spirited welfare plan. A plan that will gut the welfare system and shred the safety net for over 15 million children.

I know firsthand about welfare and the importance of a safety net because 27 years ago, I was a single, working mother receiving no child support. I was forced to go on welfare, even though I was employed, in order to give my three small children, ages 1, 3, and 5, the health care, child care, and food they needed.

My colleagues, that experience never leaves me.

My ideas about welfare do not come from books or theories. I know it * * * I lived it. And I am continually amazed that any of you presume that you know what it is like. Make no mistake, I also know the welfare system is broken. It doesn't work for recipients or for taxpayers, and it needs fundamental change.

Unfortunately, the Republican ideas for change are weak on work and tough on children.

The Republican plan does nothing, absolutely nothing, to prepare welfare recipients for jobs that pay a livable wage, or to help recipients make the transition from welfare to work.

There's no job training; there's no education; there's not nearly enough child care.

All the Republicans care about is reducing the welfare rolls, and if that means putting families on the streets, then so be it!! The Chair of the House Budget Committee, JOHN KASICH, told us last week that these cuts will be applied to the Republican plan to cut taxes * * * the great majority of which apply to the very wealthy.

And their bill literally takes food out of the mouths of our kids.

In my district alone, Marin and Sonoma counties in California, almost 7,000 school children will be denied a school meal under the Republican's mean-spirited plan.

If the Republicans think their plan doesn't punish children, they should talk to some of the wonderful children I ate lunch with when I was back in California earlier this week.

When I asked these kids why they liked their lunches so much, they told me that they can not learn or pay attention in class when they are hungry.

One of their teachers told me that when she asked her students to make a list of wishes for their families, over 50 percent of the kids wished for food. I remind you, these are children who live in one of the most affluent counties, in one of the richest Nations in the world.

After meeting these kids, I have only one thing to say about NEWT's pea-brained plan to wreck child nutrition programs: ''States don't get hungry, NEWT, children do.'' and, starving our children is not the solution to the welfare mess.

Democrats, on the other hand, know that we can fix the welfare system without punishing poor women and children.

Democrats offer welfare recipients a fair deal!!

Democrats invest in education; job training; and child care in order to get families off welfare and into jobs that pay a livable wage.

Mr. Speaker, the choice comes down to this: we either punish poor children, as the Republican bill would do, or, as in my case, we invest in families so they can get off welfare permanently.

Let us do what is right for our children. Let us defeat the mean-spirited Republican welfare bill.

WAR ON POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, as I stand before you, we have got to realize that America has been at war, and that war has been called a war on poverty. America has spent 30 years in this war, and we have spent over $3.5 trillion.

You know, it only cost America $21 billion to win World War I, but that war that we are losing now is the war on poverty at great expense, not just taxpayers' dollars expense but expense to a whole class of people that have been held in bondage for generation after generation and cannot get out of the bondage.

If we were at war, what would you expect the generals to do, Mr. Speaker? What would the American people expect the generals to do? The American people would expect that the generals would come together and plan a new strategy. And that is exactly what the Republican majority is doing, planning a new strategy to free a whole class of Americans.

Unfortunately, this class of Americans has not been able to see the light at the end of the table or at the end of the tunnel. This class of Americans have never really been able to realize that unique gifting that our Creator has given them and them alone to be all they can be in this society.

You know, I stand here before you, Mr. Speaker, as a woman who raised two teenage children when I was found to be a single parent, and my income was at the poverty level. But sometimes to get through life it takes a bit of a struggle and sometimes to realize all you can be takes a bit of a struggle.

And, you know, what our new program will do will be able to free people up to begin to realize what their level of self-esteem is. Because you can only find your self-esteem by being able to produce something in the workplace and the home. This is the most compassionate of all programs that we have seen in the last 30 years.

You know, my father told me that one of the best things that a person can do for another friend is not to give them a fish that would feed them for just 1 day but to really help them understand how to craft a fishing pole and then be able to feed himself for life.

Yes, the Republican plan is tough love, but it is a plan that will free people, free them to be all they can be in this great Nation.

WELFARE REFORM AND JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this evening to rise to discuss the issue of welfare reform and jobs and perhaps looking at it at a different perspective than some of my colleagues who have stood today. It is amazing what people do not say on this issue, and I think far too many Members of this body are looking through the wrong end of the telescope on opportunity.

There is no question that America's families and America's welfare families often fail to remain whole because America's job-producing machine is failing.

In my own home district of northwest Ohio, half the people, I repeat, half the people on welfare are working people. Half the men, half the women are not unwilling to work. They work everyday. Some work two and three jobs. But they still remain on welfare.

Half the people on welfare in my home district are there for one reason only, and that is to receive the health benefit. Half cannot receive a health benefit through their private sector employment and so they fall on to the welfare rolls as the only hope to receive health insurance.

About 15 percent of the people on welfare in my home region are blind or disabled or elderly, and the remaining 30 percent, adults and children, are really what most of this discussion has been focused on.

And we are all for moving able-bodied people into the work force, but I want to concentrate on the half of the welfare rolls that nobody talks about, and those are the people who are out there hustling everyday, and they do not earn enough to buy the basic necessities.

And I have found it rather ironic that, as the House has labored through this welfare reform discussion, it has been interesting to read the newspaper headlines today. In the Washington Post, the lead story, U.S. trade gap soared in January, economists warn of weaker dollar, and the economic growth of this country over the next year dropping a full percentage point because of difficulties we face in our trade and economic policies.

The Wall Street Journal, major story today, United States trade deficit widened in January to a record $12 billion as peso woes and the problems with NAFTA and the Mexico bailout have a terrible impact inside our own economy. And for every billion dollars of

additional deficit another 20,000 jobs lost in this country.

□ 2230

And nobody in Washington really cares.

Another article, ''Dollar Declines Still Further on News of Trade Gap,'' and it talks in the New York Times, ''United States Trade Deficit Soars to Record, Mexico Worsens Problem.''

Today the value of the U.S. dollar dropped again on international markets, and today it was also reported that our Nation's trade imbalance in January dropped 68 percent, got 68 percent worse, the largest ever in a single month in the history of this Nation, another 20,000 jobs, times 20,000, times 20,000, $12 billion of additional deficit, more lost jobs in this country in sectors that the newspapers tell us are very clear in telecommunications, another 30,000 jobs will be lost, in electrical machinery, in office computing machines, the places where we would like to put people who still remain on welfare and are not working, into good jobs, will not be there. The numbers are telling us this.

We know that the wages and buying power of our people have not gone up for 20 years, and we know that thousands and thousands of jobs are being eliminated across this country at companies like Boeing, which is going to lay off another 7,000 workers, and companies like Fisher Price in New York who just announced several hundred more workers out, but do you think anybody here in Washington really hears or understands what is going on?

And there is a major continental economic crisis here in North America that nobody is really talking about in this Chamber caused by NAFTA that is already causing market instability and is going to have far reaching economic consequences for our Nation and for Mexico, lower wages, higher interest rates, a worsening trade situation for our Nation with more lost sales and jobs and a deluge of cheap Mexican imports coming into our market. Five billion dollars from our Treasury has already gone down to Mexico, and another 15 billion scheduled as soon as it can be drawn down.

Does the Contract on America say anything about America's economic plight? No.

Does it say anything about what I have just discussed? No.

The blame is all put on welfare recipients, the majority of whom work in my district. What a shame.

WELFARE—A SPIDER WEB OF BUREAUCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CALVERT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I followed the debate very closely during the day today and actually all of this week as we have been debating welfare reform, and it is amazing to me that, as much as everybody says that we need change, there is also such a strong effort to support the status quo, to support a failed welfare state, a welfare state that in the name of compassion we funded a system that is cruel and, experience has shown us over the last 40 years, has been destroying the American family. We have a failed welfare state. Welfare spending now exceeds over $305 billion per year, $5 trillion since 1965. Three hundred five billion dollars is roughly three times the amount needed to raise all poor Americans above the poverty line.

What kinds of results have we seen? Since 1970, Mr. Speaker, the number of children in poverty has increased by 40 percent, the juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes has tripled since 1965, and since 1960 the number of unmarried pregnant teens has nearly doubled and teen suicide has more than tripled.

Next week, Monday, in my Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities we may take a look at why all of this spending and why all of this bureaucracy in Washington has failed to deliver the kind of results that we all would have wanted to see for America, and I think what we are going to see is that what we have developed is we built off of a system that inherently is wrong. We have the right motivations, but we have developed a system that cannot deliver the kind of results that need to be delivered.

I have a couple of charts here, and what we are going to be doing on Monday in the subcommittee is we are going to have members of the subcommittee, as well as staff, break into different groups and actually go through the process of applying for the benefits of 19 different welfare programs, and I think we are going to find that the process that the poor and those in poverty face and what they take a look at in Washington is a spider web of bureaucracy, regulations, mandates, and a system that just does not work for them.

In the House of Representatives we have 10 committees, 20 subcommittees, that take a look at all of these programs. When you take a look, and I do not know how well it will show up tonight, but this is the spider web and the confusion that we see here between the House and the Senate of different kinds of programs that affect children and families. Certain committees have responsibility for income subsidies, social services, health, housing, nutrition, education, and training. This is what we want to attack in the Republican bill.

We are not going after women and children. We want to get benefits to women and children. We want to actually go through and tear up this bureaucracy in Washington and actually deliver results and benefits back to them and back to women and children so that we do not end up eating the dollars here in Washington.

We need a new process, a new focus, a focus on women, children, and families, not a focus on bureaucracies, and bureaucrats, and rules and regulations here in Washington. We are going to go through these 19 programs, and they are only a small sample of the many programs and many different bureaucracies that we have here in Washington.

In the next chart that we are going to develop that we will not have an opportunity to take a look at on Monday, but will be to take a look at it from the user standpoint, the people that are supposed to be getting these benefits, the ones that we are supposed to be lifting and helping up out of poverty.

There has been discussion tonight earlier that we need more job training programs, we need more money and more programs for child care. The problem is not programs. The problem is not dollars as we are working off a failed model and a failed system.

PROFILE OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS IN OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, there has been a tremendous amount of discussion about welfare in the last couple of days, and we all understand the welfare system has to change. But sometimes I think many of us have a different concept of the welfare system, who is on welfare, how they got there and how they get off, and perhaps the facts would document. So I thought perhaps in my brief time tonight I would speak a little bit to the profile of recipients in our society.

There are some five million families on Aid to Families With Dependent Children, but I think many people are shocked to know that two-thirds of the people who are benefited by that program are children. There is also, I think, some stereotypical beliefs about who in our society is on welfare: 38.9 percent of all the beneficiaries of AFDC are white, 37.2 percent are African-American, and 17.8 percent are Hispanic. The average family size is only 2.9 people.

There is an assumption, I think, on the part of many of our constituents that AFDC is a very remunerative source of income. The facts do not really buttress that assertion. The average monthly benefit is $373 per month. That is less than $4,500 a year, and I might say that in 1970, in current dollars, the average monthly benefit was $300 a month more, $676 a month. We have seen a decline in real dollars of $300 a month in the last 25 years.

Of course some States are more generous. In the contiguous 48 States, Mr. Speaker, New York has a $703 per month average benefit; Mississippi,