While the Patten Commission recommendations did not address all of the policing issues in Northern Ireland, they were a good starting point. Unfortunately, to date, Great Britain has not instituted any of these reforms. Police in Northern Ireland are not only an issue of fairness but also of basic human rights. Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the British Government dissolved the Royal Ulster Constabulary and replaced it officially with the Service of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, this new police service is the same old, same old, with a new fancy name. What we really find when we look below the surface of its new name is that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is no more representative or fair than the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The Police Service of Northern Ireland represents its Protestant representatives rather than the communities it polices. There are presently over 9,000 members. However, as of October, 2003, only 11.6 percent are Catholic while nearly one-half of all residents of Northern Ireland call themselves Catholic.

And the Police Service has also refused to stop using plastic bullets. Patten recommended research into alternatives to these inhumane policing tools and the rapid withdrawal of their use, and the British Government also gave a commitment to replace plastic bullets by the end of 2003. But today plastic bullets continue to be used by the police service.

The people of Northern Ireland do not feel safe and rarely rely on their public police services. Citizens are not calling the Police Service of Northern Ireland when they need assistance. They are afraid that the police will violate their rights rather than protect them in their time of need. Madam Speaker, I call on Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern to fully implement the Good Friday Agreement and immediately institute the Patten Commission recommendations. For a lasting peace to survive in Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement must be given the chance to fully succeed.

Unfortunately, the peace process cannot move forward. A small faction of individuals in Northern Ireland, many of whom are adamantly opposed to the accords, are holding the future of the peace agreement hostage. They have been successful in influencing the British Government to put the agreement and the power-sharing government on hold and therefore putting the Good Friday Agreement and the fragile peace in a very dangerous position.

Most recently these opponents have convinced Blair not to seek the new Belfast Assembly, even though elections were held 4 months ago. These elections, which saw record turnouts, were finally held this past November. However, to date, Prime Minister Blair has refused to reintroduce the Belfast Assembly.

Madam Speaker, as one can easily observe, the peace in Northern Ireland is hanging by a thread. Prime Minister Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern must bring all sides back to the table and reintroduce the Belfast Assembly.

Peace in Northern Ireland is finally within our grasp. The parties involved, which all signed the historic accords some 6 years ago, must now live up to the agreement and allow the people of Northern Ireland to govern themselves freely and fairly.

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

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

Creating Jobs for Americans

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

(Mr. DREIER, Madam Speaker, in response to Mr. Wyman’s argument that it is the duty of all American citizens to fight the layoff and a substantial severance package—1900)