

schools and community centers, sharing their experiences from all parts of the world.

Since 1961, more than 168,000 have volunteered in the Peace Corps. I was among the first in the mid-sixties. I spent two unforgettable years working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Medellin, Colombia. I have carried that experience with me ever since.

National Peace Corps Day will be a day of reflection for me. As I think back to my experience—and how it led me into public life and ultimately here to the U.S. Congress—I also think of the new opportunities for the next generation. I think of the fifteen volunteers from my home district who are now all over the world serving as Peace Corps volunteers. In particular, I think of Matthew Allen who began his service in Thailand last April. I remember him talking to me, asking me if going into Peace Corps was the right thing to do. I remember telling him that going into Peace Corps would be one of the most important decisions of his life.

It was for Matthew Allen, and thousands like him, that I introduced a bill last Congress—the Peace Corps Charter Act for the 21st Century—to increase the number of volunteers in the Peace Corps. I would like every American, who is qualified and wants to serve in the Peace Corps, to have the same opportunity that I did.

I have introduced the bill again this Congress—H.R. 250. Among other things, it authorizes sufficient funds to double the number of Peace Corps volunteers by 2007. The President shares this goal and I hope that he will support this legislation. The bill also calls for the Peace Corps to enhance person-to-person contacts with the Middle East. It calls for Peace Corps to provide expanded training in HIV/AIDS treatment for volunteers in Africa and Asia.

H.R. 250 also authorizes the creation of a new fund which supports the third goal of the Peace Corps—bringing the Peace Corps experience home to communities in America. This is exactly the spirit of National Peace Corps Day.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Peace Corps today and everyday. Contact Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in their districts. Ask them to bring the story of Peace Corps to their schools and community centers. I would also ask them to support H.R. 250, so that everyone who is willing and able will have the opportunity to become part of this great American experience.

TRAINING FOR REALTIME
WRITERS ACT OF 2003

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to sponsor the "Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2003," which I introduced this afternoon with Representative ISAKSON from Georgia. I also would like to thank Senator HARKIN for introducing the companion bill in the Senate.

Today, over 28 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing. Approximately 90% of these individuals rely on captioning services to participate in mainstream activities. In addition, research has found that many more people

can benefit from watching captioning television, such as those learning English as a second language, illiterate adults, young children learning to read, and remedial readers.

Today the potential audience for captioned television is estimated at nearly 100 million, including the deaf and hard-of-hearing. There are approximately 30 million learning English as a second language, 27 million illiterate adults, 12 million young children learning to read, and 3.7 million remedial readers.

Furthermore, the events of September 11th demonstrate how imperative it is to have more closed captions. The captioning industry was strained to capacity in this effort to ensure that round-the-clock news and information was accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing citizens of our country. Without this service, a segment of our population would have been without critical information during a national crisis.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandated that all television programming be fully captioned by 2006. The mandate is unrealistic, however, given the current number of trained closed captioners. Presently, schools are educating only half as many closed captioners as are needed to provide captioning services, leaving thousands of hours of programming unavailable to the deaf or hard of hearing. Thus, this legislation we are introducing today will provide grants to schools to educate students to become proficient in closed captioning and provide this important service to many people.

It is not right for so many of our citizens to be without access to such significant news or be excluded from mainstream activities due to a lack in captioning services. Let us fulfill the promise we made in the Telecommunication Act of 1996 and help the deaf and hard of hearing and many others by increasing the number of qualified closed captioners. This will ensure access to closed captioning television for everyone who requires such services.

RECOGNITION OF TIFFANY TRITCO

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

MR. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Tiffany Tritco, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 1444, and in earning the most prestigious honor of the Gold Award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement attainable in girl scouting. To earn the Gold Award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, 1. Earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, 2. Earning the career exploration pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, 3. Earning the senior girl scout leadership award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, 4. Designing a self-development plan that requires assessment of

ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote girl scouting, and 5. Spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout Gold Award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her Gold Award Project, Tiffany organized an arts and crafts collection for a special needs camp.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Tiffany Tritco for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of the Gold Award.

WAR WITH IRAQ

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I commend this speech by the leader of the liberal party in the House of Lords.

Baroness Williams of Crosby: My Lords, I too thank the Deputy Leader of the House for the very forceful, although not at all untypical, way in which she addressed the House. We on these Benches share completely the objective of the disarmament of Iraq. There is no question about that.

I want to remind the noble Baroness of the second part of Resolution 1441. It states that Iraq should have, "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council", and that it has been accordingly decided, "to set up an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing to full and verified completion the disarmament process".

The difference between these Benches, the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and the noble Baroness, Lady Symons, is straightforwardly that we believe that the present draft resolutions pre-empt that process, that it is not yet completed, and that there is still an opportunity to avoid war. Let me say very clearly, in case there is any misunderstanding, that we believe that we, as powerfully as any other part of this House, have an obligation to our troops to make absolutely certain that men and women are not put into war, risking their lives, unless it can be shown to be absolutely necessary to do so. It is to that that I intend to address my remarks. The first question is whether we are convinced that Iraq is an imminent and present threat. There is no question but that it could be a potential threat, although I must dispute briefly with the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford. Not only the CIA in the United States but Ministers in this House have on more than one recent occasion admitted that there is no clear evidence to link Al'Qaeda to the Government of Iraq, much as we might find things easier if that were so. That must be stated very explicitly, because repeating a misconception over and again does not turn that misconception into a truth. Therefore, I doubt whether we can show that Iraq is an imminent threat.

If we are seeking imminent threat, I need only quote from a very senior colleague of mine who is the head of the security unit in the Belfer Center at Harvard University. Ash Carter is a former National Security Agency assistant secretary. He said: "News reports late last week indicated that . . . North Korea is trucking the fuel rods away where they can neither be inspected nor entombed

by an airstrike . . . as this loose nukes disaster unfolds and the options for dealing with it narrow, the world does nothing”.

That is a much more imminent threat.

Secondly, we are not convinced that containment has failed. I can quote from an authoritative source. These are the words of the Prime Minister himself in November 2000: “We believe that the sanctions regime has effectively contained Saddam Hussein in the last 10 years. During this time he has not attacked his neighbours, nor used chemical weapons against his own people”.—[Official Report, Commons, 1/11/00; col. 511 W.]

Nor has he done either in the past three years—since that statement.

Another authoritative source said: “Through a process of inspection and verified destruction, the UNSCOM inspectors have demolished more weapons capability than was destroyed by the allied forces during the Gulf war”.—[Official Report, Commons, 17/2/98; col. 900.]

Those are the words of Robin Cook, then the Foreign Secretary. Even much more recently, it has been restated more than once that containment has proved more effective in destroying weapons of mass destruction than any war at any time in the past few years. The third issue is whether we believe that the peaceful options have been exhausted. Again, I quote from two unimpeachable sources. The first is the Congressional Research Service of the United States Congress, which said: “In meetings with Blix and ElBaradei in Baghdad on February 8 and 9, 2003, Iraqi officials handed over documents on anthrax, VX, and missile programs . . . On February 10, Iraq notified the UN that it would permit overflights of American U-2, French Mirage, and Russian Antonov aircraft”.

Let us add to that the report in the Independent today, which said: “Mr. Blix said the details of the weapons”—

I have described when they were handed over to the inspectors—“were ‘positive steps which need to be explored further’. Asked if there was any indication by the Iraqis of ‘substantive progress or proactive co-operation’”, which are exactly the requirements mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Symons, Mr Blix, a man of few words, replied, “Yes”. That was only yesterday. We on these Benches are not persuaded that all peaceful options have been exhausted. We point, not to illusions or statements by Members on these Benches, but to clear and unimpeachable sources such as the Congressional Research Service and the chief inspector, Mr Blix himself. None of this would matter so much if the consequences of war were less serious than they are. I wish to say a few words about them. First, the Financial Times states: “The coalition of the willing, sounds ever more like a coalition of the reluctant”.

Huge pressures are being brought to bear, not least on moderate Muslim countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and others, to subscribe to being part of an alliance to destroy the Iraqi regime. Those countries have protested over and over again that they do not wish to be involved in the war.

Let me give two examples. There was a great deal of controversy over Turkey because it was argued that it had been refused Patriot missiles as a result of a disagreeable coalition between France and Germany. It later emerged that Turkey had never asked for Patriot missiles or for any of the other equipment that was sent to it. Turkey had asked for consultation under Article 4 of the NATO treaty. It had not invoked Article 5, which is the article concerning mutual defense. Even now, Turkey is driving a colossally hard bargain. Members of the House will have seen that one part of the bargain is

that Turkey should be allowed to bring 55,000 troops into northern Iraq—the Kurdish area, much of which is protected by a no-fly-zone—a situation which, at the very least, is likely to foment great anger and, at worst, could lead to civil war and the disintegration of Iraq. It has also—incidentally, almost—helped to destroy the real prospect of a united Cyprus entering the European Union some time in the next seven or eight years.

The International Crisis Group—I declare an interest as a board member—has discovered that there is tremendous public concern about the possibility of a war against Iraq in the Middle East. In its report, it states: “ICG interviews throughout the region, in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria, indicate that there exists wide and deep scepticism about US motives”. That may be unfair, but it is a fact that we have to take into account when deciding whether the price of war is too high. It also emphasizes the importance of pursuing every other possible alternative.

I need not add the special complication of the wretched situation in the Middle East, referred to in another place yesterday by that distinguished and brave Member of Parliament, Gerald Kaufman, as the daily almost casual slaughter of Palestinians by the IDF and the daily almost casual slaughter of Israelis by terrorists from the West Bank and Gaza. We cannot pretend that this is not a desperately serious complication. With great respect to the noble Baroness, Lady Symons, she and I both know that the reason why the UN resolutions are mandatory on Iraq, and not mandatory on Israel, which has also broken many of them, is because the United States refuses to agree to their being made mandatory on Israel.

I have the greatest respect for the Prime Minister. He has virtually ripped himself into pieces trying to hold the Administration in the United States to the UN process. He is the reason why George Bush went to the United Nations: I pay the Prime Minister great credit for that. But the distinction I have just drawn between Israel and Iraq shows all too clearly that it is not the Prime Minister who is in the driving seat. It is concern about who is in the driving seat that underlies much of the scepticism.

I do not need to mention at length the possible humanitarian consequences of a war. That has been done effectively by the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford. But they are extreme. One has only to consider the desperate plight with regard to food. According to a leaked UN document, 30 per cent of children under five will be at risk of death from malnutrition if the war lasts more than a week or so. There are also warnings about cholera and many other extreme diseases. The warnings come from a United Nations leaked document, called the “Humanitarian Consequences of the War”.

Before I come to my conclusion, I shall say in the words of a famous politician whom many Labour Members of this House will remember, “You don’t need to look at the crystal if you can read the book”.

What is the book? The book concerns Afghanistan. I shall quote again from two sources, the first of which is The Times of 13 February, which states that “large parts of the country are once more on the verge of anarchy”.

An article by the senior fellow at the American Council on Foreign Relations—I declare an interest as a member of its international advisory council—states: “Basic security and stability have still not been achieved”. Worst of all, when the President drew up his budget for 2004, he forgot to put even a penny for the reconstruction of Afghanistan into it. Paul Krugman, of the New York Times, states: “The Bush team forgot

about it. Embarrassed Congressional staff members had to write in \$300 million to cover the lapse”.

So much for Afghanistan, already largely forgotten, coming back to anarchy, and neglected by the international community.

I conclude with two thoughts. First, there is clear evidence that the obsession with Iraq is drawing us away from what should be our first priority, which is to attack international terrorism. For that we need the widest possible support. I shall not go on quoting, but it was President Jimmy Carter who said a few days ago that the obsession with Iraq had essentially diverted the American Administration from concern about terrorism. There is more evidence that we are beginning to neglect the remnants—not dead remnants, but live ones—of Al’Qaeda in many other parts of the world. Finally, there is a fundamental thought, to which my colleague Lord Wallace of Saltaire will address himself. There is undoubtedly among European opinion, including the United Kingdom, more than 80 per cent opposition to a war without UN support and considerable opposition to a war even with UN support. That does not reflect anti-Americanism, except perhaps among a small minority. Many of us regard America as one of the most enterprising, imaginative, democratic and open societies in the world. What it reflects is concern with an Administration propelled to some extent by what I can only describe as a fundamentalist Christian and fundamentalist Jewish drive that is almost as powerful as fundamentalist Islam itself. The Administration has set aside the structures of the multilateral community by removing themselves from treaties and conventions, by refusing to sign the Kyoto agreement or agreeing to the biological weapons convention being resumed, and now by embarking on nuclear plans that threaten even the nuclear proliferation treaty. It is who is in the driving seat that frightens many of us; certainly not that great country the United States.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PAUL D. WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues, Representatives PATRICK KENNEDY, JIM RAMSTAD and many others, to introduce the Paul D. Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA) in the House. This bill, well named in memory of a dearly missed Congressional colleague and mental health advocate, ends a major barrier to mental health care by providing full parity in the health insurance coverage of mental illness with physical illness. It is time to heed the call of the 54 million Americans who suffer with the effects of mental illness every day of their lives and change this pernicious form of discrimination.

While the MHPA has received substantial bipartisan support in Congress and is supported in concept by the current administration, there remains a chorus of naysayers; primarily business lobbyists and insurance industry representatives. This chorus chants that this bill removes substantial flexibility by mandating the type of health benefits to offer. Yet examination of the facts refutes their contention. The bill does not require employers to