

And so the question for America is whether we move into the future, or remain in the past. Do we demand more from parents, or do we leave it to Washington to solve all our ills? Do we return control of education to the local community, or do we run education from a Federal department in Washington? Do we change the welfare system and restore hope and optimism to the next generation, or do we continue to accept the welfare world of dependency, illegitimacy and despair?

And most importantly, do we make a real commitment to improve the lives of children across the country, or do we use children as political pawns in the upcoming election?

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MFN AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, today the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, under the leadership of the chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey, CHRISTOPHER SMITH, held a hearing on most-favored-nation status for China and human rights in China. The purpose of the hearing was to take a measure of whatever progress might have occurred in China since our last review of most-favored-nation status.

Today, many distinguished witnesses testified to who will give you documentation on the worsening state of human rights in China and Tibet. I commend them for their ongoing efforts to shine the public light on a terrible situation, for their continuing fight to assist those who promote freedom and basic human rights. Their expertise and in some cases their willingness to expose themselves, their friends, and families to danger in order to document the continuing egregious violations of human rights in China and Tibet is inspiring and I look forward to their presentations.

It is important to note for the record that according to the State Department's own Annual Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995, as well as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Campaign for Tibet and other reputable independent human rights organizations, repression in China and Tibet continues. The State Department's own report documents the failure of constructive engagement to improve human rights in China, and notes that,

The experience of China in the past few years demonstrates that while economic growth, trade, and social mobility create an improved standard of living, they cannot by themselves bring about greater respect for human rights in the absence of a willingness by political authorities to abide by the fundamental international norms.

It is clear that as the Beijing regime consolidates its power by increasing its foreign reserves through trade and the sale of weapons, China's authoritarian rulers are tightening their grip on freedom of speech, religion, press, and thought in China and Tibet.

Today we hear comparatively little about those fighting for freedom in China not because they are all busy making money, but because they have been exiled, imprisoned, or otherwise silenced by China's Communist leaders. According to the State Department's report, "by year's end almost all public dissent against the central authorities was silenced." We cannot allow this to continue. If they are not allowed to speak out for themselves, we must speak out on their behalf. We cannot forget the indomitable spirits of Wei Jingsheng, Bao Tong, Chen Ziming, Tong Yi, and the hundreds of thousands of others, known and unknown, who suffer under China's repressive regime.

Our great country is ignoring the plight of China's pro-democracy activists. In the process, we are not only undermining freedom in China, but we are also losing our ability to speak out for freedom and human rights throughout the world.

There is some reason for hope. I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues here today an event held in San Francisco over the past weekend. Over 20 rock groups and other musical artists participated in a 2 day Tibetan Freedom concert to bring attention to the plight of the people of Tibet. Organized by the Milarepa Fund and the Beastie Boys, this concert was attended by over 100,000 young people who can take the message about Tibet to communities across this Nation. The energy and enthusiasm of the concert participants was inspiring and demonstrates that the fight for basic human rights is being taken up by the younger generation. The participants in the concert, like the pro-democracy activists in China, are the future. Our cause will ultimately prevail, but we must keep up the fight.

The past few months have seen China act to intimidate the people of Taiwan in their democratic elections, diminish democratic freedoms in Hong Kong, crack down on freedom of religion by Christians in China and Buddhists in Tibet, and smuggle AK-47s into the United States via its state-run companies.

The MFN vote provides us with the only opportunity to demonstrate our concern about United States-China relations and our determination to make trade fairer, the political climate freer and the world safer. I urge our colleagues not to turn their backs on these important principles.

WE MUST REBUILD AMERICA, AND PUT AMERICA FIRST

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

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I am probably a minority within this body, not just because I am a freshman, but because I did not come to Washington with wealth or money, to speak of. I had a good job. I have a nice home. I have a loving wife and two small children. I have a lot to be grateful for. But I came here not to represent Wall Street, but to work real hard for Main Street. I came here to look after the underdog, the little guy, the working folks in this country that right now I think are having a hard time.

I am not talking about people on minimum wage. That is 3 percent of the work force. That is people at a starting level, just coming into the work force. I am talking specifically about the other 97 percent of the work force that are making more than minimum wage. They are also having a very difficult time today.

The gentlewoman from Washington talked about the special interest groups, Mr. Speaker, the PAC money, the influence these lobbyists actually have in Washington now. I am one of the very few Members of this body who do not take any of their money. I listen to the folks back in Polk County and Meigs County and small counties in east Tennessee. They are the ones that sent me here. They are the ones I take my campaign contributions from. They are the ones I listen to.

I listen to small business people real close to the ground, and I think they are having a difficult time. They are overtaxed, they are overlitigated, they are overregulated. I think of small business people like my father, who in the 1950's paid less than 10 percent of every dollar he made to the Government, total: Federal Government, State government, local government combined, less than 10 cents of every dollar. Today that obligation in this country is about half of every dollar a man or woman makes goes to the Government. It is climbing to where, when my children are my age, it is going to be more than 80 cents of every dollar. How much can we pay as a free nation and a free people in taxes?

We are overlitigated: too many lawsuits in America. We need lawyers in America, but we do not need this many lawsuits. We do not need so many lawsuits. We need tort reform, clean up the legal system, make it quicker and cleaner if you have a dispute. Frankly, we have too many lawyers in this body. We have 148 lawyers in Congress. No wonder the laws that are passed here help lawyers make money. We have too many lawyers in Congress.

We are overregulated. Frankly, a lot of our businesses are moving overseas because our regulations are extreme. Because of the new Congress, EPA and OSHA are making some reforms and going in the right direction. There has been a lot of screaming and yelling since we got here, this new Congress, but the fact is those agencies that have been screaming and yelling are actually making the reforms that we have advocated.