a cusp of their history, either dazed in the disbelief that their dreams are shattered, or cynical or despondent.

In Cuba's dire economic crisis there is a tremendous potential force for change. Basic foods, medicine, oil, gasoline and electricity are strictly rationed. Transportation is poor and undependable. Whole chunks of the nation are regularly hit with black outs. Infant mortality is up. So is suicide.

Cubans in exile and those remaining in Cuba are ready to listen and make some steps toward reconciliation. The country is poised for change. And, most importantly, it is vulnerable.

Cuba's malaise has opened the door for the United States to play a critical role in Cuba's future. In the mold of our approach to China, Vietnam and South Africa, we should offer a hand of conditional friendship while still pushing for a free and open Cuban society.

Our national and political conscience dictates that we respond to Cuba's plight by at least encouraging humanitarian aid shipments. And, in doing so, this nation can send a powerful message: Our capitalist democracy works. Despite its many shortcomings, the United States has the medicine and food to spare for many in need, especially Cubans, so close to us historically and culturally.

Encouraging aid should be the Clinton administration's first step in making friendly overtures to the Cuban people and pushing Fidel and his intransigent Marxist Leninism into obsolescence. The administration should initiate a bargaining process over the embargo which should include a combination of diplomatic overtures and policies to improve communication between Cubans and Americans.

Although Fidel might use U.S. aid to blow a little breath into the dying corpse of his revolution, the U.S. free press is easily more effective over the long run in spreading the truth about the food and medicine that would be making it into the Cubans' hands. Already, CNN and other TV stations are captured by thousands in Cuba by pirate satellites. Radio Marti, out of Florida, offers a daily diet of information from the outside world to Cuban listeners. The message to Cubans from all of these sources would be loud and clear: What you are getting is American goodwill. And if it is not reaching you, blame Fidel.

The powerful message of freedom already is carried via the vibrant but informal links that exist between the 1.2 million American Cubans and their friends and families in Cuba. The administration should encourage this exchange by negotiating for direct postal and telephone service between our two nations; the exchange of students, teachers, artists, writers and other professionals; allowing travel to Cuba by American tourists; and permitting U.S. journalists to be stationed there.

Underlying all these proposals should be a request by the administration to begin official discussions on the embargo with Havana and an agreement to raise the level of the U.S. envoy if Cuba does the same. The ultimate goal would be full diplomatic relations.

The rest, and perhaps most significant elements of the embargo, principally the prohibition of the U.S. investment in Cuba, as well as a prohibition on most commerce, could be lifted over the long term if political conditions in Cuba and the nation's human rights record improve.

Setting the stage for negotiations would put the United States in command, no matter what Fidel's reaction would be. If he balked, Castro would have difficulty explaining to his hungry people why he turned down food and medicine, the scarcity of which define the embargo to most Cubans. If he agreed to a gradual opening of relations, the irrepressible forces of capitalism and social reform, some of which are already evident, in all likelihood would sweep the nation.

Cubans are proud and patriotic, and Fidel plays on this. As long as the United States is inflexible on the embargo, we remain the imperialist enemy in their minds, and the revolution, the Cuban struggle to get out from under our thumb, goes on. But if the administration allows aid shipments and sets up a bargaining table, and Fidel does not step up, he will look like the defiant, stubborn dinosaur that he is. And something of a hypocrite, since he continually is calling for an end to what he calls the ''blockade.''

The administration has so far taken the least politically taxing course on Cuba, which is to maintain the antagonistic status quo. And that's unlikely to change until after the 1996 election. In order to carry Florida, many believe Clinton must let the conservative wealthy Cuban American National Foundation dictate Cuban policy, which pushed for the strengthening of the embargo as recently as 1992.

The truth is that many exiled Cubans want the embargo at least partially lifted, enough to help those left on the island through these tough times. And many Americans wonder why the embargo, which was imposed in 1962 by President Kennedy, wasn't dissolved with the end of the Cold War.

A growing number of conservatives and liberals and some of the nation's leading newspapers already have advocated an end to the embargo, saying that it is an antiquated policy that is hurting Cubans, not Fidel's regime. They argue rightly that Cuba and the spread of communism no longer are threats to our stability or the stability of the hemisphere. Communism and the Cuban revolution are indisputable failures.

Interestingly, Fidel is not a complete failure to Cubans. He's all they have; just Fidel, who thumbed his nose at the United States and put Cuba on the geopolitical map. But that's not enough anymore.

A young Cuban woman told me this story of two old brothers who lived together in the hills. They had fought in the revolution and believed in it. Now, hungry and old and crushed by the reality of the revolution's failure, one of them hanged himself with his belt in the rafters of his house. When the guardia came to take his body away, the other man asked that the belt be left behind to remind him of his brother and the reason he took his life. After the guardia departed, the second brother used it to hang himself. These are the stories of Cuba these days.

Optimism drives us all, and the future of Cuba, the dreams of almost two generations of Cubans who've grown up both in exile and under the delusion of the revolution, could be realized in coming decades. Second to the Cuban people, the United States is the most important force for positive change on the island. Americans have a choice: between provoking change with obsolete and misplaced hostility or encouraging it, as we did in South Africa, as constructive, engaged critics.

There is a chance that we could strangle Cubans into a violent revolution. And there is a chance that we could offer them some choices and hope, and help them make the right decisions.

Biddle Duke has been to Cuba twice, most recently this spring, as an aide to Washington-based public policy groups, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation and the Council of American Ambassadors. He is a journalist working in Santa Fe and is a former reporter for The New Mexican.

TIME TO OVERHAUL UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD CUBA

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, as I look at the vast array of foreign policy issues the 104th Congress will address, United States policy toward Cuba stands out in my mind as the most in need of a dramatic overhaul. I believe all my colleagues agree on the goals of United States policy toward Cuba—promoting a peaceful transition to democracy, economic liberalization and greater respect for human rights while controlling immigration from Cuba. Where some of us may differ, however, is on how we get there. In my view, current policy is not only outdated and ineffective, but, far worse, it is counterproductive to fostering these goals and contrary to U.S. national interests.

Rather than tightening the embargo and further isolating Cuba, as the United States has done, we should be expanding contact with the Cuban people and lifting the embargo. I say this not because I believe the Cuban Government should be rewarded; in fact, I am disappointed that the Cuban Government has failed to make meaningful steps towards political reform and improving human rights. Nor do I believe that it should be done as a quid pro quo. We should lift the embargo simply because it serves the U.S. national interests by helping foster a peaceful transition to democracy.

In my view, greater contact with the Cuban people will plant the seeds of change and advance the cause of democracy just as greater exchange with the West helped hasten the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. In his posthumously published book, former President Nixon wrote that ''we should drop the economic embargo and open the way to trade, investment and economic interaction * * *.'' Nixon believed we would better help the Cuban people by building ''pressure from within by actively stimulating Cuba's economic contracts with the free world.'' William D. Rogers, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs for the Ford administration, also believes the embargo should be lifted. As he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year, ''The breakup of the Soviet system occurred not because we cut off trade and human interchange, but because we didn't.''

United States travel restrictions to and from Cuba, only 90 miles away, are among the most prohibitive in the world. At this point, only United States government officials and journalists are allowed to travel to Cuba without having to obtain a license, and only a handful of Cubans are allowed to travel to the United States. I would ask my colleagues, do we not have enough faith in the power of our system to let contact between our citizens flourish?

Current policy not only denies the United States the opportunity to promote positive change in Cuba, but it increases the likelihood of widespread

political violence and another mass exodus of refugees to Florida. The Cuban Government, which is successfully expanding political and economic ties with the rest of the world, is unlikely to give in to United States demands. If economic pressure succeeds in encouraging the people to take to the streets, the most likely consequence would be bloodshed. The military remains united behind Castro, the opposition is too weak and the government too repressive for any uprising to be successful.

Mr. President, it is my hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join officials who served in the Bush, Reagan, Ford, Nixon, and Kennedy administrations as well as the editors of the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the New York Times, USA Today, the Economist, the Journal of Commerce, the Chicago Tribune, and U.S. News & World Report in calling for an overhaul of United States policy toward Cuba and working to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.

Let us try the same policies and the same methods that have produced the freedom that has come to Eastern Europe and Central Europe and knocked off the shackles, chains of the Soviet Union.

TRIBUTE TO DEBORAH K. HAUGER

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, I was deeply saddened last month by the death of Deborah Hauger who served as the Latin American advisor to the former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressman LEE HAMILTON. I had the pleasure of meeting Deborah on several occasions and was struck by her intelligence, vibrance, warmth and her deep commitment to doing what was right for United States foreign policy and for the people of Latin America.

I came to know Deborah through my work with Congressman LEE HAMILTON to change United States policy toward Cuba. On behalf of myself and Congressman HAMILTON, she and a member of my staff traveled to Cuba and reported to us their strong belief that United States policy was counterproductive and contrary to United States national interests. She demonstrated enormous commitment to the Cuba issue in particular, and to promoting democracy and human rights throughout the hemisphere.

She died at the young age of 34 and her death is a great loss not only to her family, friends and colleagues, but to the foreign policy of this country, to the people of Latin America and to the U.S. Congress as well. I hope my colleagues will join me in sending my sincere condolences to her family, to Congressman HAMILTON and to her colleagues.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

THE CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1995

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to call attention to a bit of an inconsistency in this amendment. If I may direct a question to one of the managers with regard to the amendment that is pending.

Is it correct that the Senator from Alaska, as he reads the prohibition on gifts, that it precludes a Senator from being reimbursed for travel or transportation to a charitable event such as the event which for a number of years was sponsored by former Senator Jake Garn of Utah? As my colleagues know, that was for a charitable purpose of the Children's Hospital. I think several hundred thousand dollars were raised for that purpose. As a consequence, transportation was provided to Members as well as lodging.

Under the proposed amendment, would transporation and lodging reimbursement for such a charitable event be precluded? I would be happy to have a response to my question without losing my right to the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, if the Senator would allow the Senator from Michigan to respond to that question.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Surely.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the answer to the question is yes, it is the same language as was in the conference report which was before the Senate last October, which had the support of the vast majority on both sides of the aisle and is the same language that was in an earlier bill. The answer is yes.

The reason for it is that a significant portion of the money which is contributed by the interest groups to those events is used for the transportation, lodging, and the recreation of Members of Congress. That is the reason for it.

But the answer to your question is yes, it is the same language as was in the conference report.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wonder if I could follow up with one other question. Why would we preclude reimbursement for transportation and lodging for charitable events, yet allow transportation and lodging for political events?

It is my understanding that there is nothing in this amendment that would preclude a Member from going out to Los Angeles for a political event, getting his lodging taken care of, getting his transportation taken care of.

Mr. President, I think there is an inconsistency here as relates to the merits of considering gift ban legislation. And I wonder why the floor managers have not seen fit to include a prohibition which I understand was not in last year's bill either. I think that the American people should understand as we consider the merits of banning gifts, that there is certainly reasonable expectation that if we ban it for charitable events, that we ought to also ban it for political events. I wonder if my colleague would enlighten me as to whether I am accurate in my interpretation that, indeed, for political events, one could get full reimbursement for travel and full reimbursement for lodging.

Mr. LEVIN. The Senator from Alaska raised this very point during a debate on the language which would ban travel to the so-called charitable events. That exact argument was raised. The Senator from Alaska attempted to strike the language which would have or which does prohibit the travel paid for to these so-called charitable events, and the amendment of the Senator from Alaska was defeated, I believe, by a vote of 58–37.

So, that argument was made at the time and the distinction had to do with whether political events are within the political activities of elected officials and are different from entertainment, lodging, meals, and travel to entertain where one brings his or her family. The distinction was adopted by the Senate during that debate by a vote of 58–37, I believe.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Well, Mr. President, I respect the response from my colleague, but when we consider just what constitutes a gift, I think we have to recognize that if we travel to a charitable event to raise money for a worthwhile cause, there is some merit to that. On the other hand, if we go to a political event in Los Angeles and get our transportation paid for and get our lodging paid for, that is meritorious, too, from a political point of view. But we are talking about a great inconsistency here in this legislation that is proposed by my colleagues on the other side. We are talking about cleansing the process, the process of accepting gifts. But they do not want to touch the area that is sacrosanct, and that is specifically political contributions and the way that money is raised.

Money is raised by travel to legitimate political events. And reimbursement occurs not only for the Member but, very often, for the spouse as well. And so I hope that those watching this among the American public, as they reflect on the merits of this debate on gifts, recognize the inconsistency that is proposed here. If my friends on the other side were suggesting that we do away with gifts, period, do away with gifts associated with charitable events, we do away with gifts that are associated with political events from a standpoint of travel and a standpoint of lodging, then there would be consistency.

But clearly, that is not the intention because there is a lot of money raised in this process. That process gets Members elected. So, I think as we address the merits of reform here in this body on the issue of gifts, we should specifically reflect on this other overlooked issue—political travel. As most of us recognize, the reason my amendment did not pass last year is there was some motivation, the motivation by those that suggested that that was too great a sacrifice, too great a sacrifice to give up political travel.