

Earlier this year, in February 2003, the United States Department of Agriculture evaluated this program, and the conclusions were overwhelmingly positive. In addition to significantly reducing the incidence of hunger among school-age children, the program was also found to promote educational opportunity, especially for girls, among some of the poorest populations in the world.

Sadly, in fiscal year 2003, McGovern-Dole received only \$100 million in funding, reducing the number of children served to scarcely more than 2 million world-wide in just 28 countries. In fiscal year 2004, President Bush only asked for \$50 million, and if this allocation remains unaltered, the United States will literally be taking food out of the mouths of yet another one million hungry children and forcing their families to remove them from school.

The senior Senator from Kansas and chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, PAT ROBERTS, a leading proponent of the McGovern-Dole program in the other body, has stated on a number of occasions his belief that this program serves our national security interests by attacking the breeding grounds of terrorism, hunger, poverty, ignorance and despair, while at the same time ensuring that children receive meals in settings where they receive a quality education, rather than hate-filled indoctrination.

I could not agree more. But rather than expanding this program to reach even more school-aged children, to help stabilize communities devastated by HIV-AIDS, and to support HIV-AIDS orphans so they might contribute to the future of their nations rather than burden them, we are cutting it again.

On November 26, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization released its 2003 report on hunger. It found that after falling steadily during the 1990s, hunger is again on the rise. In the developing world, the number of malnourished people grew by an average of 4.5 million a year for the past 3 years. The report also found that hunger exacerbates the AIDS crisis, drives rural people into the cities, and forces women and children to trade sex for food and money.

Yet over the past 3 years, we have cut funding for the McGovern-Dole school feeding program so it is now one-sixth of what it once was. This is a disgrace, plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker, we are going in the wrong direction, not just for the children of the world, but for the security of our own Nation. I call on President Bush and congressional leadership to restore full funding in fiscal year 2005 to the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education Program.

A WORTHWHILE PROPOSAL

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, much has been written lately about several attempts to craft an alternative peace plan in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The best-known of these recent plans, the Geneva Initiative, was conceived and written by representatives of both sides of the conflict but without the involvement of governments or politicians. As such, it is a fresh approach that should provide a lesson to those who continue to believe that peace is something that can only be crafted by government officials or bribed or bullied by the international community.

We do know this: After decades of conflict and tens of billions of U.S. tax dollars spent, U.S. Government involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has led nowhere. The latest U.S. Government-initiated plan for peace, the road map, appears to be a map to nowhere. This does not surprise me much. With a seemingly endless amount of money to bribe the two leaders of the two opposing sides to remain engaged in the process, is it any wonder why the two parties never arrive at peace?

But people on both sides are becoming more and more frustrated at the endless impasse and endless government and bureaucrat-written peace agreements that go nowhere.

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That is why plans like this should be of such interest. Initially conceived by an obscure Swiss professor, the project was joined by former Israeli Justice Minister, Yossi Beilin, former Palestinian Authority Information Minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo, and by other prominent officials like former President Jimmy Carter. The negotiations led to the creation of a 50-page detailed accord.

I do not know whether the product is perfect. I have not studied the minute details of the proposal. But what I do know is that politicians, governments, and special interests promote war at the expense of those who have to fight them. Wars end when the victims finally demand peace, and that is what we are beginning to see. According to one recent survey, a majority among both the Israeli and Palestinian populations support this new initiative. That is encouraging. To his credit, President Bush has demonstrated an open mind toward this alternative approach. He declared the Geneva Initiative "productive" and added that the United States "appreciates people discussing peace." Secretary of State Colin Powell echoed the President when he resisted hard-line pressure to ignore the proposed accord stating, "I have an obligation to listen to individuals who have interesting ideas." This is also encouraging.

Predictably, though, this new approach is not as welcomed by those governments, politicians, and special interests who have a stake in dragging out the process indefinitely. Pales-

tinian Authority President Yasser Arafat has been lukewarm at best. Extremist Arab organizations who have a special interest in continuing the violence have also rejected the Geneva Initiative. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has rejected the initiative out of hand. Said Mr. Sharon, "Geneva is an attempt to do something only a government can do."

But the point is that governments have little incentive to finally end conflicts such as these. The United States is in places like Kosovo and Bosnia indefinitely in the name of peacekeeping and peace processes. The same will be true of our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is not until foreign involvement ceases, that means our continued meddling in the Middle East, and the people directly involved demand peace, do real working solutions begin to emerge. The Geneva Initiative is therefore a positive step toward peace in the Middle East. Let us step back and get out of the way.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT LEAVES MANY VICTIMS IN ITS WAKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RENZI). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was December 7, known as the Day of Infamy, so named by the great President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Mr. Speaker, I suggest this evening that this day is a kind of day of infamy for this House, particularly with the passage of this conference report. This conference report contains within it so many violations of basic democracy in this House that this day will not soon be forgotten, which is why I make the analogy that I did.

The conference report leaves many victims in its wake. Let me name just a few of them. It is a 50/50 country. But if you were not of the majority party, if you are among the independents, you had little participation in this final product. Or if you happened to live in the wrong State or the wrong district, even though it might be closely held, you will look long and hard before finding your place in this conference report.

And help you, help you if you are in the low or middle classes of our country because you have been sacrificed time and time again in this report to big corporations, to wealthy Americans. If you are among the millions of what I call the disfavored elderly who will get little or no help from the prescription drug Medicare bill, you will not find yourselves among the bills we have passed this year on prescription drugs. The most unfortunate of you are the long-term unemployed. Unbelievably, this is the second Christmas Congress has gone home to leave the long-term unemployed with no relief to face the Christmas and the new year with a

rough, rather than a happy, holiday. I do not know how the House could have done that, at least for these long-term unemployed.

But the victims, Mr. Speaker, are also in this body and in the Senate. The Republicans themselves are going to have to face the music when they go home to face the 8 million who will lose their overtime pay and be informed of it just in time for Christmas. It is going to be some Christmas for them. This Republican House voted decisively to eliminate their overtime pay, but they must have heard from them because when it came time for the motion to instruct, all of a sudden we had a majority with us against the provision to eliminate overtime pay. What happened? Their own majority reversed them. So now they have got to go back home and try to say, I was for you, but I am in the party that was against you. How do you explain that?

On the Senate side, there are any number of provisions, which is why this conference report is likely to go nowhere before Christmas. Let me just pluck one analogous example. The Senate has surely heard from the American people on vouchers. They just did not have the votes to do anything on D.C. vouchers. Why? Because everybody's school district is being cut because of 3 years of a poor economy under this President. Because our promise to fund disabled children is an unkept promise of the decades. Because our promise to fund No Child Left Behind is \$9 billion in the hole. The Senate was not about to vote for any D.C. vouchers. What happened? Passed one House, never passed the other, pops up in this bill. You think that is democracy? If it happened only one time to one or two bills, that would be one thing. Sprinkled throughout, this bill is just strewn with this kind of undemocratic authoritarian dealing, more typical of countries that we criticize. But the villain in this piece has seldom been spoken of because it is not only the Republican majority, Mr. Speaker; it is the Republican President. We do not see his face here, but we have felt his big footprint, his one-man approach to this bill; and he has offended many members of both parties, especially in the Senate.

I predict this day that this bill will not get through the other body. I do not think the Senate is about to bless a bill that imposes the will of one man of the majority on the House and the Senate alike. This term we have changed the very character of this House. We need to come back no longer seeking comity and bipartisanship. We need to make the goal of the House to return to its ancient democratic traditions.

MARKING THE PASSING OF JOHN LENNON AND ACCLAIMING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BOB SEGER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn and mark the passing of John Lennon and to acclaim the accomplishments of Bob Seger, both of them musicians and artists, performers and poets.

First, on a sorrowful note, today observes the 23rd commemoration of the murder of John Winston Ono Lennon, M.B.E. Let us mark and continue to mourn his passage not merely with words but with his music and then with every agonizing echo of the deafening silence left in the wake of his senseless loss. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his widow and his sons.

On a joyous note, however, I also rise to celebrate the achievements of one who has followed and honored Mr. Lennon's legacy, Michigan's own Bob Seger. Rising from his working-class roots, Bob Seger has reached the pinnacle of the rock and roll world. For after his loyal fans conducted a petition drive and collected nearly 4,500 signatures, Mr. Seger is finally being duly recognized and inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He could not be more deserving.

Mr. Seger's life's work, his art, has been a celebration of working Americans, our lives, our loves, our losses and, most importantly, the little victories which hearten and heal and lead us all ever onward in this arduous journey of life. He is a musician, an entertainer, and a poet who speaks not only to our ears but also to our hearts.

Once the romantic poet William Wordsworth explained the essence of artistic virtue: "And then a wish: My best and favorite aspiration mounts with yearning toward some philosophical song of truth which cherishes our daily lives."

For over 30 years, Mr. Seger has sung this philosophical song of truth, cherishing our daily lives. Let us now honor his.

SENIORS ARE LOSERS IN MEDICARE BILL SIGNED TODAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. First, just a moment to my friends from New Mexico just to indicate my deepest sympathy for the loss of Joe Skeen.

I believe that there is an opportunity in this Congress to work together. I am disappointed that what we have done today clearly indicates that we have missed our chances on some occasions, missed a chance to come together as a House and Senate; and certainly over the last couple of weeks the story that will be written in history will be one that will raise a question as to whose interests have been promoted in this body.

As I look at this article from Robert Novak, "GOP Pulled No Punches in Struggle for Medicare Bill," even with-

out reading the entire text, it tells the story. My concern about the Medicare bill that was signed today is the fact that seniors are the losers. Seniors in my district when I came home during the Thanksgiving break, not understanding what we had just done, were looking for relief. They did not understand that this bill does not take place for financial reasons until 2006. They did not understand why hundreds of thousands, or at least tens of thousands of seniors in Texas would lose their retirement benefits. Or some of the seniors that use the Medicaid resources will also lose those resources.

They did not understand why they could not have a guaranteed prescription drug benefit under Medicare. They did not understand why they would be forced ultimately to go into a privatized HMO. And they certainly did not understand why the government would be forced to not negotiate the lowest price for prescription drugs which makes common sense. In this time of friendly Christmas shopping and holiday shopping, everybody is looking for a deal. They cannot understand why we have a law that says that the government cannot look for a deal. And so it saddens me that a bill was signed that really does not help our seniors and that we have captured the essence of a disregard for House rules with a 4-hour vote open almost and that in essence the GOP decided to pull no punches. Whether it means putting up another Member against a wall, whatever it meant, it meant that the interests of our seniors was not handled.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will come back in January in 2004 and we will get down to work and we will actually put on the table a reform, a revision to what has been signed. Because, frankly, I believe that we are digging ourselves a deep hole. And 2006 will not come soon enough for that hole to get bigger and bigger and bigger. This is not a good bill. Good intentions, but certainly not a good bill.

Mr. Speaker, I said that there were several things that I wanted to mention this evening, and I briefly want to mention the fact that a Texan, certainly somebody that we all know and certainly we know of his great expertise, Jim Baker, has been asked to help in the Iraqi debt. I will be sending out a letter and asking my colleagues to join me that we have a similar envoy to help relieve the debt of the nation of Haiti that in the early years of our historical beginnings fought in the revolution against the French. Haiti is almost crumbling under the weight of debt. I believe what you can do unto one you can do unto another, particularly one that is in this hemisphere. We cannot tolerate any longer the kind of burden that Haiti is facing, and it seems inequitable that you would help Iraq and not help Haiti. And so I hope the President will join me and welcome that opportunity and be able to do so.