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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. EWING].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 30, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable THOMAS W. EWING to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] for 5 minutes.

TIME TO END THE FREEBIE CULTURE

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to try and get some answers to a new policy that was announced today in the National Journal's Congressional Daily. In that daily, it says that the Speaker will now be allowing Members of Congress to sleep in their office. This is a new policy and I have a lot of questions as to what is transpiring.

We are now going through this period where we are seeing draconian cuts in all sorts of social service programs, and I find it a little interesting that at a time we are cutting out some of the poorest of the poor, we have now said that we have to extend compassion to Members of Congress because they are only making $133,000 a year and cannot possibly afford to live in Washington, DC. At least people in my district would find that a little startling in they do not find that that is a poverty wage and are a little shocked by that discrepancy as to what is poor and what is not.

But the other thing that I keep wondering about as apparently we are engaging in this new congressional slumber party, things that we do not know:

Is the House restaurant going to do room service? Are we going to rename the office buildings the House office buildings and dormitories? Does this qualify under the gift rule? Is this a gift from the Speaker to Members who use this? Will there be bed checks? Will staff be allowed to come or is this going to be income tested? Do you have to make at least as much as a Member to be this impoverished? Do we have to report this on our income tax?

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Members in the last term decided that we would be taxed on our cars, where we park our cars, because that was the only fair thing to do and to treat ourselves like the private sector.

In the private sector, I assume that the IRS would tax us if we were given free room and board. So will the IRS tax us here? And since we are already paying taxes if we have an assigned parking place, what if we sleep in our car? Does that then come in under that? Or do we get a new IRS ruling?

I find this new announcement very confusing, and I hope that we get a clarification as to what all of this is going to entail as we start this new bunk-in-the-House program.

I also hope maybe it gets reconsidered, because I think the average American feels that if you are making what a Member of Congress makes, you can probably afford a little place around here.

Furthermore, most people are paying their staff a whole lot less and they are able to live in Washington, DC, so I do not think it quite passes the straight-faced test.

Mr. Speaker, I also am not too sure that it is the kind of image and decorum that we would like to show for this House and the respect that it has had for over 200 years. It is kind of amazing to me that for over 200 years we have gotten by without Members having to sleep in their office and, suddenly in 1995, things have gotten so tough for Members that this has to be extended.

But I think it also falls into part of the whole gift rule debate that we have been trying to have on this House floor. Suddenly we get this gift, and being able to have free housing here apparently, because the IRS has not spoken, but apparently we are going to be given this gift, but we still do not have time to deal with the gift rule as to what kind of gifts we can get from lobbyists.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to end the freebie culture. I think the American people think it is time to end the freebie culture. I think they thought it was time to end it last term when we passed it over and over again, and I hope that we could take time out to get to some of the real core issues before we see even more gifts being dispensed and more perks being dispensed to Members of Congress.

I find it amazing that a lot of people would get very upset about an ice bucket being delivered to different rooms and still not being upset about Members then converting them into an apartment.

Are people going to be able to bring families to the House? If you have your family in Washington, can you convert

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your office into kind of a family living quarters where they can all stay?

All of these things, I think come from this new pronouncement, and I hope that we get a clarification later in the day from the Speaker, because I find this a very, very interesting new proposal that will probably make wonderful material for new sitcoms. If I were a sitcom writer and I read this, I would think, ''Wow. We've been waiting for 200 years for the Congress to do this.'' Can you imagine? ''They eat together, they sleep together, they legislate together.'' But I do not think that is what I want as the image of this House, and I hope we get some more information on this very soon.

GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, last year the Vice President of the United States, on a national news program, discussed health care reform and why the Democrats were not bothering to speak to the Republicans, and made the statement that ''the Republicans didn't vote for Social Security, they didn't vote for Medicare, they're not going to vote for health care, so why should we bother talking to them?''

That refrain was picked up by the then-majority-party of the House, the Democrats, and we heard it on the floor time after time. The gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] dug up the actual facts, and he and I gave several speeches on that last year clarifying the situation, that in fact 83 percent of the House Republicans in 1935 voted for the Social Security Act, contrary to the statement made by the Vice President that none of them had.

Furthermore, 47 percent of Republicans voted for Medicare in 1965. And shame of all shames, more Republicans than Democrats voted for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In fact, 81 percent of the Republicans in the House at that time voted for it, whereas only 62 percent of the Democrats did.

Mr. Speaker, why do I bring this issue up again? We disposed of it last year immediately after Congressman HORN and I made our comments. The refrain from the other side of the aisle disappeared. But last week once again it emerged as we were discussing Social Security mandates as they relate to the balanced budget amendment and the fear of some people that if we balance the budget, we will cut Social Security.

Once again the Republicans were cast in the role of having opposed Social Security when it originally passed. Comments made by the ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary indicate that.

I would like to read just a few statements that were made in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD last week in which the gentleman form Michigan, the ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary, stated, ''May I remind the gentleman,'' and he is referring to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HYDE], ''that Social Security was a Democratic Social Security insurance policy.'' Furthermore, he goes on to say that it was opposed by the Republicans.

Once again, we have the same strawperson being resurrected to say that the Republicans opposed Social Security, when in fact the record clearly shows that 83 percent of the Republicans in 1935 voted for the Social Security Act.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we do not have the old false information of last year resurrected again this year. Let us be sure that we deal with the facts. Let us give credit where credit is due.

I have a chart here which I would be happy to give to any Member of the other party who wants to review the facts, pointing out that in fact on such things as the Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, 93 percent of the Republicans voted for it. On the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1970, 99 percent of the Republicans voted for it. I have already given some of the other figures, particularly the Civil Rights Act, where more Republicans than Democrats voted for it.

I think it is clear that the Republicans are not Neanderthals as they are often characterized by Members of the other party. Let us give credit where credit is due. Let us stick with the facts. Let us stick with the actual record and recognize that we must work together to accomplish what is right and what is good for this country.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the chart referred to in my remarks as follows:

VOTES CAST BY DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS ON MAJOR PIECES OF LEGISLATION THIS CENTURY

	House Democrats supporting	House Republicans supporting	House vote
Social Security Act (1935)	[1] 96	[1] 83	372–33
Federal Highway Act (1956)	93	97	388–19
Civil Rights Act (1964)	62	81	290–130
Medicare (1965)	86	47	313–115
Clean Air Act Amendments (1970)	100	99	375–1
Water Pollution Control Act (1972)	99	93	380–14

[1] In percent.

[2] Source: Congressional Research Service.

RENEWED CALL FOR INDEPENDENT COUNSEL IN SPEAKER'S ETHICS CASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. BONIOR] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments, I just want to respond to my good friend, and he is my good friend, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS], to say on the Social Security issue, we would not be raising it, except that the Speaker, who raised the issue, said he wants to do away with the CPI index as presently stated. If he does that and they refigure the CPI based upon what Mr. Greenspan and others have suggested, we are talking about a $2,000 hit for Social Security recipients. There is no way around it.

I want the folks to be clear on that. If the Speaker and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY] and the Republicans want to fool around with Social Security and the CPI index, it is going to cost seniors dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today because we saw one more example of why we need an outside counsel to look into the Speaker's ethics problems. The Los Angeles Times ran a story this morning that raises disturbing new questions about GOPAC. GOPAC, of course, is a multi-million-dollar political action committee run by Mr. GRINGRICH which at its very heart is part of the ethics complaint that is being filed against him.

Over the past 9 years, GOPAC has raised between $10 million and $20 million. Its contributors include people who have a direct interest in Federal legislation. Yet we do not know who contributed this money and we do not know how much was spent. We do not know this because GOPAC still refuses to disclose the names of its past contributors and its past expenses.

Let me just read a headline that was in the L.A. Times this morning. ''Funding of Gingrich PAC Raises Questions. Key Corporate Donors Have Interests in Pending Federal Action. FEC Alleges Campaign Violations.

The L.A. Times story points out: ''GOPAC'' has collected contributions from wealthy individuals that far exceed annual Federal election limits.''

It points out: ''One Wisconsin couple gave over $700,000 to GINGRICH's organization between 1985 and 1993, nearly twice what they could have donated directly to all Federal candidates.''

Remember, Mr. Speaker, it was just last month that a top Gingrich ally when asked about GOPAC said that GOPAC was founded ''as a way of getting around campaign finance disclosure laws.''

We are not just talking about one or two campaigns here.

According to this morning's story in the L.A. Times, ''GOPAC boasts that half of the 136 Republican lawmakers elected since 1990 actively used the group's training materials and followed its advice on how to attack Democratic opponents and use powerful issues.''

It is not just who they gave to that is the problem, but why.

As the story points out, ''The size of the contributions solely to GOPAC from corporate donors with important interests before the Federal Government raises questions about the prospects of preferential treatment.''

When asked about GOPAC, the nonpartisan director of the government watch dog group, Ellen Miller says, ''GOPAC has clearly violated the spirit