about campaign finance abuses when he himself is being investigated on the issue of his possible campaign finance abuses.

DOUBLE STANDARDS ARE INAPPROPRIATE FOR OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, before I give remarks, I think the American people can see that the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) is perhaps one of the most partisan Democrats here in this body. I think he takes pride in that, and I applaud that because there really is not anything wrong with partisan politics; this is a political body, so that is what this is about.

Madam Speaker, I rise as chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel here in the people's House on behalf of the American people and the 1.2 million active military personnel worldwide and those in the Reserves. I am here to send a message to this administration, and in particular to the President, on his conduct as Commander in Chief.

The message is that military personnel look to the Commander in Chief to set the high standard of ethical behavior and morality. Military personnel are required to set a high example of conduct in order to set an example to those they lead. Adherence to high moral standards is the fabric of good order and discipline in the military. When military leaders fall short of this ideal, then there is confusion and disruption.

Today, many see a double standard in the military. There is a double standard because the Commander in Chief has allegedly conducted himself in a manner that would be a court-martial offense for military personnel for sexual assault and sexual harassment regarding the allegations by the Democrat staffer in the White House, Kathleen Willey.

What about the double standard in the White House of those claiming that the Air Force general did not qualify as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff because he had a relationship with a woman pending a divorce, and then we look at the President's own admitted adultery.

What about the Secretary of Defense? William Cohen stated in an interview recently that the President's alleged conduct is having no effect on troop morale. I respectfully disagree. This is not just my concern.

Let me share with my colleagues a letter I received recently from a retired Army officer with 30 years of service, Colonel John Hay. What he stated was, ''From the earliest days of service, our new enlisted men and women and officers are taught the necessity of military ethic, chain of command, standards of conduct and principles of leadership; all enforced by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. These standards and values instilled early and continued throughout a career in the military are necessary to maintain the essential trust between the military and the Nation's civilian command authority. These military ethics, values and standards of conduct are generated by the fact that the activities conducted by the Armed Forces are official acts of the Nation. Since ours is a Nation that conducts itself within a set of stated high values, the manner in which our forces perform their duties must be carried out with the same set of high values. Thus, the consistent support of the Nation can only be maintained by expecting and enforcing the highest ethical standards upon every echelon of the military chain of command from the President, as our Commander in Chief, down to and including every individual soldier, sailor, marine and airman.''

The Founding Fathers were concerned about the ethical standards of the military leaders. Madam Speaker, it was John Adams that included the first naval regulations, language that called for naval officers to have high moral and ethical standards. This language was codified for naval officers by Congress in 1956 and for the Army and the Air Force in 1997 in last year's bill.

This language calls for officers to ''show themselves a good example of virtue, honor and patriotism and to subordinate themselves to those ideals, and to guard against and to put an end to all dissolute and immoral practices and to correct all persons who are guilty of them.''

Madam Speaker, there is frustration and confusion in the military. Over the last 18 months, I have traveled to a number of military installations and training centers, not only here in the United States, but all over the world, as I have conducted extensive review in sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in the United States military. I have heard the questions from military personnel about the behavior of the President as the Commander in Chief. As a Member of Congress and as an officer in the Army Reserves, I myself find these questions disturbing.

Each of the services is recruiting young people all across the Nation. At boot camp they are infusing these young men and women with moral values of honor, courage and commitment. They are teaching self-restraint, discipline and self-sacrifice. Therein lies the understanding of deserving honor. Military leaders are required to provide a good example to these young recruits, yet when they look up the chain of command, they see a double standard at the very top.

That is why I have decided to include in my chairman's mark on Thursday for the military personnel section to the National Defense Authorization Act language that will apply John Adam's original guidance on ethical conduct for military officers to our national command authority, in particular the Secretary of Defense and the President, while acting as Commander in Chief.

I hope this language sends a loud and clear message to the administration. They are being watched. From the 18-year-old recruit to the admiral, they all look to the Commander in Chief to set the tone and serve as an example of high moral and ethical behavior.

Madam Speaker, I believe that it is worthier to deserve honor and hold it with humility than to have it, shamelessly flaunt it, and not deserve it.

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO: A DREAM DEFERRED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Madam Speaker, 100 years ago, in 1898 the United States acquired Puerto Rico as a territory. Since then, every time the Congress has considered extending the right of self-determination to the people of Puerto Rico, nativists have raised their voices in protest. Their message is a message of fear.

Less than 2 months ago, March 4 of this year, the House just passed a bill 209-to-208, by scarcely one vote, allowing the people of Puerto Rico to have an act of self-determination. The reason this vote was so close is because of the campaign of fear-mongering that was carried on in this House.

Nativists fear that Puerto Rico will be asked to join the Union as a State. In the nativist mindset, the 3.8 million American citizens of Puerto Rico do not belong in this Union because they do not walk, talk and look like the nativist of the hour. In the mid-1800s a nativist was a Protestant, white Anglo-Saxon male, born in the United States of Protestant parents. Perhaps the profile of a nativist today is the same.

Whoever they are, nativists are prejudiced. And the brand of prejudice they practice is the cultural equivalent of racism. Nativists resist the acculturation, that intercultural borrowing between diverse peoples which results in new and blended social and cultural patterns, even though America's history is a history of acculturation. How else, after all, did we arrive at the image of a great melting pot?

Nativists must think this melting pot business has gone on long enough and it has come time to put an end to it. They are willing to slander people in defense of their image of American cultural purity.

Just listen to what nativists say will happen to the United States if Puerto Rico becomes a State. ''Granting statehood to a land that is alien to us in most ways,'' declares Don Feder of the Boston Herald, will be a milestone on ''the road to national dissolution.'' Columnist George Will implies that the

''fraying of American culture'' and ''the Balkanization of society into grievance groups organized around race and ethnicity,'' which he believes is already under way, would only be exacerbated by the State of Puerto Rico. Others predict that a State of Puerto Rico would be America's own Quebec; it would be violent, it would drain the national Treasury, it would allow gangs to run prisons; it would promote political patronage, and it would rob other States of their representation in Congress.

This is scary stuff, and it is meant to be. People are using fear to paralyze the Democratic process and to deny the 3.8 million American citizens of Puerto Rico the right to self-determination and the right to participate in the Democratic process of this Nation, a right that we defend on foreign soils, a right for which our people have died defending on foreign soils.

Puerto Ricans did not welcome American troops in 1898 for the privilege of transferring our colonial status from Spain to the United States. Our forefathers were certain that the world's most admired democracy would readily confer democracy to the people of Puerto Rico, but it did not.

When U.S. citizenship was extended to our people in 1917, it was devoid of the most fundamental Democratic right, the right of self-government and self-determination. It was not until 1950 that Congress invited the people of Puerto Rico to draft a Constitution as the ruling law of the established local self-government. The right of self-determination and participation in the democratic process of our Nation continues to be a dream deferred.

Yet, the American citizens of Puerto Rico are devoted to this democracy and its ideals, and we have demonstrated our commitment tangibly at the poll booth and at the battlefield. Whenever an election is held in Puerto Rico, 80 to 85 percent of the electorate votes.

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I challenge any State of the Union to try to match that. The fact is, Puerto Rico enjoys the highest rate of voter turnout of any jurisdiction in the world where voting is not mandatory.

And Puerto Ricans have given their lives in defense of U.S. national interests. We have served honorably, in disproportionately high numbers on a per capita basis and in absolute numbers, in every military engagement our Nation has face during this century. Madam Speaker, 48,000 Puerto Ricans fought in the Vietnam War alone, and in the Korean War more Puerto Ricans died on a per capita basis than in 49 of the 50 States of the Union.

''When people fight for a country,'' as Senator DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN has so eloquently expressed, ''they get a claim on a country.'' Puerto Ricans have a claim on these United States, and we make that claim today. It is time for this Nation to turn its back on nativism and honor Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and the right to participate in the democratic process of our Nation.

We beseech the leadership, the Republican leadership in the Senate, to allow this bill in the Senate to go forward as it went forward in the House, so the people of Puerto Rico, the 3,800,000 U.S. citizens, can exercise their right to self-determination and the right to vote.

TAX FAIRNESS?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. PRYCE of Ohio). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I come to the House this afternoon to talk about the U.S. tax system. We have all just paid our taxes, so I think it is appropriate to ask the question: Is the U.S. tax system fair?

Of course not. In fact, it is kind of a preposterous question to ask anyway. We all kind of accept the fact that the Tax Code has become a perverse mess. It is a lot of things, but fair is not one of them. But like so many questions, this one becomes more complicated the more we know about it.

For example, what if we eliminated all the problems with the Tax Code, the loopholes, the needless complexities, the special exemptions and the historical anomalies? What we would be left with in the United States Tax Code is its essence. It would be nothing more than a tax on Americans' incomes at a progressive rate.

So we have to ask ourselves a question: Is a progressive tax on income fair? Well, consider the word ''progressive,'' what it means. It has got sort of a positive connotation today. It is a good thing; its basic definition is ''of or pertaining to progress.'' But before jumping to any conclusions, consider the definition in the dictionary which is number 4, ''increasing in extent or severity.''

The American income tax code has been progressive from the start. In 1913 when the tax was first imposed, the bottom tax rate was 1 percent, rising all the way to 7 percent on income over $500,000. Today the top rate is 39.6 percent as imposed upon all income above $250,000. Obviously, this sort of progressive tax is problematic in its own right, but there is more.

The reason this discussion is important is because we are starting the debate on tax reform. In the late 19th century when the income tax was first debated, the economists used the marginal utility argument as the justification for the progressive tax. Until then, the typical approach was to make everyone pay the same amount so that the more a citizen made, the more they paid. However, the marginal utility theorists argued that the last dollar people made became less important to them as their incomes went up, so to tax citizens ''equally'' one would have to tax wealthy persons at higher rates.

The idea seems pretty commonsensical at first, whether a citizen is Bill Gates or not. Whether Bill Gates earns $1,000 more than above his salary in a year, it does not change his life much. To his cleaning lady, the last $1,000 makes a huge difference in what she can afford. It might make the difference between a good year and a bad year. Thus, marginal utility works.

Not exactly, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, not all Americans are Bill Gates nor are all Americans like the cleaning lady. For example, contrast a family with an income of $100,000 to a family with an income of $125,000. Does one family really value its last $1,000 more or less than the other? Moreover, is there any way to measure the difference in ''utility'' rationally and precisely enough to base policy decisions affecting millions of Americans upon this?

In fact, this is the first easy question to answer. There is absolutely nothing in the vast edifice of economics that could help us make such a finite decision on progressive tax rates. That is the basic flaw of progressive income tax. There is no objective way to decide what different tax rates should be, and that is why many people support a flat tax.

But ignorance should not be an argument for policy decisions. Unfortunately, the government can get away with it. Americans do not really believe in an income redistribution like the Europeans do, but Americans do not want their taxes raised either. Ultimately, it is a quandary best articulated by George Bernard Shaw who said, ''A government who robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend upon the support of Paul.''

The problem for the United States is that almost everyone is a Peter and even the Pauls are starting to get angry at the system.

So once again I ask: Is it fair? Is the U.S. tax system fair? Absolutely not. But it is not just a matter of convoluted and messy tax codes. It is a question of basic fairness. Is one taxpayer's last dollar bill really worth more or less than another taxpayer's?

Madam Speaker, I call upon the Speaker to put this issue before the House soon so that we can debate ways to simplify our tax system, albeit a flat tax, sales tax, or simply a simplified Tax Code that everyone can understand.

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Madam Speaker, 100 years ago this past Saturday, April 25th, the United States officially declared a state of war with Spain, and