EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ABUSES AT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

HON. W.J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 10, 1995

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I read with dismay this morning's story about the foolish waste of taxpayer dollars by staff at the Secretary of Energy's office to pay for consultative review of press coverage of the Secretary and her Department. It is but one more example of agency spending on image building and lobbying that I hope to address in legislation which Mr. CLINGER and I are now preparing. We cannot and should not tolerate such abuses any longer.

But if one is to legitimately call upon the President to ask for the Secretary's resignation over this, we should be prepared to ask that the entire Cabinet resign. Every department in one form or another, is equally guilty of abusive waste and inappropriate spending on image building, lobbying, and public relations efforts. All of which should be equally condemned and rendered illegal. Secretary O'Leary is entitled to no special favors on this.

Energy Secretary O'Leary's standing in our Government and the Cabinet should not be called into question on this incident. She should be judged and regarded by how successfully she conducts the proper affairs of the Department of Energy, and on that basis she has every right and duty to continue her service to the President and to our Nation.

Secretary O'Leary and every Cabinet official, however, need to instruct their collective staff to end this practice of public relations spending and inappropriate lobbying. If they are unable to do so, the Congress, I believe, is ready to make those practices illegal, as they are both dumb and inexcusable.

CONFRONTING THE MYTHS

HON. ANDREW JACOBS, JR.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 10, 1995

Mr. JACOBS. Mr. Speaker, how about a dose of reality? The following article by Prof. Fran Quigley was published by the Nuvo Newsweekly in Indianapolis.

P.S. If the present welfare system as we mistakenly ''know it'' is so bad, ask yourself this question: Why did President Ronald Reagan sign it into law in 1988?

[From the Nuvo Newsweekly, Nov. 2–9, 1995]

CONFRONTING THE MYTHS—THE TRUTH ABOUT POVERTY AND WELFARE

(By Prof. Fran Quigley)

''Welfare as we know it'' is coming to an end. True to the campaign promises of both President Clinton and the Republican Congress, our country's system of providing guarantees of federal income assistance to poor families through the program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children is being dismantled. In its place will be state-run programs of assistance, including strict time limitations on the receipt of benefits, mandates that parents work outside the home and potentially a blanket denial of assistance to children of teenage mothers.

In Indiana, the changes to ''welfare as we know it'' are even more radical. In June of this year, most Indiana recipients of AFDC were notified that they would be subject to new rules that limit their lifetime enrollment on the program to two years and would be subject to a ''family cap,'' where the state refuses to provide any additional benefits to families for new children conceived while the mother was enrolled in the AFDC program. In light of the conventional wisdom that has the Democratic party as the defender of the nation's poor, the irony of these stricter state provisions is that Democratic Governor Evan Bayh has sponsored and defended the two-year limitation and the family cap, while many Senate Republicans recently rejected these same provisions as too onerous for the poor.

All of these changes have come as a result of immense popular support for elected officials to change ''welfare as we know it.'' But what exactly is welfare as we know it? It turns out that once the programs and the people enrolled in them are examined beyond rhetoric about ''lazy deadbeats'' and ''welfare queens,'' that actual data show that many of the assumptions of the welfare debate are incorrect.

Some of these assumptions are so prevalent that they have taken on the status of myths. It is a dangerous situation when these myths have a place at the center of the welfare debate and now the dismantling of the family safety net. In order to take an informed position on the changes in our government's role in assisting the poor, these myths need to be confronted by the cold, hard, statistical truth:

MYTH NO. 1: IF POOR PEOPLE WOULD JUST GET JOBS, THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE POOR

Truth: In 1990s America, poverty is now a problem for working people and their families. In 1969, full-time employment at a minimum-wage job provided enough income to keep a family of three out of poverty. In 1992, full-time minimum-wage employment provided only 76 percent of the income needed to keep that same family above the federal government's estimate of the poverty level, and only 50 percent of the income estimated to be necessary for a three-person family to live a safe and healthy lifestyle in Indianapolis.

Implicit in this ''get a job'' myth and much of the anti-welfare rhetoric is the notion that poor people are poor because they are too lazy to work. However, noted welfare and poverty researcher Joel Handler describes empirical studies showing that poor people, including people receiving welfare, usually a well-developed work ethic and, in fact, most do work at jobs that simply do not pay enough salary to keep their families out of poverty.

Those who do not work outside the home usually are raising families, and the financial difficulties of maintaining employment, child care, transportation and health care are often responsible for forcing single parents out of the workplace. Also, any description of AFDC recipients as not ''working'' ignores the reality that raising children is both difficult and important work: Anyone who has raised children must reject the ''lazy'' description for a single mother who is raising kids in an environment of substandard housing, violence and constant financial uncertainty.

MYTH NO. 2: ONCE A PERSON RECEIVES WELFARE BENEFITS, HIS FINANCIAL NEEDS WILL BE MET

Truth: Receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children in Indiana provides a family with less than one-third of the income needed to meet the federal government estimate of the poverty level. A disabled adult's Supplemental Security Income provides a little over 54 percent of the estimated income necessary to meet the poverty level for a two-person family. AFDC benefit levels vary among states, but the median state AFDC maximum monthly benefit level for a family of three was only $366, which is barely more than a third of the federal poverty line. The grim implication of these figures is that our streets and shelters are full of families with children who are homeless and/or hungry, yet are receiving the maximum welfare benefits allowed.

MYTH NO. 3: WOMEN HAVE BABIES IN ORDER TO RECEIVE LARGER WELFARE CHECKS

Truth: Since Indiana's average AFDC monthly increase totals only $65 per additional child, as contrasted with the federal government's quite modest estimate of a $200-plus increased monthly cost of living per child Indiana's welfare recipients do not have any financial incentive to have babies. In fact, most welfare mothers do not have a large number of children: 73 percent of all AFDC recipients have only one or two children. AFDC recipients with more than three children constitute only 10 percent of the total number of families enrolled in the program.

MYTH NO. 4: MOST WELFARE RECIPIENTS ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN, LONGTIME DEPENDENTS AND TEENAGE PARENTS

Truth: All of these descriptive adjectives are incorrect as applied to AFDC recipients. African-Americans only make up 37 percent of all AFDC recipients (down from 45 percent in 1969), over half of all recipients leave the AFDC program within one year, and only 8 percent of recipients are under the age of 20.

MYTH NO. 5: PROGRAMS TO HELP THE POOR ARE TOO EXPENSIVE FOR STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS

Truth: Don't blame the poor for budget deficits without looking in the mirror first: All the direct aid to the poor (AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and SSI) together does not equal three of the tax breaks benefiting the middle class and wealthy (deductions for retirement plans, home mortgage interest deductions, and exemptions for employer-paid health insurance premiums). Put another way, the AFDC program consumes only 1 percent of the federal budget and 2 percent of the average state budget.

Also, government investments in the well-being of our nation's poor, especially poor children, are cost-effective because of the programs' prevention of future social costs. For example, every dollar spent on Head Start programs is estimated to save $4.75 in later special education, crime, welfare and other costs. Similar estimates have every dollar spent on childhood immunization or