

there at almost exactly 25 years to the day that we have seen our troops pull out of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. That really bothers me.

They are celebrating in Vietnam. They are taking our Secretary of Defense around to war memorials showing where their valiant airmen shot down our young Americans who were killed, and they are celebrating their victory over the United States 25 years after the fall of Saigon.

Our Secretary of Defense is over there during this celebration. To me, as an American, it seems unseemly. And I think a lot of Americans, especially those who served in Vietnam or who had loved ones that died and are still unaccounted for in Vietnam, would feel the same way.

Mr. Speaker, I just say to this administration and to the Secretary of Defense, if he wanted to go to Vietnam to talk to them about the POW-MIA issue, if he wanted to go to Vietnam to tell them how important their relationship with us is, then why in the world did he do it during their celebrations of the defeat of the United States and Vietnam? It makes no sense to me. It rubs me the wrong way.

I hope that the Secretary of Defense and others in the administration hear what we had to say. He should have done it at a different time.

ISSUES FACING RURAL AMERICA

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a good day for rural America. I want to congratulate the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. EMERSON) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) for reviving the Rural Caucus. I do not know what happened that it died. It should never have. For someone who represents a very rural district, it is certainly a delight that we have it back.

Why do we need a Rural Caucus? Well, first, I come from a very rural district, the most rural district east of the Mississippi, from northern tier Pennsylvania. A lot of people do not think of Pennsylvania as being rural. They think of Philadelphia and Lancaster and Pittsburgh. But much of Pennsylvania is rural. It is the most rural population in the country. One-third of Pennsylvanians live in towns of less than 2,500. That is rural.

Now, the problem we have is that urban America, who really runs this country, dominates governments at State and national level, does not understand the needs of rural America. I call rural America the heartland of this country where we have some of our finest, hardest working people with the best work ethic.

There is nothing more than we can point to today than the farm crisis. As I look out on the beautiful farmlands that are in Pennsylvania and other

neighboring States, and as we see the farmers leave and the barns fall down and the underbrush grows up on what was beautiful farm fields, we are gradually losing much of our heritage in this country.

The farm crisis, if not addressed, will again put more and more rural people out of work and send them to the cities to push more urban sprawl. It is vital that this Congress meets the needs to preserve farms in this country because of the vital role that we play.

My message to the White House is stop the food embargoes. Allow American farmers to sell their products at a fair price around the world. By lifting the embargoes, it would be \$12 billion to \$15 billion added to the farm budgets, and our farmers would get a much better price for their products because their markets would be expanded.

Another issue that is facing rural America is rural health care. I chaired health issues in Pennsylvania for a decade. I understand them. Rural health care is paid an unfair payment in comparison to urban suburban America. Why should a procedure in rural America be paid maybe half as much as a procedure in suburban urban America. There is no real reason for that except that is the rules that have been promulgated by HCFA that administers Medicare and Medicaid.

If rural America's health payments are not equalized or made fair, we will lose rural health care, and there will be no winners because those people will have to travel long distance to suburban areas. HCFA will pay the high price for the same health care that could have been administered in the hometown communities.

Rural transportation, rural airports, rural rail lines, we cannot afford to lose another mile of rail line in rural America. We cannot afford to have another community lose its ability to have rail service because it will make sure that certain jobs and certain opportunities are not available to them. Local air service is vital to the future of rural America, and it is under threat in this country because of government policies.

Another issue that has just been recently brought into the national news is the explosion of substance abuse in this country and in particular in rural America. Rural America was always thought to be free of drug use. It was an urban problem. Mr. Speaker, the recent studies show that there is more abuse among young people in rural America than any other part.

One of the reasons is we do not have adequate enforcement in rural America. The strike force, the drug strike force, the special groups that have been put together to work in urban America and suburban America, they do not like to work out in rural America. Because we do not have adequate enforcement, drug usage is on the rise, and we are losing young people by the thousands because drugs, not only harm young people, they often kill them.

Drugs are dangerous. Drugs are not healthy. Drugs are not safe. We must somehow stop the drug culture in all of America and specifically rural America.

A question I ask: Is rural America prepared for e-commerce? Do we have adequate ability to the Web, to the Internet? Are our telephone systems up to date? Do we have digital switching? Do we have an adequate amount of fiber optics? Because if we do not, it will be no different than if we do not have highways and we do not have rail and we do not have air service. E-commerce is where the future is.

One of the issues is equity in education. Rural school districts have historically been underfunded in comparison to urban and suburban districts. Suburban America has a strong tax base and can afford a good educational system. Urban America has some of the similar problems of rural. We have always subsidized them. But we have not subsidized rural education in the same manner that we have subsidized urban education. So rural education has had to take a back seat. Not all of the opportunities that are needed for our young people are there.

One of the issues facing this country and rural America is, do we have adequate access to technical education. My answer is no. The jobs that are out there today, many of them are high-tech jobs, many of them are mid-tech jobs. But we need an education that is a blend of academic and technology.

America is not prepared in my view, and rural America very much so, not prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, not prepared for the jobs of today. We are not adequately training the workforce. What is going to happen if we do not prepare this technical workforce, we are going to export another level of manufacturing that we should not lose and we do not need to lose if we do not prepare the workforce for the manufacturing companies.

The manufacturing companies that are still processing and manufacturing in America today are very high-tech. There is a computer and a robot hooked together all the way down the line. It is a very high-tech manufacturing, and it takes a worker far more than was needed in the past when one just needed a willing worker. One needs a person today that is trained.

ELIMINATION ON BAN ON IMPORTING TO UNITED STATES IRANIAN CAVIAR, CARPETS, AND PISTACHIOS

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity, because I was not on the list to address the House today and did not expect to do so. My remarks may be intemperate because I come here in anger. I speak here not with any prepared text, but

from a few roughly thrown together notes. I know those who prepare the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD like a prepared text to follow afterwards, but they will, unfortunately, have to rely upon our outstanding court reporter.

Mr. Speaker, 20 minutes ago, I became aware of a horrifying news report, a report that filled me with anger at a proposed administration policy, a policy that may be taken by an administration that I have supported time and time again with my vote and with my voice.

Today, news reports indicate that this Friday the State Department plans to announce an elimination on the ban on importing to the United States of Iranian caviar, carpets, and pistachios. We will be told that these three exports are insignificant to a Nation with so much oil. But Iran is able to export its oil on the world market and obtain the world price. Nothing America does influences that price or the total demand for Iranian oil.

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In contrast, Iran stands to benefit substantially if its three major non-energy exports are allowed into the United States. Nothing we do could have a greater impact in the area of importing goods from Iran than to allow carpets, pistachios, and caviar into our markets.

Mr. Speaker, do we really need Iranian caviar? The Russian caviar somehow does not satisfy the palates of the most discriminating? I do not think so. I think the greater thirst, the greater craving than for Iranian caviar is the thirst, the craving in the State Department to make concessions of a tangible nature to Iran before we get more than the first wisp of improved Iranian behavior.

Mr. Speaker, about a year ago, 13 Jews were arrested in Shiraz, Iran; and they were charged with espionage for the United States. Ten of those 13 remain in prison. All 13 go to trial next month. All of them face the death penalty. Why would America liberalize our export rules while these 13 face the death penalty for allegedly spying for us?

Mr. Speaker, since the Iranian revolution, 17 members of the Jewish community have been executed at roughly the rate of one per year in a constant and bloody effort at community repression, and yet our State Department wants to let in the caviar, the carpets. Mr. Speaker, that caviar will not taste good. There is blood in the caviar; the carpets wrap human bodies. And we have got to stand firm for once.

Mr. Speaker, the Vice President of the United States has said that Iran's treatment of the 13 Jews held in Shiraz would be a test for the Iranian government. But what test proctor is so wimpish as to award an A to the student before that student even turns in a paper? The test is still outstanding. Can Iran stop its repression of the oldest Jewish community outside of

Israel? Can they let go of the desire of some of the hard-liners in Iran to oppress this small remaining community of 30,000 people?

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand how stupid and outrageous these espionage charges are. Here in the United States we are a multiethnic society. Anyone can grow up to be a spy. We can have Jewish-American spies, Chinese-American spies, or English-American spies, because everyone participates in our society. In Iran, no Jew is allowed anywhere near anything of strategic significance, and America would not be the world's only superpower if we made a practice of hiring as our spies those in a small community prohibited from getting anywhere close to any of the information we might find significant.

Mr. Speaker, these 13 are not held out of a genuine belief that they might be guilty of espionage, but rather as an effort to torture a community and perhaps execute 13 of its members.

Mr. Speaker, there is blood in the caviar, bodies have been wrapped in the carpets, and it is time for America to say no until the 13 Jews of Shiraz are liberated and until the Iranian government takes other important actions as well.

TIMELY TOPICS FOR A NIGHT-SIDE CHAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is time for another night-side chat. I look forward to visiting with my colleagues in the next few minutes. There are a number of topics I would like to cover this evening, but first and foremost I have just listened to the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and his points on caviar from Iran. The gentleman's comments were excellent, and they were right on point.

It is amazing how the administration, in my opinion, is dealing with the oil situation that we have got, the high gasoline prices that all of our constituents pay out there, yet this week they are going to lift the restraints and allow Iran, which is a member of OPEC, to go ahead and trade these products in our country. When we consider even further what the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) has said in regards to the terrorist acts and the problems that we have had with the country of Iran, it makes it even more astonishing that the administration would lift those trade restraints and allow Iran to come in here and trade as if they are our neighbors in our neighborhood. It does not make sense.

I had to put my two bits in on that because I think it is important and because I want to talk a little this evening about gasoline prices. It has hit all of us across this country.

I also want to talk about my case of the week. As many of my colleagues know, I used to be a police officer; and I like to highlight some of the more absurd cases I read about in our national press. This week's case comes out of the State of Colorado, my home State.

I want to talk a little about law enforcement and our drug enforcement in the State of Colorado. We have a lot of good hard-working law enforcement officers in Colorado.

And then, finally, colleagues, I wanted to talk about probably the most important topic of this evening: guns. Guns. A little controversy later on in the discussion, so I hope my colleagues will stay around because I want to talk about guns and what kind of situation we have got with guns. I want to talk about gun squads. I want to talk about guns, and I think at the conclusion of those remarks, my colleagues will walk out of this Chamber supporting what we are doing in the State of Colorado in regards to guns.

Let us start at the top. Let us start talking about gasoline prices. We all know what is happening at the pump. And, by the way, I have heard a few news commentators say, gosh, we have nothing to complain about, look at the gas prices in Europe. Well, let me just say that we should not compare the gas prices in Europe with the gas price in the United States because the gas price in Europe is not comprised of extra cost of production; it is taxes. It is extra taxes in Europe.

I do not think we in this country ought to sit idly by and say we ought to raise our price of gasoline, just like the Europeans do, which means we are going to put a substantial tax increase on our gas prices. I think our country has every reason to object to the high prices of gasoline as we now see it. Our entire economy is dependent upon fuel and oil.

Now, sure, we would like to lessen that dependence in the future. In fact, during the oil crisis in the 1970s we had a very aggressive drive to reduce our dependence on oil; but in fact we increased our dependence on oil, to the extent that we are much more dependent today on foreign oil than we were after the crisis in the 1970s, when we said we were going to be less dependent. A number of different factors played into that.

Now, it is very easy to condemn oil. I deal with a number of people that are anti-oil. They think it is all big corporations, or they think this country has deserves what it gets in regards to oil. Well, if we really take a look at how fundamental it is, in fact there is not in this great room of ours, nothing, whether it is the furniture, whether it is the vehicles we use to get here, the electricity that lights the facility or powers this microphone or works TV cameras, all of this is very dependent upon this fuel. If we did not have this fuel, if the price gets out of hand, we will have an economic crisis. And when we have an economic crisis, that means