

What is worse, these two agreements appear to be just the beginning of the NAFTA legacy. Next we are told there is going to be a so-called Central America Free Trade Agreement, or CAFTA, that is currently being negotiated by the United States trade representatives. CAFTA has the potential to create a free trade zone in the Western Hemisphere that would flood our borders with cheap imports, and our only export, Madam Speaker, would be our good-paying jobs.

Madam Speaker, it is time we took a stand. It is time we put America's workers first.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to just simply look at the record. Our country has taken the wrong path. We cannot afford to go down this dangerous road any further. I urge my colleagues to oppose the Chile Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act and the Singapore Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. It is time we got our country back on track.

Madam Speaker, I represent 12 counties that stretch along the eastern and southern portion of Ohio. In one of my counties, Mahoning county, the unemployment rate this very day is 11.4 percent. In the City of Youngstown, the unemployment rate is 18.2 percent. I have people who have worked in steel mills and are now jobless. We have steel mills that are under threat. The china and pottery industry along the Ohio River is under threat. The titanium industry is under threat.

Our country is under threat, and I would urge the President and this Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, to recognize reality, to turn from our foolish ways and to return to the attitude that I believe our forefathers had before us, who believed that our first obligation as representatives in this body is to put this country and our communities and our constituents first.

CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOWDON, GEORGIA

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

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I did not rise to speak on this issue, but I just feel compelled to respond to some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are not directly questioning the honesty and truthfulness of President George W. Bush, but yet are doing it secondarily through these so-called "constituent letters."

I want to remind them that it is inappropriate, indeed, out of order, for a Member of Congress to speak in this House from this well and to suggest that the President is lying, that the President is untruthful, that the President deceived the American public. Whether they are saying that directly or they are suggesting it through these so-called constituent letters, they are

getting very, very close to crossing that line.

I want to remind my colleagues that this president was elected, for more than any other reason, because of his honesty and his integrity. The American people trust President Bush and applaud him for what he is doing, what he has done and what he will continue to do to bring peace to the Middle East.

Madam Speaker, actually I am rising today to celebrate the 105th anniversary of Bowdon, Georgia, a jewel of a city in the 11th Congressional District which I represent.

Bowdon has a proud history that dates back before the official founding of the city. In 1847, Carroll County troops from the Bowdon area, fighting under General Winfield Scott, defeated a large army under Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo, Mexico. The town of Bowdon was originally called Cerro Gordo to commemorate that victory. After Alabama Congressman Franklin Welch Bowdon assisted the town in securing a post office, the citizens honored him by renaming their town Bowdon in 1848.

Several years later, in 1853, about 30 local residents selected the present town site. Lots were sold to the highest bidder, with the most expensive lot going for \$10.50. The city grew quickly, and by 1855 Bowdon had five stores, several shops, a primary school and a high school. At least one of those original houses in Bowdon still stands today.

It was not long before the people of this community chartered Bowdon College in 1856. The college was the fifth chartered in Georgia. The school was a trailblazer in the State, as it was first to educate both men and women. With few resources, but with the commitment of a devoted community, Bowdon College educated thousands of poor but ambitious students until 1936. After the Civil War, Bowdon College was one of five endowed by the State of Georgia to educate wounded and disabled veterans, in 1866 and 1867. The program educated more than 200 veterans.

In the early part of the 20th Century, Bowdon flourished with cotton and lumber sales. Soon there was a demand for rail service, and a rail line was completed in 1910. Governor Hoke Smith and Congressman William Charles Adamson, a native of Bowdon, attended the ceremony to celebrate the completion of the line.

Bowdon expanded its job-base during the Great Depression, when Bowdon College graduate Warren Palmer Sewell opened a clothing plant in 1932. Warren Sewell Clothing was one of the top ten manufacturers of clothing in the country when he died in 1973.

Today, Bowdon remains a proud city in Carroll County. Each August, Bowdon holds its annual Founders Day celebration. This year, the city's 105th anniversary, the celebration will be particularly special.

INVESTIGATING REASONS FOR WAR WITH IRAQ

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I know that this journey that we have taken since the beginning of the year involving the war against Iraq in many instances confuses the American public.

I certainly applaud the American public's willingness to wholeheartedly support the men and women in the United States military. America has always joined together around its brave, strong and diligent men and women of the United States military when they have been put in harm's way and when they are in harm's way because of the principles or the direction of Members of this government.

So this discussion this evening is to separate out the respect and appreciation for their bravery. It is an attempt to calmly state that this Congress needs to do its responsible duty in terms of determining the basis upon which this war was declared and the intelligence that was gathered and the reasons given for going to war against Iraq.

If you read the beginning pages of our Constitution, the Founding Fathers, all of whom had some history in fleeing a despotic government, determined that this would be a perfect Nation, a Nation grounded in democratic principles, a transparent Nation. In the opening lines of the Constitution, it said we are organized to create a more perfect union. They believed that. They believed in transparency and they believed in the honesty of government and the integrity of government.

I believe that this Congress has a responsibility to openly discuss the intelligence gathering that led to the representation that the United States of America was about to be under imminent attack by Saddam Hussein and his troops and that we were in immediate danger.

Many of my colleagues came to the floor of the House during that vigorous debate in the fall of 2002 with great pain, believing that they had to cast a vote for the resolution that was on the floor that allowed the President to go to the United Nations, but if, if, the United Nations did not move, then the President interpreted the resolution to be able to move unilaterally, unilaterally, against Iraq.

In spite of the fact that many of us argued vigorously that an outright declaration of war was required under the Constitution, Article I, Section 8, a vote of this body, members of the majority disagreed with that, and they fought against what I think is the right thinking and forward thinking view of 133 Members of both Houses, who said we must have a constitutional vote on a declaration of war.

Madam Speaker, we had not gone to war, if you will, by the time of the 2003

State of the Union presentation made by this President. What had occurred was a lot of debate, a lot of involvement in the United Nations, but we had not gone at that time into Iraq.

It was a statement in the State of the Union, I believe, that framed for the American public the urgency of going. The words "recently purchased uranium from a Nation in Africa" caused the focal point to be on the fact that Saddam Hussein might have nuclear weapons that could be poised, if you will, directly at the United States of America.

That is why it is so extremely important that we have an independent commission, which I call for, and subsequently a special prosecutor, if necessary. That is why I have offered an amendment to the foreign operations appropriations bill to ensure that there be no funds blocking the creation of an independent commission, meaning no funds be used to block the creation of an independent commission.

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I hope that this amendment will be debated fully on the floor of the House on the basis of truth, not on the basis of partisanship. I have included as well in that amendment, or in amendments that I will offer, the idea of promoting women to be engaged more so in the peace processes. Whether it is in the Mideast or whether it is in discussions dealing with Liberia, women have been effective proponents and/or crafters of peace in international agreements, and I hope that can be the case.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important to note that Americans are equally concerned about a bipartisan, non-partisan independent commission that openly presents the facts in a public setting. I appreciate the fact that the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence is now reviewing this issue, but the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, behind closed doors, does not represent the people's House. It does not represent the people of America being able to understand the trail of information that would cause statements to be made about the status of a purchase of uranium or the intelligence that would suggest to this Nation that we had to go in right at that moment unilaterally and not multilaterally.

Just a brief statement: "I am looking to you and other Members of Congress to look beyond partisan politics and make the courageous choice to discover the truth about what the administration did and did not know about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction before sending our armed forces to Iraq." Lora Munsell, Jackson, Ohio.

Clearly this Congress must speak and must act. I would simply ask we allow an independent commission to go forward.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARRIS). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I have been here for a while and listened to the remarks such as those just given by my colleagues from the great State of Texas, but quite honestly I cannot understand how it is possible to criticize the President for the action that he took in Operation Iraqi Freedom and at the same time ask the President to go forward in an action in Liberia.

That being said, I think it is incumbent upon us on the Republican side of this House to point out that after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it had become apparent that the United States needed, the United States was required to be more vigilant about terrorism and weapons proliferation and pay particular attention to the prospect of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of groups or states that would use them against American interests, American interests either here at home or abroad. And unfortunately, over the prior 10 years we have seen that with attacks in Saudi Arabia, the Khobar Towers, the bombing of the Cole and, of course, the attacks here on September 11.

The Bush administration, the Clinton administration, indeed, the United Nations all agreed that Saddam Hussein possessed a significant biological and chemical capability in 1998 when the inspectors were withdrawn. There is broad agreement that Saddam Hussein, different from any other leader, had proven himself capable of using these weapons for offensive purposes and not merely in a defensive posture.

Where those weapons are today falls into one of several categories. They may still be hidden. Saddam Hussein had become a master of concealment. Please remember that in 1995 the United Nations was preparing to lift sanctions believing that Iraq had disarmed. It was only the defection of Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Jamal and the revelation that significant weapons were presented that halted the United Nations from lifting the sanctions in 1995.

Perhaps Hussein did destroy the weapons after the inspectors left in 1998. It seems preposterous on its face, but while this was unlikely given his other behavior, the burden of proof was clearly still on Saddam Hussein, not the United States, not President Bush and not the United Nations to demonstrate the destruction of the weapons had indeed occurred.

There is also the possibility that the weapons had degraded over time or were destroyed in the bombing or looted during the first combat phase in Iraqi Freedom. It does not really matter. The disorder and political uncertainty we are witnessing in post-war Iraq, while at one level unsettling, are to some extent a reflection of how completely Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime dominated and dictated Iraqi life.

There are efforts in the Congress to employ a full investigation into these

difficult issues to understand whether any mistakes were made and to take action to fix them in fulfillment of Congress's important oversight responsibilities.

To date, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence reject a broader probe of the weapons of mass destruction issue.

I believe that Congress is exercising its oversight authority and has set in place procedures to review comprehensively and on a bipartisan basis the intelligence surrounding Iraq prior to the outbreak of war and to take into account any dissenting views on the Iraqi threat within the intelligence community.

People who have lived in a police state with no freedom of speech are unlikely to volunteer information until stability and security are achieved in Iraq. We must remember 30 years of living under a dictatorship cannot be reversed overnight.

But the most important point is this: A free Iraq makes American and its allies safer by removing a destabilizing force in the region, removing a regime that pursued weapons of mass destruction, eliminating a state sponsor of terrorism and, ultimately, by serving as a living example to the people of the Middle East of the benefits of freedom and democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ASSURED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. EVANS. Madam Speaker, it is no secret to anyone in this body, nor to