

the net widely to look at the variety of federal agencies involved in a particular area, not just the main one (for example, not just looking at foreign policy actions of the State Department, but also of Commerce, Defense, Agriculture, CIA, etc). As I said earlier, it is the responsibility of oversight to look into every nook and cranny of government.

Fifth, the oversight agenda of Congress should be coordinate to eliminate duplication. The administration often complains, with some justification, about the burden of redundant oversight and duplicative testimony. Different committees shouldn't cover the same ground over and over, while other important areas and programs fall through the cracks. Committees currently do prepare their oversight plans, but I sense no one is in charge of coordination.

Sixth, continuity and expertise are critical to successful oversight. Excessive staff turnover and turnover of chairmen harm the institutional continuity and expertise so essential to the job of oversight. This is also why I generally favor having standing committees do oversight rather than special, ad hoc communities. Also, oversight should not be used or directed by interest groups.

Seventh, there is such a thing as too much oversight. Good oversight draws the line between careful scrutiny and intervention or micro-management. Congress should examine broad public policies, but it should not get mired and it should avoid a media show. It should certainly expose corrupt and incompetent officials, but it should avoid attacking competent, dedicated officials. Oversight requires reports to be informed, but the reporting requirements should not be excessive. In general, the quality of oversight is much more important than the quantity.

Eighth, good oversight involves documentation. The more you can get things in writing, the better off you are.

Ninth, follow-through is also important. It is one thing to ask agencies to improve their performance, but it requires the work of Members, committees, and staff aides to make sure that the changes have taken place.

Tenth, Member involvement in oversight is important. Certainly much of the work needs to be done by staff. Yet I found that Members often left too much of the responsibility with staff. Having Members involved brings additional leverage to any oversight inquiry.

Eleventh, good oversight takes clear signals from the leadership. Structural reforms and individual efforts by Members can be helpful, but for oversight to really work it takes a clear message from the congressional leadership that oversight is a priority and that it will be done in a bipartisan, systematic, coordinated way. The key role of the House Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader in successful oversight cannot be overstated.

And finally, there needs to be greater public accountability to congressional oversight. The general public can be a very important driving force behind good oversight. Congress needs to provide clear reports from each committee outlining the main programs under its jurisdiction and explaining how the committee reviewed them. As citizens understand how important congressional oversight is to achieving the kind of government they want—government that works better and costs less—they will demand more emphasis on the quality of oversight by Congress, and they will be less tolerant of highly personalized investigations that primarily serve to divert Members' attention from this critical congressional function.

CONCLUSION

My personal belief is that conducting oversight is every bit as important as passing legislation. President Wilson thought that "the informing function of Congress should be preferred even to its legislating function." Our founding fathers very clearly recognized that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty".

A strong record of congressional oversight of—"continuous watchfulness"—will do a lot to restore public confidence in the institution. It will show that Congress is taking its responsibilities seriously and is able to work together.

I'm not Pollyannaish about all of this. Certainly there will be roadblocks and obstacles in the effort to strengthen and improve oversight. The work is not particularly easy under the best of circumstances, and we can't expect all of the hard feelings and distrust about the direction of oversight in recent years to dissipate overnight. But it is my firm belief that this is an area in which Congress simply must do better. And your willingness to participate in these workshops gives me good reason to think that this is an area in which Congress will do better.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KLINK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 16, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 434) to authorize a new trade and investment policy for sub-Saharan Africa:

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Chairman, I oppose H.R. 434, and I am proud to say I was an original co-sponsor of a much better trade bill, H.R. 772, the "HOPE for Africa Act" introduced by my colleague JESSE JACKSON of Illinois.

I supported H.R. 772, and opposed H.R. 434, for reasons centering on concerns for labor, the environment, women's rights, and the HIV/AIDS problem faced worldwide.

First, in labor terms, I opposed H.R. 434 because it is bad for both American and African workers. Over the past twelve months, 118,000 jobs in the textile and apparel industry have been lost in the United States—more jobs than in any other industry. The reason is competition with low-wage imports, manufactured in nations where worker compensation and working conditions are deplorable. As a result, U.S. textile workers are losing their jobs, and African workers work in sweat-shop style conditions.

On the other hand, H.R. 772, the Jackson bill, would have required that labor rights be adhered to in the workplace, while the H.R. 434 has no binding language to protect worker rights. The Teamsters, International Longshoremen and Warehousemen, AFSCME, Paper Allied-Industrial Chemical and Energy Workers (PACE), Transport Workers of America, Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) and the United Auto Workers all opposed H.R. 434.

Second, in environmental terms, I opposed H.R. 434 because the bill text does not even

mention the environment. The bill contains no environmental safeguards in its core text—which is a startling oversight. This encourages U.S. firms to move to sub-Saharan Africa in order to evade the standards they must meet here at home.

On the other hand, H.R. 772, the Jackson bill, provided a new model for trade by combining expanded trade, open to all sub-Saharan countries, with the requirement that multinational corporations operating in these countries comply to the same environmental standards that apply here in the United States.

For these reasons, H.R. 434 was opposed by—and H.R. 772 was supported by—the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth, American Lands Alliance, Earth Island Action, International Rivers Network, Native Forest Council, International Law Center for Human, Economic and Environmental Defense, and the International Primate Protection League.

Third, in women's rights terms, I opposed H.R. 434 because it simply called on the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) to give special consideration to women entrepreneurs and to investments that help women and the poor.

On the other hand, H.R. 772, the Jackson bill, targeted investment financing for small businesses and women-owned and minority-owned businesses, including provisions for human rights, labor rights and environmental protections.

Fourth, in HIV/AIDS terms, I opposed H.R. 434 because it completely ignored the AIDS crisis. The bill failed to mention the word "AIDS" nor did it specify any funding to combat the AIDS epidemic in Africa. However, since the beginning of the AIDS crisis, 83% of AIDS deaths have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

On the other hand, H.R. 772, the Jackson bill, targeted direct assistance from the Development Fund for Africa for AIDS education and treatment programs. For these reasons, many HIV/AIDS community groups opposed H.R. 434 but supported H.R. 772—ranging from the Human Rights Campaign Fund to Project Planet Africa.

In closing, I want to turn for a moment to general trade policy. I read a disturbing quote from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) given on March 3, 1999: "Setting up assembly plants with Chinese equipment, technology and personnel could not only greatly increase sales in African countries but also circumvent the quotas imposed on commodities of Chinese origin imposed by European and American countries."

H.R. 434, had very weak transshipment provisions, with no safeguard against China using sub-Saharan Africa as a transshipment point for Asian manufacturers of textile and apparel products. On the other hand, H.R. 772, the Jackson bill, contained strict, enforceable rules guarding against transshipment from China and other locales. For these reasons, the National Cotton Council and the American Textile Manufacturers Institute opposed H.R. 434.

By passing H.R. 434, which I voted against, nothing was accomplished to give relief, and to save the jobs of, American and African textile workers; to protect the environment; to