

[Ceremonial Swearing-In Jan. 5, 2003,
Cleveland, Ohio]

IRAQ AND THE ECONOMY

(By Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich)

The America I envision seeks world unity instead of unilateralism. It gains its power through being the first to help, not the first to strike. It extends itself to the peoples of the world to life their burden. It is an America, which when asked for help, dispenses bread instead of bombs, medical assistance instead of missiles, and food instead of fissile materials.

There is a role for America in the world. It is in working with the community of nations to achieve the security of all nations. It is in restoring the promise of the Non Proliferation Treaty to lead the way to get rid of all nuclear weapons. It is through strengthening and abiding by international treaties. It is in assuring control and eventual elimination of biological and chemical weapons, and landmines. It is in protecting our global climate.

America can help protect the world. America can help save the world. But America cannot control the world, nor should we want to do so.

Yet our Administration would project American power for the purpose of domination. The National Security doctrines call for America to strike any where it pleases and to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Our nation is now poised to go to all-out war against Iraq. Iraq has not committed any act of aggression against the United States. Iraq was not responsible for 911. No credible evidence exists linking Iraq to Al Qaeda's role in 911. Iraq was not responsible for the anthrax attack on our nation. The United Nations has yet to establish that Iraq has usable weapons of mass destruction. There is no intelligence that Iraq has the ability to strike at the United States. According to the CIA, Iraq has no intention to attack America, but will defend itself if attacked.

Why then, is our nation prepared to send three hundred thousand of our young men and women into house to house combat in the streets of Baghdad. Why is our nation prepared to spend \$200 billion or more of our hard-earned tax dollars for destruction of Iraq?

Why is our nation preparing to use the most powerful military machine in history to wage an assault against the people of Iraq, to destroy their houses and buildings, to wipe out their water and electric systems and to block their access to food and medical supplies?

There is no answer which can separate itself from oil economics, profit requirements of arms trade, or distorted notions of empire-building.

War with Iraq is wrong. But if war is prosecuted further in Iraq, we must be prepared to advance the cause of peace in this country. We must be prepared to stand up, to speak out, to organize, to march, to demand an end to the war, or to demand an end to an administration which insists on war.

It is urgent we oppose this war. It will dominate our nation's priorities. It will threaten Social Security. It will threaten Medicare. It will block a prescription drug benefit for the elderly. It will stop America from providing jobs for all, health care for all, education for all.

There are some who believe that it is unpatriotic to challenge the Administration on the war. They believe it is politically wiser to debate the economy. But how can one reasonably separate war from the budget, war from the economy, war from America's ability to meet the needs of the people of this nation?

The Administration's own top economic adviser said the war could cost up to \$200 bil-

lion. Our federal budget is already close to a \$200 billion deficit due to huge tax cuts for the wealthy. Remember when we had a budget surplus?

Each time the administration talks about war, fear is created and when fear goes up, the market goes down. War will mean a sharp increase in oil prices, which will hurt jobs in manufacturing and transportation. One economic study with a worst-case scenario puts the cost of an all-out war, plus long-term occupation of Iraq at \$1.6 trillion.

You cannot separate war from the economy. You cannot separate war from America's ability to meet the needs of our own people here at home.

We need to ask the questions: Why does America have hundreds of billions to ruin the health and take the lives of innocent people in Iraq but no money to provide health care for all Americans?

Why would America spend hundreds of billions to retire Saddam Hussein, but no money to protect the retirement security of its own people?

Why does America have money to blow up bridges over the Euphrates River in Iraq, but no money to build up bridges over the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland?

The path America must take is one of peace which leads to prosperity. It is one which understands that creating a structure of peace ensures that economic structures can be sound, affirmative of human needs and restorative of human values.

This is the dream of a Department of Peace making nonviolence an organizing principle in our society—making the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a reality—working to make war itself a thing of the past. It is this ethic of peace building which will cause us to take down weapons from the heavens and work to create a heaven on earth.

Peace and prosperity shall be as two pillars in a newly rebuilt America which provides for the economic and social security of its own people as a cause of nationhood and for the economic and social progress of peoples of other lands as a cause of brotherhood.

This confirmation of the purpose of nation was the dream of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society, and John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier. This shall continue to be our dream in the days ahead, that no matter the darkness, we shall holdup the light of America's higher purpose, which calls to us across the age from Washington. Jefferson and Adams through Lincoln to the present day.

Our nation has always had a higher calling, despite the darkness of 911 and the official response to it. It is a calling to maintain the quest for democracy, for freedom and liberty at times of peril as well as in times of peace. That higher calling is our heritage. The words of Francis Scott Key still echo:

"Oh say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave, o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" he celebrated the link between freedom and bravery: it takes courage to live in a democracy. It takes courage to stand up to terrorists and maintain basic liberties. It takes courage to lead the way toward global disarmament while some are bent on destruction.

It takes patience to face dictators around the world and not be tempted to bomb them into submission. It takes wisdom to have great power and to make gentle its presence in the world.

And it takes compassion to understand the plight of peoples world wide who themselves are trying to survive, to live out their own humble lives despite having conditions which are challenging or governments which are oppressive.

My friends. This is still your government. You have a right to have a say in how its

destiny is being charted. That right derives from our very Declaration of Independence, which claimed self-governance as a basic right. Government does not just happen in Washington, DC. It is the result of a process that takes place in thousands of cities, villages and townships. It is also a process which also takes place in our hearts, which is brought to life by our love of country, and our love of each other.

VETERANS BEING DENIED HEALTH BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REHBERG). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, at a time of pending war, the President has submitted a program to this House referred to as the stimulus package that will direct about \$300 billion to the richest 5 percent of America's citizens, and I would like to place that against further decisions made by this administration which affect America's veterans.

At a time of possible war, at a time when we talk about our admiration for our military and at a time when we verbalize our appreciation for those who have served our country in military service, we are treating our veterans in the most shabby manner.

A case in point, last February the Veterans Administration increased the copayment that veterans must pay for prescription medications by a whopping 350 percent. Now at a time when we find money to give billions to the richest among us, we are nickel and diming America's veterans. Perhaps the most egregious example of how we are shortchanging our veterans is found in a memo that was written on July 19, 2002, a memo that was sent out by the Deputy Under-Secretary for Operations and Management of the Veterans Administration. I would like to read a few comments from that memo. It was sent to all of the health care providers across the country.

It says, "As you are aware, the Veterans Health Administration is currently facing a growing crisis related to the continuing demand for health care services that exceeds our resources. Moreover, actuarial projections indicate a widening gap in the demand versus resource availability." And then the shameful conclusion of this memo, "Therefore, I am directing each network director to ensure that no marketing activities to enroll new veterans occur within your networks." Let me read that sentence again. "I am directing each network director to ensure that no marketing activities to enroll new veterans occur within your networks."

Even though some sites may have local capacity as a national system, all facilities are expected to abide by this policy. Marketing activities may include generalized mailings to veterans, prohibited. Local newspaper or newspaper articles encouraging veterans to

enroll, prohibited, or similar public service announcements. In other words, the policy of the VA is to withhold information from veterans regarding the services that they are legally entitled to.

Now, I call this the new "if they do not ask, we will not tell" policy. If the veterans do not ask what services they are entitled to under the law, the VA policy is that we will not tell them. And, furthermore, we will prohibit our health care providers from reaching out to sick or disabled veterans and telling them what this body has provided under the law for them. This is shameful. I ask how the American people can tolerate and why the administration would institute such a policy that says to America's veterans that they may be entitled to certain services legally, health services, but we are prohibiting. Think of that, we are prohibiting our network providers from giving veterans information that they deserve, that they need to know in order to get the services that they are legally entitled to receive. This is shameful.

I call upon the administration and I call upon those of us who are Members of this body to hold this administration accountable for this shameful act. I wonder how many veterans who have served this country and paid with their health and their bodies understand what this administration is doing to them.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 22) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 22

Resolved, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following committees:

Committee on Agriculture: Mr. Stenholm of Texas.

Committee on Appropriations: Mr. Obey of Wisconsin.

Committee on Armed Services: Mr. Skelton of Missouri.

Committee on the Budget: Mr. Spratt of South Carolina.

Committee on Education and the Workforce: Mr. George Miller of California.

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Mr. Dingell of Michigan.

Committee on Financial Services: Mr. Frank of Massachusetts.

Committee on Government Reform: Mr. Waxman of California.

Committee on International Relations: Mr. Lantos of California.

Committee on the Judiciary: Mr. Conyers of Michigan.

Committee on Resources: Mr. Rahall of West Virginia.

Committee on Science: Mr. Hall of Texas.

Committee on Small Business: Ms. Velazquez of New York.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Mr. Oberstar of Minnesota.

Committee on Veterans Affairs: Mr. Evans of Illinois.

Committee on Ways and Means: Mr. Rangel of New York.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 23) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 23

Resolved, That the following Member be, and is hereby, elected to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct:

Mr. BERMAN of California.

The resolution was agreed to.

The motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, today we have successfully debated and passed a bill to provide an extension of unemployment benefits to millions of Americans who find themselves out of work. This is a laudable activity for us to be involved with and I was proud to be able to support that particular piece of legislation.

I find, however, that we are soon going to be debating another piece of legislation that is referred to as an economic stimulus package, and during the course of that debate we will undoubtedly be talking about the number of jobs that need to be created in the United States in order for our economy to get moving again. All of these things I support and I believe need to be done, but I also believe that there is something which has been left out of the equation and left out of the discussion when it comes to jobs and providing economic benefits for American citizens. I underline the word "citizens" because what has happened over the course of the last decade is that we have allowed into this country, illegally we have allowed into this country between 8 and 13 million people. We do not know for sure, of course, because they came without our permission. They came across the borders. We are told that they are here working and taking jobs no other Americans would take.

Mr. Speaker, I get many, many letters from people in my district who are out of work and they tell me that they would take any job available to them. There are steelworkers out of work, factory workers up and down the East Coast, all across the rust belt, these people are willing to take any job

available; but, of course, other people have gotten there before them. But, who are these people? Up to 13 million of them are people who are not citizens of this country.

□ 2200

We import them. Of course it is true that many businesses hire people who are here illegally, even knowingly hire people who are here illegally because they believe they will work for less, they will work under conditions that perhaps other people would not. We take advantage of many people. They are oftentimes manipulated by unscrupulous employers once they get here.

This is all bad, it is all illegal, but we ignore it and we suggest that we have to do something else to provide jobs for people who are here. But why do we not look at the fact that if we secure our own borders, if we ask people who are here illegally to return to their country of origin, that we would immediately provide millions of jobs for American citizens? Only we would not have to spend another dollar; we would not have to appropriate any more money.

Today it was 7 or \$8 billion for the extension of unemployment benefits, but doing what I ask, and that is to secure our borders, to identify people who are here illegally and deport them. This does not really cost all that much. That is what the Federal Government should be doing. That is our role and responsibility, to secure the border, to know who is coming into this country, for how long and for what purpose. We choose not to do that. We choose not to do that because there are political implications there, and there are political ramifications of such a decision. If we were to actually defend our own borders and control the process so that people coming into this country would do so in a legal process, we would, of course, diminish the flow of illegal immigrants. That would upset the Democrats because they would say that this would impede their ability to gain potential voters, knowing that many immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, would flock to the Democratic Party.

On the other hand, we have the Republican Party which says that if we were to secure our own borders, if we were to stop the flow of illegal immigrants into the country, that would impede the ability of businesses to hire cheap labor. Both of these reasons are, I think, bogus. They do not reflect what we should be doing in this body and, that is, to uphold the law. We should be demanding that the INS, we should be demanding that this administration uphold the law and that we address the issue of border patrol, increasing border patrol and also putting the military on the border which is absolutely necessary in order for us to achieve any degree of security on our borders and on our coastline. That is imperative. But we refuse to do it. We are fearful of doing it.