

again, let us offer the ultimate vote of confidence in their democracy. Let us reward the self-sufficiency they have demonstrated by giving them their country back and bringing our American soldiers home.

2330

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. SCHMIDT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

U.S. AUTO INDUSTRY SUPPORTS UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE—IN CANADA

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, as we spend our time here talking about Christmas and the war on Christmas, I think we have missed the whole point. At least the Republicans have.

My passion since I arrived in Congress has been that every American should have access to affordable health care coverage. It should be a right, not a privilege as it is today. Over 45 million Americans have no coverage at all, and millions more cannot afford to get sick because of inadequate or expensive coverage.

Democrats have made health care a top priority, but the Republicans have not. Christmas trees seem to be more in their order. I have repeatedly introduced H.R. 1200, universal health care legislation. My friend and colleague JOHN DINGELL has done the same. My colleague JOHN CONYERS has done the same. We have many proposals all approaching a universal solution to a problem for this country.

Dozens of Democrats have been willing to sign on to this bill. But the majority, the Republicans, have talked but done absolutely nothing. Instead, they have used every opportunity to disparage government and claim that solutions to everything always end in the words "incorporated," "privatized." Whether it is Social Security or Medicare or drugs or whatever, it always has got to be private.

Republicans claim government, the one they control, is incapable of addressing America's needs. They proved it down in Louisiana. They proved it themselves. Their tortured logic says that we can wage war, but we cannot solve the health care crisis.

Pick up the newspaper, and the conclusion is inescapable. There are no more tomorrows. The health care crisis is real and a present danger to the American people and the U.S. economy, much more than this war on terror.

Especially hard hit is the manufacturing sector. Employees throughout the country are bracing for plant closings or wage and benefit cuts. We came out here and did pensions again today. We continue to do it to the workers.

Companies like General Motors and Ford cite the cost of providing health care coverage as a major factor in their current financial crises. So quietly behind the scenes here on Capitol Hill, the domestic auto industry has been talking to lawmakers about a bailout. They are looking for tens of billions of dollars next year and say it is required to save the auto industry and thousands of family wage jobs.

I am a strong supporter of America's labor movement and a strong supporter of family wage jobs. And if a company treats its employees right, I strongly support them as well. That might make me a candidate for supporting an auto bailout. But it really makes me wonder why Republicans will not join Democrats and fight for its family from within, a health care system that is destroying people, business, and our way of life.

Republicans say, let the market fix it. Well, we have done that. And the special interests have said stay out of it because people like me want this Nation to guarantee health coverage for everybody. Lobbyists make a living in this town out of spinning the tale of us against them and how we have to do it individually, and we cannot do it as a country.

Well, I will enter into the RECORD a letter that sets the record straight and give us a chance to finally confront America's health care crisis. This letter was sent separately to the Canadian government by the Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Daimler Chrysler and the union representing auto workers in late 2002.

The so-called big three U.S. car companies put their full support behind publicly, publicly, funded health care in Canada. Let me read some excerpts. "Canada's publicly funded health care system provides essential and affordable health care services for all Canadians, regardless of their income. For both employers and workers in the auto industry, it is vitally important that the publicly funded health care system be preserved and renewed."

The letter sent by GM, Ford, and Daimler Chrysler, concludes: "In addition to reinforcing the quality and accessibility of health care for all Cana-

dians, these measures would also help to ensure the long-run success of the Canadian auto industry." There is a business reason to do it. That is the U.S. auto industry acting outside the United States. It is time for them to act inside the United States and for us to act.

H.R. 1200 provides universal health care with guidelines for Federal Government decisions by local government and health care by the private sector.

My Democratic friends have other ideas. There is more than one idea how to do this. We ought to get them on the table. It is time for the Republican majority to make health care a priority. It is time for the auto industry to support a solution that is morally responsible and economically urgent: health care. Every American has a right.

Madam Speaker, we have been talking about it, and we have not done anything. It is time to stop talking about Christmas trees and start talking about health care for all Americans.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2002.

Canada's publicly funded health care system provides essential and affordable health care services for all Canadians, regardless of their income. Publicly funded health care also enhances Canada's economic performance in several important ways.

The auto industry is Canada's most important export industry; it directly employs over 150,000 Canadians in high-wage jobs, supports hundreds of thousands of other spin-off jobs, produces \$90 billion worth of shipments per year, and generates billions of dollars in tax revenues for all levels of government in Canada. The success of this industry has been crucial to Canada's economic progress over the past decade. Canada's health care system has been an important ingredient in the auto industry's performance.

Workers in the auto industry, and in the many manufacturing and service industries which supply automakers, benefit directly from access to public health care services. Thanks to this system, they are healthier and more productive. Employers in the auto industry, meanwhile, enjoy significant total labour cost savings because most health care services are supplied through public programs (rather than through private insurance plans).

The public health care system significantly reduces total labour costs for automobile manufacturing firms, compared to the cost of equivalent private insurance services purchased by U.S.-based automakers; these health insurance savings can amount to several dollars per hour of labour worked. Publicly funded health care thus accounts for a significant portion of Canada's overall labour cost advantage in auto assembly, versus the U.S., which in turn has been a significant factor in maintaining and attracting new auto investment to Canada.

Canada's publicly funded health care system is now facing demographic, technological, and fiscal pressures. The erosion of publicly funded health care through measures such as the delisting of currently-covered services, the imposition of user fees, the failure of the public system to keep up with the changing nature of health care, and new costs such as prescription drugs and home care, will impose significant costs on automotive employers and undermine the attractiveness of Canada as a site for new automotive investment.