During Black History Month, I thank Rev. Scipio for dedicating himself as a public and faith-based servant to protect our at-risk youth.

□ 1430

DEMOCRATS WORK EVEN WHEN HOUSE FLOOR NOT IN SESSION

(Mr. ISRAEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ISRAEL. Madam Speaker, I had not intended to speak either, but after listening to some of my friends from the other side of the aisle discuss how the House has finished and we have concluded business, they may be going home for the day, but I want to share with America and my constituents what I am going to be doing. I am not leaving. I am going to continue to work.

At 2:30, I will be meeting with a constituent group from my district. I am going to return to a hearing of the Energy and Water Subcommittee. I will be meeting with another group from my district at 3. I am meeting with the adjuvant general of the New York National Guard at 3:30. At 4, I am meeting with a member from the other side, Congresswoman EMERSON, to discuss the Center Aisle Caucus.

Then I have a 4:30 staff meeting, then a Humane Society meeting, then a U.S.-China Working Group meeting. Then I will be going to George Washington University to give a speech.

My friends, it is okay for you to go home at 2:00 when the legislative business is done, but many of us on this side, we are going to continue to do the work that the American people want.

DEMOCRATS WORKING HARD IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I had not intended to speak this afternoon either. Actually, I am late going to a military personnel subcommittee hearing where we are going to take a look at the changes that are going to happen to the Reserve Montgomery GI bill. It is running a little late because we had votes, but we are working here. I don't know where the other side is. They are in the minority now, and maybe they are going home; but we have a lot of things to get done for the American people.

When I finish with the military subcommittee, I will be going to the full Homeland Security Committee where we are going to receive a briefing on the SpyNet program. On this immigration issue that everybody in America thinks is so important, this is how we protect the borders and how we are using assets there, and we are going to get a briefing on that. That should include Republicans. I don't know if they will show up for that meeting, but they should.

After that, Madam Speaker, I have a subcommittee on oversight and investigations with respect to the House Committee on Armed Services where I also serve. And then I will meet with constituents, credit unions, and people who are in town. So we on this side of the aisle are working very hard to keep the work going on here in Washington, D.C.

DEMOCRATS WORKING HARD

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I, too, would certainly like to share my schedule. I have been listening and passing on and was not going to speak, but I heard complaints about work not being done.

I have a 4:00 meeting with the Progressive Caucus.

I have a meeting where we are going to be discussing the Employer Free Choice Act later this afternoon.

We have the National Wildlife Federation that is coming around to talk about their issues.

We then will be talking about the whole question of North Korea which is going on right now in the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The county executive from Hudson County, Mr. Tom DeGise, is coming over to discuss problems of the county.

Later in the afternoon, the president of Monmouth University will be in my office discussing their 2008 agenda.

We will have the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs to talk about peace between the Palestinians and Israelis, something that is extremely important.

I have a meeting scheduled with Ambassador Olhaye, Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps.

I could go on and on. My time has run out, but I have still 8 or 10 or 12 issues to meet on.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

(Mr. POE 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 Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CIVIL WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, finally, grudgingly, the administration has agreed to talk to Syria and Iran about the civil war that is raging in Iraq. This should have happened at least 2 years ago, so why now?

Has the President finally concluded what many of us have said for a long time: That you cannot shoot your way to a peace in Iraq? That would be a hopeful sign, but it is doubtful since he continues to escalate the U.S. presence in the middle of a civil war.

The apparent movement towards diplomacy comes at a curious time. The American people told their government last November to get their soldiers out of harm's way when they gave the Democrats a 2-year contract on the majority. And it didn't take long for this House to make a down payment on rebuilding trust with the American people.

Despite repeated Presidential claims that meant nothing, the overwhelming passage of Speaker PELOSI's first step in getting U.S. soldiers out of harm's way was the shot heard round the world.

No one wants to move faster than me in getting the soldiers out of Iraq. But every journey starts with a single step, and we have done it.

The American people and other nations welcomed the Speaker's leadership in getting this country to begin to set a new course in Iraq based on a reality, and not based on the same old rhetoric from the White House. They continue to bluster; so what else is new?

There are serious mainstream Middle East leaders who believe the U.S. policy has more to do with extraction than engagement. By extraction, they don't mean U.S. soldiers being extracted out of harm's way, they are referring to extracting Iraq's oil.

The Asia Times yesterday published two commentaries that are reverberating throughout the Middle East. One is called, ''U.S.'s Iraq Oil Grab is a Done Deal.'' And the other is entitled: ''Big Oil In, Stability Out Under New Iraqi Law.'' I will include the two articles for the RECORD.

As many articles in recent days have pointed out, the President's representatives in Iraq used intense pressure behind the scenes to get the Iraq government to take the first step in making production-sharing agreements, PSAs, the law of Iraq. There are scenarios in which investment and production will be a benefit to the Iraq people, but the Iraq people have to be solely in charge. As it stands, and as many fear, the

PSA language approved over the weekend could indenture Iraq's oil wealth to U.S. oil interests for decades to come.

As passed by the Iraq parliament, a new centralized government agency in Iraq, closely tied to the U.S., would have ultimate control over who gets access to Iraq's vast oil resources.

The oil industry itself says it costs one single dollar to extract a barrel of oil in Iraq, but that barrel brings $60 today on the world market. How does big oil, closely aligned to the President and Vice President, spell conservation? It is spelled I-R-A-Q.

Here is the U.S.-Iraq equation as seen by people from the Middle East: Billions of barrels of oil, billions of dollars in profits, dozens of U.S. military bases across Iraq, and thousands of U.S. soldiers remaining in Iraq.

The bottom line is this: Is the President hoping Iraq will import democracy, or will it export oil under the thumb of U.S. oil interests?

The production-sharing agreements have not yet been enacted into law. The outcome is still uncertain. But one thing is certain, production-sharing agreements that favor the U.S. means the U.S. will be in Iraq for decades. The President has expressed a new found interest in diplomacy.

Are we going to negotiate with Iran at the same time we push for PSA agreements to become law? A lot of people in the Middle East wonder. The U.S. needs to state its intentions if there is any hope for a diplomatic solution in Iraq.

We not only need to extract U.S. soldiers from Iraq, we also need to extract U.S. oil interests from dictating the oil future for the Iraqi people. The deeper the U.S. goes in influencing the distribution of Iraq oil wealth, the more we inflame the tensions and suspicions about why we invaded Iraq in the first place.

Remember weapons of mass destruction and Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda and democracy? Now it becomes clear what it is really all about: Getting control of Iraq oil.

Madam Speaker, we have got to have the President come clean. Perhaps he will do a White House speech on this.

[From the Asia Times, Feb. 27, 2007]

U.S.'s Iraq Oil Grab Is a Done Deal

(By Pepe Escobar)

''By 2010 we will need [a further] 50 million barrels a day. The Middle East, with two-thirds of the oil and the lowest cost, is still where the prize lies.''—U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, then Halliburton chief executive officer, London, autumn 1999.

U.S. President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney might as well declare the Iraq war over and out. As far as they—and the humongous energy interests they defend—are concerned, only now is the mission really accomplished. More than half a trillion dollars spent and perhaps half a million Iraqis killed have come down to this.

On Monday, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's cabinet in Baghdad approved the draft of the new Iraqi oil law. The government regards it as ''a major national project''. The key point of the law is that Iraq's immense oil wealth (115 billion barrels of proven reserves, third in the world after Saudi Arabia and Iran) will be under the iron rule of a fuzzy ''Federal Oil and Gas Council'' boasting ''a panel of oil experts from inside and outside Iraq''. That is, nothing less than predominantly U.S. Big Oil executives.

The law represents no less than institutionalized raping and pillaging of Iraq's oil wealth. It represents the death knell of nationalized (from 1972 to 1975) Iraqi resources, now replaced by production sharing agreements (PSAs)—which translate into savage privatization and monster profit rates of up to 75% for (basically U.S.) Big Oil. Sixty-five of Iraq's roughly 80 oilfields already known will be offered for Big Oil to exploit. As if this were not enough, the law reduces in practice the role of Baghdad to a minimum. Oil wealth, in theory, will be distributed directly to Kurds in the north, Shi'ites in the south and Sunnis in the center. For all practical purposes, Iraq will be partitioned into three statelets. Most of the country's reserves are in the Shi'ite-dominated south, while the Kurdish north holds the best prospects for future drilling.

The approval of the draft law by the fractious 275-member Iraqi Parliament, in March, will be a mere formality. Hussain al-Shahristani, Iraq's oil minister, is beaming. So is dodgy Barnham Salih: a Kurd, committed cheerleader of the U.S. invasion and occupation, then deputy prime minister, big PSA fan, and head of a committee that was debating the law.

But there was not much to be debated. The law was in essence drafted, behind locked doors, by a U.S. consulting firm hired by the Bush administration and then carefully retouched by Big Oil, the International Monetary Fund, former U.S. deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz' World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development. It's virtually a U.S. law (its original language is English, not Arabic).

Scandalously, Iraqi public opinion had absolutely no knowledge of it—not to mention the overwhelming majority of Parliament members. Were this to be a truly representative Iraqi government, any change to the legislation concerning the highly sensitive question of oil wealth would have to be approved by a popular referendum.

In real life, Iraq's vital national interests are in the hands of a small bunch of highly impressionable (or downright corrupt) technocrats. Ministries are no more than political party feuds; the national interest is never considered, only private, ethnic and sectarian interests. Corruption and theft are endemic. Big Oil will profit handsomely—and long-term, 30 years minimum, with fabulous rates of return—from a former developing-world stalwart methodically devastated into failed-state status.

In these past few weeks, U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has been crucial in mollifying the Kurds. In the end, in practice, the pro-U.S. Kurds will have all the power to sign oil contracts with whatever companies they want. Sunnis will be more dependent on the Oil Ministry in Baghdad. And Shi'ites will be more or less midway between total independence in the south and Baghdad's dictum (which they control anyway). But the crucial point remains: nobody will sign anything unless the ''advisers'' at the U.S.-manipulated Federal Oil and Gas Council say so.

Nobody wants to colonial-style PSAs forced down their throat anymore. According to the International Energy Agency, PSAs apply to only 12% of global oil reserves, in cases where costs are very high and nobody knows what will be found (certainly not the Iraqi case). No big Middle Eastern oil producer works with PSAs. Russia and Venezuela are renegotiating all of them. Bolivia nationalized its gas. Algeria and Indonesia have new rules for future contracts. But Iraq, of course, is not a sovereign country.

Big Oil is obviously ecstatic—not only ExxonMobil, but also ConocoPhillips, Chevron, BP and Shell (which have collected invaluable info on two of Iraq's biggest oilfields), TotalFinaElf, Lukoil from Russia and the Chinese majors. Iraq has as many as 70 undeveloped fields—''small'' ones hold a minimum of a billion barrels. As desert western Iraq has not even been exploited, reserves may reach 300 billion barrels—way more than Saudi Arabia. Gargantuan profits under the PSA arrangement are in a class by themselves. Iraqi oil costs only US$1 a barrel to extract. With a barrel worth $60 and up, happy days are here again.

What revenue the regions do get will be distributed to all 18 provinces based on population size—an apparent concession to the Sunnis, whose central areas have relatively few proven reserves.

The Sunni Arab muqawama (resistance) certainly has other ideas—as in future rolling thunder against pipelines, refineries and Western personnel. Iraq's oil independence will not go down quietly—at least among Sunnis. On the same day the oil law was being approved, a powerful bomb at the Ministry of Municipalities killed at least 12 people and injured 42, including Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. Mahdi has always been a feverish supporter of the oil law. He's a top official of the Shi'ite party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI).

A whole case can be made of SCIRI delivering Iraq's Holy Grail to Bush/Cheney and Big Oil—in exchange for not being chased out of power by the Pentagon. Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the SCIRI's leader, is much more of a Bush ally than Maliki, who is from the Da'wa Party. No wonder SCIRI's Badr Organization and their death squads were never the target of Washington's wrath—unlike Muqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi Army (Muqtada is fiercely against the oil law). The SCIRI certainly listened to the White House, which has always made it very clear: any more funds to the Iraqi government are tied up with passing the oil law.

Bush and Cheney got their oily cake—and they will eat it, too (or be drenched in its glory). Mission accomplished: permanent, sprawling military bases on the eastern flank of the Arab nation and control of some of largest, untapped oil wealth on the planet—a key geostrategic goal of the New American Century. Now it's time to move east, bomb Iran, force regime change and—what else?—force PSAs down their Persian throats.

[From the Asia Times, Feb. 27, 2007]

Big Oil In, Stability Out Under New Iraqi Law

(By Antonia Juhasz and Raed Jarrar)

While debate rages in the United States about the military in Iraq, an equally important decision is being made inside Iraq—the future of its oil. A draft Iraqi law proposes to open the country's currently nationalized oil system to foreign corporate control. But emblematic of the flawed promotion of ''democracy'' by the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush, this new law is news to most Iraqi politicians.

A leaked copy of the proposed hydrocarbon law appeared on the Internet at the same time that it was introduced to the Iraqi Council of Ministers (cabinet). The law is expected to go to the Iraqi Council of Representatives within weeks. Yet the Internet version was the first look that most members of Iraq's Parliament had of the new law.

Many Iraqi oil experts, such as Fouad al-Ameer, who was responsible for the leak,

think this law is not an urgent item on the country's agenda. Other observers and analysis share Ameer's views and believe the Bush administration, foreign oil companies and the International Monetary Fund are rushing the Iraqi government to pass the law.

Not every aspect of the law is harmful to Iraq. However, the current language favors the interests of foreign oil corporations over the economic security and development of Iraq. The law's key negative components harm Iraq's national sovereignty, financial security, territorial integrity and democracy.

The new oil law gives foreign corporations access to almost every sector of Iraq's oil and natural-gas industry. This includes service contracts on existing fields that are already being developed and that are managed and operated by the Iraqi National Oil Co (INOC).

For fields that have already been discovered, but not yet developed, the proposed law stipulates that INOC will have to be a partner on these contracts. But for as-yet-undiscovered fields, neither INOC nor private Iraqi companies receive preference in new exploration and development. Foreign companies have full access to these contracts.

The exploration and production contracts give firms exclusive control of fields for up to 35 years, including contracts that guarantee profits for 25 years. A foreign company, if hired, is not required to partner with an Iraqi company or reinvest any of its money in the Iraqi economy. It's not obligated to hire Iraqi workers, train Iraqi workers or transfer technology.

The current law remains silent on the type of contracts that the Iraqi government can use. The law establishes a new Iraqi Federal Oil and Gas Council with ultimate decision-making authority over the types of contracts that will be employed. This council will include, among others, ''executive managers from important related petroleum companies''. Thus it is possible that foreign oil-company executives could sit on the council. It would be unprecedented for a sovereign country to have, for instance, an executive of ExxonMobil on the board of its key oil-and-gas decision-making body.

The law also does not appear to restrict foreign corporate executives from making decisions on their own contracts. Nor does there appear to be a ''quorum'' requirement. Thus if only five members of the Federal Oil and Gas Council met—one from ExxonMobil, Shell, ChevronTexaco and two Iraqis—the foreign company representatives would apparently be permitted to approve contacts for themselves.

Under the proposed law, the council has the ultimate power and authority to approve and rewrite any contract using whichever model it prefers if a ''two-thirds majority of the members in attendance'' agree. Early drafts of the bill, and the proposed model by the US, advocate very unfair, and unconventional for Iraq, models such as production sharing agreements (PSAs), which would set long-term contracts with unfair conditions that may lead to the loss of hundreds of billions of dollars of the Iraqi oil money as profits to foreign companies.

The council will also decide the fate of the existing exploration and production contracts already signed with the French, Chinese and Russians, among others.

The law does not clarify who ultimately controls production levels. The contractee—the INOC, foreign or domestic firms—appears to have the right to determine levels of production. However, a clause reads, ''In the event that, for national policy considerations, there is a need to introduce limitations on the national level of petroleum production, such limitations shall be applied in a fair and equitable manner and on a pro rata basis for each contract area on the basis of approved field-development plans.'' The clause does not indicate who makes this decision, what a ''fair and equitable manner'' means, or how it is enforced. If foreign companies, rather than the Iraqi government, ultimately have control over production levels, then Iraq's relationship to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and other similar organizations would be deeply threatened.

Many Iraqi oil experts are already referring to the draft law as the ''Split Iraq Fund'', arguing that it facilitates plans for splitting Iraq into three ethnic/religious regions. The experts believe that the law undermines the central government and shifts important decision-making and responsibilities to the regional entities. This shift could serve as the foundation for establishing three new independent states, which is the goal of a number of separatist leaders.

The law opens the possibility of the regions taking control of Iraq's oil, but it also maintains the possibility of the central government retaining control. In fact, the law was written in a vague manner to help ensure passage, a ploy reminiscent of the passage of the Iraqi constitution. There is a significant conflict between the Bush administration and others in Iraq who would like ultimate authority for Iraq's oil to rest with the central government and those who would like to see the nation split in three. Both groups are powerful in Iraq. Both groups have been mollified, for now, to ensure the law's passage.

But two very different outcomes are possible. If the central government remains the ultimate decision-making authority in Iraq, then the Iraq Federal Oil and Gas Council will exercise power over the regions. And if the regions emerge as the strongest power in Iraq, then the council could simply become a silent rubber stamp, enforcing the will of the regions. The same lack of clarity exists in Iraq's constitution.

The daily lives of most people in Iraq are overwhelmed with meeting basic needs. They are unaware of the details and full nature of the oil law shortly to be considered in Parliament. Their parliamentarians, in turn, have not been included in the debate over the law and were unable even to read the draft until it was leaked on the Internet. Those Iraqis able to make their voices heard on the oil law want more time. They urge postponing a decision until Iraqis have their own sovereign state without a foreign occupation.

Passing this oil law while the political future of Iraq is unclear can only further the existing schisms in the Iraqi government. Forcing its passage will achieve nothing more than an increase in the levels of violence, anger and instability in Iraq and a prolongation of the US occupation.

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

(Mr. DREIER 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 gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING BRIAN JAMES IVORY

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

Mr. ISRAEL. Madam Speaker, we are all so proud on both sides of the aisle of the work that our servicemembers are doing in military theaters abroad, in Iraq and Afghanistan and so many places around the world. And we should be just as proud of the work they do when they come home.

I rise today to share with my colleagues the extraordinary heroism of Brian James Ivory. Mr. Ivory was a very proud member of the United States Marine Corps. He served in Iraq. He crewed aircraft flying in and out of some very dangerous places.

He was also stationed in North Carolina where he assisted in search and rescue missions, and he came home to Long Island when his deployment ended.

On December 17, he was driving home from work at night and he saw a vehicle in front of him hit a utility pole and erupt into flames. This young man, who had already served and sacrificed for his country, who had already paid his dues, rather than driving on and just calling the police, stopped his car, called the authorities and then pulled the driver out of the car, risking his life one more time, not in Iraq, but on the Long Island Expressway.

I want to commend this gentleman for his heroism. This is a story that I know is not unique. The point here is that we not simply celebrate the sacrifices and the heroism of our servicemembers when they go abroad to fight our battles, but we also keep in mind their bravery, their courage, their commitment, their dedication, their loyalty to protecting human life when they return home.

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

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

REGULAR ORDER LACKING UNDER DEMOCRATS

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to come back and talk a little bit more about the majority and the work schedule and the work ethics that they seem to be putting forth. I could come up and read my BlackBerry and my schedule to you. I don't know if that is exactly what our constituents had in mind, was electing us and paying us to come up here and go to receptions and go to dinners and travel around ourselves. That