THE RAIDERS ARE COMING—AND I DON'T MEAN THE FOOTBALL TEAM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the raiders I am referring to do not wear football helmets and they do not throw a ball. They are profiteering health care entrepreneurs, and they are quickly moving into our community.

The move toward investor-owned health care, particularly where doctors are sharing in the financial risk and have incentives to deny care, means that patients could be denied access to critical medical resources. Significant health care dollars are being siphoned off to pay shareholders, soaring executives salaries and exorbitant marketing costs. Meanwhile, the number of Americans who are uninsured and underinsured is growing.

The explosion of profit-sharing health care companies is leading the current transformation of the U.S. health care market, and they have arrived in our district. Watch out. The move toward monopolistic, for-profit health care requires a legislative response to protect patients and consumers.

THE MOVE TO FOR-PROFIT HEALTH CARE: COLUMBIA-HCA

The largest, most aggressive for-profit health care company is Columbia-HCA Healthcare Corporation [Columbia]. Columbia has aggressively pursued the acquisition of nonprofit hospitals. As a result, Columbia now owns 355 hospitals making it the wealthiest for-profit chain with $18 billion in annual revenue.

Columbia owns the San Leandro Hospital; the San Leandro Surgery and Outpatient Center; Estudillo Surgery Center; and the San Jose Hospital as well as Diablo Valley Surgery Center in Concord. Elsewhere in the bay area, Columbia owns Healdsburg General Hospital and Palm Drive Hospital in Sebastopol; Columbia Los Gatos Surgical Center; Mammography Plus Medical Group; and Sereno Surgicenter in Los Gatos in addition to the four facilities in the south bay that comprise the Good Samaritan chain. They have reportedly offered to negotiate deals with almost every hospital in the bay area including Sequoia, Eden, and St. Rose.

I have asked Medicare to investigate whether Columbia's merger mania is bad for the patients and for our community.

Will quality patient care be provided?

As a for-profit hospital, Columbia's primary obligation is to its out-of-town shareholders. Their focus is on the bottom line, not quality care.

We will see a reduction in care provided to the poor in our community!

Columbia offers physicians up to 20 percent ownership interest to encourage physicians to direct paying patients to their hospital, and charity cases away from the Columbia hospital. Study after study shows that for-profit hospitals provide a lower level of charity care than do nonprofit hospitals.

Will services be eliminated that are vital to our community?

It is likely that programs such as trauma centers and neonatal intensive care units will be eliminated.

Will Columbia close local hospitals?

It has a history of buying many local hospitals and closing them to increase bed occupancy and profits in other units.

Will existing labor contracts be ignored?

Columbia is reportedly reneging on labor contracts at Good Samaritan Hospital and has an antilabor record.

Capitalism is great but should patients be put at risk?

I do not believe health care is a commodity. Joseph Cardinal Bernadin said it best:

> Health care is fundamentally different from most other goods and services. It is about the most human and intimate needs of people, their families, and communities. It is because of this crucial difference that each of us should work to preserve the predominately non-profit character of our health care delivery system.

The goal is not health care anymore—it is care of the stockholder interest. I am preparing legislation to make sure: First, for-profit do not skim off the healthiest patients and dump the sickest, money-losing patients in public hospitals; and second, the public's investment in nonprofit hospitals is not lost through phony sales prices. You can count on me to fight the takeover of our community's hospital system and keep the ''care'' in health care.

TRIBUTE TO THE SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CENTER ON AGING ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to an outstanding organization in my district that for 25 years has addressed the needs of older residents—the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging in La Grange, IL.

The center is enjoying its silver anniversary of providing a variety of important services for senior citizens. The agency drew out a study commissioned by the La Grange Kiwanis Club in 1970 that determined that not only was the senior population growing in the area, but that the vast majority of this group did not know where to turn for assistance.

The senior center was initially established as an arm of a local mental health agency, but because of the great demand for its services, it soon became a separate entity. In 1974, it leased its first facility, a building in La Grange, which it still occupies 22 years later.

Beginning with a staff of three on 1971, the center grew to employ a staff of 26 and over 300 volunteers. Today, the center now serves more than 10,000 seniors in 22 communities. The services provided range from arts and crafts classes to delivering meals to the homebound to investigating suspected cases of abuse of the elderly.

However, the varied offerings of the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging all contribute to one goal: to promote independent living for seniors and support their efforts to maintain healthy active lifestyles within their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging for 25 years of service to the senior citizens of its community, and wish the organization many more years of service.

TRIBUTE TO LOUIS ELIAS, WILLIAM MORGAN, AND GABRIEL KASSAB

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, the March of Dimes is an organization with a noble mission: to fight birth defects and childhood disease. We all share the March of Dimes dream which is that every child should have the opportunity to live a health life.

For the past 12 years, the Southeast Michigan Chapter of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation has honored several Macomb County residents who are outstanding members of our community and have helped in the campaign for healthier babies. On the evening of Wednesday, September 25, 1996, the chapter will be hosting the 13th annual Alexander Macomb Citizen of the Year award dinner. The award, instituted in 1984, is named after my home country's namesake, Gen. Alexander Macomb, a hero of the War of 1812.

This year, the March of Dimes has chosen Louis Elias, William Morgan, and Gabriel Kassab as recipients of the Family of the Year Award. The Elias family executives can be counted on to devote time and money to numerous charitable and civic groups. Mr. Elias is known as a quiet philanthropist. His generous donations over the years have benefited many charitable organizations. Mr. Kassab has been active in several civic and social groups. He has also served on the executive board of the Boys Scouts of America. Mr. Morgan was instrumental in instituting the service club system of operations which annually returns over $2 million to the community. The Elias family members have been ardent backers of the March of Dimes' dream of erasing birth defects.

I applaud the Southeast Michigan Chapter of the March of Dimes and the Elias Family for their leadership, advocacy, and community service. The Elias Brothers are living proof that the business community meets their civic responsibility. I am sure that the Elias families are honored by the recognition and I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting them as the 1996 recipients of the Alexander Macomb Family of the Year Award.

TURKEY: NEW GOVERNMENT, SAME OLD REPRESSION

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks, the new Government of Turkey has demonstrated a familiar disregard for international human rights commitments and earlier promises made to secure entry into a European Union customs agreement. On August 26, 41 members of the Peoples Democracy Party [HADEP], including its leadership, were charged for alleged ties with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party [PKK]. The same day, two editors of the Turkish Daily News were charged with ''damaging the prestige of the armed forces'' by publishing an

opinion poll. And, on September 3, Akin Birdal, president of the Human Rights Association of Turkey, was detained for participating on a delegation negotiating the release of Turkish soldiers captured by the PKK.

Mr. Speaker, the HADEP case follows an all too familiar pattern. The Turkish Government is stepping up efforts to delegitimize and dismantle HADEP, Turkey's only Kurdish-based political party. Supported by more than 1.2 million votes in last December's elections, HADEP was increasingly viewed as a possible interlocutor in the bloody conflict between government forces and Kurdish militants. Yet, like its director predecessor, the Democracy Party [DEP], whose 13 parliamentarians were imprisoned or exiled for speech crimes, HADEP has now become the government's target. In June, following a party convention at which a Turkish flag was torn down, 28 HADEP leaders were detained and have been held ever since, without being charged—despite their disavowal of any connection to the flag incident. Following the convention three HADEP members were murdered and party offices in Izmir were bombed. Two men accused of tearing down the flag have been charged with treason and could face the death penalty.

Mr. Speaker, nationalist hysteria over the flag incident also had negative consequences for a former DEP Member of Parliament, Sirri Sakik, who has been charged for saying, ''People who desire that a certain respect be paid to their own flags should also be respectful of others' flags''. Prosecutors deemed this statement to be advocating separatism and charged Sakik under article 8 of the Anti-Terror law. Mr. Speaker, you may recall that article 8 was amended with great fanfare last fall to mollify European concerns about Turkey's human rights record in advance of the vote on Turkey's customs union entry. Dozens of people have since been jailed under the new and improved article 8, and hundreds of others under similarly restrictive statutes.

Mr. Speaker, the Turkish Daily News case demonstrates how mainstream journalists also face continued repression. Ilnur Cevik, who participated in a Helsinki Commission briefing on Turkish elections, and Hayri Birler face up to 6 years in prison for publishing results of a poll on preferences for government alternatives following last year's elections. The polls were published in February and some speculate that the belated decision to prosecute was based on growing displeasure in military circles with Cevik's perceived support of Refah, the Muslim-based party.

Mr. Speaker, another troubling case involves Human Rights Association [HRA] President Akin Birdal, who participated in a 1995 Helsinki Commission briefing. A valuable source of information on human rights abuses in Turkey, the Association and its president, Akin Birdal, have received numerous awards in the United States and Europe. Since its inception, HRA activists have faced severe repression. Fifteen branches have been closed in southeast Turkey, activists and leaders have been murdered by government-supported death squads, and hundreds of HRA members have been arrested and imprisoned. The absurd justification for the latest detention, however, made the authorities look even more capricious than usual.

Akin Birdal participated in a delegation seeking the release of Turkish soldiers captured by the PKK. The delegation, led by a Member of Parliament from the ruling Refah Party and including other well-known human rights activists, was discussed in the press and government circles for weeks. Although unsuccessful, the delegation's mission fueled speculation that the government might be reconsidering its purely military approach to the Kurdish insurgency. Such speculation caused sufficient consternation in ruling circles to order detention of delegation members. Although the government released the delegation members on September 6, it remains unclear whether they will be charged under Penal Code Article 169 for aiding an illegal organization, for which they could face up to 5 years in prison.

These recent incidents, Mr. Speaker, punctuate the routine repression occurring daily in Turkey. None accused in these incidents committed acts of violence, but are being silenced rather for speaking against government-sponsored violence and policies that have prolonged a bloody internal war. And, if the pattern of past convictions of former parliamentarians and others repeats itself, the only evidence that will emerge to suggest support for terrorism will be clumsy fabrications and testimony coerced under torture.

Our important ally Turkey, Mr. Speaker, is facing a serious multidimensional crisis. If we are to help Turkey address this crisis, we must be firm in our support for a political solution to the conflict which has claimed more than 21,000 lives and created more than three million internal refugees. Recent events in northern Iraq have underscored regional instability complicated in no small part by Kurdish unrest in Turkey. Clearly, Turkey's leaders will pay little more than lip service to human rights commitments when it become necessary to secure cooperation with Western governments. They will continue such policies as long as Western governments remain willing to overlook abuses in order to advance security or economic objectives. Turkey's allies should undertake every effort to support the victims of this peculiar form of democracy. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to speak out against recurring restrictions imposed on free speech in Turkey and call upon the Turkish Government, once again, to release all those imprisoned for nonviolent expression, including the HADEP members and former DEP parliamentarians.

ETHICS COMMITTEE HANDLING OF GINGRICH CASE A TRAVESTY

HON. PATRICIA SCHROEDER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 10, 1996

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker 7 years ago, we had an Ethics Committee investigation against Speaker Jim Wright. The committee had requested an outside counsel, Richard Phelan, to prepare a report on the Wright case.

Here is what Congressman NEWT GINGRICH said on ''Meet the Press'' about releasing Mr. Phelan's report to the public:

> Now, that report is secret; I don't know of anybody other than the committee members and Mr. Phelan who know what's in it—except Mr. Wright's lawyer. And I think that report and the back-up documents have to be published.
>
> I cannot imagine going to the country * * * tell them we've got a $1.6 million report—and, by the way, there's nothing in it, but you can't see it.
>
> Clearly, that report is going to have to be published.
>
> Well, I think the first key test is whether or not the Phelan report is published, and the background documents and the appropriate interviews of 65 witnesses under oath are published.
>
> I think it's vital that we establish as a Congress our commitment to publish that report and to release those documents so the country can judge whether or not the man second in line to be president—the speaker of the House—should be in that position.

Congressman GINGRICH also demanded that Mr. Phelan be given the independence necessary to do a thorough and complete job. He wrote to the Ethics Committee chairman insisting that Mr. Phelan have full authority to investigate the Wright case; that he be allowed to make public statements and reports; and that a copy of his contract with the committee be made public.

Today, the tables are turned. Speaker GINGRICH is under investigation, but it is an investigation cloaked in secrecy. It is an investigation undermined by the committee's own members.

In this Monday's rollcall, several former special and committee counsels expressed grave reservations about how the current Ethics Committee is handling the Gingrich case.

Worse, in yesterday's Manchester, CT, Journal Inquirer, the chairman of the very Ethics Committee subcommittee charged with conducting the investigation trashes the very process he is heading up. Congressman PORTER GOSS is quoted as saying:

> It's a foolish process that needs to be changed. I'm not going to defend the process.

Congressman GOSS goes on to trivialize the report prepared by special counsel James Cole and criticize the press for running stories about the report.

Congressman GOSS should resign from the Ethics Committee. He is sabotaging the very process he is supposed to be leading. If he wants to be Speaker GINGRICH's defense counsel fine—it's a free country—but get off the Ethics Committee.

Worse, he is discussing a report he claims can't be discussed. Members of Congress can't read the report. The taxpayers—who paid the half million dollars it cost to prepare it—can't read the report. We have no way of knowing what's in it.

Yet Congressman GOSS feels free to discuss, characterize, and minimize the report while at the same time saying that under committee rules it is secret and can't be talked about.

This reminds me of the old TV quiz show, ''I've Got a Secret.'' The Ethics Committee has a secret—a half-million-dollar investigation of Speaker NEWT GINGRICH that it doesn't want the public to see.

My advice to the committee is to trust the good judgment of the American public. Release the report and let the chips fall where they may.