

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

SPEECH OF

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 12, 2000

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The actual date the anniversary will be observed is April 24, but I rise today while we are in session to pay my solemn respects to the innocent fallen and add my words to history's record of one of the most terrible tragedies known to mankind.

On April 24, 1915, a group of Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders were arrested in the city then known as Constantinople, taken to the interior of Turkey, and murdered. What followed from there was nothing less than the systematic deprivation of Armenians living under Ottoman rule of their homes, property, freedom, and lives. The tragic toll of its dark period in world history includes the death of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children and the deportation of 500,000 others. Before their tragic deaths, countless Armenian women were subject to unspeakable cruelties, in the form of sexual abuse and slavery.

History is not condemned to repeat itself. We can prevent future tragedies by acknowledging, remembering, and commemorating yesterday's tragedies. Unfortunately, the Turkish Government still refuses to admit its involvement in the Armenian Genocide, and even the current U.S. administration has not fully acknowledged the extent of the wrongdoing between 1915 and 1923. That is why we must make our voices heard. History's record must reflect the truth of what the Armenians experienced: mass murder and genocide. If it does not, only then are we condemned to a future littered with more instances of unspeakable wickedness and cruelty.

My congressional district contains a large and vibrant Armenian-American community, which has contributed so much to the Merrimack Valley's economic vitality and culture. When today's Armenian-American community commemorates the Armenian Genocide, they convey the message to the world that only the continued vigilance of people of good conscience stands between peaceful human coexistence and another instance of genocide.

My respect for my Armenian-American constituents and for their commitment to remembering past tragedy and preventing future tragedy compels me to rise and speak today. It compels me to add my voice to those who speak out against hatred and fear. It should compel us all to remember past horrors, lest they happen again.

READING DEFICIT ELIMINATION ACT

HON. WILLIAM F. GOODLING

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 13, 2000

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced the Reading Deficit Elimination Act

(RDEA), which is an important step in ensuring that every American has the ability to read. I am also pleased that Senator PAUL COVERDELL (R-GA) is introducing an identical bill today in the Senate.

According to statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 74 percent of third graders remain poor readers when they reach the ninth grade. Overall, 40 percent of fourth-graders are reading at the "below basic" level. The National Adult Literacy Survey, as many as 50 million adults have only minimal reading skills. This situation is absolutely unacceptable.

Yesterday, we passed a resolution in my committee to make good on our commitment to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This legislation is consistent with our efforts to provide funding for special education. It is estimated that as many as 2 million students who are placed in special education are there simply because they haven't been taught to read.

The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development tells us that 90 percent to 95 percent of these students could learn to read and be returned to their regular classrooms if they were given instruction based on the finding of scientific research.

Just this morning, the National Reading Panel released its report on "Teaching Children to Read," in both the Senate and the House. The message we heard confirms what we have known for years: Teaching children to read is essential if they are to be successful in life. We now have scientific research that shows us the way once again.

Based on findings of more than 35 years of research, the Panel reports the following ingredients of what students need to learn if they are to read proficiently:

Phonemic Awareness—letters represent sounds.

Systematic phonics instruction—a necessary, but not sufficient, component of learning to read.

Reading Fluency—rapid decoding of words, practiced until it is automatic.

Spelling—accurate spelling, not the invented kind.

Writing Clearly—which leads to developing good reading comprehension skills.

I believe if we are to eliminate the reading deficit, then it is necessary for students to be taught all of these necessary skills.

Complimentary to the legislation being introduced today is the Literacy Involves Families Together (LIFT) Bill, which I am pleased is part of the Reading Deficit Elimination Act. In addition, Republicans pushed to pass the Reading Excellence Act, which was signed into law by the president in 1998. It is helping teachers in low-income areas and in schools where there is a high illiteracy rate to apply the scientific principles of reading instruction in the classroom.

When President John Kennedy launched Project Apollo in 1962, and set a goal of sending a man to the moon by the end of the decade, all America cheered. That goal was met when Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon in July of 1969.

Our determination to eliminate the reading deficit is no less challenging than going to the moon, and it is equally achievable. For the sake of our children, and the future of our nation, we must not let them down.

I hope we can come together as a nation to cheer on the elimination of the reading deficit

for all our children. The Reading Deficit Elimination Act is an important step in that direction.

TRIBUTE TO U.P. LABOR HALL OF FAME CHESTER F. SWANSON

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 13, 2000

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to the late Chester F. Swanson, one of that great breed of dedicated, lifelong union activists who help ensure a good quality of life for the working men and women of northern Michigan. I offer these remarks on the occasion of Chester's election to the Michigan's Upper Peninsula Labor Hall of Fame.

At age 15 in 1921, Chester began working for a famed gunmaker in my district, Marble Arms Corp. in Escanaba, Mich. He retired from the corporation after 50 years of service, but he returned many times after this retirement to help with the set-up of machines used to make gun sights.

In 1945 a charter was issued by the United Auto Workers for Local 126 at Marble Arms. Proud that the union had come to his shop, Chester made the drive across northern Michigan and took the ferry across the Straits of Mackinac to pick up the charter. He never stopped being a union advocate from that moment on, serving as the local's financial secretary and union steward.

Although Chester died almost 30 years ago, Mr. Speaker, one can still hear many wonderful stories that paint a picture of a man who took joy in each day, who made great friendships, who was respected by his co-workers, even the younger workers who remember him so fondly.

Gary Quick, UAW International Representative for Region 1-D, recalls that when Chester traveled, he called his mother each day, and when he completed the call he would return to his group and announce, "All is fine with Mum!"

Gary also recalls one icy winter night—a black, black night with the temperatures about 30 below zero—when the union leadership, including Chester, found itself traveling home from a meeting about 60 miles away. A side trip was required to take one of the members home in the small community of Rock, a trip on back roads with snowbanks higher than the automobile. Chester wondered aloud if the gang would survive the trip, should they run into trouble. For years afterward, Gary says, Chester would be sure to say, "We made it that cold night to drop off Red in Rock, so I guess we will make it wherever . . ."

Friends recall that Chester, even at the age of 90 years young, would eat his three good meals every day, would be ready to stay out with the younger fellows until late at night and would be ready to go again in the morning.

They recall that Chester never forgot his camera for important events, recording friends and sharing the prints, and maintaining a photo record of area youth participating in local sports.

Most of all, Mr. Speaker, friends remember Chester as a union man, who cared about his fellow workers, his community, and who cared about the job he performed with pride for more than half a century.