Mr. GOODLING. Children is the name of the game as far as our program is concerned. We are here to make sure that anything we do will not hinder there getting a good education, but will enhance that possibility.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, as the only Independent in the Congress, what I would like to do is touch on a few thoughts that my Republican and Democratic colleagues often choose not to address. There are a lot of very, very important issues which Congress discusses every week, but somehow or other we seem not to talk about some of the most important issues facing the American people.

The first issue that I would like to talk about is heightened by an article which appeared in the February 5 Washington Post National Weekly edition. The article touches on an issue which I think all of us in this country should be very concerned about. That is the quality of American democracy, and to what degree we in America remain a vibrant democracy.

Mr. Speaker, all of us should be deeply concerned, no matter what our political persuasion is, that in November, 1994, when the so-called Republican revolution took place, and the gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. GINGRICH] became Speaker of the House, all of 38 percent of the American people voted in that election. Sixty-two percent of the American people did not vote. The vast majority of low-income Americans did not vote. Young people in large numbers did not vote. Working people did not vote.

What does it mean, Mr. Speaker, when in Europe and in Scandinavia and in Canada and in other industrialized democracies, 60 percent, 70 percent, 80 percent of the people come out to participate in the political process, but in the United States of America, we have a major national election of great consequence and 38 percent of the American people participate? What does that mean?

I think it suggests, Mr. Speaker, that the vast majority of American people are giving up on the political process. They are hurting. They are in trouble. But they look to the Government, and they do not see a government which responds to their needs. I think what they instinctively understand is that by and large, what happens here in Congress and the decisions that we make here in Congress reflect to a very large degree the interests of the wealthy and the powerful, the people who can contribute $10,000 a plate to a Newt Gingrich-sponsored fundraising dinner; the people who contribute $16 million in one night to a Republican Party fundraising dinner.

Meanwhile, the folks back home are working longer hours for lower wages. They are concerned that they cannot afford to send their kids to college. They cannot afford health care. They are worried about the health care bills for their parents. They are deeply worried, and they look to Congress, and essentially what they see is a Congress which represents the interests of the wealthy and the powerful, and forgets about the needs of the middle class and the working people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, in the article in the Washington Post on February 5, their National Weekly edition, there is some information that they received from a national poll which should be of major concern to all Americans, regardless of their political persuasions. Let me quote a little bit from that article.

I quote: ''To measure how much Americans know about politics and the political system, the Washington Post, the Kaiser Foundation, and Harvard interviewed 1,524 randomly selected adults in November and December. These Americans were asked 18 general knowledge questions about how their government works and who their leaders are. An additional 21 political knowledge questions were asked in 4 other national Washington Post polls. The surveys revealed a knowledge gap that is deep and wide.'' I would hope that people listen to the following paragraph.

□ 2000

This is based on polling by the Washington Post working with other institutions. Two-thirds of those interviewed could not name the person who serves in the U.S. House of Representatives from their congressional district. In other words, two-thirds of those polled did not know who was representing them in the House of Representatives. Half did not know whether their Representative was a Republican or a Democrat.

Then they go on, ''Who is the Vice President of the United States?'' Who is the Vice President of the United States? Four in ten, 40 percent of Americans surveyed, did not know or got it wrong. Forty percent of the American people did not know the name of the Vice President of the United States.

It goes on, two out of three could not name the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, ROBERT DOLE, who will be likely a candidate for President. Nearly half, 46 percent, did not know the name of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, NEWT GINGRICH, and on and on it goes.

It seems to me when 62 percent of the people do not participate in an election, when 40 percent of the people do not know the name of the Vice President of the U.S., when two-thirds of the people do not know the name of their Representative to the U.S. Congress, when many people, a majority of the people cannot name their two United States Senators, it seems to me that we have a serious problem regarding democracy in America. If we do not change the circumstances in a variety of ways, I fear very much that in the years to come we are going to lose the democracy that we have today.

Why is it that so many people do not have faith in Government, and why is it that so many people do not participate in the political process? As I said earlier, I think that has a lot to do with the belief that most people have that despite all of their problems and all of their needs, that the elections do not mean much because the people who are elected end up not representing ordinary people, but end up representing the wealthy and the powerful.

Unless we can create a political revolution in this country by which Government begins to stand up not just for those people who have huge amounts of money but for ordinary Americans, unless we can reaffirm the faith of the American people in the political process and in their Government because they see the Government responding to their needs, I fear very much that we are not going to increase voter turnout or get young people to understand what democracy is all about.

I think one of the problems that we have in this whole area is that there has been a tremendous misstatement of reality that has been going on for the last number of years by the corporately controlled media, I believe, and also by our two-party system. What has been going on is that when people turn on the television and they watch CBS or NBC, or they pick up their local newspapers, what they are hearing is the economy is booming, the economy is growing, the economy is doing very, very well.

Then the television people will tell them, well, gee, the stock market is at an all-time high. Then they will tell them corporate profits are doing very, very well this year for the major American corporations. Then they will say inflation is down and that is very good for the economy. The economy is growing and millions of new jobs are being created, all of which may be true, but it does not bear on the most important economic reality, and that is what is happening to the average American.

It is not a question of whether the stock market is soaring for the wealthy people who own most of the stocks. It is not a question of whether corporate profits are at an all-time high. The question is what is happening economically to the average American? The corporate controlled media, and I think to a large degree—there are exceptions—the two political parties represented here have not addressed that issue.

That reality is that for the average American, for the middle-class American, the economy of the United States is in a depression-like situation, and I use that word advisedly.

The reality is that since 1973, 80 percent of all American families have either seen a decline in their incomes,

decline in their standard of living, or at best their incomes have remained stagnant. Now, if 80 percent of American families are seeing a decline in their standard of living, or at best economic stagnation, how can anybody with any sense of integrity talk about a growing or dynamic economy? For the middle class of America, we are in the midst of a major depression.

When I go back to Vermont, and I go back to Vermont almost every weekend, and I talk to the people throughout my State, we hold many town hearings on what is going on here in Washington. We talk to people. What do we find? I do not think Vermont, by the way, is terribly different from the rest of the country. What we find from our dairy farmers in the State of Vermont, our small farmers, they are working 60, 70, 80 hours a week. Their income is declining, and many of them are being forced off the land.

What we find is for many of our working people, they no longer work one job at 40 hours a week. Forget about that. That is ancient history. Nobody works one job at 40 hours a week. What they have to do now is work two jobs, on occasion three jobs, in order to bring home the income that their family needs to survive.

Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago American workers were the best compensated in the world, and when people would say America is No. 1, what they were talking about it that for the middle class of this country, their wages, their benefits, their pension plans, their health care, we were No. 1.

But something has happened over the last 20 years. CBS does not talk about it too much. The Speaker of the House does not talk about it too much. Most of the people in Congress do not talk about it too much. But in that 20-year period, Mr. Speaker, we went from first in the world to 13th in the world, and now our standard of living is far behind many of the countries in Europe and in Scandinavia.

One of the very interesting things that is happening, and it is a sad statement to make, is that increasingly we see European companies coming to the United States and starting factories here. There is nothing wrong with that. That is a good thing.

But why are European companies coming to the United States of America? The answer, and it really would have shocked our parents or any of us 20 or 30 years ago, they are coming to the United States today for cheap labor. They are coming to America for the same reason that American companies are going to Mexico.

In my State of Vermont we have skilled workers, hard-working people, who earn $7 an hour, who earn $8 an hour and less without benefits, who are skilled and hard-working people. You cannot get the type of labor in Europe, you cannot get that type of labor in Scandinavia, because the wages paid in those countries are much higher. So all over America, what we are seeing is companies coming to America to hire our people at low wages, minimal benefits, and I would say that that is a real tragedy that this Congress has got to address.

Mr. Speaker, adjusted for inflation, the average pay for four-fifths of American workers plummeted, declined by 16 percent, in the 20 years between 1973 and 1993. In 1973 the average American worker earned $445 a week. Twenty years later, accounting for inflation, that worker was making $373 a week.

Today the reality for the middle class of America is that they are working longer hours for lower wages. So despite what CBS or NBC or the New York Times may tell us, the reality is that for ordinary Americans, we are in the midst of a severe depression.

How many women all over this country, we hear a whole lot of discussion about family values here, and many of us believe that if a woman wants to stay home—and many women do not, and that is fine—but if a woman wants to stay home with her kids, she has the right to do that. But what we are seeing in this country now are millions of women forced to join the work force because their family cannot make it with one breadwinner, and I think that that is pretty unfortunate.

Just the other day, just last week in Burlington, VT, my hometown, I talked to a woman who said that between her and her husband they are receiving eight separate sources of income. Both of them are working different part-time jobs. They have one kid. They very rarely have a chance to have the whole family together.

That is happening all over America. Husbands do not see wives. Wives do not see husbands. Parents do not see their kids together. This is a tragedy, and it is a tragedy that the U.S. Congress must address.

Mr. Speaker, as bad as the situation is for middle-aged, middle-class workers, there is another phenomenon going around and going on that deserves a whole lot of discussion. As bad as it is for middle-aged folks, it is far, far worse for young workers, and this is pretty scary stuff.

When we ask why the average American is angry or why the average American is nervous or anxious, it is not just that he or she is working longer hours for lower wages. That is pretty bad. But they are terribly worried about what is going to happen to their kids, and I speak as somebody who has four kids.

What is happening is in the last 15 years, the wages for entry-level jobs for young men who are high school graduates has declined by 30 percent, three-zero percent. For young women it has declined by 18 percent. Wages for entry-level jobs for college graduates have also declined for men.

What about young families? Families headed by persons younger than 30 saw their inflation-adjusted median income collapse by 32 percent from 1973 to 1990. What the result of that is, is many young people are not getting married. They cannot afford to get married. Young families are not buying their own homes. They cannot afford to buy their own homes.

Most of the new jobs that are out there are not paying working people a decent wage. Very often they are in the service industry. They are flipping hamburgers at McDonald's. They are working in a ski resort. They are not jobs that are allowing people to come into the middle class.

Mr. Speaker, the dream of America, what the American dream is about, it is a dream that my parents had. My father came to this country from Poland without a nickel in his pocket and our family never had much money. But the dream of what America is about is that as parents you work hard, you are prepared to sacrifice so that your kids can do better than you did, so that your kids will have the opportunity to have the education that you never had.

I think one of the areas of anxiety and panic that so many middle-class families are feeling now is not only what is happening to them, it is the great, great worry as to what is going to happen to their kids. It is not just the kids who do not go to college. It is even the college graduates, as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are creating so many low-paying jobs that right now, Americans at the lower end of the wage scale are now the lowest paid workers in the entire industrialized world. That means if you look at what goes on in Europe, what goes on in Scandinavia, many other countries, what you are seeing now is that American workers at the low end are now, if you can believe it, the lowest paid workers in the entire industrialized world, and I think that is quite unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of new jobs in this country today pay only $6 or $7 an hour. They offer no health care benefits. They offer no retirement benefits, and they offer no time off for vacations or sick leave. In fact, more and more of the new jobs being created are part-time jobs or temporary jobs.

In the State of Vermont, I hear from people who say, well, I have to go out and have two 20-hour jobs because the local grocery store is not hiring anybody at 40 hours anymore. They hire two people at 20 hours so that they do not have to pay benefits or provide health care or any other type of benefits that a full-time employee might receive. Many employers now consider 27 hours a week full-time jobs.

In 1993, if we can believe this, one-third of the U.S. work force was comprised of, quote-unquote, contingent labor.

□ 2015

The largest employer in the private sector today is not General Electric, it is not General Motors, it is Manpower Inc. So more and more of our workers are having to go out and find a job for 2 months, they are finding a job for 3 months, but they are not having any

security on the job. They are not moving up the ladder. They are working for a couple of months, then they are gone, no benefits no security. Then they have to go out, and they have to hustle a new job. That causes, to say the least, a great deal of stress for the American work force.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about why wages are in decline in the United States and why the new jobs that are being created are primarily low wage, part time temporary jobs, one of the reasons for that is the major decline in manufacturing jobs in America and the major decline in middle-level white-collar management, middle-level white collar management jobs as well.

In the past 10 years, the United States lost 3 million white-collar jobs; 1.8 million jobs in manufacturing were lost in the last 5 years alone. There is a wonderful word that is out there now in the American vocabulary, and that word is downsizing. Corporate America does not even have the guts to use the word firing any more. But they are using the word downsizing.

All over this country, in virtually every major American corporation, we are seeing massive layoffs at a time, I should mention, when corporate profits are at an all-time high.

Mr. Speaker, five companies alone, Ford, AT&T, General Electric, ITT, and Union Carbide, laid off over 800,000 American workers in the last 15 years. While decent-paying jobs continue to disappear, the number of involuntary part-time workers tripled between 1970 and 1993.

Mr. Speaker, there have been studies that have been done which have shown, if you can believe it, a correlation between the compensation that the CEO's for the largest corporations in America receive and the downsizing that they do. It appears that it is a wonderful thing to be rewarded, that the heads of AT&T and the large corporations are throwing thousands of American workers out on the street and in return what they get are very large bonus increases and salaries and very positive and beneficial stock options for them.

The more workers you can throw out into the street, the more money you make. And I think this is a very sad statement about the culture of corporate America at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about industries, clearly one of the reason is a very simple fact: The average American today is working far harder and far more hours than was the case just 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, according to recent studies, the average American is now working 160 hours a year more than he or she worked in 1969, 160 hours. That is 1 month extra. That means people are now forced to work, not to bring in income, to work overtime, they are working two jobs, working three jobs, women are now forced to go out into the work force. The number of Americans working at more than one job has almost doubled over the last 15 years.

Now, it is important again to reiterate the kind of jobs that are being created. President Clinton, and President Bush before him and Reagan before him, they touted the growth of millions and millions of new jobs. Well, they are right. Millions of new jobs are being created. But what kind of jobs are they? Are they jobs that people can work at and become members of the middle class, or are they jobs that people work at and after 40 hours of work they are further behind the 8-ball than when they started?

Mr. Speaker, between 1979 and 1987, there were over 4.4 million jobs created. That is pretty good, 4.4 million jobs. And that is the information that we see in the newspapers, that we hear on television, millions of new jobs being created. That is the good news.

But what is the other side of that equation? Of that 4.4 million new jobs being created between 1979 and 1987, 3.6 million of them were at poverty-level wages. So what you are having is new jobs being created, but, unfortunately, the vast majority of them are at poverty level wages.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we now have the dubious distinction of being the country in which our low-wage workers are now poorer than in any other country in the industrialized world.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, if parents and working people cannot earn a decent living, how are they going to take care of their children? And the answer is they are not.

One of the areas we should be terribly ashamed of, and I fear Republican policies are only going to make a disaster even worse, is that 22 percent of our children today live in poverty. We have by far the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. We have some 5 million children who go hungry every single day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have talked for a moment, actually for more than a moment, about what is going on for the middle class and the working people of this country.

But there is another reality out there. And that is, while the middle class is shrinking, while more and more workers are receiving poverty level jobs, there is another reality that is taking place, and it is a reality that we do not talk about enough on the floor of the House, and it is a reality that we do not hear about on television, virtually at all, and that is that today, at the same time as the United States has by far the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world, we also by far have the most unequal distribution of wealth in the industrialized world.

I know we are not supposed to talk about that. That is something that is kind of a little bit dirty, and we are not supposed to talk about that here in the Congress. But the reality is the wealthiest 1 percent of the population in America own over 40 percent of the wealth of America. They own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent.

Further, in terms of income distribution, that means what people are earning every year, the highest earning 4 percent make more money than do the bottom 51 percent. Prof. Edward N. Wolf, who is a professor at New York University, concluded the most recent study of America's concentration of wealth by saying, and I quote—

> We are the most unequal industrialized country in terms of income and wealth, and we are growing more unequal faster than the other industrialized countries.

You know, I think it is appropriate every now and then that we talk about things like justice, like decency, terms we do not hear too much on the floor of the House. We have got to ask ourselves some basic questions: Is it just, is it right, that the wealthiest 1 percent of the population in America owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent? Is it appropriate to be seeing in our economy today a significant increase in millionaires and people on top, while at the same time more and more people are forced to work for poverty level jobs?

Mr. Speaker, during the 1980's, the wealthiest 1 percent of families saw their incomes rise by 80 percent. So, for the people on the top, the economy is doing fantastically. In the same decade, the 1980's, the bottom 90 percent of families saw their income rise only 3 percent. Most people saw a decline in their standard of living. No wonder that the richest 1 million families today own more than 84 million middle-class working and poor families put together.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about economic growth, all of us are in favor of economic growth. But there is something wrong when the vast majority of that income growth goes to the people on the top, the people who make $200,000, $300,000, $400,000 a year; meanwhile the middle class is shrinking, people work longer hours for lower wages, and the jobs available to millions of working Americans pay $5 an hour or $6 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that really needs to be addressed because I think it really smacks of obscenity, and that is that in 1980 the average CEO in America, the corporate, the chief executive officer of a major corporation, that CEO earned 42 times what the average factory worker earned.

Today, according to recent reports, the CEO's of the major corporations are now earning 200 times what their average worker is earning.

Just this last year, a report that I saw indicated that the compensation, that is, salaries, bonuses, stock options for the major CEO's went up by over 23 percent. Meanwhile, workers were getting 2 or 3 percent increases in their income.

I think ultimately we have to ask ourselves whether the CEO's of the largest corporations need to eat 200 times more than their workers, need to spend 200 times more for education for

their kids than the average middle-class person, should have 200 times more income, to take care of their health care needs of their parents than the average middle-class person.

I think we have got to bring the issue of justice back home again and say to the CEO's of the major American corporations, the people who are downsizing all over this country despite recordbreaking profit, the people who are taking our jobs to Mexico and to China, it is wrong, it is wrong for you to be earning 200 times what your workers are earning. It is your workers who have created wealth in your company, and you have got to have a little bit of decency, and you have got to share it, and you cannot gobble it up all for yourselves and your families. There is a limit to the number of automobiles you can have, a limit to the number of cars you can have, the working people of this country, the middle class of this country, they also have a right to have health care for their kids and their parents, they also have a right maybe to go on a vacation every once in a while, they have a right to send their kids to college also.

The fact that we have such a grotesquely unfair distribution of wealth and incomes is an issue that this Congress must address, and it has to address.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that has been discussed a great deal lately is taxation. Taxation, everybody wants tax reform. I would just simply point out that, according to a study conducted by the House Committee on Ways and Means, the top 1 percent of taxpayers saved an average of $41,000 in 1992 over what their taxes would have been at 1977 rates. In other words, one of the scandals that we have seen is the result of the tax reforms of 1977, 1981, and 1986 is a major cutback in the tax rates of the largest, the wealthiest people in America, and the largest corporations.

In fact, in 1977, if Federal 1977 individual tax rates had still been in effect in 1992, the Nation's wealthiest top 1 percent would have paid $83.7 billion more in taxes which is about one-half of the Federal deficit today.

So, maybe Mr. GINGRICH and his friends would not have had to propose slashing Medicare, Medicaid, education, environmental protection, veterans' programs, the needs of our littlest kids, maybe they would not have had to propose that the wealthiest 1 percent of our people, whose incomes are soaring, had paid, were able to pay, had paid their fair share of taxes.

Mr. Speaker, let me chat for a moment about some suggestions that I and other Members of Congress are making. I am the chairman of the House Progressive Caucus, which now has 51 members, and the Progressive Caucus has been attempting to lead the effort, with success, against the disastrous policies of the Contract With America and Mr. GINGRICH's Republican Party.

But more than that, we are attempting to come up with sensible solutions that would allow the middle class of this country to expand, to grow, rather than to see it shrink. So let me, if I might, just suggest six or seven areas that I think this country and this Congress should been moving forward in.

□ 2030

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that most of the new jobs that are being created are low wage jobs, many of them are part-time jobs, many of them are temporary jobs, this Congress must raise the minimum wage. In my view it should be raised to at least $5.50 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, the current minimum wage of $4.25 an hour is in terms of purchasing power 26 percent less than it was 20 years ago. In other words, our minimum wage workers today are far poorer than was the case 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, we hear a whole lot of discussion about welfare reform and the need for people to go out and work. I believe that. But I believe that, if somebody works 40 hours a week, they are entitled to live above poverty. I do not think that people are making it at $4.25, $4.50, or $5 an hour without benefits. You cannot raise kids on those wages.

So I think that, given the fact that the minimum wage in terms of purchasing power has declined by 26 percent over the last 20 years, we have got to have the courage to raise the minimum wage. In my view it should be raised to at least $5.50 an hour.

What is happening around this country because of the failure of Congress to act, a number of States, including the State of Vermont, are themselves trying unilaterally to raise the minimum wage. I applaud that matter. But the truth of the matter is the best way for it to be done, it should be done in 50 States in America, not in 5, not in 10. Let us do that. Let us raise the minimum wage here in Congress to at least $5.50 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, the second area that I think we need to take a hard look at is creating jobs right here in America rather than continuing to defend Europe and Asia against a nonexistent enemy. Many taxpayers may not know this, but our Government continues to spend about $100 billion a year defending Europe and Asia against whom we are not quite sure. It seems to me we should take that $100 billion, being it back home to rebuild both the physical and human infrastructure of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, we can put a heck of a lot of people back to work doing meaningful work, rebuilding our roads, our mass transportation, our bridges, our schools, our libraries. In terms of human needs, we can save a whole lot of misery by hiring qualified people in terms of disease prevention, getting people out, working against smoking, against teenage pregnancy, against AIDS.

We can save a lot of lives by having people going out into our communities. We should be putting more money into Head Start, not less money; hiring more people for child care, not cutting back on those important areas.

So it seems to me that, rather than spending $100 billion a year defending Europe and Asia, bring the money back home, put our people to work, making the country a richer country, improving our physical and human infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, there is another area that needs to be discussed which gets relatively little discussion on this floor, and that is our current trade policy. In my view, our current trade policy is a disaster. I think that, sadly, tragically, all of us in the House who stood up and said ''NAFTA was not going to work,'' unfortunately, we were proven right.

What we have seen is many tens of thousands of American jobs lost to NAFTA. We have seen a trade deficit grow with Mexico. We have learned that the Mexican Government lied to us about the state of their economy. They devalued their peso which necessitated President Clinton to propose a $50 billion bailout loan guarantee for Mexico, which many of us opposed. I brought forth legislation on the floor of this House which would have forced the President to come to Congress before lending Mexico any more money as part of the bailout. Unfortunately, that did not get through the Senate.

But it is not just NAFTA and it is not just GATT, it is our entire trade policy. This year the United States will have a trade deficit of about $160 billion. People say, so what? What does it mean to me? I don't care.

Let me tell you what it means to you. The economists estimate that, if a company were to develop a plant in the United States that produced $1 billion of export, exported $1 billion on product, on average, that company would be hiring 20,000 American workers at decent wages. What that means is when you have a $160 billion trade deficit, when you are importing $160 billion more in goods and services than you are exporting, that equates to the loss of 3 million decent jobs.

Mr. Speaker, just this last weekend I was at a mall in Vermont. I was just looking around at the goods that were available and went into one of the stores where they were selling televisions and VCR's, went into another store selling clothing. I would urge Americans to do that and take a look at the labels as to where these products are made. Increasingly what you see is: Made in China, made in Malaysia, made in Mexico, made in El Salvador.

What is going on is that major American corporations have basically deserted the United States of America, taken their factories to very desperate Third World countries where people have to work for horrible wages.

I remember several years ago going to Mexico as part of the NAFTA debate, and going into a factory there

where it was a very state-of-the-art factory, a very sophisticated modern factory. Most of the people there were women who were hard-working, good people. They were earning $1 an hour. We left the plant and walked a quarter of a mile down the road to see where the folks were living. Where they were living was in shacks, often without running water, often without electricity.

Even worse, as bad as the economic situation is in Mexico, it is, of course, worse in China. When our friends at the Nike sneaker company or the other major sneaker companies leave the United States and go to set up their plants in China, what they are doing there is hiring workers at 20 cents an hour; 20 cents an hour.

So what you are doing, it is a worthy exercise. Take a walk through the mall and see where products are manufactured. Increasingly where you are going to see these products manufactured is in desperate Third World countries.

Mr. Speaker, whenever we have a war, our multinational corporations become very patriotic and tell us how much they love America and how much they support the young men and women who are prepared to put their lives on the line defending America. They have big parades and are just ever so patriotic.

I hope very much that the CEO's of the major American corporations would begin to show us their love of this country and patriotism by maybe not running to China and Mexico, but reinvesting back home here in the United States of America.

I think this is an issue I know that the Progressive Caucus and other Members of Congress are prepared to address. It makes zero sense to me, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to give huge tax breaks to large corporations who are downsizing their work force, despite record breaking profits, who are taking our jobs to Mexico and China. It seems to me those are not the companies that should be receiving major tax breaks.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it seems wrong to me that, given the fact that the U.S. Government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the entire world, not just military, but many, many products, that we should begin to think about preferential treatment for those companies, and there are many of these companies who are reinvesting in their communities, who are hiring American workers at decent wages.

We have got to take a hard look at this issue. We have got to give support to those American companies that are doing the right thing. And they are out there. They are treating their workers with respect and with dignity. They are showing us their patriotism, because they are not running to Mexico or China, but they are supporting their communities, the communities that made them money in the first place.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, we have got to take a fundamental look at our entire trade policy. Do we build a wall around America? No. Do we think that trade is a bad thing? No. Trade is a very good thing. But we want to develop a trade policy which allows us to export roughly as much as we import.

We want to have the option of purchasing foreign products. There is nothing wrong with that. But we need a trade policy which puts Americans to work building the goods that we can build so well. Our workers are second to none in the world, if they are given the chance. But the truth of the matter is, we do not talk about it too often, but corporate America is selling out the middle class and working class of this country when they run to China and they run to Mexico. We need a series of policies to get those companies to reinvest here in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue which I am working on, which some other Members of Congress are working on, that needs to be addressed, and that is that when we try to understand why the standard of living of working people has declined, when we try to understand why the middle class is shrinking, it is important to understand the correlation between the decline of the standard of living of working people and the decline in the trade union movement in America.

It seems to me that if working people are going to get justice, if working people are going to earn decent wages at the place that they work at, if working people are going to get decent representation here in Washington or in their State capitals, it is important for the U.S. Congress to develop policies which allow working people to join unions, if that is what they want to do.

Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of workers who do not want to join a union, and that is their right. No question about it. But in my view, and I think the studies indicate this, there are millions of working people who want to join unions, who understand that workers who are in unions earn significantly more than nonunion workers.

The problem right now is that the deck is very much stacked against workers who want to join unions. Despite the law, which is routinely ignored by company after company, those workers who are trying to form a union are fired, they are laid off, they are disciplined. Workers are terrified they are going to lose their jobs. Companies threaten workers that they are going to go to Mexico or shut down the whole place if a union comes.

It seems to me if we are interested in raising income for the working and middle class, we need major labor law reform. The essence of that labor law reform must be that if 50 percent of the workers in a shop vote to join a union, plus one, they have a union. We need legislation that compels the company to sit down and negotiate in a serious way with those workers.

Too often in America, after workers go through all the blood, sweat, and tears of forming a union, they sit down to negotiate their first contract, and the owners refuse to negotiate in good faith and they drag it on and on and the union gets lost. It seems to me that should be illegal. An owner should negotiate in good faith with a union, and if the company does not do that, disciplinary action is taken against that company.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that I think needs to be addressed that is an issue that we hear very, very little discussion about on the floor of this House now, which is the crisis in health care. Many of us right now are, of course, preoccupied fighting against GINGRICH'S massive cuts to Medicare and Medicaid and other health care programs.

What we are trying to do is see that these cuts do not take place, to see that elderly people do not have to pay double the premiums that they are paying today in 7 years, that we do not see massive cutbacks to hospital, general rural hospitals in particular, which might close down hospitals.

In terms of the cuts in Medicaid, we do not know what will happen to the elderly people who need nursing homes, who will not be guaranteed nursing home care. We do not know what will happen to the middle-class families who today can see their parents taken care of well in a nursing home through Medicaid, but will no longer have that guarantee that that will take place. So while we are fighting those terrible cuts, we must not lose track of the real need for fundamental health care reform in America.

When we talk about health care, we have got to understand several basic facts. No. 1, the health care crisis today is worse than it was 3 years ago when we had this big debate on health care. It is not better, it is worse. Today, over 40 million Americans have zero health insurance. More than that have inadequate health insurance. These are the people with very high deductibles. They do not go to the doctor because they cannot afford the deductible, they cannot afford the copayment.

Furthermore, what we have got to understand is that despite the fact that 40 million Americans have no health insurance and so many people are under insured, that the United States today continues to spend far more per capita on health care than does any other major industrialized nation on Earth.

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We are spending more for a terribly bureaucratic and wasteful system that rewards the insurance companies with huge profits, that pays the CEO's of the major insurance companies huge salaries, that rewards certain doctors with huge incomes, that allows our pharmaceutical companies to charge our people in America far more for the same product that they sell in Europe, or in Canada, or in Mexico. So I think we

have got to move toward a simple, nonbureaucratic health care system which guarantees health care to every American. That is what our vision must be when we talk about family values. What we must be saying is that every family in America knows that they will be able to go to the doctor of their choice without worrying that they are going to go bankrupt.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we continue the fight against these disastrous cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, we must hold out the vision for a single-payer, State-administered health care system which guarantees health care to all people, and in fact we can guarantee health care to people, to every man, woman, and child in America, and we can spend less than we are right now with our wasteful, and bureaucratic, and inadequate system.

Mr. Speaker, I think the last point that I want to touch on has to do with campaign finance and election reform, and that is, as I think many Americans understand, it is not a level playing field in terms of what goes on here. We have our freshman Republican class who are revolutionaries, and they certainly are. Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, they have broken all of the records from any other class in the history of Congress in raising corporate PAC money. The biggest corporations; that is pretty revolutionary, I suppose, getting far more than any other class has received.

Mr. Speaker, 29 percent of the members of the United States are millionaires. My understanding is 25 percent of the freshman Republican class are millionaires, millionaires, and it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if we do not want to convert the House of Representatives, the people's body, into a House of Lords, we need some pretty fundamental campaign finance reform which takes away the ability of big money interests to continue to dominate what goes on here in the Congress.

Let me just briefly touch upon some of the issues that I think must be addressed in any serious campaign finance reform legislation.

No. 1, we have got to revisit the issue of very, very wealthy people being able to buy elections. I have nothing personally against Steve Forbes, or Ross Perot, or anybody else, so it is not a personal criticism of them. But I really think it is unfair that people who are just born or perhaps made hundreds and hundreds and millions of dollars, that they have the freedom to get up and say, well, you know, getting boring, you know, middle age, tired of my business career. I think that I am going to run for the President of the United States. Why not? Let us take out $25 million, $50 million out of the old checking account. No problem. We are worth a billion dollars, we are worth a half a billion dollars, and guess what? We will break the monotony. We will run for the President of the United States. Gee, that must be a lot of fun.

So I have nothing against Steve Forbes or Ross Perot; they are fine people. But I think that we have got to create a situation in which every American has the ability, should be able to run for President of the United States, should be able to run for the Senate, should be able to run for the House, should be able to run for Governor, and not just millionaires. And what we are seeing is not just on the presidential level. Do not kid yourself. More and more people who are running for the United States Senate or running for the United States House of Representatives are millionaires. The leadership of both parties is soliciting those people. It is pretty easy. You do not have to worry about raising funds for these guys. They are millionaires; they will pay for it themselves.

And we are seeing this also not only here in Washington, you are seeing it in State capitals as well. Millionaires, you know, became Governor of Louisiana not so long ago, and that is the pattern.

Is that what we want for America? Is that what people fought and died for, to defend democracy for, that we end up having people with huge amounts of money running the government? I do not think so. I do not think that is right.

So I think we want to revisit Butler versus Valeo, the very wrong-headed Supreme Court decision which basically said, gee, millionaires and billionaires have a constitutional right, a freedom of expression, to buy elections. I think that is wrong, and I think through a constitutional amendment or perhaps rethinking on the part of the Supreme Court we have got to revisit that issue. Wealthy people should not be able to buy elections.

Second of all, if we are talking about fairness and elections, the most important issue is to limit the amount of money that can be spent in an election, and we can argue whether for a House race that should be $400,000, $500,000, or $600,000, but that is the most important thing. If somebody has $2 million, somebody has a hundred thousand dollars, the guy with the $2 million is going to win the vast majority of the time, no matter how good or bad that person may be. So we want to limit the amount of money that can be spent.

And third, we want to make sure that the money itself is not coming from wealthy, powerful interests, but from ordinary people, and I think what we probably want to do is have a combination of small contributions balanced off against public funding of elections so we do not have to have spectacles of the Republican National Committee, I guess it was, holding a fundraiser in Washington, DC, and on one night raising $16 million, and Mr. GINGRICH going around the country at $10,000 a plate fundraisers, and in fairness it is Republicans who do this; the Democrats do it as well. And I think we want to end that type of politics.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply conclude my remarks by suggesting that this country faces some serious problems; there is no question about that. But I think those problems are solvable. I do not think there is anything that I have discussed today, the lack of a national health care system, decent wages for our middle class growing out between the rich and the poor. I think those problems are solvable. But I want to say this. Those problems are not going to be solved if tens of millions of American people continue to turn off to the political system. People fought and died to continue this country as a democracy, and we are insulting those people when we say, oh, politics, hey that is all crap, they are all crooks, I am not going to get involved. Wrong.

And I want to say this also; that there are people in Congress and in government who really do not want ordinary Americans to vote and to participate in the political process because, if you only have a small number of people who are voting, as in the last election where we had 38 percent of the people, then big money can dominate what goes on if ordinary people in the middle class do not participate.

So let me simply conclude by saying this country has serious problems, but they are solvable problems. We can create policies by which the middle class will expand rather than shrink. We can create policies by which we do not have $160 billion a year trade deficit. We can create policies which move us toward a balanced budget in a fair way, by dealing with corporate welfare and defense spending rather than slashing Medicare and Medicaid. We can improve education in this country and make college affordable for every middle-class and working-class young person. We do not have to continue to have, by far, the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. We can address those issues. But we will not address those issues unless ordinary people begin to stand up, and fight back, and make the effort to reclaim this government which belongs to them. It does not simply belong to the millionaires and billionaires who have used this government for their own interests. It belongs to ordinary Americans, middle class and the working people of this country.

So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can see a reinvigoration of democracy in this country, serious political debate about how we can improve life for the vast majority of our people. That is my hope, and I think if people do that, we are going to see some really good changes in this country.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Kalbough, one of his secretaries.

THE NEW POPULISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr.