

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 tunnel 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