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THE EFFECT OF NAFTA ON AMERICAN LIVES AND BUSINESSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, 3 months ago, Congress and the White House were locked in a heated battle over fast track, a very contentious issue, debate which we think for now has been set aside and put off until another day.

In the meantime, we have a real opportunity, in the calm after the storm, where we can begin a very thoughtful discussion with the American people about our engagement in the global economy.

I am pleased this evening to be joined by two distinguished colleagues who, together with me and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS), the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. MARCY KAPTUR), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ALAN BOYD) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. KAREN THURMAN), took a trip through Georgia and Florida to talk to people who were affected by our trade policies. I am joined this evening by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BART STUPAK) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. BILL DELAHUNT).

Several of us, as I said, during the President's Day recess, got on a bus and went 500 miles. We stopped in some of the great cities of the South. We stopped in Atlanta and Tallahassee. We passed through small towns and countless miles of rural countryside. We visited farms and factories and cattle ranches and auto plants. We drove down bumpy roads. We took a few wrong turns, like we took one very long wrong turn. We stayed in people's

homes along the way. We talked and we argued late into the night, and passed the time with folk songs and laughter. We had some very unforgettable experiences.

How many of us have had the chance to drive through rural Georgia, listening to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS) tell stories of the Freedom Rides which rolled through the same countryside in 1961, or tasted fried alligator tail served by the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. KAREN THURMAN) at a cattle ranch in someplace called Wacahoota, Florida, or followed the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ALAN BOYD) to the top of the Florida State Capitol building for a birds-eye view of Tallahassee?

But the most important thing that we did on our journey was to listen, listen to people, listen to how these policies had affected their lives. We saw some inspiring success stories, like the Ford Motor Plant in Hatfield, Georgia, which is just outside of Atlanta, where managers and workers have turned a unique partnership into one of the most successful auto plants in the world. They won the J.D. Power Award for Excellence.

We had a very good discussion that lasted over an hour with workers and managers all working together to make a good product, to make a quality product that pays good wages. We heard sad stories, too. We met with workers who lost their jobs at Lucent Technologies, a plant that closed 2 years ago and moved to Mexico.

This is a picture of our bus, with the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. BILL DELAHUNT), the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS), and some of the workers. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BART STUPAK) is right here. Some of the workers who had lost their jobs are here.

I remember talking to one woman who was standing in front of this plant. She had worked there 25 years. She quietly told what happened when her livelihood disappeared. Like many people today who lose their jobs because of trade, she got another one, but it only paid \$7.25 an hour, I believe, working at the Target store. She had been making \$15 an hour.

The telephone that she once assembled for Lucent is now made in Reynosa, Mexico. Do you know what they pay folks down there to do that? Less than \$1 an hour. But the price of the telephone, she told us, keeps going up. How did she know? She worked in the Target store now that sells those telephones.

We got on the bus from there and we went down to Columbus, Georgia, where we met with textile and apparel workers from throughout the region. They told us what happened when plants closed in small, rural communities where few opportunities are available for those who lose their jobs. More than 150,000 textile and apparel workers have lost their jobs in the past 2 years alone, 2 years alone.

Farther down the road, we visited with farmers who worked at a tomato packing co-op in Quincy, Florida. The once bustling facility now stands virtually empty. Since NAFTA was passed in 1993 more than half the tomato farmers in Florida have gone out of business. Many of these farms have been owned by the same families for generations. These people are very, very proud of their work, and they know they have nothing to fear from old-fashioned competition, but one after another, they told us of their story and their frustration.

Here they are, dealing with a situation in Mexico where tomatoes are grown with chemicals and pesticides that are illegal here in the United States. They are grown in unsanitary conditions and picked by workers, including children, children who are 11, 10 years of age, who toil for indecent wages. That is what they are up against. These Florida farmers wondered aloud how much longer they can stay in business under these conditions.

So what does a tomato farmer in Quincy have in common with a garment worker in Columbus, Georgia? What connects a cattle rancher outside of Gainesville with these people here, a high-tech telephone worker in Atlanta? There is a thread that connects all of these people and their diverse lives. They have learned something important, something that people in Washington and Wall Street still do not understand. These people know from hard firsthand experience that something is wrong with our trade policy. Those of us who work in Washington have a lot to learn from these folks.

We know, of course, that a single bus trip cannot solve such a complex problem.

□ 1815

But these issues cannot be addressed without listening to the people who are affected and understanding what has happened to their lives.

We began such a dialogue with our 500-mile journey. This is a long-term debate. It is going to take many years, and we expect to be back on the road again soon to continue this discussion. I hope that others will join us from my party and the Republican Party as we work together to steer this Nation into the future. We can do this if we only find common ground, and we can find common ground if we engage in a dialogue, not only with each other but with the people in the country who are affected by these policies.

I believe, in conclusion, before I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DELAHUNT) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. STUPAK), that what we are advocating is a policy for the future, a trade policy that deals with the issues that our parents and our grandparents and their grandparents struggled with a hundred years ago. Those same issues are being struggled with in countries that we do trade with today,

that are trying to develop into a developed nation.

In this country 100 years ago we did not have the 8-hour day, we did not have the 40-hour work week, unemployment comp, worker's comp. We did not have the weekend. We did not have health and safety laws. All of those things happened because people were willing to sacrifice, they were willing to march, they were willing to demonstrate, they were willing to be beat up and go to jail. They were willing in some instances to die.

It was a Triangle Shirtwaist fire in the City of New York, at New York University today, a sweatshop where over 100 women were killed because of unsafe working conditions, that prompted the movement to a safe working condition in this country.

It was 9,000 coal miners living in tents, demanding an 8-hour day, and then having the companies mount machine guns on top of armored cars and threaten these miners, burning their tent site, killing 21 of them, including 11 children, that started the movement to get the 8-hour day.

It was Upton Sinclair's novel, "The Jungle," that exposed rotten food and beef in this country that was poisoning and killing too many innocent people. That led the movement to consumerism and led the movement to safe food.

All of this did not just happen. It happened because people did something about it. And there are people like those that I have just mentioned in Mexico and in Indonesia and in China who are struggling for these same basic rights: a decent wage, a right to organize, a right to assemble, a right to collective bargaining, and the right to lift themselves up to our level.

And it is not only right for us to stand with them because it is the right thing to do; it is also the right thing to do for our people because when their standards go up, multinational corporations cannot say "Well, if you do not take a cut in pay, a cut in wages, a cut in benefits, we are moving to Mexico or Indonesia or China." They cannot say that because the standards there begin to rise and so the comparative advantage is gone.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I thank my friends who went on this tour, especially the two gentlemen who are with us today, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK), who knows the food safety issue. He knows all of these issues, but he knows the food safety issue as well as anyone in this Congress, and he has played an instrumental role in raising that issue to the forefront as we debate these issues. And the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) a new Member who immediately understood this issue and sensed the anger and the frustration in this country, sensed the inequities, and understands the plight of small business people in this, which never gets talked about but is very key as well, and who took of his time to come with us and listen and to see and

to talk and to engage in dialogue so that he could come back here and express to our other colleagues what he had heard on this trip.

Mr. Speaker, with that I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for yielding, and thank him for organizing this special order and actually being the leader on the fair trade campaign.

This bus trip that the gentleman talked about, where we went around Georgia and Florida and listened to people, was put on by the Citizens' Trade Campaign. That is a group of religious leaders, labor leaders, consumer groups, consumer advocacy groups, and they invited us to go out and get out of our safe districts, we are comfortable there, and go talk to folks like we have in our photograph there, I didn't know any of them there other than the Members of Congress, and to listen to their stories.

Mr. Speaker, I found throughout this whole trip, no matter what aspect it was, whether it was manufacturing or farming, Americans are eager to compete. They want to compete. They want trade agreements. But at the same time they know that this country has some standards that we must adhere to, whether environmental standards, labor standards, agricultural standards, and especially food safety standards.

They are saying, we are happy to compete. We can compete with anyone at any level. Just let us all play by the same rules. Let us have a fair trade agreement.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting at the Ford plant that the gentleman spoke of where they made the Taurus and the Sables, the number one efficient auto plant in the world according to J.D. Power and Associates, year after year. They are the number one plant. They have a great working relationship between labor and management.

We asked the question: How many cars do you sell to Japan? Obviously, they must sell a lot of this number one popular car. They said, "This year we are doing pretty well. We are going to get 670 units." We asked how many units do they make in an hour, and they can make 67 units in an hour. So what Japan orders from us as far as this very popular car is one 10-hour shift worth of cars, is all they are going to have, and they think that is a breakthrough for this year.

The point they stressed is that while they are the most efficient plant in the world according to J.D. Power, yet they can only sell 670 cars. What is going on here? And they do put the steering wheel on the right-hand side. And Japanese consumers love American cars, especially the cars that come off this line in Georgia.

All they ask is, let us compete. If they are going to bring a car in, let us bring a car into Japan. And they were

serious and sincere and it was neat to listen to these guys.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I think a fact that I shall never forget upon visiting that Ford factory was that the cost of the car that they produced, which was the Sable, a fine car, in the United States cost approximately \$20,000. When that car was exported to Japan, the consumer in Japan had to pay approximately \$45,000 for that vehicle.

Mr. BONIOR. And it was not just the expensive boat ride over.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It was not the expensive boat ride. But I think really what that particular statistic does really talks to what we are about, which was fair trade. We ought to have probably a picture of the car that was produced here, produced in Atlanta, Georgia, just to remind the American people that that car was \$20,000 here in the United States and \$45,000 in Japan.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman makes a very good point. We asked why does it cost so much? From \$20,000 to \$45,000 to \$50,000? And they said: See, when we bring an American car and put it over in Japan, then we must follow their rules. We must now follow the Japanese standard. Every car must go through a processing center where they go through with a very fine-tooth comb, and they reject and continue to reject it until that is the perfect car. And every time there is a rejection and further inspection, the manufacturer here, in this case Ford, would then have to pay to bring it up to their standards.

So if I might, I would like to talk a little bit about standards tonight and food safety, because when we went to Florida and we had heard from the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN), the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) and others, as we were doing the debate about fast track last year, they said we are happy to compete with Mexico on food standards, especially our winter fruits and vegetables and the citrus, but just have the same standards. But since the implementation of NAFTA in 1993, they said look what happened in our State because we do not have the same standards. Florida has lost 50,000 agriculture-related jobs.

Mr. BONIOR. How many jobs?

Mr. STUPAK. 50,000 agriculture-related jobs since the implementation of NAFTA. The tomato industry has lost \$750 million since 1993. They said our job, our health, our Nation's food standards have gone downhill. But we said, look, can we compete with Mexico to produce food at a competitive price while maintaining the world's highest food safety standards? They unequivocally said yes, we can, as long as the

food coming into our country meets the same standards.

Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about a surcharge or anything to make it meet our standards. We are talking about some very, very basic health standards that this Nation has set forth, has fought for over the years to develop the world's greatest and safest food supply.

But look what has happened. Take our own State of Michigan. We had the school hot lunch program in which strawberries had come in from Mexico and they were tainted with hepatitis A. And Michigan is as far as one can get from the Mexico southern border. But we have to understand that our fruit and our food supply, especially our winter vegetables, 50 percent or more comes in from Mexico during these winter months.

So we had these strawberries that got in the school lunch program and they came from Mexico. At the initial outbreak we had 179 Michigan students contracted hepatitis A after eating tainted Mexican strawberries.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, could the gentleman repeat that, please.

Mr. STUPAK. It started out 179 Michigan schoolchildren contracted hepatitis A by eating tainted strawberries. It is now up to 324, and this is in Calhoun County, the public health officials have told us 324 have contracted hepatitis A from school lunch.

Mr. DELAHUNT. So from the time it was first diagnosed that this epidemic broke out, it has almost doubled in terms of the number of young children that have been conclusively diagnosed and contracted hepatitis as the result of the importation of unsafe food from Mexico?

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. I am talking about 10-year-old students here. Most of these children were second, third and fourth grade 10-year-old students.

If we stop and think about what we are doing in this country, we have food standards in this country that are the envy of the world. We have the safest food. But if we look at what has happened recently, every second of every day someone is stricken with food poisoning. If we take a look at it, that is 33 million Americans a year. In fact they attribute 9,000 deaths to tainted food here in the United States.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, that is a startling number. I do not think many of our constituents realize how widespread it is. I know my son just got food poisoning last week. We do not know exactly what it was from, but that was the diagnosis. It happens and it happens often. As my colleague says, 9,000 Americans die per year.

Mr. STUPAK. From food poisoning. And we do not always recognize it as food poisoning. But these numbers are from reports and studies of the General Accounting Office. U.S. News and World Report did a big article on it a couple of months ago. That is where some of these statistics derive from.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for a question, what kind of inspection occurs when these food imports enter into the United States?

Mr. STUPAK. Well, jumping a little bit ahead here, but let me explain a little bit of what has happened, what we have found. I mentioned the General Accounting Office and they have done a couple of reports. One was in May of this year, and here is what they told us.

Mr. HUNTER. The General Accounting Office is an official agency of the United States Government, non-partisan in nature?

Mr. STUPAK. Nonpartisan. FDA inspections, talking about domestic and imported foods, in 1981 we had 21,000 inspections in this country. 21,000. In 1996 we have, domestic and imported, 5,000 inspections. In 1981 we had 21,000 inspections of our food supply; 1996 we had 5,000.

Mr. BONIOR. It drops down.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is less than 25 percent this past year of what occurred 6 or 7 years ago.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, remember what I said earlier. More than 50 percent of the lettuce, tomatoes, the fresh fruits and vegetables we consume in this country are not grown in this country because it is the wintertime. Our growing seasons are down, and especially now with the weather problems we have seen with El Nino as California has been hit.

So now we go back to what happened to the tomato industry that we saw in Florida. Why did they lose 50,000 agriculture-related jobs? Why did they lose \$750 million in lost profits? Because they cannot compete with the Mexican tomato industry which has really taken over the U.S. market.

□ 1830

Down in Florida we tell them, you have to play by the rules. You cannot use illegal pesticides. You must use very clean irrigation water, and you must have proper handling of your product. But they do not play by the same rules in Mexico, and when they come across the border, there is no one to inspect.

For instance, take a look at it, there are 9,000 trucks per day that come in from our southern border carrying fruits and vegetables. Actually it is 12,000, but 9,000 are carrying food products. Of those 12,000, 9,000, which are food products, how many are inspected? One percent. Just 1 percent are ever inspected.

The infrastructure to do the inspections that are necessary was never in place when NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, was passed. And look what has happened. The inspections have actually gone down.

So we wrote the President and the administration a letter, 84 Members of this Congress signed it, and said, look, if we are going to do these trade agree-

ments, and we are for trade, and if we are going to have equal standards, you have to do a couple things, Mr. President. And we hope we can join and work with you because we want to have trade agreements, but we need to include three things.

Number one, we need to include strong food safety and health safety standards in these trade agreements, whether it is NAFTA or an extension of the fast track agreement. Have our standards, please, Mr. President. Let us increase the funding for border inspections of Mexican trucks carrying food produce, meats, frozen foods into our country, and last but not least let us begin an aggressive food labeling program so all food products that come into this Nation, when you go to the store and you reach for that tomato, it should be labeled in that bin, whether that is grown in Mexico, California or Florida. And let the American consumer decide whether they want tomatoes grown in Florida or Mexico.

Mr. BONIOR. Are there any States that do this now?

Mr. STUPAK. Right now there are two States. Florida is actually one of them. So is the State of Maine. In this bus trip we asked agricultural people, what does it cost if we would say you have to label your fresh fruits and vegetable products from the country of origin so the consumer would know? They said, it costs, according to State officials, \$4 for every store you own a year, \$4 for every store. There were some consumer groups and we asked them. I will take it back, it was \$4 a month. So we asked the consumer advocacy groups what did they think. Florida said it was \$4 per month per store. What do you think it is? They said, at most it is \$8 to \$10 per month per store. That is the added cost, very limited, very, very limited.

So there is not a big financial incentive why not to do it, but again, should not the American consumer have the final say on where they want their fruit, vegetables, especially during wintertime, where it is grown, you choose where you want to take it from, that that Nation does not live up to our standards like on irrigation water and illegal use of pesticides, then you should have the right to say, I reject that fruit or vegetable from Mexico. I would rather have U.S.-grown because I know the standards it lives by.

That is all we are trying to do is, what are the safety standards. We talk about safety standards all the time. Whether you are in Michigan, Florida, Georgia, when it comes to trade and food safety standards, you are certainly concerned about your health, your family's health, and you want to make sure you these high standards are met.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If the gentleman would yield, I do not think that there is any Member of this body that would disagree with the fact that it is unconscionable to allow food that is contaminated to be imported into this country.

I want to get back to the statistics that you talked about in terms of your home State of Michigan and Mr. BONIOR's State where there were in excess of 300 children under the ages of 10 who contracted hepatitis. But putting aside the human anguish, putting aside the fact that this is just unacceptable to the American people, what I would dare say is that the cost of treating the victims of that epidemic in terms of our health care dollars has to be substantial.

Somebody is paying the bill. And it would appear to be the people of Michigan in that particular case, but people all over this Nation in terms of allowing into this country the import or importation of food products that very well might be endangering the health of Americans, there is a dollars and cents cost to that.

Mr. STUPAK. No doubt. There is a dollar and cents cost, but let us continue with this Michigan example. There are 300 and some children now who have hepatitis A. We know how to treat that. You are very ill. There is an antibiotic, you will get better. But what has happened in Michigan? Give you some idea of what kind of food we are importing here, these children right now today are still suffering from loss of hair, skin loss, respiratory infections, asthma-related illnesses, shingles, sores in their mouth. Those are not symptoms of hepatitis A. The suspicion is that there were other things in these strawberries. The unclean water that they used to irrigate, could there have been lead, arsenic? Was there an illegal pesticide as Mexico uses, DDT? We have not used that in this country for a long time, and 30 other chemicals in this country they still use in Mexico.

So the secondary symptoms, which are quite horrendous to say the least, we have asked the FDA to do a further follow-up. You have these strawberries. They were impounded. What else was there? Was it lead? What else is causing these other symptoms for these poor children in Michigan? We wrote that back last fall. We still have yet to receive an answer.

So while there is a monetary cost, as the gentleman pointed out from Massachusetts, of treating hepatitis A, we have added costs of things we do not know. We have the agricultural loss of jobs. You have the industry loss, but how do you tell a 10-year-old whose hair is falling out that, well, it is okay, we have got a good trade policy in this country, and we just do not have enough inspections on the border, and, well, I mean, you cannot. Financially or emotionally, you cannot put a value on that.

Mr. BONIOR. It is not just the children in Michigan. Two facts briefly, if I could, that relate to your comments. Number one, I was astounded to learn on our trip that approximately 70 percent of the food sold at this time of the year in Michigan in the Detroit area is imported, 70 percent. I do not know

why I was astounded. I guess I never really thought about it that much. That is a huge number.

The second point I would make, it is not only the children of Michigan who have suffered dramatically as a result of these trade policies that do not take into account lower standards, health standards, but it is the children of Mexico as well. If you look along the border between the United States and Mexico from Texas to California, an area called the maquiladora, there has been virtually no cleanup. They have had this huge surge of industrial development and these plants pouring their waste and their sewage into canals where children bathe and play, and as a result we have had this terrible outbreak of health problems for these children.

The American Medical Association, a conservative and I might even say stodgy organization, but one that is held in pretty high esteem in this country, called this area, called this area, the border area, the maquiladora area, a cesspool of infectious disease. Their words, not mine.

So to get this to trade again, what we are all about is raising those standards so that not only those Mexican children but our children do not have to suffer the consequences that the gentleman from Michigan and my friend from Massachusetts, who so ably outlined for us.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, the issue here in the United States, we want to maintain our food supply as safe as we can. So while we want to raise the standards for the children south and even north of our border, we also must maintain what we already have. These standards, again, the workers we saw, they can compete with anyone provided we are playing by the same standards.

We have had problems with beef coming from Canada, that has been tainted. We have had trouble with Guatemalan raspberries. We have had milk problems up in the Northeast from an airborne pathogen that came over probably from Europe.

So that is why it was so important when we had the fast track discussion last fall and we asked the President to sort of do three things for us, to maintain our standards, the United States standards. Number one, renegotiate the provisions of NAFTA that relate to border inspections and food safety to ensure that any fast track authority would include strong food safety provisions. Secondly, we asked to increase the funding for border inspections or, alternatively, limit the increasing rate of food imports to ensure that there is a safe supply of food here in this country. Last but not least, to begin the program to label all foodstuffs including fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and meats with their country of origin. Unfortunately, that was not put forth by the administration.

I guess those were simple standards we asked for, but stop and think about

it. About 6 months ago or maybe even a little longer, we were ready to go to a trade war with China over things like CDs, intellectual property rights, copyrights, banking laws. That is all fine. We have these standards for cassette discs. We have it for copyright infringement. We have it for so-called intellectual property, and we have it for copyrights. Why not for food safety, something where we all eat and consume? And yet we have more than 50 percent of our fruits and vegetables. At least give the American consumer the right to determine whether they want that tomato grown in Mexico or in Florida, and you know what standards they are grown under.

I learned a lot from these folks on our bus trip. I look forward to future trips for the Citizens for Fair Trade campaign. I think we are all for trade, but when you hear these stories of these people or whose children have been stricken because of improperly imported food, you certainly, your heart goes out to them. But this is an issue that is being repeated too often. As I said, each second of every day someone suffers from food poisoning, 33 million Americans a year suffer from it. There are 9,000 deaths per year.

A CD has never killed anybody, but we certainly maintain its standards. Why can we not have that same standard for our food safety in this Nation?

I thank Mr. BONIOR for organizing this special order and also being a leader on this issue and opening our eyes to some of these very, very serious issues that must be addressed, and it is the proper position of the U.S. Congress to ask these questions as we continue trade agreements around this Nation and around this world.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague for his insights and leadership, particularly on this aspect of the trade issue.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to echo the sentiments expressed by Mr. STUPAK that it was an extremely informative and educational trip for myself as well as for every Member of Congress. I did learn something about food. As you know, I come from Massachusetts, which is not necessarily considered an agricultural economy. However, I should point out that Massachusetts is the second leading producer, it might be the first, but I will concede to Wisconsin, the second leading producer of cranberries, and most of those cranberries happen to be cultivated and grown in my district, which includes the south shore of Boston as well as Cape Cod and the islands.

But I did learn this that I had never known before. When we talk about globalization, when we talk about trade, you mentioned, for example, that 70 percent of the food that is consumed in the State of Michigan during the course of the winter is imported. When we talk about globalization, we are really talking to, I would suggest, the beginning of the end of a way of

life, but because what I learned on this trip as it related to agriculture is that it is the small farmer in America that is losing, not the large agribusiness, not the large multinational conglomerate, if you will. But again and again we heard that the small farmer just cannot make it.

□ 1845

They cannot survive. And my memory, and maybe it is a romantic view of American history, was a small farmer in America that really produced not just food, but in many respects our national prosperity.

Mr. BONIOR. Our way of life, our culture, so many pieces of the fabric and texture of our country was established, as the gentleman correctly stated, by that type of an entity. It was not just an economic entity, it was a social entity that carried tremendous values that today we revere in this country.

Mr. DELAHUNT. As the gentleman says, it is almost as if there is a loss of a sense of community; that these people who really made America great, the small farmer, is at such an incredible disadvantage because of unfair trade. Unfair trade.

And those are the people we ought to be concerned about. Who is standing up for the small farmer here in America today? It is certainly not the multinational conglomerate.

I was pleased to hear my friend, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK), talk about that we are not opposed to trade. Because the reality is every single Member that participated in that trip wants to encourage trade. We are pro-trade. We are pro-fair trade. But what we want to be able to do is to write the rules of international commerce so that every single American benefits from the prosperity that is generated by global trade and by the global economy. That is what we are about. And that was really the first very small step along that road. The very first step.

But what we have discovered in real terms is that not everybody is playing by the same rules. We have to have a set of rules where there is a minimum wage; where there are child labor standards; where there is a 40-hour workweek; where there is paid vacations; where there is a weekend. It is not about exploiting other nations, it is about raising their standard of living and not suppressing our own standard of living to benefit the few.

If we can pause and reflect, we think of in the past 10 years how well the stock market has done. Broken all records. Every day there is a new record. I daresay that the stock market has probably increased, since 1980, 700 or 800 or 900 percent, and my gut tells me that I am underestimating that. But what is happening to the median income of the American people in this country? The top 20 percent have done well.

Mr. BONIOR. Extremely well.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But what about the other 80 percent? What about the mid-

dle class in America? It is really about the middle class, because if we do not have a viable middle class, the poor and the disadvantaged have nowhere to go but even further down.

So what we are talking about is a global commerce, an international trade where the American people, through its Congress and through its President, write the new rules, the new rules that will encourage trade, but where every single American and people all over the world will benefit, not just a few.

Mr. BONIOR. And the gentleman is so correct when he talks about just the few. There has been an enormous wealth created in this country, particularly over the last 15 to 20 years, and accrued to the top 20 or 25 percent, as the gentleman stated, of our population. They have had tremendous increases in their standard of living and in their worth.

And that is not an insignificant number of people. Twenty-five percent of America is what, maybe 60 million, something like that? Sixty-five million people. That is a lot of people who have generated an enormous amount of wealth. They tend to be the same people who control the organs of communication: the media, the networks, the newspapers, the periodicals, the way we communicate electronically today. They are the folks that control that, and oftentimes they do not move beyond their own circles. They do not see what we see.

The gentleman is absolutely right, the top did very well. But those below the 75 or 80 percent level, below that top 20 or 25 percent, their salaries have basically been frozen or gone down. If we go to the bottom 25 percent of working people in this country, they have had a serious, serious drop in real wages over this same period of time, to the point now where we have in this country the largest income gap between the top working people and the people at the bottom. It has grown enormously.

Why is that? Well, there are many reasons. Trade is a piece of it. I want to be careful and use the right word, but I would say we have betrayed our ancestors and we have betrayed our heritage on the issues that both of us have talked about that took so long to build up in this country. These struggles for a decent wage, for safe working conditions, for compensation, for time off, they just did not happen. We struggled for that.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If the gentleman will continue to yield for a moment. If those that went before us had not prevailed, would there be a middle class in America today?

Mr. BONIOR. Of course not. Of course not.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Is it not absolutely critical that whatever we talk about in terms of our own responsibility, it is to ensure that those standards that were created, as the gentleman said, through struggle and toil, stay the

same so that we continue to have a healthy middle class that really sets us apart as a healthy democracy?

Mr. BONIOR. That is right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Because without a healthy middle class, democracy starts to erode.

Mr. BONIOR. That is right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And we become a society of have and have-nots. And that is part of the problem.

Mr. STUPAK. If the gentlemen will yield on that point. In talking about the middle and upper class, and I guess we could say the lower class, those on the lower economic scale, there was an interesting article recently put out by "Inside Michigan Politics," a publication from our home State, just 2 weeks ago.

Mr. BONIOR. That the gentleman shared with me on the bus.

Mr. STUPAK. Right. Basically, they have been doing this study and they had broken down the American workers into five different categories, the top percentile, the middle, and the lower percentile; and again breaking them, the whole working population, into 5 percentiles. The highest percentile, from 1990 to 1996 nationwide, they went up 13 percent greater than any other class.

Mr. BONIOR. The top 20 percent.

Mr. STUPAK. The top 20 percent went up 13 percent. In Michigan it was 12.7, rounded off 13 percent. The middle class, the third percentile, the third level, the middle one here, during that same 6-year period, from '90 to '96, they lost 2 percent. So they went down 2 percent. And the bottom 20 percent, or the lowest economic class that they surveyed, actually lost about 20 percent over the same period of time.

So we can see the rich will get richer, the poor will get poorer, and the poor middle class here that we all relate to and speak of, actually lost 2 percent in our home State of Michigan.

Mr. BONIOR. And the gentleman is right. What happens, of course, is when people's salaries get bumped from, as I described earlier this woman at Lucent Industries, is making \$15 an hour and she lost her job. She found another one at Target, the department store, for \$7.50, half her salary. What happens with those people, of course, is that they work two jobs.

Mr. STUPAK. What is their biggest concern right now?

Mr. BONIOR. And their spouse often works two jobs.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And what does that mean?

Mr. BONIOR. That means they are not home.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is correct.

Mr. BONIOR. And when they are not home, the whole fabric that keeps our society together, the values of the family being there when their kids come home from school, working with them on their homework, going to their ball games or their dance recitals, it is not there. And they do not participate in their community. They do not vote.

It is no wonder the percentage of people participating democratically in this country is starting to slide, because they do not know what is happening in their communities. They are busy trying to make a living and trying to stay even.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is like running on a treadmill. That is exactly what it is like.

Mr. BONIOR. Do my colleagues remember the woman who came on the bus, and where was it, it was just outside of Gainesville, with the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. KAREN THURMAN), and sang us that song?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Anytown USA.

Mr. BONIOR. Anytown USA; about how these towns have just changed so dramatically. We now have CVS Pharmacies coming in, and the small pharmaceutical companies, the store owner is gone. We have the Kmart's that we have the Wal-Mart's that have come in, with the huge percentage of products made abroad, by the way, and that just kind of ruins the whole downtown area in these communities.

The multinational large corporations have had an enormous impact on changing the values and the face of what America looks like today.

Mr. STUPAK. These workers we spoke to, especially ones outside this plant, and even the textile workers down in Columbus, Georgia, if we look at that photograph, and I know it is hard to see for the folks, but those workers there are not young people just out of high school. They had 25 to 30 years. This was the last plant they had of making these telephones. So they moved, some of them, five and six times trying to keep their jobs.

And the gentleman is right, they were making about \$13 or \$15 an hour and, now, working at Target, for like \$7 an hour. But look at these workers. They were mid- to late 50s. They have 25 to 30 years in with this company. And they said we have been gone now for over a year and we are struggling to find work.

And their big concern, what was their big concern? While they were retirees and had vested benefits, they were now taking their health benefits away.

Mr. BONIOR. That is right. These folks, 25 to 30 years, moved their jobs away, now working somewhere else, but at least they had these benefits. Now they are going after their health and pension benefits.

Mr. STUPAK. Now they are going for their health and pension benefits.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is important to remember, too, we are not just talking blue collar workers here. There were people that were concerned and frightened about their jobs as middle managers.

I can remember reading 2 or 3 years ago a series in The New York Times about corporate downsizing and restructuring. The victims of corporate restructuring and downsizing are out there, too. The individual that was

making \$65,000 or \$75,000 or \$85,000 a year, we should speak about him, too, because he has or she has not had an opportunity to secure a job, similar kind of employment, that exceeds in many cases more than 60 percent of what his or her income was.

The gentleman spoke earlier about the small business person. Does anybody in America recognize what is happening in the community? The gentleman talked about the drugstore. I have this vivid memory of every day, on my way home from school, stopping at the independent drugstore: The individual who sponsored the Little League team, who knew my name, who traded with my parents, who was an integral part of the community.

That does not happen today. That store is gone. The hardware store, that was part of the song that that folk singer sang to us. Rather than going down and getting your nails and hammer at the hardware store in our local town, where again we knew that individual and we connected with the owner, with the proprietor, he or she is also gone. Today we walk into Home Depot.

Maybe an argument can be made, and I have not heard it yet, that we are better off as a result of the efficiencies that are occurring there. But there is something missing in terms of the quality of life with these people going on.

□ 1900

Remember community banks? Is there anybody in America that has not witnessed the incredible acceleration of the demise of community banks? I know in New England we really have two banks left. If you are a middle-class person, and you need a loan real quickly, go in and knock on that friendly door.

Mr. STUPAK. Whether it is banking or whatever, and I hope the folks listening do not just think it is Georgia or Florida we are talking about but it is everywhere, whether it is Massachusetts or Michigan.

My home area, northern Michigan, I represent the northern half of the State but even my little community of Menominee, which is 10,000 people, and Marinette, Wisconsin right across the border, 12,000 people, we had 4 paper mills in the area. Recently we have been devastated by layoffs. 896 workers have been laid off since September of 1996.

Our paper industry up there in northern Michigan, each of our mills found their own little niche in the market. What happened? The big corporate multinational company from Australia, Visi, comes in. They like this nice little plant in Menominee, so they buy it. They buy it for two reasons, the niche or the product line we produce and our customer base. So they buy this plant, they buy our product line, they buy our customer base.

Then suddenly, even though that mill makes money and machine number

one, paper machine number one still made money, it was not as efficient as they wanted it. So without any responsibility to the community, machine number one is gone, that is 220 workers, and all the support in that factory needs it.

Kimberly-Clark takes over, Scott paper, Scott tissue, we all know that. Kimberly-Clark came in, bought the product line, bought the customer base, basically shut the place down.

Badger was a very small little paper mill in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. Again, imports made it cheaper to buy the pulp elsewhere, and Badger is really struggling to make ends meet. As we globalize, not only is there economic and social justice you have to argue, but there is also a corporate responsibility to these communities and to these individuals. Where do these people, whether in Georgia, Florida or Michigan, who have 30 years in, go for a job?

Mr. BONIOR. There is a backlash that is going on all around not only the country, around the world today, to globalization. We know it is happening, we know it is a reality, we know it is here. It is here to stay, that our borders are broken down, we are going to be trading with each other, and that is good.

The backlash comes when it is not fair. What we are all about is trying to write the rules so that the average man and woman gets a break and it does not all go to the top. It is not much more complicated than that, although we have talked about all the difficult and intricate pieces here.

What we have got to do is start holding accountable those multinational corporations and those governments that are in cahoots with these corporations to make sure that the average working man and woman get a break, because we are all in this together. What happens to the worker in Mexico or Indonesia or in China affects the worker here. People are starting to figure that out.

I thank the gentlemen for spending the time this evening. I look forward to getting back on the bus with them and going to other parts of this country to hear stories, to understand and listen to people and coming back here and sharing their concerns with our colleagues and with the country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have the great pleasure and honor of yielding now to the distinguished gentleman from Waco, Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the Chief Deputy Democratic Whip.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished minority whip for recognizing me to speak for a few minutes on an issue that is very near and dear to my heart. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to discuss an issue that I believe is of critical importance to our Nation and to every American family. The issue is religious freedom.

Specifically, I want to comment on Federal legislation that I believe will

do great damage to our Bill of Rights and to the cause of religious liberty. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) has introduced a constitutional amendment that, if passed into law, would for the first time in our Nation's history amend our cherished Bill of Rights, that Bill of Rights which has for over 200 years protected American's religious, political and individual rights. On Wednesday the Committee on the Judiciary is expected to vote on this ill-conceived legislation.

The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) has mislabeled his work the Religious Freedom Amendment. More appropriately, it should be called the Religious Freedom Destruction Amendment, because that is what it will do.

In my opinion, the Istook amendment is the worst and most dangerous piece of legislation I have seen in my 15 years in public office. It is dangerous because it threatens our core religious rights and would literally tear down the 200-year-old wall that our Founding Fathers built to protect religion from the intrusion of government. That is why I will be working with a bipartisan coalition of House Members and religious leaders from across the Nation to defeat this measure.

The Istook amendment would allow satanic prayers and animal sacrifices in the name of prayers to be performed in our public school rooms. It would step on the rights of religious minorities and allow government facilities, including county courthouses and elementary public schools, to become billboards for religious cults.

Mr. Speaker, America already has a religious freedom amendment. It is called the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is the first pillar of our Bill of Rights. It is the sacred foundation of all of our rights.

The First Amendment begins with these cherished words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." For over two centuries that simple but profound statement has been the guardian of religious liberty, which is perhaps the greatest single contribution of the American experiment in democracy. To tamper with the First Amendment of our Bill of Rights has profound implications.

In the name of furthering religion, the Istook amendment would harm religion. In the name of protecting religious freedom, it would damage religious freedom. With no disrespect intended to my colleague, if I must choose between Madison, Jefferson and our Founding Fathers versus the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) on the issue of protecting religious liberty, I shall stand with Madison, Jefferson and our Founding Fathers.

If history has taught us nothing else, it has taught us that the best way to ruin religion is to politicize it. Our Founding Fathers deleted the mentioning of God in our Constitution, not out of disrespect but out of total reverence for their faith in God and the impor-

tance of religion in our lives. It is that same sense of reverence that should move us in this Congress to protect the First Amendment of our Constitution, not dismantle it.

Some have suggested that the Istook amendment is necessary because they allege God has been taken out of public places. I would suggest those people must not share my belief that no human has the power to remove an all-powerful, ever-present God from any place on this earth.

The fact is there is no law in America that prohibits prayers in school. Teachers have said as long as there are math tests, there will be prayers in school. I agree. Under present law, school children may pray silently in school or even out loud, so long as they do not disturb the class work of others and try to impose their religious views upon their fellow students. Today in our schools children can say grace over school lunches and, if they wish, pray around the flagpole before and after school.

Under the Bill of Rights, government resources, though, cannot be used to force religion upon our school children against the wishes of their parents or the children themselves. What the Bill of Rights does prohibit is government-sponsored prayer, as it should.

Our Founding Fathers were wise to separate church and State in the very First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. Religious freedom flourishes in America today. Why? Precisely because of our Constitution's wall of separation between church and State. Islamic fundamentalism seen in the Middle East today is a clear example of how religious rights are trampled upon when government gets involved in religion.

In the months ahead, I urge Americans to look beyond the sound bite rhetoric of the Istook amendment and ask themselves this question: Should prayer be an individual right or a government program?

U.S. SHOULD SUPPORT INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, few weeks ago, several Members of this body had sent a letter to the Honorable Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of the Indian State of Punjab. The letter alleges that India's security forces and the Punjab state police have been involved in a number of acts of murder, rape, and torture of the Sikh community. The letter also called for the establishment of a state human rights commission to investigate these alleged crimes.

Mr. Speaker, there is no need to resurrect these allegations or propose a new way to deal with them.

Last year, under the direction of Chief Minister Badal, the Punjab gov-

ernment established a human rights commission whose primary purpose is to investigate claims of human rights abuses committed by government officials, Indian security forces, and members of the Punjab state police. This commission is headed by a former Chief Justice of the Indian High Court. The former Chief Justice is accompanied by retired judges and private citizens from the State of Punjab. The commission was purposely filled with individuals who are of different and unique backgrounds to ensure that all interests are represented.

The Indian government several years ago, I should point out, also established the National Indian Human Rights Commission to investigate claims of human rights abuses. That commission has found members of the Indian security force, border patrol, and military to have used excessive force, especially in Punjab. This commission has swiftly disciplined these individuals for the crimes they had committed.

I am surprised that there was no mention in this letter that representatives of the International Commission of the Red Cross and Amnesty International have visited India. Many distinguished leaders from the U.S., including Members of this body, have traveled to India to meet with government officials, separatist leaders, and the general population.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the predominantly Sikh Akali Dal party won the majority of seats in the legislature, and the party's leader, Prakash Singh Badal, was named Chief Minister. To show that they are committed to the peace and prosperity of Punjab, the Akali Dal party ran in coalition with the predominantly Hindu BJP party.

What concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is that these claims and accusations about the situation in Punjab really are almost 10 years old now. The developments over the last 2 years, three elections with over 60 percent voter turnout and the establishment of the state human rights commission, are in sharp contrast to the claims that are being made in this letter that was sent to the Punjab government. The people of Punjab have demonstrated their preference and commitment to peace and the democratic process.

I think it is time that Members of this body look past the problems that formerly plagued Punjab. It is time for us to focus on different issues, such as the major economic reforms initiated by the Punjab government.

Punjab is currently trying to attract numerous American companies to invest in the state's infrastructure, information technology, and agriculture projects. We should support those American companies, such as Pepsi, Heinz, and Kellogg, who have already made tremendous investments and have helped bring stability back to the state of Punjab.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking that we show our support and work with the