

be identified and apprehended before they subsequently kill and destroy. Granted, the borders are porous and terrorists enter at will, but I believe that better surveillance can be effected, and we must insist upon it.

Some Members of Congress, Mr. Speaker, have accused President Bush of practicing political opportunism by dispatching troops into Iraq. They should be ashamed. Common sense clearly concludes the safe political course would have been to have done nothing. President Bush acted presidential. The approval ratings of President Bush and Prime Minister Blair would be far more favorable had they turned blind eyes to Iraq. Great risk was assumed in going forward, but they responded as able leaders.

Approximately 18 months ago, an Iraqi citizen said to me, the U.S. must take out Saddam. We are afraid of him because we know what punishment and torture he is capable of inflicting. The U.S. must remove him. The world is not safe as long as he remains in power, he concluded.

I then asked him, If we remove this evil regime, will the Iraqi people embrace us or reject us?

The gentleman was silent. I repeated my question, and he reluctantly replied, I do not know. I said, Neither do I and that concerns me.

It continues to concern me. It concerns me, as well, that we have become the Rodney Dangerfield in the world of diplomacy to some; no respect for what we have done. Oh, yes, Mr. Speaker, the great majority wanted Saddam gone, but they did not want to become involved. Let someone else do the heavy lifting. Let others expose themselves to danger.

We were given warnings. The first attack on the World Trade Center in the nineties; our two embassies subsequently attacked; the attack upon the USS *Cole*, and we did virtually nothing in response. No surprise that the terrorists concluded these Americans have no backbone. They have no will to respond. We can attack them with impunity. Then 9/11. Some insist we should have delayed our efforts to remove Saddam.

Delay for what? The U.N. was indecisive. The U.N. observed Saddam's violation of one agreement after another without reprimand, and all the while Saddam operated as he pleased. Surely, Saddam must have viewed the U.N. as his own personal dancing bear.

Some insist that our responding to the 9/11 attack was a mistake, implying that had we done nothing in response, that terrorists would simply have gone away. That gang does not simply go away.

Finally, weapons of mass destruction. There is ample evidence voiced by Democrats and Republicans alike that Iraq and Saddam did possess, in fact, weapons of mass destruction. They have not been detected, but do we then conclude that these weapons do not exist? Neither have Saddam nor Osama

bin Laden been detected, so applying this logic, I suppose they do not exist.

We are at war. And war has a way, Mr. Speaker, of frustrating timetables, good intentions notwithstanding; I cite Bosnia.

I know we in the Congress are appreciative to the countries around the world that are assisting us in this effort and to our servicemen and women as well. If we prevail, the world will be better for it, but we must be strong. As we know from the outset, it will not be a quick fix. Many have compared Saddam and Osama bin Laden and their fellow terrorists with Adolf Hitler, but there is a salient distinction, Mr. Speaker. Hitler and his gang wanted to conquer the world. Saddam and Osama bin Laden and their thugs are not averse to destroying the world. Therein lies a distinction, Mr. Speaker, that makes our task far more formidable.

As the majority leader just said earlier, to retreat at this juncture would be ill-advised.

GOOD ECONOMIC NEWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, last week brought the American taxpayers some good news. Whether it was in the USA Today newspaper, Associated Press stories, the New York Times or the Washington Post, they all said pretty much the same thing. The U.S. economy grew at a rapid pace of 7.2 percent during the third quarter of this year.

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Mr. Speaker, this is an accomplishment that has not been seen in 19 years, or since 1984, when Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. Most economic analysts were expecting just a 6 percent gain. In addition, the growth rate accelerated from a 3.3 percent rate in the second quarter. This must come as quite a surprise to those who have been hoping for bad economic news.

I would like to greet the economic detractors with even more positive news: the value of U.S. stock markets has increased with shareholder wealth up \$2.9 trillion, an increase of 22 percent since October 2002; and the 10,000 mark in the Dow Jones is well within reach. Disposable income is up 5.8 percent at an annual rate in 2003.

This is very interesting. U.S. homeownership in the United States was 68.4 percent in the third quarter. Now this is the highest level it has ever been.

Productivity growth remains strong, which has bolstered business profits. Orders of manufacturing goods have been increasing since earlier this year, and shipments of durable goods have increased since this summer after, of course, a period of decline and stagnation.

Consumer confidence has increased and consumer spending has increased on food and clothes by 7.9 percent, and this is the best increase since 1976.

Business spending on equipment and business software has increased 15.4 percent, the largest increase since 2001.

Mr. Speaker, these economic facts are evidence that what President Bush proposed and Congress passed was right in passing the Jobs Growth and Tax Relief package, that is, the tax cuts. It has given the economy the shot it needed from the recession that started at the end of the Clinton administration; and with higher economic activity, American workers obtain better wages and living standards.

While this significant growth is encouraging, we must strive to ensure that our economy continues on this positive track. Of course, we cannot logically expect that the economy will continue to grow at this rate as it did in the third quarter, but most private forecasters predict the economy will be above the historical average.

Of course, one thing a good economy must do is create jobs; 57,000 new jobs were created in September, the first gain in nonfarm payroll employment since January. This is positive news, and we are seeing signs that the labor market is improving. Initial claims for unemployment insurance have declined by more than 10 percent, and the 4-week moving average has stayed below 400,000 claims for 4 straight weeks.

As the economy has recovered, the U.S. has become more productive. With higher productivity, fewer people are needed to do the same job. Because of this, there has not been a corresponding job increase in the national economic growth.

Of course, I think there is more we need to do to continue these progrowth policies. I would offer one caveat this afternoon. Part of a progrowth economic policy is to reduce spending. Federal Government spending increased by 1.4 percent in the third quarter alone. Over the past 5 years, the government has increased spending by \$586 billion. Spending is now just over 20 percent of the gross domestic product. If we continue to follow an alarming increase in Federal spending, the government will be faced with more and more difficult choices, none of which will help our economic recovery and economic growth.

We have a healthy economy to look forward to today. Let us keep it that way. Let us control government spending.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RENZI). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 49 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m. today.