

Then there was Alan Coffey, Jr. Alan started in 1969. Alan is still on Capitol Hill. He served on the House Committee on the Judiciary as minority counsel, but he is now majority general counsel and staff director of the Committee on the Judiciary. Alan is as sharp as ever, but he started with Hamilton Fish.

Gerry Schindler started as a volunteer on Ham's campaign. Eventually Gerry moved to Salisbury, MD, and now works in the office of Congressman WAYNE GILCHREST. She is a lovely, kind woman, and another friend of mine.

Then there is Shirley Cavanaugh, Dorothy Pedersen, Clementine Anthony, Janice Traber, Shelva Hoffman, Tom Schatz, and Phyllis Coleman, another remarkable woman. She started in 1979 in Ham's Poughkeepsie office as a caseworker and staff assistant. Later she moved to the Washington office to work as a legislative correspondent and chief caseworkers. She served Ham for 15½ years, and then she moved with me into my office. She is the finest human being I have found here on Capitol Hill. She is a wonderful human being, and has helped countless people in my district. My hat is off to Phyllis Coleman for her many, many years of service. I am proud to have her in my office.

Hope Wittenberg worked for Ham. Nick Hayes came in, replacing John Barry, from 1982 to 1994. He was Ham's administrative assistant. Nick, too, remains a good friend.

Nora Lucey Mail is still here on Capitol Hill. Mariel Friedman, David Gilroy, and then there is Pari Forood Novik. Pari Novik and her husband Dick are good friends. She served 6 years on Ham's staff, and they live in Dutchess County, where they help the Dutchess community in hundreds of ways. Pari basically now has opened and runs a radio station.

Molly Clark, Morey Markowitz, Grace Washbourne. Grace always made sure Ham got where he needed to go. She was a scheduler and a wonderful help to Ham.

Debbie Reilly, Renee Longacre, Mike Hanretta, Heather Whyte, Nancy Eaton, another caseworker who moved from Ham's office to help me.

Linda Jo Edwards, Melissa Bottini, Claire Benson, and many more. These are the people who made the office of Hamilton Fish what it was and helped Ham be the man that he was, and helped him continue to keep his image well-honed. I believe it fitting that we also offer them a tribute, as we have Ham.

#### OPPOSITION TO DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

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

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to explain my opposition to the conference report on the defense authorization bill which the House passed earlier this evening.

Mr. Speaker, shortly after I was elected to the Congress in 1992, several constituents first raised with me the POW-MIA issue. It did not take a great deal of research before I concluded, to my shame, that our Government had left hundreds of POW's behind in Vietnam at the end of that war. Since I entered the Congress I have participated in hearings which have only reinforced my original conclusion in that matter. In fact, the Government's denials in these hearings have taken on a feeble and pro forma quality, as if they know and we know that what they must say for the record is not true.

Like many other Members, I continue trying to expose this truth publicly, but I am not so naive as to believe, with all the foreign policy, economic, and personal interests at stake that any administration is likely to admit that several hundred men were left behind following Operation Homecoming in 1973, and that a 20-year bipartisan coverup has since occurred.

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But I did think it possible to make better provision for servicemen in the future. I was very pleased when, in last year's authorization bill, Congress passed the Missing Service Personnel Act. This act established a separate agency to track POW-MIA's, granting extensive powers to that agency and legal rights to the families of missing servicemen. The new legislation made it much less likely that soldiers could be left behind in subsequent wars. It tacitly recognized and therefore partially redeemed the sins of the past. Nothing could give better meaning to the past sacrifices of our POW's than real action to ensure that others are never abandoned as they were.

However, during debate on this year's bill, and at the urging of the Pentagon, the Senate adopted an amendment gutting the legislation passed only 6 months ago, loosening standards for investigation and certification.

As has so often been the case with the POW-MIA issue, it is impossible to fathom the reason for the Senate's and presumably the Pentagon's position. Certainly the families and the veterans organizations will be mystified and heartbroken. As I said before, the new law has only been in place for 6 months. What have we learned in that short period of time that justifies so significant a change? Why do we now believe that it is acceptable for a commander to wait 10 days before reporting that one of his men is missing in action? Why is it less important now than it was 6 months ago to require that forensic standards be satisfied before identifying a body based on one tooth or one bone? And what has the Department of Defense done since the beginning of the year that should convince us to err on the side of giving it more discretion in making these determinations given its dismal record over the last 20 years?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot blame any Member who decided to vote for this

conference report because of the good things in it, notwithstanding what it does to the cause of POW's and MIA's. Everyone has to make his own decisions in matters of that kind. I freely admit that my vote was based more on conscience than on policy. I simply cannot join in once more sacrificing the interests of our POW's in the name of some greater good. Objectively I know that what the Congress did tonight will have little effect on those left behind in Vietnam. I am sure they have long since given up hope of deliverance and in fact most are by now buried in fields or shallow graves or stored in warehouses in case the Vietnamese need their bodies for some purpose. What I find unendurable is the sense that we have today abandoned them again, heaping yet another betrayal on the bones of these honorable men who made the mistake of trusting us.

#### HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORBES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for one-half of the remaining time as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I do not plan to use all of the time. But I did want to take to the floor tonight to talk about the health insurance reform legislation that was passed today on a bipartisan basis and certainly start off by saying that I am pleased that the bill did pass, that we have agreement between the House and the Senate, and that this legislation will go to the President and that the President has indicated, obviously, that he will sign it, because at least we will be able to say that this year there has been some progress, albeit small progress, but some progress toward expanding health insurance opportunities for Americans.

I have been very concerned over the last 2 years that we would not get this legislation passed because of inaction, which I put the blame on the Republican leadership here in the House. One of the things that Democrats, that we as Democrats did at the beginning of this session of Congress, was to establish a health care task force whose goal primarily was to try to expand health insurance opportunities for the many Americans who either do not have health insurance or who have problems obtaining health insurance even if they can afford to pay for it. I think this is one of the major issues that we must address not only in this Congress, but also in future Congresses.

The bottom line is that more and more people every day in this country do not have health insurance. The estimates now are that it may be as many as 40 million Americans. I think it is unconscionable that that number continues to grow, and I think that government, and the Federal Government