

lengthy debate today on the airline bill, and a good piece of that debate centered over the Speaker's commitment to the membership of this body on the benefits for workers that have lost their jobs from the airline disaster, and the airline industry's economic problems.

I am just interested, if the gentleman from Texas could enlighten us, and I do not expect to have a complete answer here, given the fact that this was just done today, but when in fact we might expect action on legislation that was discussed on the floor in the colloquy between the Speaker and the leader.

□ 2310

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I thank the gentleman for the question, and just to be clear, the Speaker's exact words earlier this evening were, and I quote, the committees of jurisdiction have already been examining proposals to assist in this area. We will take a comprehensive look at the health care needs of these displaced workers and work together to bring an appropriate legislative response to the floor as soon as possible.

It is my interpretation that by that the Speaker meant the committees of jurisdiction are working; and at whatever point they can report legislation, we would make the floor available for that legislation. I simply cannot speak for the committees' work.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague for that. I just want to encourage the gentleman from Texas and the rest of the leadership on the Republican side of the aisle to help expedite the hearing process and the committee process on this legislation. As I think the gentleman from Texas is aware, regretfully the numbers of laid-off workers have increased dramatically, especially, of course, in the airline industry; and we are probably going to see a fallout in some ancillary industries and other industries. I think it would be prudent, wise, and just to expect that we will move with some alacrity on these issues of health care, unemployment compensation, and, of course, training, when necessary.

It is not as if this is a difficult thing to do. It is pretty standard when we enter these economic downturns. And moving with some degree of speed on this would, I think, be appreciated, especially given the nature of the situation our country finds itself in today. So I will continue to raise this issue on a regular basis, with respect, but with urgency and with some passion. And I just want the gentleman to know that this is an issue that will be before us on many occasions as we go through these next weeks.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I do have an inquiry of the majority leader. I do join the gentleman in the fervent hope we can complete our business for the week by Tuesday night. In the event that it was necessary for us to convene on Wednesday morning, could we convene at 9 a.m., in the hopes that maybe we could wrap up our business on Wednesday morning and not continue into Wednesday afternoon?

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman from Michigan will yield further.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the inquiry. The gentleman makes a very good point, and I have to say, I think in full confidence, that as a matter of respect for our colleagues, should we have to propound such a unanimous consent request, I would guess that the gentleman would hear a resounding silence when asked if there were any objections. I appreciate the question.

Mr. SHERMAN. I thank the majority leader for doing everything possible to accommodate us.

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ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2001

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY)?

There was no objection.

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DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR  
WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON  
WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

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

There was no objection.

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APOLOGY TO SIKHS, MUSLIMS,  
AND ANYONE ELSE TAKING OFFENSE  
AT PRIOR STATEMENTS

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

Mr. COOKSEY. Mr. Speaker, I was recently quoted as saying something that Sikhs, Muslims, and other Americans facing harassment and violence in this country took as offensive. I am sorry for any distress my statement caused,

and I want them to know that I do not approve of any harassment or violence against any American. All I intended to say was that if a person fits the established profile of a terrorist, that person should expect to be looked at closely by airport security, given the atrocity of September 11.

Many Sikhs are being subjected to harassment due to their beards and turbans, which are required by their religion. Americans of the Muslim faith are also receiving harassment. Sikhism is an independent, monotheistic, revered religion. It is not part of any other religion, although Sikhs are sometimes mistaken for Muslims or Hindus. There are 21 million Sikhs in the world, most of whom live in the Punjab state of India. Approximately 500,000 live in the United States; and most are naturalized or American-born citizens. Most have contributed to all walks of life. Most of the people who wear turbans in this country are Sikhs.

There are many reasons Sikhs come to America, but mainly they come seeking freedom. To persecute them only weakens American unity at a time when our country is under attack.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the Sikhs, Muslims, and other Americans who are facing harassment and violence know that I do not condone such acts, that I stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and that I am on their side.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PLATTS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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AMERICANS FACING UGLY  
THREATS AT HOME

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, as America mourns its dead and prepares to launch a global war on terrorism, some Americans are facing additional ugly threats here on the home front, and they are not from foreign terrorists but, regretfully, they are from fellow citizens.

Since the attacks on New York and Washington last week, many Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, Sikhs, and other Americans of South Asian heritage have become the targets of terrible bigotry and violence based solely on their faith, their heritage, or their choice of traditional clothing.

□ 2320

Americans of just about every religion and ethnic heritage lost loved ones in this terrorist attack. At least five Sikh Americans were killed in the

World Trade Center, and one a convenience store owner named Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot dead last week in Phoenix by an angry gunman calling himself a patriot. Other Sikhs are facing harassment and humiliation in our airports, and every American should deplore this backlash. It is morally repugnant.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, Indian and Pakistani Americans died in the attacks, too; and they have become targets of retaliation in the aftermaths. In Dallas, a Pakistani Muslim grocer named Waqar Hassan was shot dead in a hate crime on Saturday.

In New Jersey, businesses owned by Indian Americans have been spray painted with crude epithets, warning them to leave town. Such intimidation is reminiscent of the KKK or Nazi Germany. It has no place in modern America, and all of us must stand with our neighbors in the face of such ignorance and hatred.

I am reminded of the remarks that were made on the floor of the House last Saturday morning between 12:45 and 2 a.m. in the morning when the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) said on this floor in a comment or remarks that she made on the resolution, we had to condemn this kind of bigotry, that she was locking arms that weekend with religious leaders in her community, rabbis, ministers, priests, imams and others, and walking through the streets of her community in solidarity against this kind of repression and intimidation.

Mr. Speaker, mosques and temples have been vandalized, business owners shot and killed, school children taunted, and women attacked with stones and knives. As we have just heard from the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. COOKSEY), in this House a colleague referred to the head covering some Sikhs or Muslims wear out of respect for God as a diaper, and his spokesman went on to say that all turban-wearing airline passengers should be taken aside and questioned.

Mr. Speaker, this runs directly against the very ideals that make our country great. It runs against the ideals of equality of tolerance of diversity and, yes, our own democracy. We are a Nation built by immigrants, a Nation that is stronger, not weaker for the many people and cultures who proudly call it home, and we must stand united as one people in this difficult time and this time of crisis.

So I say to my friends and colleagues here in the Chamber and across America, when this happens, join with your brothers and sisters of different faiths and races and nationalities and ethnicities and bind together and show your support for those who have been singled out unjustly.

America will prevail against terrorism, and we will prevail not just through the strength and the courage

of our military but through the enduring strength of our most cherished principles. Only if we stand by our ideals and our neighbors will we successfully defend the Nation that we love.

#### HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY RETIREES

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

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the people tonight about the terrible tragedy that occurred a week ago Tuesday, about the terrible loss of life for not only people who serve in the military at the Pentagon, the folks that worked at the World Trade Center, the people on those airplanes, but the firefighters who lost their lives trying to save the lives of others. I think it has caused us all to reflect and hopefully appreciate more those people who work every day to look out for us.

It also brings to mind the importance of rewarding those people who serve us, treating them well, paying them well, giving them the best possible equipment because as the President spoke last night, they will be called upon in the very near future.

One of the promises that has been made to those people for decades, certainly since World War II and in the Army recruiting those years all the way up to 1991, was a promise of free lifetime health care if they served their country honorably for 20 years or more in the military.

Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform my fellow citizens that because of the failure of an agreement between the Department of Defense and Medicare those military retirees who were hoping to take that benefit to a military treatment facility will probably be turned away on October 1.

I say I regret that because, as we probably know, more than half of our Nation's military retirees have chosen to retire near a military treatment facility. That is their family. We as a Nation asked them to leave their parents, leave their loved ones to go to places like Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Panama. We are getting ready to ask them to go to places like Afghanistan.

In doing so, for many of them, they lose the ability to maintain their nuclear family, so their family becomes the Air Force, the Marines, the Army, the Navy.

Since they were 18 years old, they were told they could go to a military treatment facility; but now because of the draw-down in the Department of Defense, there are not as many doctors as there used to be, and because the defense budget is tight, the Department of Defense made the decision that for

those who have reached the age of 65, you cannot go to the base hospital anymore. You have got to find a private sector doctor. You have got to leave the family. I think that is a tragedy.

Again, over half of our Nation's military retirees intentionally bought a home near a base so they could use that base hospital, and now the same Nation that can provide \$16 billion in foreign aid, the same Nation that can waive the budget rules to bail out the airlines, give their corporate executives 20 and \$30 million a year to run those companies into the ground, the same Nation that can spend money left and right, waiving the rules anytime they feel like it for those who really have not earned it to this extent are going to tell our Nation's military retirees that because you do not fit quite right into the budget we cannot find the money to solve your problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for an amendment that has already passed this House overwhelmingly about a year ago right now. There were 406 of my colleagues who voted to say to our Nation's military retirees that they could continue to use that base hospital and that Medicare is going to reimburse that base hospital for their care. After all, the sailors, the soldiers, the Marines, the airmen paid their Medicare taxes just like everybody else; and if it is their choice to go to a military treatment facility, then that is where they ought to be able to go.

Unfortunately, the law now blocks them from doing so. We sent that bill over to the Senate; and unfortunately the Senate chose to take our language that says they have to do it and said to Medicare, they may do it, they can reach an agreement if they feel like it.

Well, the bureaucrats at Medicare did not feel like it; and so now our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our Marines, our coast guardsmen, they are the ones that have to suffer.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a real simple thing on the defense authorization bill next week. I am asking for an opportunity for this House to speak in favor for fulfilling the promise of lifetime health care to our Nation's military retirees and a Nation that is going to find \$320 billion to defend itself that just last week spent an additional \$40 billion on defense, one would think we could find a hundred million or so to do that for our Nation's military retirees.

I am particularly disturbed, Mr. Speaker, that you have put the word out that if I so much as ask for that amendment that you are going to pull the defense authorization bill. Let me say that again. If an elected representative of the people of south Mississippi so much as asks for a recorded vote on an amendment to fulfill the promise of lifetime health care for our military retirees, the Speaker of the House says he will not allow that bill to take place at all.