

least from now through 2030, start paying off the debt, and still provide significant tax relief to the American people. That is the direction that we should be heading with our Nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER  
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). Members are reminded to refrain from characterizing Senate action or inaction.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 128, CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FY 1999.

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)) from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-724) on the resolution (H.Res. 541), providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J.Res. 128) making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4569, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-725) on the resolution (H. Res. 542) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4569) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3248, DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM ACT

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN)), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-726) on the resolution (H. Res. 543) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3248) to provide dollars to the classroom, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

RESHAPING THE INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me apologize for keeping you here after 10 o'clock at night. Also, let me apologize to the staff. I do not ordinarily talk to myself in an empty room, as the other two gentlemen have been doing for an hour. But there is something tonight that I feel I simply have to get off of my chest.

Mr. Speaker, I intended to speak tonight to address some of the institutional failures that I believe are besetting this country as we deal with the matter involving the President. The Speaker's recently announced guidelines about what comments are permissible about the Starr report that we voted to release, and the President's conduct, prevent me from saying on the floor certain things that I wanted to say. In deference to those guidelines, I will honor them. But the whole text of what I intended to say will be available in my office.

Mr. Speaker, Friday night after 2 hours of reading, after our vote on Friday, I began to wonder about the correctness of my vote earlier that day in light of my concerns about the appropriateness of what should be electronically directed into people's homes in this country. Taking a break from my reading, I turned on the TV to see, as an unreconstructed Cubs fan, if I could find out whether Sammy Sosa had hit another home run again. The tube came on, and within seconds I heard a CNBC reporter using language that I never expected to hear on the Nation's national news programs, or what passes for them these days. And at that moment I reached the same conclusion that millions of Americans have probably reached. I have had it. Not just with this story, but with something far more disturbing.

What I felt was a conclusion that has been building within me for months, even years. I was overwhelmed with the feeling that our society and our country is faced with nothing less than the accelerating failure of institutions that are central to our functioning as a decent society and as a democracy that works the way our Founding Fathers wanted it to work.

Mr. Speaker, please do not misunderstand. This is a great country. In many ways, it is a good country. There is much that is good in our society and we have had much good economic news in recent years. Nonetheless, I believe that most crucial institutions and institutional arrangements in this country and in this society are failing in their responsibilities. That failure is affecting our economy, our culture, our political system, our long-term environmental security, and even our own spirituality.

The evidence of the failure of our most important institutions is all around us in this and other events. At the moment our Nation is transfixed on this episode, global challenges face us everywhere. The world's economy is in turmoil. We have almost no tool but persuasion to move the Japanese Gov-

ernment off a course of economic and fiscal impotence and incompetence that threatens the economic health of all of Asia and indirectly threatens our own economic health as well.

International financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund are being overwhelmed by changes in the world economy, changes in currency relationships, changes in capital flows that each day weaken the ability of the major institution the world has to stabilize economic relationships between nations, the IMF.

The Nation with the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons that could possibly one day be arrayed against us, Russia, is experiencing political and economic chaos. Much of Europe is focused on that chaos, but here in America we give it only intermittent attention and analysis.

The most irrational, paranoid, and dangerous government in the world, North Korea, is facing military, political, and economic instability that could easily threaten the lives of 50,000 American servicemen and women stationed in South Korea, and hundreds of thousands of other human beings.

Our ability to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons has been brought to the edge of failure by events on the Indian subcontinent and in Korea. And yet the discourse in this country about how to deal with that issue is shallow and in some cases down right dangerous.

The best chance in a generation for peace in the Middle East is slowly but surely sliding away, and this decade has produced the hottest known global temperatures in years with huge potential consequences for worldwide agriculture, fisheries, economic dislocation, public health, and environmental stability. And yet commercial disputes about profit levels are threatening our ability to take even marginal action to minimize potential catastrophe.

On the home front, the Supreme Court, the institution that we in the end rely upon more than any other to preserve the balance of forces that protect our democratic processes and our liberty, has handed down two very different sets of decisions that have crippled the ability of our political system to function as a democracy should.

First, the spectacularly myopic decision by the Court in the Paula Jones case that the government would not be distracted if that case went forward now rather than 2 years from now and the President was out of office.

Second, the mind-bogglingly naive decision that the constitutional rights of Americans to have a political system that functions for them would be protected by a series of naively libertarian decisions that equate money with speech, establish absurd legalisms about campaign financing that have no relationship to reality that have turned politics into a money chase and political campaigns into the competition of dollars rather than ideas.

Other domestic institutions are also failing in their fundamental responsibilities. Large sections of corporate America are making economic decisions devoid of any values except the maximization of financial benefit to the management and investment elite of this country, in almost total disregard of the impact of those decisions on low workers, their families, and their broader communities which have nurtured them.

These decisions and policy decisions by government have together produced the greatest disparity between the economic well-being of the wealthiest 5 percent of our people and everyone else in the modern history of our country. If we as a people are concerned with moral outcomes, should we not be just as concerned about how the Nation deals with poor people and sick people as we are about how we deal with each other on matters of sexual intimacy?

The political elite has largely debased what passes for political dialogue on many crucial issues. It has allowed its reliance on the community of pollsters and consultants to produce the lowest common denominator discourse in which winning and holding power drive out almost any consideration of the need to educate and enlighten the public on every front.

Is there no length to which we will not go to hold or seize power? Is there no amount of pain we will not inflict on each other for political gain?

More and more individuals are entering Congress and other political institutions who see issues not as problems to be confronted, but concerns to be manipulated and toyed with around the margins in order to seize and hold power.

So many debates are split along party lines and driven by the ideological enforcers, the modern-day American counterparts of Mikhail Suslov, the old guardian of the purity of Soviet orthodoxy, that when bipartisanship does occur, we are almost startled by its appearance.

The focus and limits of much of that debate is set by political elites in both parties who rub shoulders with the financial and economic elites of the Nation far more often than they do with everyday working people. The press itself, with all too few lonely and valiant exceptions, some of whom work in this building, has fallen into the same bad habits it legitimately criticizes in the politicians it covers.

The press too, especially the electronic media, drawn by the realities of the marketplace has often become little more than the public affairs entertainment division of profit-making corporations who will do almost anything to preserve market share instead of responding to the public's needs to understand the substance of issues before the country.

The press, driven by market surveys and polls, produces story after story that portray politicians as gladiators and celebrities, rather than problem

solvers, responding to and strengthening some of the most unhealthy public biases on the landscape.

For every question that I get from a reporter on the substance of an issue, I get five from other reporters about the politics of that same issue, reflecting both a laziness and a shallowness that this country simply cannot afford. And worst of all, some reporters cannot resist using any device to win a point, no matter how much damage they do to the country and innocent individuals in the process.

One need look no further than the reporter who last Sunday on a Sunday talk show in an interview with a guest snidely asked that guest what his wife's definition of sex was. That reporter owes his own profession, his viewers, and the wife of that guest a public apology for his own inability to resist his Dennis the Menace impulses which have increasingly made that reporter a caricature of himself. Is there no length to which some members of the press will not go in order to humiliate other human beings, all in the name of news values? I wonder.

Even religious institutions have allowed themselves to fail the Nation in too many instances and have allowed politicians to manipulate religious concerns more to find political advantage than to find spiritual answers.

□ 2215

Debates and discussions about the nature of humankind and our origins, our purpose and our relationship with our creator are essentially conversations about the unknowable, at least in this life. Yet the certitude with which some political and religious figures attack those who have legitimate differences of belief are disheartening and appalling and border on the sacrilegious. Too many political and religious leaders alike have allowed religion or the superficial reference to religion to be used for nonreligious purposes. They wrap political, commercial and ideological preferences in religious ribbons and desecrate both religion and politics in the process. The 10 Commandments represent a guide for living and for the treatment of others. They are not supposed to be a road map for human beings or politicians to destroy each other. They are not a political program or an economic program. As Mario Cuomo once said, "God is not a celestial party chairman." To the best of my knowledge, God has not yet taken a position on capital gains or other tax plans. But you would never know it by listening to some of the self-promoting political manipulators who pass themselves off as the clergy of the tube. Politicians have no special qualifications to judge the private lives of other people. In the end, only God can do that. The nuns at St. James taught me a long time ago that we have enough to do worrying about the stewardship of our own souls to pass judgment on the private lives of others. Neither do religious leaders have any special com-

petence to judge the specific mechanisms by which elected officials in a democracy accomplish decent public ends. Those of us in public life owe due consideration to their opinions, but we have, after all, taken an oath to uphold the Constitution in accordance with the dictates of our own conscience, not someone else's. That is our own sacred public duty under the Constitution. We religious and political leaders alike have allowed debates about religious truths and values to be used all too often as weapons to inflict pain and gain political advantage rather than as tools to find moral answers that take decent account of the moral values of others as well as ourselves. We have all too often allowed the substitution of moralizing for morality, and have allowed the search for God to become a journey that develops hatred and contempt rather than love for our fellow searchers.

Example. On abortion, an issue which we will be debating again for the thousandth time tomorrow, perhaps the most agonizing, troubling and divisive of all moral debates in the public realm. On that issue, both sides have allowed their own certitude about the will of God or their dedication to unbending individualism, their desire for tactical advantage, to get in the way of their responsibility to recognize good intentions and honest nuances of conscience. And so that debate has become more and more a political manipulation of the legislative process rather than a search for areas of agreement that would reduce the world's acceptance of abortion at the same time that it recognizes the dignity of individual conscience.

All of these institutional failures, I believe, are rooted in two fundamental shortcomings: One simply, a lack of knowledge or understanding about how the world and institutional relationships are changing; the other is the triumph of a me-first rampant materialistic individualism that prevents the leaders of almost all of our social, political, commercial, informational and religious institutions from really focusing on the answers to one simple question: In addressing whatever decisions confront us, how can I or we take into fair account the needs, concerns and interests of those who are not just like us in social or economic standing, cultural outlook or political or religious beliefs? That is the important question.

We desperately need to address our key institutional shortcomings, because institutions are the major tools available to any culture, to any nation, and to any society to shape its future. Yet we continue to be transfixed on the Starr-Clinton-Lewinsky soap opera. The Nation has been moved to this focus because of two people largely. First, Mr. Starr. On a number of accounts, Mr. Starr represents the overreaching zealotry of a personally upright but ideologically and politically partisan individual who before he was

appointed special prosecutor was already contemplating filing a court brief on behalf of Paula Jones and who had indicated he was planning to join Pepperdine Law School, an institution financed in large part by a person who has contributed millions of dollars to try to bring down the President. Mr. Starr from all reports is a fine, upstanding human being. But a person of his partisan and ideological mind-set should in my view never have been appointed to a position that calls for, above all, unquestioned fairness, balance and judgment. President Clinton is the second person. Up to this point he has been the most personally talented politician of his generation. He appears to be a person of good heart and courage who wants to do good things for the country. But it has often been noted in the press that the President's causes have been both promoted and crippled by a tendency to use language in ways that are technically in conformance with the truth but often result in obscuring rather than clarifying.

As frustrating as I feel about parsing of language in this episode, I am even more unhappy about the lack of candor demonstrated by both the President and congressional leaders in jointly obscuring the real effect of the budget agreement they both sold to the Nation last year on our ability to meet our domestic responsibilities in strengthening education, health, environment, housing and social service. Why does that frustrate me more? Because the second was a public event which had direct, substantive consequences for American citizens and their families on questions that we will be voting on every day.

At this point, some things are clear to me and some things are not. I cannot really reach a final judgment on this depressing matter until I have had an opportunity to have all of the appropriate information. But my first impressions are these. First, after four years and the expenditure of over \$40 million since Mr. Starr was first appointed to review the facts surrounding the Whitewater land deal in Arkansas in the 1970s, we still have no finding of illegal conduct by the President in Whitewater, no finding of illegal conduct by the President in the investigation of the White House travel office which Mr. Starr subsequently undertook, no finding of illegality by the President on the matter relating to the FBI file case. At this point all of the Nation is focused on something which had not even occurred when Mr. Starr was first appointed independent prosecutor.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I intended to comment on some of the concerns I had about both Mr. Starr and the President, but I am precluded by the Speaker's guidelines from doing so. The complete text of what I had to say on this point will also be available in my office, but I will not address them here.

As we ask the question, what is the proper action for Congress to now take, I will say that this episode in many ways is very different than Watergate. The actions in Watergate involved burglarizing and wiretapping political opponents, attempting to use the IRS to intimidate political opponents, financial payoffs to defendants in criminal cases, and other uses of the levers of governmental power to subvert the very democratic processes that underlie the essence of America. In considering an appropriate action for the Congress to take, I would urge the House to consider the course it took in another case a year earlier. At this point, what is important for us to determine is what is the best thing for the country. A congressional reprimand or other sanction may prove to be the most appropriate action, especially if it allows Congress to end this matter in a much shorter period of time so that the Congress and the presidency can refocus our attention and activities from issues of the past to the future public needs of the Nation and the people we are supposed to represent. I do not know how this sad chapter will end, but I do know that this episode and the way it has been handled by the leadership circles of our major institutions demonstrates a desperate need to examine how we can renew those crucial institutions.

In two years, the millennium will draw to a close. This Nation's institutions are simply not ready to lead the country into a new one. I would never in three lifetimes call for a new constitutional convention, because this generation of political leadership in my judgment is highly unlikely to improve on the work of the Founding Fathers. It is much more likely to muck it up. But I do believe we need to have millennium conventions convened for the purpose of examining ways to reshape, redirect and refocus almost all of our institutions, economic, corporate, political, communication, religious and even our international institutions, such as the IMF, the U.N. and NATO. In the political arena, we need special attention paid to the presidential nominating process to try to find ways to reduce the importance of candidates' media skills and increase the role of peer review by people who know the candidates best if both parties are to produce candidates with the qualities necessary to lead this country.

I do not know how we can change the human heart, but we do need to find ways to reshape the major institutions of this society so that there are more incentives to produce a new focus on selflessness. That is the major task we each face as individuals on life's journey. We need more help and less hindrance from the institutions that dominate our lives along the way.

#### ISSUES SURROUNDING REPORT OF INDEPENDENT COUNSEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, like most if not all Republicans in the House, I have refrained from making speeches or public statements about the current scandal gripping the White House. I have said on numerous occasions that there are more important issues I would rather the public focus on, like, for example, using American technology to upgrade Communist Chinese rockets, thus putting millions of American lives at risk of nuclear incineration. That is something I would like the American people to pay attention to. I would rather see investigative journalists tracking down the details of Communist Chinese money that was laundered into the last presidential campaign. I never did understand how those impoverished Buddhist monks ever got those \$5,000 checks to turn over to the President's reelection effort. We never did find that out, did we? I wonder where that came from.

Anyway, there are other things that are much more important than the current scandal that seems to be gripping onto everybody's attention. We Republicans have done our best to let the Starr investigation run its course without adding to the shrillness of the voices heard throughout the land.

□ 2230

Most of us honestly believe that it is a tragedy that a young lady who asked for an apology for ungentlemanly conduct did not get those words of apology that she sought, and had that happened, had she received the apology she was looking for, there would have been no civil case, there would have been no depositions, there would have been no lying under oath, there would have been no need to seek information to see if the offending actions were or were not part of a pattern of personal abuse. This country would have been spared all the humiliation and the spectacle of it all. Well, except for the fact that arrogance came to play and there was a refusal to apologize for offensive behavior. But for that, this thing would have gone away.

But this disgusting scenario has played itself out, and it has been all too public, and it has played itself out without the prodding of Republican Members of Congress. We have, for the most part, tried to maintain decorum, we have tried to maintain our position so that, if necessary, we would be ready to deal with the worst eventuality if we were called to make judgments.

One of the most respected leaders of this body admired by Republicans and Democrats alike is HENRY HYDE, chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary. He, more than any other, has attempted to remain aloof from the bitter rhetoric and accusatory language