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# House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mrs. VUCANOVICH].

## DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
*September 24, 1996.*

I hereby designate the Honorable BARBARA F. VUCANOVICH to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. McDevitt, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1044. An act to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to consolidate and reauthorize provisions relating to health centers, and for other purposes.

S. 2101. An act to provide educational assistance to the dependents of Federal law enforcement officials who are killed or disabled in the performance of their duties.

The message also announced that the Senate agrees to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 1507) ''An Act to provide for the extension of the Parole Commission to oversee cases of prisoners sentenced under prior law, to reduce the size of the Parole Commission, and for other purposes.''

## MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of May 12, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] for 5 minutes.

## COMSTOCK ACT STILL ON THE BOOKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Madam Speaker, I take this 5 minutes to talk about something I hoped we would have been able to correct on corrections day, but we have not quite gotten to it yet. Maybe there is still time.

There was in the past century a man named Mr. Comstock, and Mr. Comstock was one of these people who decided only he knew what was virtuous and right, and somehow he managed to convince all sorts of people that this was correct. He even in 1873 was able to get on the floor of this House, if you can imagine such a thing, and he stayed here all day long while the Congress was in session. He ran around with a satchel full of books and pictures, and he buttonholed every Member he could find saying, ''Look at this, look at this.'' He wanted a bill passed, which the Congress then passed unanimously, and they named it the Comstock Act after him because he had pushed so very hard for it.

Madam Speaker, what this bill did was allow almost him, himself, to define what would be lewd, what would be filthy, or what would be things that should be banned. He was particularly upset about anything dealing with family planning and also any kind of abortion or contraceptive information.

So, with virtually the entire Congress intimidated, they let this act go through, and, as a consequence, this man went on to really terrorize America, because shortly thereafter, it was not bad enough that the Congress passed this bill, but they then commissioned him as a special agent of the Post Office and vested him with the powers of arrest and the privilege of free transportation so that he could go around and enforce this law unilaterally. He want on to brag later on that he had been responsible for enough criminal convictions of people to fill a 61-coach passenger train. That is really fairly amazing.

And some of the people that he went after were particularly women. He went after Victoria Woodhull, who had tried to run for President even though women could not vote in the 19th century. He went after her on counts of obscenity and every other such thing. He was absolutely obsessed with Margaret Sanger and her husband. He arraigned Margaret Sanger on eight counts of obscenity, and then he went after Margaret Sanger's husband for the same thing.

This is really all very serious because Americans were living with censorship of their mail, druggists lived in constant fear of being prosecuted by this man or people enforcing this law, having anything that looked like a contraceptive, publishers were terrified and had to change an awful lot of the text book and scientific information because, again, this could happen, and George Bernard Shaw said from across the ocean, as he looked at this: ''Comstockery is the world's standing joke at the expense of the United States. It confirms the deep-seated conviction of the Old World that America really is a provincial place, and second-rate civilization after all.'' So, even George Bernard Shaw was watching all of this.

These were serious fines, too. They are now up to $5,000 to $250,000 for a first offense.



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