

The question is, are we up to the task? Are the politicians up to the task of representing that same kind of competency and professionalism, if you will, in providing what that mission should be?

Mr. STRICKLAND. That is right. But we all know that talk is cheap. And the fact is that there are a lot of lofty words spoken in this Chamber, but we have a serious problem. There are moms and dads and sweethearts and husbands and wives, children, whose loved ones at this very moment are serving under the most difficult circumstances. They cannot be adequately protected. They are sitting ducks. We got excited in this town when there was a sniper loose and it took us weeks to identify that person, to find out who it was. Now there may be a sniper loose in the State of West Virginia and we are concerned about that. Baghdad is full of such snipers. Our soldiers are in fixed positions and they are being killed on a daily basis.

I asked Ambassador Bremer, what are we going to do? What is the plan? How are we going to keep these deaths from occurring? The answer I got is that we probably are going to have to accept the fact that there are likely to be continuing casualties.

That is not acceptable. We have got a responsibility to take a different course of action.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I know we are winding down, but before we do, I think we would be remiss if we did not note the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. In the future, I would hope we would include Afghanistan, because those same brave young men and women are in Afghanistan. Two stories today, Associated Press. The Taliban are no longer on the run and have teamed up with al Qaeda once again, according to officials and former Taliban, who say the religious militia has reorganized and strengthened since their defeat at the hands of the U.S.-led coalition nearly 2 years ago.

And now the administration is talking about doubling the aid from \$900 million to almost \$2 billion. I daresay that will be insufficient, but remember this, it is costing us \$11 billion a year to maintain a military presence in Afghanistan.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank my colleagues for being part of this tonight. Iraq Watch will be back next Tuesday night.

□ 2100

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2989, DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION AND TREASURY AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida (during the Special Order of Mr. SMITH of Michigan), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-258) on the resolution (H.

Res. 351) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, Social Security. I am disappointed that there are only about 22 people that have ever sponsored legislation to help solve the Social Security problem, probably one of the greater challenges that we have faced in this country as far as financial.

Certainly I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), my friend.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, and I want this on the RECORD, he is the man. He is the man on this. He and I have had these discussions in the past; and if there is anybody who understands the issue, anybody who has been more devoted on this issue, I do not know who it is. I have enormous respect for him not only for the depth of research that he has done on it but the passion he brings to the discussion. And it is something, in the context especially of the tragic circumstances we were just outlining, that definitely needs to be put forward because the financial stability of this country is at stake; and if there is anybody who is a leader in trying to confront that issue in a positive way, it is him.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Hawaii and I discussed, maybe it was 8 years ago, the problems of Social Security and the problems that we were pretending somehow that taking all the Social Security surpluses and spending them for other programs was not being something considered in this body or in the White House. The challenges of Social Security are real, and as short a time ago as 5 years to 6 years, it was considered very unpopular to discuss any changes in the Social Security system.

Certainly the fact that we have an aging population and a slowing down of the birth rate, in fact, many countries of the world, and the United States is approaching that situation, where we are going even below the zero sum growth. If a mother has an average of something like 2.2 children, then on average it is going to replace the mother and the father. But many countries of Europe, most countries of Europe, and now the United States, are approaching a situation where we are not reproducing a workforce that ultimately is going to have to pay Social Security benefits, and that is because we have a

Social Security system that is referred to as "pay as you go." That means we tax the existing workers of this country and their taxes immediately are sent out in benefits to recipients.

And to demonstrate how much Social Security has grown as far as a percentage of the total budget, I have drawn this pie chart; and that shows that Social Security is now the largest piece of pie, the largest portion of total Federal spending, representing 22 percent of total Federal spending. And defense, even with the increased challenges that we are now facing in Iraq and Afghanistan, Social Security is still a much higher cost than defense. And of course we see other entitlements. All other entitlement programs only represent 14 percent, but we should not overlook Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare it allows at 11 percent; but if prescription drugs are added to that program, the estimates are that the cost of Social Security and Medicaid will soon even be greater than Social Security.

So the question is what do we do about it? How do we come up with money? What do we do in an aging society? An aging society does not mean that each one of us is growing older, which is true, but rather that the elderly population is increasing more rapidly than the population as a whole. The second is that Social Security systems which provide most of the elderly people's financial support are not sustainable as they are presently structured. All we have seen in some other countries, what we have seen in most States of the United States, is moving from a fixed benefit program to a fixed contribution program.

There are three goals that I think we need to pursue in terms of making any changes in Social Security. Number one, that current retirees do not have a reduced benefit program. Number two, is that future retirees, our young workers today, can expect even a better retirement in terms of guaranteed money coming in during their retirement years than exist today for the current population. The number three requirement is that it should be a program that does not jeopardize our economy but encourages economic growth.

The next chart represents what has been happening in the Social Security. This past Friday the Congressional Budget Office came out with their new estimates of the economy and projections for our deficit spending in this country. Their projection was for this fiscal year, 2003, we would be having deficit spending, spending more than we are taking in, of \$562 billion. 562 billion includes all of the surplus money that is coming into the Social Security trust fund. Next year, they are projecting that we are going to have deficits, spending more than we are taking in, of \$644 billion. And I just say in relation to Social Security, we cannot continue to expand the spending of the Federal Government and at the same time not deal with the unfunded liability of Social Security, the