1715

This was truly a tragedy. Whales were hunted almost to extinction in the late 1800s.

Mr. Speaker, we must not allow the clock to be turned back to past days of barbarism. Republicans and Democrats in this body must stand with the American people and stop this conspiracy against these magnificent creatures. We must not return to commercial whaling.

THE 85TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOSSELLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a horrible period in our history that took the lives of 1.5 million Armenians and led to the exile of the Armenian nation from its historic homeland.

My colleagues and I join with the Armenian-American community, and with Armenians throughout the world, to remember one of the darkest periods in the history of humankind. We owe this commemoration to those who perished because of the senseless hatred of others, and we need this commemoration because it is the only way to prevent such events in the future.

We have already learned the lessons of forgetting. The Armenian Genocide, which began 15 years after the start of the twentieth century, was the first act of genocide this century, but it was far from the last. The indifference of the world to the slaughter of 1.5 Armenians laid the foundation for other acts of genocide, including the Holocaust, Stalin's purges, and, most recently, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

The lessons of the destruction that results when hatred is left unchecked have been too slowly learned. The world's indifference to the Armenian Genocide proved to Adolf Hitler that his plans to annihilate the Jewish people would encounter little opposition and would spur no global outcry. The post-Holocaust directive ''zachor,'' remember—lest history repeat itself, came too late for 1.5 million Armenians and 6 million Jews. It came too late for millions of victims around the world.

Today we recall the Armenian Genocide and we mourn its victims. But we also renew our pledge to the Armenian nation to do everything we can to prevent further aggression, and we renew our commitment to ensuring that Armenians throughout the world can live free of threats to their existence and prosperity.

Unfortunately, we still have to work toward this simple goal. Azerbaijan continues to blockade Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh, denying the Armenian people the food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance they need to lead secure, prosperous lives. And as long as this immoral behavior continues, I pledge to join my colleagues in continuing to send the message to Azerbaijan that harming civilians is an unacceptable means for resolving disputes.

Mr. Speaker, after the Genocide, the Armenian people wiped away their tears and cried out, ''Let us always remember the atrocities that have taken the lives of our parents and our children and our neighbors.''

As the Armenian-American author William Saroyan wrote, ''Go ahead, destroy this race . . . Send them from their homes into the desert . . . Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh again, see if they will not sing and pray again. For, when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia.''

I rise today to remember those cries, and to pay tribute to the resilience of the Armenian people, who have contributed so much to our world. Those who have perished deserve our commemoration, and they also deserve our pledge to ensure that such an horrific chapter in history is never repeated again.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT OF 2000

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

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, my home State of Oklahoma has a strong heritage in our Nation's Native American history and culture. In fact, the name ''Oklahoma'' means ''Land of the Red People'' in the Choctaw language. So nowhere else in this country is there more appreciation than in Oklahoma that a museum dedicated to preserving this legacy is being constructed in Washington, D.C.

The National Museum of the American Indian was established as an act of Congress in 1989 to serve as a permanent repository of Native American culture. The groundbreaking took place in September of 1999, and it is scheduled to open in the summer of 2002.

Because of the historic significance and importance of this museum to the people of Oklahoma, I am introducing a bill today that will commemorate its opening. The National Museum of the American Indian Commemorative Coin Act of 2000 will call for the minting of a special $1 silver coin intended to raise funds for the museum and celebrate its completion.

As part of the highly respected Smithsonian institution, which is now the world's largest museum complex, the National Museum of the American Indian will collect, preserve, and exhibit Native American objects of artistic, historical, literary, anthropological, and scientific interest. Also important is that it will provide for Native American research and study programs.

The coin my bill proposes will be of proof quality and be minted only in the year 2001. Sales of the coin could continue until the date that the stock is depleted. The coin would be of no net cost to the American taxpayer, and the proceeds from its sale will go towards funding the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. The proceeds would also help supplement the museum's endowment and educational outreach funds.

Based on past sales of coins of this nature, we are likely perhaps to raise roughly in the range of $3.5 million for the museum. The coin will be modeled after the original 5 cent buffalo nickel designed by James Earl Fraser and minted from 1913 to 1938, which portrays a profile representation of a Native American on the obverse, and an American buffalo, American bison, on the coin's reverse side.

Mr. Speaker, as an Oklahoman, I was proud to have led the effort in Congress to designate the Roger Mills County site of the November, 1868 Battle of the Washita, yes, some might more accurately describe it as a massacre, as a national historic site. This site in Western Oklahoma, where Lieutenant Colonel George Custer and the 7th U.S. cavalry attacked the Cheyenne Peace Chief Black Kettle's village.

Now I am pleased to introduce the National Museum of the American Indian Commemorative Coin Act of 2000. A like version of this bill is already making its way through the Senate, having been introduced there by United States Senator BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL of Colorado and Senator DANIEL INOUYE of Hawaii.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my fellow colleagues in the House to take this opportunity to recognize the importance to our Nation of the National Museum of the American Indian by becoming a cosponsor of my bill.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to speak about one of the 20th century's early atrocities, the Armenian genocide. It is a subject that is very near and dear to my heart as my own grandfather was a witness to the bloodshed firsthand.

While the genocide began well before the turn of the past century, April 24 marks an important date that we as citizens and human beings need to remember. It was when 254 Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Turkish authorities in Istanbul and taken to the provinces of Ayash and Chankiri, where many of them were later massacred.

Throughout the genocide, Turkish authorities ordered the evacuations of Armenians out of villages in Turkish Armenia and Asia Minor. As the villages were evacuated, men were often shot immediately. Women and children were forced to walk limitless distances