

China's Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington Liu Xiaoming described Taiwan's presidential election as "a local election in an area of China." Yet, even if his description is accepted, it demonstrates how far the rest of China has to go: in China, a germinating democracy has not progressed beyond the stage of local village elections. Municipal or national elections have yet to be held.

As President Clinton so succinctly observed, "the election provides a fresh opportunity for both sides to reach out and resolve their differences through dialogue."

Ironically, it is China, which had urged Taiwan to adopt direct trade, postal, and telecommunications links while Taiwan under President Lee rejected such direct ties, that now rejects President-elect Chen's offers to institute direct contacts.

There apparently is the perception even inside China that their policy needs to be changed. One official was quoted over the weekend as saying, "we are painting ourselves into a corner. We are tough when we should be soft and passive when we should be taking the initiative."

Yet, even as Taiwan has grown apart from China, it has also grown closer. It has invested \$24 billion in China and China now accounts for 23 percent of all Taiwanese exports. Taiwan's and China's economic progress have become mutually self-sustaining.

As a result, we should not be painting China into a corner now. As it attempts to come to terms with the new realities in Taiwan, we should be taking steps to welcome China into a greater, more responsible role in the international system. A critical step in that regard is granting China Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR). This critical vote in the U.S. Congress promises to open up China's markets to greater competition and more goods from the West. PNTR does not mean that China will be a democracy, nor does it mean instant benefits for the American economy, but it is a step towards integrating China into the new world community.

Shortly after China joins the World Trade Organization, Taiwan will join. This is the third new reality with which American policymakers must contend. Taiwan has changed. It is not the single-party dictatorship which it was when the Taiwan Relations Act or the three communiques were promulgated. It is a vibrant democracy with a strong economy. It has long clamored to be allowed to play a more active role in the world community by providing assistance to international aid organizations or in UN Specialized Agencies. Can a new role be found for the Taiwan of today in tomorrow's world? Finding one may well be the key if China and Taiwan are to resolve their differences and achieve conciliation.

VETERANS

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to add my name as a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 1810, "Veterans Claims and Appeals Procedures Clarification and Improvement Act."

Recent court decisions have made it more difficult for veterans to get their rightful assistance from the Veterans Administration, VA, and to develop their claims. This bill will clearly lay out the rules of how the VA will assist veterans with these claims. This bill will remove many of the barriers now standing in the way of veterans gathering information from many different sources to make their claim "well-grounded."

Right now, many veterans who have filed claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs must wait for months and, in some cases, even years for the claims to be decided. This creates a hardship on our veterans who have served our country with pride. In my state of Montana, I have seen veterans wait five to 10 years for their claim and the necessary appeals to make it through this bureaucratic system. Over the past few years, I have seen my veterans' casework increase due to veterans having problems in obtaining information that the VA previously provided.

My President, can you imagine a homeless veteran finding out that they must call this federal agency or write to this private hospital to obtain his or her own information for a claim? Often, many veterans just give up when they face these many bureaucratic obstacles. They fall though the cracks of a system that is fast becoming a legal nightmare and a system that was supposed to be there for them when they came home. Why? It is because the Department of Veterans Affairs has ceased being helpful to the veterans in the development of their claims.

We must honor our commitment to our veterans and ensure the VA is being as helpful as possible to all veterans. This bill will do just that. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and bring an end to the nightmare that America's veterans are having with the present system.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, April 6, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,762,301,865,002.06 (Five trillion, seven hundred sixty-two billion, three hundred one million, eight hundred sixty-five thousand, two dollars and six cents).

One year ago, April 6, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,665,194,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred sixty-five billion, one hundred ninety-four million).

Five years ago, April 6, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,872,968,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred seventy-two billion, nine hundred sixty-eight million).

Ten years ago, April 6, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,092,513,000,000 (Three trillion, ninety-two billion, five hundred thirteen million) which reflects a doubling of the debt—an increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,669,788,865,002.06 (Two trillion, six hundred sixty-nine billion, seven hundred eighty-eight million, eight hundred sixty-five thousand, two dollars and six cents) during the past 10 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE VINCENT A. BIFFERATO

• Mr. BIDEN. On March 31st, hundreds of people gathered in a lobby of the courthouse in Wilmington, Delaware. The focal point of the dignified but unassuming room is an information desk, with a big board behind it that's used to post the daily schedule for Delaware's Superior Court. It is, quite literally, where the Court meets the public, and it was the ideal—and perhaps the only—place for this particular occasion, a reception honoring Judge Vincent A. Bifferato as he retired following 32 years on Superior Court, a total of 36 years of public service.

"Biff," as Judge Bifferato is universally known outside of the courtroom, is not the type for a country-club send-off. Part of it is roots. His father, born in Italy and never having had an education himself, always said he knew his son would go to college, and got to see his son sworn in as a member of the Delaware Bar. Biff remembers his father on that day, sitting in the front row, crying; "To him," Biff says, "it was the American dream."

And Biff knew, as his life since he became a lawyer has proved, that there is a second chapter to any true American dream story. It's the chapter written after you get there, the story of what you do with power and status once you've got them. And the truth is, it's the part of the story that matters most.

What Biff has done in his position as a judge is to combine the forceful exercise of authority and the vigorous application of the law with an uncommon sense of compassion for and responsibility to the people he was there to serve. He had never forgotten what drew him to public service in the first place—the opportunity to help people who need government, people who need someone on their side in order to have a chance. And he has never let those of us around him forget it either, always reminding colleagues and students—and anyone else who might need to be reminded—of our particular obligation to the least powerful of our fellow citizens.

Biff's concern for how people treat each other is, in fact, the hallmark of his character. In his courtroom, small-town lawyers from one-person firms knew they stood on equal footing with heavy-hitters from the big city. Litigants and witnesses were treated with

fairness and respect. Decorum and civility were not ideals but practiced standards.

Biff initiated a monthly forum for lawyers because he saw that solo practitioners and young attorneys from small firms were not getting the mentoring they needed, and also, as he said, that "[t]here was a need for people to be nice to each other." That effort to promote professionalism and ethics—one lawyer described it as a "blue-collar Inn of Court"—is now called the Judge Bifferato Superior Court Trial Practice Forum. And for his leadership in that undertaking and in countless others, formal and informal, Biff received the inaugural Distinguished Mentoring Award from the Delaware State Bar Association.

As Resident Judge for New Castle County, Biff also made it his mission to ensure that the courthouse staff was appreciated as it should be. His emphasis was never on hierarchy but always on the common effort, never on the power or prestige of his office but on the contribution of each person who helped make the justice system work. It was the Court's staff Biff talked about most at his retirement reception, concluding simply, "I love them all."

"Love" is a word heard often in relation to Vincent A. Bifferato. It was striking how often it was used at his retirement. Alongside words more expected at such occasions, like respect and esteem, "love" for Judge Biff was expressed by almost every speaker, including the Governor, the Mayor and the President Judge of the Court. No amount of ability, no standard of professionalism earns that kind of affection; it is, rather, a response to this man's grace of spirit, to the warmth and sincerity he brings to relationships, to the openness of his heart.

That heart was on generous loan to the Superior Court and to the people of Delaware, but it belongs, first and always, to Biff's family—to his wife, Marie, to his children and grandchildren, to his sister and to his mother, who was there, sitting in the front row, 37 years after that first swearing-in ceremony. She had always been proud of him, she said, long before any of his public accomplishments and contributions, because he was always "a nice, young boy."

Biff remarked at his send-off that it was "a hell of a tribute for just doing your job." But it was, of course, much more a tribute to who he is, a "nice, young boy" who made the most of his opportunities and then sought relentlessly to open opportunity for others; a leader who not only recognizes but genuinely feels his common humanity with those in need of help; a man who fulfilled and enriched his father's dream—for his family and for all of us.

Biff will have a successor but never a replacement. As he begins to write the next chapter of his life, he has our immeasurable thanks and, indeed, our love.●

QUINCY MINE HOIST ASSOCIATION HONORS MR. BURTON H. BOYUM

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Mr. Burton H. Boyum, who on April 13, 2000, is being honored by the Board of Directors of the Quincy Mine Hoist Association. Mr. Boyum is being recognized for his many contributions to the history and preservation of the iron and copper mining heritage in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Mr. Boyum was born in Minnesota in 1919. In 1941, he came to the Upper Peninsula, and from that time until his retirement in 1984, he served Cleveland Cliffs International as a Mining Engineer. Mr. Boyum is considered the foremost expert on the geology, mineralogy, and mining heritage of the Upper Peninsula. He has published two books and two historical videos on the subject, and has also provided many fortunate citizens with free tours of the area.

In his time there, Mr. Boyum has been an active member of many groups that help to preserve not only the history, but also the pure natural beauty, of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. What is important to note, I believe, is not only Mr. Boyum's involvement in these organizations, but his leadership within them. In 1957, he served as Chairman of the U.P. Section of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, and worked to preserve the World's largest steam hoist. He is the only serving member of the Board of the Quincy Mine Hoist Association who took part in its foundation in 1961, and thus has played a pivotal role in making the Association the premier preserved mine site in the State of Michigan. He hosted the first Michigan State Historical Society Annual Meeting in Marquette. He organized the first Marquette County Historical Society county-wide conference. He led the charge in forming the Michigan Iron Industry Museum; the Marquette Range Iron Mining Heritage Theme Park; the National Ski Hall of Fame, located in Ishpeming, Michigan; and the Great Lakes Olympic Training Center, located in Marquette, Michigan. And in 1996, under President Boyum's leadership, the Quincy Mine Hoist Association built the first Cog Railroad in the Midwest.

In 1998, due to his incredible efforts for the organization, Mr. Boyum was named the Quincy Mine Hoist Association's first Chairman of the Board. He was also recognized in perpetuity by his peers, who created the Burton H. Boyum Award in his honor. On behalf of the entire Senate, I extend a much deserved thank you to Mr. Boyum for all of his incredible work.●

KELLOGG-HUBBARD LIBRARY

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Montpelier, Vermont is a very special city. It is our state's capital, but it is also one with a great sense of community. Much

of that community pride comes from the Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

The happiest memories of my childhood in Montpelier revolve around my family and the Children's Library in the Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

I ask that an article I wrote for our local newspaper, *The Times Argus*, about the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, its children's wing and its former librarian, Mrs. Holbrook, be printed in the RECORD.

[From the *Times Argus*, June 13, 1996]

MONTPELIER BOY REALIZES MISS HOLBROOK WAS RIGHT

(By Patrick Leahy)

The 100th anniversary of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library triggers memories for all of us who have lived in Montpelier. And they are great memories.

While I was growing up, Montpelier did not have television. We children did not have the advantage of cable TV with 10 channels giving us the opportunity to buy things we didn't need and would never use or another 10 offering blessings or redemptions for an adequate contribution.

Deprived as we were, we made do with the Lone Ranger and Inner Sanctum on the radio and Saturday's serials at the Strand Theater on Main Street. For a few minutes on Saturday afternoon, we could watch Hopalong Cassidy, Tarzan, Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim or Batman face death-defying predicaments that would guarantee you would be back the next Saturday, 14 cents in hand, to see how they survived (and I recall they always did).

Having exhausted radio, Saturday matinees, the latest comic books (I had a favorite) and childhood games and chores, we were left to our own imagination.

That was the best part.

We were a generation who let the genies of our imagination out of the bottle by reading. Then, as now, reading was one of my greatest pleasures.

My parents had owned the Waterbury Record Weekly newspaper and then started the Leahy Press in Montpelier, which they ran until selling it at their retirement. The Leahy family was at home with the printed word and I learned to read early in life.

At 5 years old I went down the stairs of the Kellogg-Hubbard Children's Library, and the years that followed provided some of the most important experiences of my life.

In the '40s and '50s, the Kellogg-Hubbard was blessed with a white-haired children's librarian named Miss Holbrook. Her vocation in life had to be to help children read and to make reading enjoyable. She succeeded more than even she might have dreamed.

She had the key to unlocking our imagination.

With my parents' encouragement, the Kellogg-Hubbard was a regular stop every afternoon as I left school. On any day I had two or three books checked out. My sister Mary, brother John and I read constantly.

In my years as U.S. senator, it seems I never traveled so far or experienced so much as I did as a child in Montpelier with daily visits to the library. With Miss Holbrook's encouragement I had read most of Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson in the early part of grade school.

To this day, I remember sitting in our home at 136 State St. reading *Treasure Island* on a Saturday afternoon filled with summer storms. I knew I heard the tap, tap, tap of the blind man's stick coming down State Street and I remember the great relief of seeing my mother and father returning from visiting my grandparents in South Ryegate.