

time of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE).

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

There was no objection.

CONFUSING MEDICARE CARD GAME

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this week America's seniors and disabled Americans can use the new prescription drug discount card created by last year's Republican Medicare law. This card program has not exactly been met with a resounding "yes." Nationwide fewer than 500,000 seniors out of 40 million actively chose to enroll in the card.

A little surprise when seniors in Ohio and throughout the country have found it confusing, have found it overwhelming, have found it way, way too bureaucratic, and have found it unreliable.

Under traditional Medicare, all of your benefits are available through one Medicare card that looks like this. But under the new program, seniors have to choose from a whole deck of cards. This card may be a discount for Fosamax. This card may be a discount for Zolof. This card may be a discount for Vioxx. This card may be a discount for Lipitor. This card might be a 12 percent discount. This card might be a 16 percent discount. This card might be a 19 percent discount.

But even with that confusion, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse because one card might cover your blood pressure medicine but not your heart medicine; the discounts published in the brochure you read, the 12 percent, the 14 percent, the 16 percent, the discounts you might read could be out of date by the time you get to the drug store.

In other words, under this Rube Goldberg kind of plan, you pick one of these, in Ohio, 53 cards, you pick one of these cards, you pay \$30, you are stuck with that card the whole year. Yet, the card maker, the card seller can change the discount, can change the drugs that are covered anytime during that 52 weeks. Mr. Speaker, that is not Medicare. This is Medicare. It is simple. It is reliable. It is universal.

The new program is having such problems that even one of its most widely accepted provisions is having trouble signing people up. The new law provides annual subsidies of up to \$600, a good idea, on drug purchases for some, unfortunately too limited, number of low-income seniors.

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But even that provision did not reach its target audience. Secretary Tommy Thompson says he is somewhat concerned that low-income seniors are not signing up. A lot of us are concerned in

this House that they are not signing up.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), and I have introduced a bill that would automatically enroll all seniors in the new low-income subsidies program.

Like Medicare itself, our proposal is simple; it is universal and reliable. Unfortunately, because it violates the Republican privatization way of doing things, they do not want to do it. So instead of actually fixing the problem by saying all seniors who are eligible get the \$600 automatically, the Bush administration's going to spend another \$4 million to advertise to try to encourage people to sign up. They have already spent up to \$80 million to tell seniors that this program is a good idea overall. Now they want to spend another \$4 million doing something that we ought to do to reach out to those seniors that need the drug benefit.

Earlier last year when the HHS auditors said the Republican bill would cost \$134 billion more than the White House said, the White House suppressed the estimate and gagged the auditor. When the initial reaction from seniors was less than enthusiastic, the Bush administration announced plans to spend, as I said earlier, \$80 million of our taxpayer dollars to educate seniors on why this bill is not really this bad after all. When news coverage of the program was not favorable enough, the Bush administration was undaunted. They just rolled out their own news stories, at taxpayers' expense, complete with fake anchor, phony interviewer, bogus reporter. It is not about substance; it is about image.

I think we can show that we can do better. House Republican leadership should pass the Dingell bill this week. It would begin to enroll those people who are eligible for the \$600 drug benefit, those lower-income seniors. We could pass it and get it over to the other body in plenty of time to have it on President Bush's desk by next week. I would love that to happen.

The choice, Mr. Speaker, again should be do we want one Medicare card that can give good drug discounts using the 40 million beneficiaries to negotiate a 40, 50, 60 percent discount for all seniors on this one card, or do we want to issue this privatized kind of Medicare with 53 cards, with 53 different plans, sold by private insurance, too confusing, too bureaucratic, and, frankly, a benefit that is barely worth it?

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my 5 minutes at this time.

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

There was no objection.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

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, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Our allegiances to our allies and friends change constantly. For decades, exiled Iraqi Ahmed Chalabi was our chosen leader to be in the new Iraq. Championed by Pentagon neocons and objected to by the State Department, Mr. Chalabi received more than \$100 million U.S. taxpayer dollars as our man designated to be the leader of a new Iraqi government.

But something happened on the way to the coronation. The State Department finally won out in its struggle with the Pentagon to dump Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress, delivering Iraq to a competing exiled group.

What a mess. No one should be surprised. Regime changes, whether by the CIA or by preemptive war, almost always go badly. American involvement in installing the Shah of Iran in the 1950s, killing Diem in South Vietnam in the 1960s, helping Osama bin Laden against the Soviets in the 1980s, assisting Saddam Hussein against Iran in the 1980s, propping up dictators in many Arab countries, and supporting the destruction of the Palestinian people all have had serious repercussions on American interests including the loss of American life. We have wasted hundreds of billions of dollars while the wounds in the Middle East continue to fester.

How many times have our friends become our enemies and our enemies our friends, making it difficult to determine which is which? Our new relationship with Qaddafi in Libya is an example of the silliness of this policy. Long-term interference in the internal affairs of other nations does not help us or those we support.

The invisible economic costs are enormous, but generally ignored. A policy of militarism and constant war has huge dollar costs, which contributes to the huge deficits, higher interest rates, inflation and economic dislocations. War cannot raise the standard of living for the average American. Participants in the military industrial complex do benefit, however.

The clear failure of the policy of foreign interventionism followed by our leaders for more than a hundred years should prompt a reassessment of our philosophy. Tactical changes, or relying on the U.N., will not solve these problems. Either way, the burden will fall on the American taxpayer and the American soldier.

The day is fast approaching when we no longer will be able to afford this burden. Currently, foreign governments are willing to loan us the money needed to finance our current account deficit and, indirectly, the cost of our

worldwide military operations. It may seem possible now because we have been afforded the historically unique privilege of printing the world's reserve currency.

Foreigners so far have been only too willing to take our depreciating dollars for their goods. Economic law eventually will limit our ability to live off others by credit creation; and trust in the dollar will be diminished, if not destroyed. Those who hold these trillion-plus dollars can hold us hostage if it ever becomes in their interest. It may be that economic law and the hostility toward the United States will combine to precipitate an emotionally charged rejection of the dollar.

That is when the true wealth of the country will become self-evident, and we will no longer be able to afford the extravagant expense of pursuing an American empire. No nation has ever been able to finance excessive foreign entanglements and domestic entitlements through printing-press money and borrowing from abroad.

It is time we reconsider the advice of the Founding Fathers and the guidelines of the Constitution, which counsels a foreign policy of nonintervention and strategic independence. Setting a good example is a far better way to spread American ideals than through force of arms. Trading with nations, without interference by international government regulators, is superior to sanctions and tariffs that too often plant the seeds of war.

The principle of self-determination should be permitted for all nations and all demographically defined groups. The world tolerated the breakup of the ruthless Soviet and Yugoslavian systems rather well, even as certain national and ethnic groups demanded self-determination and independence.

This principle is the source of the solution for Iraq.

Instead of the incessant chant about us forcing democracy on others, why not read our history and see how 13 nations joined together to form a loose-knit republic with emphasis on local self-government. Part of the problem with our effort to reorder Iraq is that the best solution is something we have essentially rejected here in the United States. It would make a lot more sense to concentrate on rebuilding our Republic, emphasizing the principles of private property, free markets, trade and personal liberty here at home rather than pursuing war abroad. If this were done, we would not be a militaristic state spending ourselves into bankruptcy, and government benefits to the untold thousands of corporations and special interests would be denied.

True defense is diminished when money and energy are consumed by activities outside the scope of specifically protecting our national interests. Diverting resources away from defense and the protection of our borders, while antagonizing so many around the world, would actually serve to expose

us to greater danger from more determined enemies.

A policy of nonintervention and strategic independence is the course we should take if we are serious about peace and prosperity. Liberty works.

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

(Mr. DeFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the gentleman from Oregon's (Mr. DeFAZIO) time.

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

There was no objection.

THE INCOMPETENCE MUST STOP

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

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, sadly I am here to talk about what we cannot ignore: the sad, sad chronicle of incompetence and blunder which marks this administration's conduct of national security policy.

I do not think in the history of the United States there has been a major national security effort handled so badly. I voted against the war in Iraq. I voted for the war in Afghanistan, and I am glad I did. I voted against the war in Iraq because I did not think it was justified, and I feel vindicated in that judgment; but even for those who thought it was justified, I do not understand how they can fail to join in the criticism of the shambles this administration has made of the policy.

I will insert in the RECORD here, Mr. Speaker, an article by Elisabeth Bumiller from the May 29 New York Times, and the headline is "Conservative Allies Take Chalabi Case to the White House."

[From the New York Times, May 29, 2004]

CONSERVATIVE ALLIES TAKE CHALABI CASE TO THE WHITE HOUSE

(By Elisabeth Bumiller)

WASHINGTON, May 28—Influential outside advisers to the Bush administration who support the Iraqi exile leader Ahmad Chalabi are pressing the White House to stop what one has called a "smear campaign," against Mr. Chalabi, whose Baghdad home and offices were ransacked last week in an American-supported raid.

Last Saturday, several of these Chalabi supporters said, a small delegation of them marched into the West Wing office of Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, to complain about the administration's abrupt change of heart about Mr. Chalabi and to register their concerns about the course of the war in Iraq. The group in-

cluded Richard N. Perle, the former chairman of a Pentagon advisory group, and R. James Woolsey, director of central intelligence under President Bill Clinton.

Members of the group, who had requested the meeting, told Ms. Rice that they were incensed at what they view as the vilification of Mr. Chalabi, a favorite of conservatives who is now central to an F.B.I. investigation into who in the American government might have given him highly classified information that he is suspected of turning over to Iran.

Mr. Chalabi has denied that he provided Iran with any classified information.

The session with Ms. Rice was one sign of the turmoil that Mr. Chalabi's travails have produced within an influential corner of Washington, where Mr. Chalabi is still seen as a potential leader of Iraq.

"There is a smear campaign under way, and it is being perpetrated by the C.I.A. and the D.I.A. and a gaggle of former intelligence officers who have succeeded in planting these stories, which are accepted with hardly any scrutiny," Mr. Perle, a leading conservative, said in an interview.

Mr. Perle, referring to both the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, said the campaign against Mr. Chalabi was "an outrageous abuse of power" by United States government officials in Washington and Baghdad.

"I'm talking about Jerry Bremer, for one,"

Mr. Perle said, referring to L. Paul Bremer III, the top American administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in charge of the occupation of Iraq. "I don't know who gave these orders, but there is no question that the C.P.A. was involved."

In Baghdad, coalition authorities vigorously denied Mr. Perle's assertion. "Jerry Bremer didn't initiate the investigation," Dan Senor, the spokesman for the Coalition Provisional Authority, said in a telephone interview.

Similarly, Mark Mansfield, a C.I.A. spokesman, called Mr. Perle's accusation that the agency was smearing Mr. Chalabi "absurd." A Defense Department official who asked not to be named said that Mr. Perle's accusations against the D.I.A. had no foundation.

Mr. Chalabi has been a divisive figure for years in Washington, where top Pentagon officials favored him as a future leader of Iraq and top State Department officials distrusted him as unreliable. Either way, Mr. Chalabi and his exile group, the Iraqi National Congress, fed intelligence to the Bush administration about Iraq's unconventional weapons that helped drive the administration toward war.

Intelligence officials now argue that some of the intelligence was fabricated, and that Mr. Chalabi's motives were to push the United States into toppling Saddam Hussein and pave the way for his installation as Iraqi's new leader.

Although Mr. Chalabi's supporters outside the administration have been caustic in their comments about his treatment, there has been relative silence so far from Mr. Chalabi's supporters within the administration. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz, who favored going to war in Iraq and was a patron of Mr. Chalabi, did not respond to numerous requests this week for an interview.

Mr. Wolfowitz's spokesman, Charley Cooper, said in an e-mail message that Mr. Wolfowitz believed that Mr. Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress "have provided valuable operational intelligence to our military forces in Iraq, which has helped save American lives." Mr. Cooper added in the message that "Secretary Wolfowitz hopes that the events of the last few weeks haven't undermined that."

The current views of Vice President Dick Cheney and his chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby,