

Any flag that can survive the contamination of being draped around the shoulders of Spiro Agnew is surely impervious to mere flame.

Is the flag damaged when it is burned by political protesters? No, but the reputation of the protesters is, by virtue of the fact that they have revealed themselves to ignorantly hold in contempt the nation which has been and continues to be the last, best hope for human liberty.

Nor is flag burning a protest which leaves the frustrated patriot without an answer. If a flag is burned, the proper and effective response is to fly your own.

A symbol is just that, a symbol, and not the thing itself. To presume that one can do damage to what is symbolized by damaging the symbol is to engage literally in voodoo thinking, and one might as well start sticking pins in dolls.

So the purpose of banning flag burning is not to protect the United States of America. It is to protect the feelings of those who are offended when they see a flag burned in political protest. But the protection of free expression is precisely what the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights, and therefore the flag itself, is all about. Inoffensive speech is never in danger of being banned, because no one has a reason to ban it. And anything actually worth saying is sure to offend someone, somewhere. Therefore, if free speech has any meaning, it means the protection of offensive expression. The distance between banning the burning of flags and requiring the burning of books may be much shorter than we think.

We do the United States no favors when we undermine the reality of its achievements—among which is free expression—in an effort to protect the symbol of its achievements, the flag.

"But is nothing sacred?" amendment proponents ask. Well, the flag certainly isn't. It is a secular symbol deliberately lacking religious weight, and therefore can't be "sacred," in the strict sense. But if a supernatural analogy is needed, we would be seeing the situation more clearly if we viewed the flag in terms of the mythological phoenix, which always files—whole and renewed—out of its own ashes.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 2, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2127) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purpose:

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in complete opposition to the cuts in this years Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (H.R. 2127), a bill that funds programs that are in many cases the foundation of our future and the hope for tomorrow. I am staunchly opposed to any proposal that would make drastic cutbacks in programs for women and children, students, seniors disabled Americans, and individuals living in rural communities.

For example, I remain appalled that included in this bill is the absolute elimination of

the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP].

Five million Americans, including the disabled, the working poor, and low-income senior citizens are in desperate need of funding for LIHEAP. Without these funds vulnerable Americans will be forced to chose between heating their homes or feeding their families. For Vermont, this means a cut of \$5,753,000 in low-income heating assistance.

Beyond the cuts in LIHEAP, the package cuts federal education funding by \$3.7 billion in fiscal year 1996. Education for disadvantaged children—formally known as chapter 1 funding—is cut by more than \$1 billion, which will result in cuts to Vermont of close to \$2.5 million in fiscal year 1996. Vermont education improvement funds will be cut by over \$1 million, and Vermont will lose more than \$1 million in safe and drug free school funds. Vocational education will be cut by 27 percent nationally, resulting in a loss to Vermont of over \$1 million.

At a time when we need to devote more resources for education it will be an absolute disaster for Vermont to lose tens of million dollars in Federal education and training funding. These cuts will mean higher property taxes for Vermont communities and fewer students receiving Head Start, student loans, and grants, assistance for the disadvantaged, and summer job opportunities.

By the year 2002, Republican-approved cuts would deny: 309 Vermont children a chance to participate in Head Start; 60 out of 60 Vermont school districts funding used to keep crime, violence, and drugs away from students and out of schools; 21,200 Vermont college students would be denied \$2,111 in loans, and as many as 3,000 graduate students would be denied \$9,424 in loans to help pay college costs; 9,492 Vermont low-income youths would be denied a first opportunity to get work experience in summer jobs.

In 1996 alone, Republican-approved cuts would deny: 2,100 disadvantaged Vermont children crucial reading, writing, and mathematic assistance in school; 700 Vermont students funding for Pell Grants to help afford a college education; 227 young people in Vermont a chance to participate in national service programs; 563 dislocated Vermonters training opportunities.

Seniors programs are also severely damaged by this bill. The Community Service Employment for Older Americans is cut by \$46 million dollars. The National Senior Volunteers Corp., which includes the Senior Companion Program, the Foster Grandparent Program and the Retired Seniors Volunteers Program, is cut by more than \$20 million. Congregate and home delivered meals for seniors are cut by more than \$20 million. This will mean that 114,637 fewer seniors will be able to get hot meals at senior centers under the Congregate Meals Program and 43,867 frail older persons will be cut off from Meals on Wheels.

Working Americans will suffer as a result of this bill. At a time when Americans are working longer hours for less pay and the gap between the rich and the poor is wider than at any time in the history of this Nation, this bill is an assault on working people. This bill is going to make it far more difficult for working people to keep their place among the middle class as workplace safety, health, protection, and bargaining laws are taken off the books. The bill literally guts the Occupational Safety

and Health Administration which protects our workers from unsafe conditions in the workplace. Corporations will find it easier to violate wage hour laws, set up bogus pension systems and take advantage of workers who try to organize.

Disabled Americans are not spared the cuts in this bill. The Developmental Disabilities Councils, which provide some of the only services to meet the needs of the people with severest disabilities, have been cut by \$30 million, or nearly 40-percent reduction. The Councils have been instrumental in supporting a voice for this highly vulnerable population and their families. Nationwide, the Councils have been a voice to foster deinstitutionalization of people with mental retardation; to work for employment and economic independence of people with developmental disabilities, and to encourage the development of long-term care in community-based settings.

In Vermont the Developmental Disabilities Council supports the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights, an organization which provides advocacy on disability issues; supports a statewide newsletter, The Independent, focusing on issues affecting the elderly and people with disabilities; supports the disability law project to provide advocacy on individual cases and systematic issues; supports a highly successful project to make recreation sites accessible to people with disabilities; and, among other things, supports statewide training for people with disabilities on the Americans with Disabilities Act.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, health care for rural communities has been put at great risk by this bill. This bill eliminates State Offices of Rural Health, the Federal Office of Rural Health, rural health telemedicine grants, the essential access to community hospitals programs, new rural health grants, and the bill cut by 43 percent, the rural health transition grants. This bill turns its back on small rural communities that are struggling to recruit doctors, maintain hospitals, and reach out to isolated rural settings that have difficulty accessing health care.

In closing, let me say that this bill could not be more clear about the misplaced priorities of the Republican majority in Congress. While Republicans set out gutting programs for women, children, students, seniors, people with disabilities and working Americans, they launch production of the F-22 airplane in the Speaker's district and increase spending billions more on the creation of more B-2 bombers—a weapon the Pentagon has said it doesn't want or need.

CONGRATULATIONS TOMMY
CUTRER ON HIS MANY YEARS OF
SERVICE IN TENNESSEE

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 4, 1995

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, we all aspire to make a difference in the lives of those around us. I rise today to thank my good friend and constituent, T. Tommy Cutrer, for making a difference in so many people's lives and to congratulate him for his many years of service to the working men and women of Tennessee and America.