a professor by the name of Davinder Singh was prosecuted under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act, an Act which was purportedly repealed in 1995. Despite the United Nations condemning India's laws, and evidence of coercion and torture of the accused for the purposes of extracting a confession, Mr. Singh has been sentenced to the death penalty. In India, the new Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) seeks to fill the void created following the lapsing of TADA, and makes the TADA legislation look mild. POTO provides for suppression of information and therefore makes journalists subject to terrorism charges if they publish information unfavorable to the government. It makes the disclosure of information to police investigators mandatory with prison terms of up to three years for non compliance. Under the POTO citizens of Punjab will be forced to live in a police state that is even more brutal than the last two decades.

We need your urgent assistance to let the Indian government know that democratic nations will not tolerate such abuses of innocent citizens and such shameless violations of civilian rights from a Commonwealth partner. Please take every action possible to obtain the immediate release of Mrs. Khalra and six other lawyers, and to repeal the death penalty sentence against Davinder Singh. Your active and vocal response to these travesties of justice are imperative to the future of all civilians in India.

POEMS BY WENDELL PIGG AND EDYTHE OWSTON

HON. ED BRYANT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2001

Mr. BRYANT. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share with the Members of the House of Representatives two excellent poems written by my constituents. Both are members of Unit 19, American Legion Auxiliary in Columbia, TN. Post Commander Wendell Pigg, grew up on a farm in Maury County and served our Nation during the Korean war. Despite ill health at times, his love of country and devotion to his community has never waned. He was so moved by the happenings of September 11, 2001, that 3 days later he wrote a poem entitled "Our Flag, Old Glory."

OUR FLAG, OLD GLORY

(By Wendell Pigg)

You've been shelled and shot and battered
around
Burned and cast upon the ground
You've had terrorists attack you and tear
you down,
Lifted you up and bent you around.
You've been mistreated on land and on sea
You have always gotten up for us to see.
I saw you today, at half-mast you stood
I noticed you really didn't look so good.
Tears were seen falling as our Old Glory
wept.

We could tell it had been a while since you
had slept

Thank you, Old Flag, for seeing this through
Another crisis for me and you.

Old Glory they call you and, Oh, what a
name

With all your splendor and all your fame.

You've stood with us and have held our hand
God Bless America, United We Stand!

Auxiliary member, Edythe Owston, is not a native Tennessean, but has become a vital part of the community since moving from California in 1994. The events of September 11 moved her to write a poem, entitled "Our Great Country."

OUR GREAT COUNTRY

(By Edythe Owston)

Our ancestors came from overseas,
When they landed here they fell to their
knees.

They were given the freedom they did not
know,

Thankfulness and prayers they had to show.
They made a great nation, for which we are
proud,

Prejudice and hatred should not be allowed.
Now let's work together to keep this land
blessed.

It will happen if we all do our best.

So three cheers for red, white, and blue,

This great country that belongs to me and
you.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOHN CONWAY

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a solemn heart that I like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to one of the true pioneers in Colorado's ski industry. Mr. John Conway recently passed away from natural causes at the age of 84, and as his friends and family mourn his passing, it is only appropriate that we thank John for his contributions to the Vail area and the State of Colorado.

Mr. Conway was a major figure in the creation of the Vail ski area. He began by serving as a real estate appraiser in the 1950's. As the idea for creating the ski area that is now Vail took shape, John began finding land suitable for the resort.

John was tasked with the responsibility to personally convince ranchers and farmers of the need for a ski resort in the area. Working side-by-side with the landowners, John convinced the different owners to sell their land to the corporation that came to be known as Vail Associates. The steps that John took to put together the foundation for Vail ski area was a necessary step to making Vail ski area one of the premier ski destinations in the nation and the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that we remember John Conway. His vision, dedication and service to the resort industry has allowed Vail to become a popular and successful ski area in the State of Colorado.