

bloody reprisals. Last week's optimism has yielded to this week's despair.

I urge President Bush to make it clear to both sides that the United States will continue to insist on the terms agreed to at the Aqaba summit, an end to the violence, the dismantling of the illegal outposts and the resumption of security cooperation. Clearly, Abu Mazen must do much more to stop terrorism. But it is obvious that he cannot stop the murderous Palestinian extremists without help from Israel. And Israel will never succeed in vanquishing terrorism through military force and continued occupation. A political solution is the only answer.

The road map to peace has hit a tremendous obstacle. But we have no choice but to persevere. If this initiative is destroyed, Israelis and Palestinians may be doomed to a life of violence and suffering forever. Such a fate is not what these two peoples deserve, and it is surely not what America can afford.

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

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

□ 1800

#### RUBBER-STAMPING TAX LEGISLATION

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we are going to have another session of the rubber stamp Congress. There is an old song by Tennessee Ernie Ford that goes, "You load 16 tons, and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt."

This Congress at a Committee on Rules meeting tonight, the Committee on Ways and Means chairman did not even show up. The bill was all greased. We are going to pass \$80 billion more of debt out of here tomorrow.

Now, the Democrats offered a bill that would have cost \$3.5 billion to take care of those people earning between \$10,500 and \$26,500.

When the Republicans got this bill, they said, Oh, boy; Let's go, and so they have crammed everything in it that President Bush wants. They are going to come down here, and we will have about an hour's debate, half an hour on the Democratic side, half an hour on the Republican side; and they will stamp that baby and out she goes. That is how this Congress is operating. Not one single hearing will have occurred on this bill, not one single hearing. \$80 billion in a half-hour.

Think about it. That is why my colleague, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), came out here, to show the almost—\$1 trillion in debt that has been accumulated over the last 2 years

under this administration. Well, tomorrow we are going to add another layer of frosting on the cake, and everybody will come with their stamp in their hand and do it.

Now, we also had a discussion here with one of the gentlemen from Georgia who said next week we are going to deal with the issue of Medicare. There has been no bill put in the Congress for the single largest program in the Congress that the government runs, and that is the Medicare program. The Committee on Ways and Means that I sit on has had not a single hearing on the proposal that is being brought in here. It is being greased somewhere to take up to the Committee on Rules and run down here on the floor, and, in a couple of hours, everybody will bring their stamp out and go, Boom, I approve of everything George Bush does.

That is what this Congress is about, approving whatever George Bush does. Nothing else. There is no thinking going on in here. They just wait for their orders from the White House, go up to the Committee on Rules, slap the bill together, bring it to the floor, and stamp it "approved."

Now, that is no way for the United States Congress to operate. We were made in the first section of the Constitution because the founders of this country believed that the Congress was where the basis of our government should derive, that there should be discussion among the 535 Members of both bodies as to what is going to happen in this country.

But this time we are in a one-party government. It is a parliament with a fixed-end, and this party is President Bush, the Senate and the House; and they run them down here and run them through and stamp them, and that is the end of it.

Now, there is a serious problem in that kind of government, because it makes it very partisan. I was told that the Medicare bill is written, but that you have to ask the chairman to go up to a room and sit there and read it in the room. You cannot take it out; you cannot take it to your office. I am a Member of Congress. I was elected by 690,000 people, and so was every other Member. But I am not allowed to read the bill until the day they drop it up here in the committee and ram it through the House in 24 hours.

People I go home to, they say, What is in the bill, Jim? What does this do, what does that do?

I do not know. And it is not because I will not read or I am not smart or I will not work or I will not do what has to be done, but this is the way this place is being run. People are not being given a chance to discuss this.

We have got an even bigger issue, and that is the whole issue of how we got into war. Everywhere in Great Britain right now the belief is that Tony Blair is toast. The liberals are calling for an inquiry. And this House will not do it, because the Republicans have rubber-stamped what we did. "I approve of Mr. Bush."

#### SHORTCHANGING VETERANS

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am a new Member of this body, I was just sworn in in January, and as a new Member there is a certain awe to this Chamber, a certain awe to the legislative process and the idea of priorities. You come into this body with the notion of certain priorities that are not Democratic, they are not Republican but they are priorities of the American people.

Unfortunately, it did not take very long for me to recognize that we all do not share the same priorities. We can talk about tax cuts, and we can talk about deficits, and we can talk about our debt; but you just do not have tax cuts without some reaction somewhere down the line in the budget, and I wanted to speak tonight to share with the American people and share with my colleagues my own personal experience that I had over the last few weeks, really since Memorial Day, back in my district, which is northeastern Ohio, Youngstown and Akron, Ohio, and everywhere in between, the cities of Niles and Warren, where there is a strong concentration of veterans.

The reason I rise tonight is to share for the record the feelings, the emotions of the people back in my district. Let me just say, quite frankly, that they are tired of the public relations gimmicks, they are tired of the press conferences, they are tired of the salutations to the veterans. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, their budgets are being cut for the veterans, we are not able to service all the veterans that are beginning to move into the VA system, and we are spending our tax money, and borrowing more money, to give back, when we are cutting short what the veterans deserve.

About 3 months ago or so we passed a resolution out of this body saying that we have unequivocal support and appreciation for our troops. Unequivocal. But for the veterans, we are going to cut your budget.

We just had a Committee on Veterans Affairs meeting. I have been fortunate to serve on the Committee on Veterans Affairs. Here are the President's recommendations to save money at the VA: first, annual fees for some Category 7 veterans; annual fees for all Category 8 veterans; the co-pay went from just a couple of dollars to \$7 for prescription drugs, and now it is going to go, I believe the proposal is, from \$7 to \$15.

Mr. Speaker, I think in this country we are beginning to recognize that the leadership down here is not addressing the problems of our veterans. We are not taking care of those people who we sent to hell, where they lost limbs, had their health damaged for the rest of their lives. And now one proposal is to say if your disability is service-related under 30 percent, that we are no longer going to cover you.