some claim; or we are giving a tax cut to people who do not deserve it. Well, I would just urge Members here to understand that there are millions of hard-working Americans, and I know this because where I come from, in Staten Island and Brooklyn, I know that there are people working every single day, 6, 7 days a week, sometimes the parents are working two or three jobs, the father is a fireman who works at night, the mother is a teacher who works during the day, and they are juggling responsibilities, who is going to watch the kids, and they just want to put a little money aside to buy a washing machine or to buy the kids' clothes for school, or to save a little money for their education or perhaps a great treat like going away on vacation. But somehow, when we have the opportunity to send some of the money back to them, there are those here who say, oh no, they do not deserve it.

Well, I suggest strongly that we stand for tax relief for the American people. Yes, we should fund the priorities for the American Government and the American people; we should fund things like our defense and education and protecting our environment, and keeping our hands off Social Security and protecting and strengthening Medicare.

□ 1930

But why can we not cut taxes? For years I heard when I was not in Congress that, well, we are facing a deficit and we cannot afford to cut taxes. Now we hear, well, we are going to face a surplus and we cannot afford to cut taxes. Well, if we cannot do it when we have a deficit and we cannot do it when we have a surplus, when can we?

I suggest that we put our faith in the American people, put our faith in their spirit and their ingenuity and their creativity to go out there and provide incentives to work hard, put a little more money in savings, put a little more money back in investment not only in themselves and their family but in their neighborhoods in this country.

Just look at Erie County in upstate New York. A 12-year incumbent who ran on a platform of he was going to spend more and more of the people's money, as opposed to the Republican candidate who said, you know what, you work too hard. I am going to run primarily on one issue. I am going to run on a 30 percent tax cut. Well, no surprise. He won handily.

I again submit to the Members of this body, and I believe I speak for the vast majority of Americans, is the American people deserve tax relief. If we truly believe in the notions of personal freedom and individual liberty and if we want to instill in our children a sense that if they work hard in this country and they go to school and do the right thing and work and do the right thing in their community and they are able to give back and invest not only in themselves but again in their community and their family, that they will benefit and our country will be richer and better for it.

But, instead, we are constantly barraged by those who say, huh-uh, you do not know how to spend your money wisely, the American people.

In fact, we hear about these bills that come through and they are vetoed, as another one was vetoed today by the White House, and we heard recently the litany of reasons why. Why? Because it does not spend enough money.

Well, where is that money coming from? The cherry trees here in Washington only bloom once a year. They do not bloom every day with money. I would just hope that the people of reason and common sense would understand that the American people work too hard for their money. They deserve more of it back.

TRIBUTE TO FAMILY AND LOVED ONES OF EGYPTAIR FLIGHT 990

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, this evening I stand before my colleagues with a heavy heart in the wake of the EgyptAir Flight 990 tragedy. The unsettling news of the plane crash struck a particular cord within me, as several of the passengers on that flight were in some way connected to my home district in Baltimore.

Arthur and Marie Simermeyer were both active and upstanding seniors who were citizens of my home district and were on that plane. They volunteered at the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Glyndon and were described by family and friends as having a kind and giving nature that was surpassed only by their love of life even in their elder years.

These were people who made positive contributions to the community and helped keep the neighborly spirit, which can sometimes be rare, very much alive among those who knew them. Yes, this tragedy was indeed a major loss. But the Simermeyers were special people who gave to a special location.

We also had some students that were killed in the EgyptAir flight. They were exchange students from Egypt. As I thought of the situation over in my head repeatedly, I searched for an answer, a positive amidst the sea of disaster and despair, any silver lining that would help me and others feeling the pain of this tragedy pass this deep and dark cloud. Then I realized that, just as there is a lesson in everything, there is something that we all can take away from this unfortunate occurrence.

We can all at some point identify with the loss of a loved one, a friend, or a dear community member. Still, just as we here in the United States grieve over the death of those Americans on Flight 990, we must remember those teenagers returning home and show our support to the Egyptian communities that mourn their deaths as well.

This is an important opportunity for the strength and support from one person to another to transcend ethnic, racial, and national boundaries. This is the time where we must come together across international lines and show our sympathy and compassion as we all share in the unexplainable loss of good and innocent people.

Just as pain knows no color, country, or social class, support, compassion, and comfort should not know the difference between nations, either. Just as we mourn the loss of the Simermeyers and the other passengers on that flight, our hearts and prayers are also with the families and friends of those Egyptians who also perished in this tragedy.

We must seize this opportunity before us and learn the lesson that we must all come together to help each other cope with the results of disaster.

As I close, I feel compelled to focus on the newly developed friendship between a Baltimore teen, Shantell Rose, and Walaa Zeid of Egypt. The two had been inseparable as they lived, studied, shopped, and played together for 2 weeks as a part of the exchange program. At the end of this precious time, Shantell stated that, as they parted, they said, ''I love you.'' In describing this experience, she said that they had started a relationship that will last for decades and cross continents.

I say to Shantell Rose, other students, and to all the loved ones of those that have departed us in this tragedy that the journey of life takes us through many times of happiness and sadness. We remember the happy times as the most loved and enriching experiences of all. Although the sad times do not outwardly appear to benefit us, they are, in reality, what builds strength and character in all of us.

Remember that our relationships will still last decades and the new relationships that Americans and Egyptian families will make will continue across the continents. These relationships will build your strength and character and allow you to say these simple words: Do not cry for me, for the time we shared will always be.

THE CUBA PROGRAM: TORTURING OF AMERICAN POW'S BY CASTRO AGENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) for convening tomorrow's hearing on the Committee on International Relations on ''The Cuba Program: The Torturing of American POWs by Castro Agents,'' and for his ongoing leadership and commitment to veterans' issues.

This issue is particularly important to me for various reasons. But, more importantly, as I read through the accounts of what our men and women in uniform have endured through this century of war, I think of my husband, Dexter Lehtinen, who served in the special forces in Vietnam and was injured in combat. He was relatively fortunate, but so many of his colleagues were not.

The Geneva Convention prohibits ''violence to life and person, in particular murders of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture'' and ''outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.''

This is exactly what took place in a prison camp in North Vietnam known as ''The Zoo,'' seen here in a declassified photo, the site where 19 of our U.S. military officers were tortured.

During the period of August 1967 to August 1968, 19 of our courageous servicemen were psychologically tortured, some brutally beaten, by interrogators assessed to be Cuban agents working under orders from Hanoi and Havana.

Described by some to be a psychological experiment, the goals of The Cuba Program, as the torture project has been labeled by our Defense Department and by our intelligence agencies, has been described in different ways as an attempt to test interrogation methods, to obtain absolute compliance and submission to captor demands, or ultimately to be used as a propaganda tool by the international Communist effort, as Mike Benge will elaborate upon during tomorrow's congressional hearing.

Some POWs were tortured and then instructed to write a series of questions and answers given to them by their interrogators. These scripts on most occasions included statements declaring that the United States was waging an illegal, immoral, and unjust war. Prisoners were tortured, again some psychologically and others physically, to ensure cooperation in appearances they were forced to make before visiting dignitaries. Refusal to comply with the captors' commands usually meant that Fidel, Chico, and Poncho, as the torturers were called by the POWs, would be called in for intense beatings of the prisoners.

The ruthless nature of the interrogators and the severity of their actions led prisoners such as Captain Raymond Vohden, Colonel Jack Bomar, and Lieutenant Carpenter to question how human beings could so brutally batter another human being.

Captain Vohden and Colonel Bomar will offer compelling and detailed testimony to us tomorrow, describing the heinous acts committed against them by Cuban agents at The Zoo, acts which are in direct violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.

Survivors of The Cuba Program have been eager to identify and trace the Cuban agents who systematically interrogated them and tortured their fellow Americans. Yet, despite their efforts, a successful resolution of this matter has not been achieved. We hope that tomorrow's hearing will be the first of many steps aimed at changing that outcome.

The first is to get leads that could take us closer to an identification of the Cuban torturers.

Our second goal is to provide the basis for an ensuing interagency investigation of the new evidence that has been uncovered, including a search for pertinent data and sources previously unavailable under the Cold War parameters.

We want our State Department, the CIA, the FBI, INS, and the Defense Intelligence Agency to coordinate a comprehensive approach to this case.

Lastly, this hearing will begin to establish the foundation for future action against the torturers. On a broader scale, this investigation will serve to highlight the brutal nature of the Castro regime and the historic and ongoing threat that it poses to the American people.

Ultimately, our hope is that tomorrow's hearing will serve to honor those POWs, and I will show my colleagues a poster that has their picture, 9 of the 19 who were involved in The Cuba Program. We hope that tomorrow's hearing will serve to honor these POWs, who were willing to give life and limb so that we may all be free. We will honor them by finding out the truth about Castro's participation in Vietnam known as The Cuba Program.

CURRENT EVENTS IN AMERICA

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, today in a hearing before the full Committee on Resources we discussed the President's proposal to lock up some 40 million acres of our national forests.

I am sure this sounds good to some. But what it mainly will do is drive up prices on houses and everything else that is made from wood, and it will destroy jobs.

So if my colleagues want to hurt poor and working people by driving up prices and destroying jobs, then they should support this proposal to lock up our national forests.

In the 1980s, the Congress passed what was then thought to be a very strong environmental statement that we should not cut more than 80 percent of the new growth in our national forests.

Today we have reduced logging down to less than one-seventh, less than 14 percent of the new growth. Today we are not even cutting half the number of dead and dying trees each year.

This is causing so much fuel buildup that the Forest Service tells us now that 39 million acres are in great risk of burning. Actually, we need to cut some trees to have healthy forests. And we are not even coming close to doing that.

Today, in my part of the country, the Forest Service says that only .02 percent of the trees in the Cherokee National Forest is being harvested annually, two-tenths of one percent. Yet, the July-August issue of the Sierra Club magazine said that the Cherokee is being logged at a ''furious pace.''

Much of the environmental movement has been taken over by extremists. Some are putting out very false or very distorted or very exaggerated information because they know they have to scare people to keep their big contributions coming in. Many of these environmental extremists are wealthy or upper-income people who simply do not realize how much some of what they advocate hurts the poor and working people.

Also, some of this environmental extremism is financed by extremely big business because they know the stringent rules and regulations and red tape about the environment drives the small farmers and small businesses out. Thus, the big guys have less bothersome competition to deal with.

Which brings me to my second topic, the Kyoto agreement.

□ 1945

I read in one of the nonpartisan congressional publications this week that the administration knows it cannot get the Senate to ratify the Kyoto Agreement, so it is trying to get it enacted through the back door. This report said that Federal agencies hope to build big business support for Kyoto by giving favorable treatment on regulations, contracts and so forth to businesses that will voluntarily comply in advance. Then they believe these big businesses would then lobby the Senate for the agreement in order to force everyone else to comply.

Many people around the world and some rich socialists in this country think it is unfair that with just 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. consumes about 25 percent of the world's goods. This is really what was behind the Kyoto Agreement. The administration was apparently so eager to say that an agreement had been reached that it approved a very bad deal. The Senate passed a resolution 95–0 saying that if an agreement was reached in Kyoto, it should apply to all countries and should not harm the U.S. economy. This agreement exempts 129 of 173 countries including China and Mexico. The Global Climate Information Project says: ''So while the U.S. cuts energy use by more than 30 percent, most U.N. countries get a free ride. Because U.S. energy prices will rise, American products could be more expensive at home and less competitive overseas. That will slow down our economic growth and cost American jobs. All for a treaty that will produce little or no environmental benefit.''

One thing it would do for sure is speed up the transfer of wealth and