

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, March 27, 2001

The House met at 12:30 p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 395. An act to provide emergency relief to small businesses affected by significant increases in the prices of heating oil, natural gas, propane, and kerosene, and for other purposes.

S. 395. An act to ensure the independence and nonpartisan operation of the Office of Advocacy of the Small Business Administration.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 106-554, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, appoints the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) to the Board of Trustees for the Center for Russian Leadership Development.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2001, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS CONVENES FIRST BIKE SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress to make the Federal Government a better partner in the creating of more livable communities, communities that are safe, healthy, and economically secure. Today, transportation and energy are issues in every community across America. These problems are the results of countless individual decisions.

Mr. Speaker, this week a group of activists dedicated to making America a better place are gathering here in Washington, D.C. The League of American Bicyclists is convening the first annual Bike Summit. I would like to

congratulate them on their efforts. As the spokesman for the Bipartisan Congressional Bicycle Caucus, I am excited that this bicycle community is coming to Washington, D.C. to make their voice heard.

Cyclists have a long and effective history of advocacy in this country. At the turn of the century, bicycling was fun, fast, convenient; and it was modern. The problem was there was no good place to ride these new-fangled contraptions. As a result, there was increasing demand for new, safe bike routes. In response, the Good Roads Movement was launched here in Washington, D.C. after a successful effort to lobby Congress for a \$10,000 grant to study the possibility of a paved-road system. Well, the rest is history.

Bicycling remains a favorite alternative mode of transportation. While only 1 percent of Americans use bicycles as their primary mode of transportation, studies show that in communities that have good bike facilities, bike lanes and parking, that up to 50 percent of the public living within the 5- to 10-mile range will use it for commuting.

Good bicycling communities rival European communities in terms of cycling participation. Even in my hometown, rainy Portland, Oregon, we are more than double the national average. The league conference is an opportunity for us who hear once again from the bike advocates from around the country on the importance of using cycling as a means of transportation. It does not contribute to pollution or create traffic congestion. A 4-mile bicycle round trip prevents 15 pounds of air pollution, and we have in fact made huge strides with bicycle facilities. We have committed in the last 10 years almost \$2 billion for bike and pedestrian projects, far more than the \$41 million that had been done the 17 previous years.

Mr. Speaker, we need to encourage people to expand these small, meaningful choices in transportation. Worried about OPEC, parking problems, a lack of exercise, simply level the playing field, give the cyclists today an opportunity. There are millions of them around the country who are waiting not only to be heard but to be given a chance to cycle safely in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members of this Congress to take advantage of this opportunity to meet with advocates and industry representatives from their districts this week, not just in your of-

fice. Thursday night the Bike League is hosting a reception from 5 to 7 in Room 268 of the Rayburn; and on Friday the Bicycle Caucus, the Washington Area Bicycle Association, and the League of American Bicyclists will be hosting the first Bike Caucus Ride of the 107th Congress for Members and their staff. It is a fun 7-mile ride. It is a perfect way to get to know your constituents and have a better feel for the community in which we work here in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, what about Members who do not have their bicycle here yet? No excuse. Contact us and we will make sure that there is a bicycle available for Members and their staff. It would be a great idea also for Members of Congress to make sure that they have renewed their membership in the bicycle caucus before somebody asks them to do so. Last year we had almost 80 Members.

Get ready to ride and have fun, but also help your own community with the serious side because cycling is important for recreation and exercising. It is a way for more children to be able to get to school on their own. It is an excellent transportation choice for communities for adults; and it is an excellent way, if we do our part, to make our communities more livable, more safe and economically secure.

TAX RELIEF THIS YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELDON of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the House's attention to the current debate about retroactive tax cuts for all American families. Some of my colleagues may have missed some important developments over the past few days that reflect what I believe, Mr. Speaker, is a major shift in the conventional wisdom about President Bush's tax cut proposal. Forgive me for being indelicate, Mr. Speaker, but everyone today seems to be singing the President's tune.

Mr. Speaker, first our Democratic colleagues said that the President's tax cut proposal was a risky scheme. My colleagues may remember last year that most of them voted against a tax cut that was just 70 percent of the total that they are now supporting as an alternative to the President's plan. They may not want us to remember their old

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

position, Mr. Speaker, but the facts are plain. Their message on tax relief has definitely changed.

This weekend the President of the United States and even Senator KENT CONRAD both said, "We ought to act now on tax relief." The momentum in the political debate continues to move in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, namely toward larger, retroactive tax cuts this year. Even the toughest critics of tax relief said if you are going to use tax reductions as a method for economic stimulus, you must act quickly to have any effect whatsoever. Tax cuts will be meaningless to this year's economy, Mr. Speaker, unless they take effect this year. Our faltering economy is not just about a jittery stock market. There is no need to beam up any one around here today. Everyone seems to agree with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and I, tax relief is the new religion, Mr. Speaker; and everyone has caught it in Washington, D.C.

Finally, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Alan Greenspan of the Federal Reserve have both said that America's economy is experiencing a crisis in consumer confidence. No other single thing that Congress could do this year will do more to improve consumer confidence than by providing tax relief for every taxpayer that begins January 1 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of retroactive tax relief is an idea whose time has come. This Congress should act and act now.

MARCH 25 MARKS 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF TRAGIC TRIANGLE FIRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCARELL) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PASCARELL. Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, March 25, came and went. March 25 is the 90th anniversary of the tragic Triangle fire, an event that changed the course of American history. On that day in 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory located on the top floors of the Asch Building on the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place in New York City.

The 575 workers who worked at the sewing machines had cans which collected the excess oil from the sewing machines. These cans were placed on top of boxes of lint. You can just imagine the picture now. A spark, an ignition, and the whole place went up, and 146 people out of the 475 that were working that day died. These people could not get out of the factory because the doors had been bolted. The doors had been locked by those who put profit ahead of worker safety. Times have changed, have they not?

Mr. Speaker, we argued on this floor in the last 2 years and 3 years about trade relations with other countries. I opposed those trade agreements that were not reciprocal but were one way, and we talked about the working conditions in other countries as not being up to what they should be; and yet here on our own mean streets of the United States of America, the greatest republic in the world, these factories still exist. Sweat labor still exists, and who speaks for those people, locked away for 12 and 16 hours? Who is here to talk about working conditions and what situations people have to go through to bring bread home to their families? Many times they are the new waves of immigrants, nowhere else to work, but in conditions that you and I would never accept.

Mr. Speaker, this fire is cited in the United States Almanac because it is the worst industrial fire in the history of the Nation. Business at the time was only concerned with the bottom line. Fire inspections and precautions were woefully inadequate. The Triangle factory had never conducted a fire drill. That building was supposed to be fireproof. There was no oversight and there certainly was no OSHA.

Mr. Speaker, we have all heard the debates of the past few weeks about protecting the workers. The employees were not in labor unions either, or just a few of them. There was no one there to protect them or speak for them. They were exploited and abused; and while we talk about working conditions in Honduras, in China, and well we should, right here in major suburbs and cities of this country, we know that the Department of Labor knows best about what goes on behind those locked doors right in the heart of New York City.

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of this tragedy people throughout the Nation demanded restitution, justice, and action that would safeguard the vulnerable and the oppressed. There were massive protests by people angry at the lack of concern and the greed that made the Triangle fire possible. As a direct result of that horrible tragedy, there was a substantial effort to alleviate the most dangerous aspects of sweatshop manufacturing in New York and throughout the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, on February 17, 2001, not too long ago, the last survivor of that factory blaze, Rose Freedman, passed away at 107 years of age. It is important that we not let the memory of the Triangle fire be extinguished from our memories. It is important that the workers of America, be they on farms, be they in factories, or be they in electronic cubicles, stand up and speak out when they see things that are unsafe. The courts will protect them; and if the courts do not, we will.

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versary of the tragic Triangle Fire, an event that changed the course of American history. On that day in 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory, located on the top floors of the Asch Building on the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place in New York City.

The fire swept through the top 3 stories of the building in only ½ hour. When the fire ended, 146 of the 575 Triangle factory employees had died. Not all died in the fire. Many jumped to their deaths from the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors rather than face the flames.

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Most of the Triangle factory workers were women. Most of the workers were recent European, Jewish or Italian immigrants, some as young as 11 years old. These women had come to the United States with their families to seek a better life.

But the harsh realities of working in a sweatshop was their reality.

Business at the time was only concerned with the bottom line. Fire inspections and precautions were woefully inadequate.

The Triangle factory had never conducted a fire drill and had locked doors, poor sanitation, and crowding. There was no oversight. There certainly was no OSHA. Most of the employees were not in labor unions. There was no one there to protect them from being exploited and abused.

However, in the wake of this tragedy, people throughout the nation demanded restitution, justice, and action that would safeguard the vulnerable and oppressed. It is unfortunate that it took events such as the Triangle Fire to demand change. There were massive protests by people angry at the lack of concern and the greed that had made the Triangle fire possible.

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It is important that we not let the memory of the Triangle Fire be extinguished from our memories.

It is for this reason that I have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 81 with my friend from New York, Mr. KING. This resolution recognizes the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Triangle Fire.

In my mind, this resolution is very simple and very straightforward. I taught my students about the fire in just this manner when I taught history class. But apparently, for reasons that escape me, it is just too controversial for today. And that is a shame.

In 1911, the Triangle Fire brought attention to the many serious problems facing factory employees and paved the way for worker protection laws.

In the year 2001, we cannot even recognize the memory of the fire and its victims on the House floor. But even worse than not considering a simple, non-binding resolution, is that we are letting history repeat itself.

The truth is that young workers around the world are dying needlessly in burning factories