

FLEXIBLE TRADE POLICY TOWARD CUBA

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise to discuss American relations with Cuba. Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to Havana with Senators BAUCUS and ROBERTS. We spent ten hours with Fidel Castro, in what has been characterized by the press as a marathon meeting. But more importantly, we had meetings with dissidents and Catholic Church representatives.

It was my first time in Cuba, and I went there with no pre-conceived notions although I did have the opportunity to be thoroughly briefed prior to our departure.

I returned from Cuba convinced that lifting the trade embargo and restrictions on travel, especially for educational exchanges, are extremely important steps in an effort to foster economic and political liberalization in Cuba. They are important steps but not for the reasons which are generally assumed.

As one Cuban told us, ending the American economic embargo on Cuba will not produce economic change. The Castro government has no interest in economic reform—even along the lines of that now seen in China or Vietnam. As the Minister of Economics and Planning explained, there is no program for privatization in the economy, insisting that capitalism does not work but “pure socialism” does. The government allows some private investments, mainly in farming, but the intent of the State is still to control the economy. Indeed, President Castro told us that he believed Cuba could not survive if it was a member of the International Monetary Fund and called the IMF the “world’s most subversive organization.”

While this was denied by the Foreign Minister, I came away convinced that the government does not want the American embargo on Cuba lifted because the lack of economic ties allows the government to blame the United States for its own economic failures. If the embargo was lifted, Cuba’s leaders might find another excuse for their failed policies but it might make it harder for them to find widely acceptable excuses.

The Cuban people have voted already for change. Many have fled to the United States. One Cuban told us that social and economic differences are increasing. The population has declined over the last decade in part because people sadly see no future for their children. The average Cuban salary is said to be \$11 per month. The Castro regime was described to us by those we spoke to in Havana as a dying dictatorship: aging, inefficient and corrupt.

In this environment we should not exaggerate America’s influence. Castro will do everything to limit it. But we can start to build a basis for a future relationship with the Cuban people

after Castro. The Congress can demonstrate our good will by a partial lifting of the trade embargo. We can demonstrate our good faith by allowing freer movement of Americans to Cuba and to do what we can to encourage Cubans, especially school children, to visit the United States on exchanges. The Congress should promote cultural ties and try to direct assistance to the Cuban people.

None of this will be easy. Nothing Castro said indicated to me that he was willing to permit, for example, Cuban school children to attend American elementary and secondary schools or colleges in significant numbers. Nothing Castro said indicated to me that he was willing to allow American aid, including medical supplies, to be given directly to the Cuban people.

But even if the hand of friendship is rejected, I believe we should still offer it. The future of Cuba is not Castro. President Castro said one clear truth: Cuba still suffers from an inherited history of four centuries of colonialism. Unfortunately, he does not understand that his form of paternal dictatorship perpetuates the same horrors he claims to abhor.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read some of the names of those who lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is in session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today.

Clyde E. Frazier, 40, Chicago, IL; Ernest Jones, 57, Knoxville, TN; Jose Lopez, 29, Houston, TX; Elva V. Manjarrez, 35, Chicago, IL; Kimberly Meeks-Penniman, 39, Detroit, MI; Anthony L. Moore, 28, Memphis, TN; Donald Pinkney, 23, Baltimore, MD; James Riley, 26, New Orleans, LA; Void Sampson, 24, Philadelphia, PA; Michael A. Williams, 35, New Orleans, LA; and Unidentified male, 22, Newark, NJ.

One of the gun violence victims I mentioned, thirty-five-year-old Elva Manjarrez of Chicago, was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting while she was sitting in a parked car. No motive was ever established for her death.

We cannot sit back and allow such senseless gun violence to continue. The deaths of Elva and the others I named are a reminder to all of us that we need to enact sensible gun legislation now.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, July 24, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,668,098,197,951.86 (Five trillion, six hundred sixty-eight billion, ninety-eight million, one hundred ninety-seven thousand, nine hundred fifty-one dollars and eighty-six cents).

Five years ago, July 24, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,938,385,000,000 (Four trillion, nine hundred thirty-eight billion, three hundred eighty-five million).

Ten years ago, July 24, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,161,847,000,000 (Three trillion, one hundred sixty-one billion, eight hundred forty-seven million).

Fifteen years ago, July 24, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,796,347,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred ninety-six billion, three hundred forty-seven million).

Twenty-five years ago, July 24, 1975, the Federal debt stood at \$535,417,000,000 (Five hundred thirty-five billion, four hundred seventeen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,132,681,197,951.86 (Five trillion, one hundred thirty-two billion, six hundred eighty-one million, one hundred ninety-seven thousand, nine hundred fifty-one dollars and eighty-six cents) during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO INTERNS

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, today I extend my appreciation to my summer 2000 class of interns: Anna Gullickson, Kayla John, Sara Low, Charles Wishman, Tom Mann, Alyssa Rotschafer, MayRose Wegmann, Eric Bridges, Monica Parekh, Michelle Levar, Joe Plambeck, Ben Rogers, Robert Barron, Morgan Whitlatch, Veronica Hernandez, Cary Cascino, Daniel Myers, Linda Rosenbury, Ryan Howell, Jay Smith, SreyRam Kuy, and Jim Dunn. Each of them has been of tremendous assistance to me and to the people of Iowa over the past several months, and their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Since I was first elected into the Senate in 1984, my office has offered internships to young Iowans and other interested students. Through their work in the Senate, our interns have not only seen the legislative process, but also personally contributed to our nation’s democracy.

It is with much appreciation that I recognize Anna, Kayla, Sara, Charles, Tom, Alyssa, MayRose, Eric, Monica, Michelle, Joe, Ben, Robert, Morgan, Veronica, Cary, Daniel, Linda, Ryan, Jay, SreyRam, and Jim for their hard work this summer. It has been a delight to watch them take on their assignments with enthusiasm and hard