EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES OF HOUSE TO FAMILIES OF PEOPLE KILLED IN FANGLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPLOSION IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on Ways and Means be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 121) expressing the sincerest condolences of the House of Representatives to the families of the 42 people, including 37 children, killed in the March 6, 2001, explosion at the Fanglin elementary school in the Jianxi province of the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) to explain the resolution.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to send our condolences to the survivors of those who died. Let me say briefly, Mr. Speaker, 10-year-old Zhang Yanhong was a good student; and she always listened to her teachers. As a result of her hard work, she was one of the best students of her third grade class. The two teachers that attended the school, the Chinese Prime Minister Zhu immediately denied that there had been any forced labor involved in Fanglin. Instead, Communist party officials invented a story about a mad man who entered the school and set off the explosion as part of his suicide attempt.

According to news accounts, Communist party officials blocked roads into the village to prevent journalists from seeing the scene of the accident for themselves and interviewing residents. Residents who let journalists into the school were nearly always arrested. The journalists who risked their lives to report the story were threatened with death. Unknown to many Americans, the Chinese government gave tax incentives to the factories to raise money for their schools. While the government tried an investigation to determine what really happened and apologize in a nationally broadcast message, the Chinese government imprisoned journalists, had their telephones disconnected to prevent contact with the outside world.

However, thanks to the brave and determined reporting of both Chinese and international journalists, to the persistence of the children's parents and the Chinese government, we now know the truth. It was only a matter of time before the truth about forced child labor in this school would be revealed.

A week after the Chinese government invented its story, the Chinese prime minister finally apologized for the incident and acknowledged that the fireworks were manufactured in an elementary school. Prohibition on child labor is not only the standard for Western countries or developed countries, it is an internationally recognized labor standard that has been approved by the ILO of which the United States and virtually every country of the world is a member.

For years, the parents of the children in the Fanglin elementary school which is in the small village 400 miles southwest of Shanghai, had complained that their children were being forced by school officials to manufacture large fireworks at school. Every day, the young children were required to spend hours mounting fuses and detonators into the fireworks, that were then sold by local Communist party officials. The underpaid teachers and government officials running the child labor scheme also set a sliding production quota in order to maximize their profits. It started at 1,000 fireworks per day for the youngest children and reached 10,000 fireworks per day for the fifth graders.

Mr. Speaker, something terrible was bound to happen and soon it did. On a Tuesday afternoon, the fireworks exploded in the elementary school and took the lives of 42 people including 37 young children.

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On March 6 of this year, 37 young Chinese school children were killed in an explosion that occurred while third and fourth graders were forced to manufacture fireworks at the Fanglin Elementary School. For years before the explosion, the parents of these children had pleaded with school administrators and government officials to end the practice of forced child labor, but their concerns were ignored. The conditions of the labor of these little children were hazardous, and the demands were unrealistic. The youngest children in the school were expected to mount at least 1,000 detonators and fuses into fireworks per day. Children who were slightly older were each required to manufacture 10,000 fireworks per day.

It was only a matter of time before the truth about forced child labor in this school would be revealed. Unfortunately, nobody knows if the hundreds of thousands of fireworks produced at the Fanglin Elementary School were eventually sold to stores and firecracker stands right here in the United States. It is a violation of U.S. laws which prohibit the importation of products made by forced labor. I have called upon the U.S. Customs Service and the Department of Labor to conduct an investigation to determine which products are produced under Chinese forced child labor. A few years ago, the Chinese government acknowledged that it was encouraging industries to move production into Chinese elementary and high schools. The government taxes the salaries of the businesses that set up their factories in the schools. While the government claims that these school industries do not use child labor or forced labor, the
case of the Fanglin Elementary School suggests otherwise.

Over the years, California elementary and high schools have industries manufacturing a host of products, and the U.S. Government must ensure that none of these child labor products are reaching U.S. consumers. I call upon the Secretary of Labor and the Commissioner of Customs to act on my inquiries and to ensure that the imports from China are free from forced child labor.

Today the Members of the House can join in expressing condolences to the families of the children who died as a result of the exploitative labor conditions in Chinese schools and elsewhere in that country.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember these children when we debate the issues on international trade in the future.

Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) has been a leader in child labor protection and labor rights along with the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH). They are a voice over these trade routes for people, including for children, and that trade is more than just material goods. It is amazing how hard it is to carry that message, even in this country, and yet we look at a nation like China, with over 1.250 billion people, and we see that none of the standards that we have written into law in this country exist. Yet we continue to be the chief market, whether it is fireworks or toys or clothing, the chief market in the world for Chinese exports.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution asking for a full accounting and for compensating China for allowing its children to be used in such a heinous way.

With imported carpet from India, we require smiling logos in order to guarantee to American consumers that they are buying a product that is not made with child labor. We have no such guarantees with China.

I thank the gentleman for what he is doing. In some places on Earth, life is very cheap; and here in our country it used to be cheap. In fact, it was not until a woman further west by the name of Mary Norton, the first Democratic congresswoman to serve here east of the Mississippi River in the 1930s who wrote into our laws the prohibition on child labor in our country. We as a country gained a broader conscience of how we should live as a people and that children have value as human beings beyond whatever they might be able to produce. They have a value beyond being a producer. They have an intrinsic value as a human being.

Mr. Speaker, I support the gentleman’s fine cause and support the resolution and again compliment the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for their work in this regard. I thank the gentleman for the opportunity to address this.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Further, I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the Committee on International Relations for bringing this matter to the floor. I appreciate their cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

The Clerk reads the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 121

Whereas on March 6, 2001, an explosion at the Fanglin elementary school in the Jianxi province of the People’s Republic of China’s killed at least 42 people, including 37 children;

Whereas the children, all between the ages of 9 and 11, were being forced by elementary school officials to manufacture fireworks when this tragedy occurred;

Whereas the parents of the deceased children report that the mandatory labor, which involved mounting fuses and detonators into large firecrackers, had been a daily practice at the school for years;

Whereas this systematic exploitation of children in the elementary school was not only known but actually organized by individuals holding official responsibilities with the local Chinese Government;

Whereas this practice is a grave violation of the rights of children under the International Labor Organization’s Conventions 138 and 182, as well as Convention 29 on Forced Labor; and

Whereas Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji has taken this type of acknowledged these violations of internationally recognized labor standards: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its sincerest condolences to the families of the 42 people killed in the March 6, 2001, explosion at the Fanglin elementary school in the Jianxi province of the People’s Republic of China, including to the parents and families of the 37 young children who lost their lives as a result of this dangerous and forced child labor;

(2) expresses its gratitude to the Chinese and international journalists who reported the true cause of the explosion in response to the Chinese Communist Party’s original attempts to put forward an “authorized”, but false, version of the events; and

(3) expresses its support for international trade agreements and policies that will enforce the International Labor Organization’s core labor standards, which include prohibition of child labor and forced labor;

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
OFFERED BY MR. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The Clerk reads as follows:

Amendment in the nature of a substitute offered by Mr. Smith of New Jersey:
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE
14161

July 23, 2001

Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (during the
reading). Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (during the
reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous
consent that the amendment in the na-
ture of a substitute be considered as
read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there
objection to the request of the gen-
tleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question is on the amendment in the
nature of a substitute offered by the
gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

The amendment in the nature of a
substitute was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question is on the resolution, as
amended.

The resolution, as amended, was
agreed to.

AMENDMENT TO THE PREAMBLE OFFERED BY
MR. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr.
Speaker, I offer an amendment to the
preamble.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment to the preamble offered by Mr.
SMITH of New Jersey:

Whereas on March 6, 2001, an explosion at the Fanglin elementary school in the Jiangxi province of the People's Republic of China, including to the parents and families of the 37 young children who lost their lives as a result of this dan-
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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there
objection to the request of the gen-
tleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question is on the amendment to the
preamble offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

The amendment to the preamble was
agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on
the table.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question is on the amendment to the
preamble offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

The amendment to the preamble was
agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on
the table.

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, many
of us were revoluted when the Demo-
cratic leadership took $1 million from
Bernard Schwartz from Loral Federal
Governorating. It should not san-
tion unfair discrimination but rather
should fight it wherever it exists.

Last week, Congress took a decision
that compromised this principle. The
passage of the Community Solutions
Act last week by this House would per-
mit groups to discriminate unfairly
against certain Americans. Worse yet,
the bill would actually take away the
right of communities to establish their
own antidiscrimination laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for
Congress to correct this House
mistake. I encourage you to work with the
Senate to see that any final version of
this bill respects the rights of commu-
nities to enforce their own anti-
discrimination laws and thereby pro-
tect one of our most cherished Amer-
ican principles.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr.
OTTER). Under the Speaker's an-
nounced policy of January 3, 2001, and
under a previous order of the House,
the following Members will be recog-
nized for 5 minutes each.

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INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 2246,
MEDIA MARKETING ACCOUNT-
ABILITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a
previous order of the House, the gen-
tleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is
recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I would
like to rise this evening and discuss a
topic that is important to all of us,
which is our Nation's children.

Two months ago, I was in a truck
stop and I saw a young man playing a
video game. I did not think much about
it, but I went up behind him and
watched what he was doing. He was
shooting a laser gun, but he was not
shooting at targets. He was not shoot-
ding ducks. He was shooting people.
Every time he hit one, an arm flew off
and the blood spurted, or a head flew
off and the blood spurted. I was really
impressed by the violence of the game.
This young man was about 10 years old.
Nowhere on that game was any type of
rating indicating that this was inap-
propriate for a young person.

As I saw that, I began to have a flash-
back to some of the school shootings
we have had, and I realized that the
United States currently is the most
violent nation in the world for young
people, with the highest homicide rate
and the highest suicide rate of any na-
tion in the civilized world. Our out-
of-wedlock birthrate has risen from 5 per-
cent in 1960 to 33 percent today. And so
you say, what has happened here? Why
has our culture unraveled in the way
that it has?

I am sure we can point the finger at
a great many different reasons and
causes, but I would say one of the chief
causes is the influence of violent, ex-
licit material in the entertainment
industry. Because, you see, the average
child spends 25 hours a week watching
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licit material in the entertainment
industry. Because, you see, the average
child spends 25 hours a week watching
movies, playing video games and lis-
tening to recorded music and probably
spends about an hour or less talking to
his or her parents. That 25 hours has a
big impact. Some of this benign, but
much of it is really pernicious and very
harmful.

In September of 2000, the Federal
Trade Commission prepared a reported
titled Marketing Violent Entertain-
ment to Children. This is what they
found, and I quote:

"The pervasive and aggressive mar-
keting of violent movies, music and