

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 4, 1997]
OFF THE SCREEN AGAIN

Last October the Nobel Peace Prize went to two leaders of East Timor, a distant South Pacific island where a small population has been valiantly resisting Indonesian colonization for more than two decades. The prize brought a brief flare of publicity to East Timor's just but long-neglected cause, and then—just as Indonesia's government hoped—world attention again turned elsewhere. Last week, one of the Nobel laureates, Jose Ramos-Horta, came to Washington, hoping to put East Timor back on the international agenda.

Over the years, the United States has offered little assistance. Anxious to please a Cold War ally, U.S. officials looked the other way when Indonesia occupied East Timor in 1975 and when tens of thousands there died from what the Nobel committee listed as "starvation, epidemics, war and terror." President Clinton, early in his term, seemed ready to reverse traditional U.S. policy. His administration supported a United Nations resolution criticizing Indonesia on human rights, and in 1993 Mr. Clinton raised the issue of East Timor with Indonesian President Suharto. But then Mr. Clinton decided that trade mattered above all, and the plight of East Timor again receded from U.S. policy screens.

Last week, Mr. Ramos-Horta, a kind of unofficial foreign minister, for the first time secured a meeting with senior officials in the State Department. This is a positive, if small, step forward. It should be followed by more action. Indonesia is a modernizing nation of nearly 200 million people who live on 6,000 islands. Its own interests are not served by keeping captive 600,000 Timorese living on one of those. Mr. Ramos-Horta is asking only for a plebiscite so the East Timorese can decide their own future. It's a reasonable request.

MAKE IT RIGHT WITH GULF WAR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EWING). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to issue my personal plea for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to accept the fact that we have gulf war veterans and family members who are very sick and they need the best medical assistance available given without hesitation by these departments.

While the issue is very serious, we can focus our concern later about who is responsible. Ignoring these sick and disabled veterans does nothing for them not their families. More seriously, this situation erodes public faith in our Government as a whole and these departments in particular.

In the last few months, more and more information has come out about the possibility of exposure to chemical and biological weapons in the gulf region. Film footage of the destruction of vast weapons storage areas have been played on the screens of television all over America. The Department of Defense has now admitted to the potential for exposure of many thousands of

service members in the gulf at that time.

The depot at Kamishya, described to be the size of 25 B-25 hangers, was just one of what may prove to be many sites where exposure occurred. The bunkers were reportedly full of chemical and biological weapons. This information was reported to commanders in charge but orders were given nonetheless to destroy the site.

Until recently, veterans have been told that gulf war illness was a mental condition, stress, or posttraumatic stress disorder. A veteran from Whatcom County in my district back home in Washington State has had a claim pending with the Veterans Administration for over 4 years, only to be told that they need more information to be able to rate him.

Just last week he was finally given a rating of 60 percent for the gulf war illness portion of his claim, but he is one of the few that have met with much success for gulf war illness.

If you speak to the Veterans Administration about that 95 percent denial rate for veterans claiming gulf war illness, the VA will respond that the 5 percent approval rate is really a great achievement. My constituent and many others like him are waiting for the system that we are responsible to oversee to finally look at the work of the reputable researchers who believe they have identified the cause and viable treatment for many of the afflicted.

KREM television in Spokane, WA, has shown an excellent series of stories, produced and reported by Mr. Tom Grant. Mr. Grant conducted interviews with veterans and researchers from around the country that illustrate the severity of the problem and show promising results with the treatment of the drug Doxycycline. My office has a copy of this statement and would be happy to make it available to other Members.

We owe it to our veterans not to bury our heads in the sand but to look at the sources of the problem and potential solutions that fall outside the comfort paradigm of the Department of Defense. If Doxycycline has helped some of our veterans, our Government physicians need to be free to dispense it to others.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our Government evidently has not yet learned from the post-Vietnam era of neglect and denial that we appear to be witnessing another Agent Orange like debacle, one of possibly much greater magnitude.

Now, not tomorrow, is the time to make it right with our gulf war veterans, with their wives and their children.

HUMAN CLONING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, for years the American public, and humans in general, have been fascinated with the possibility of creating human life by other than the natural means. This has given rise to stories such as Frankenstein, the attendant movies, and other horror stories related to that.

This past week fears reached a new height when we discovered that British researchers had cloned a sheep. Immediately cries arose about the dangers of doing this, the British Government has threatened to withdraw funding for that research, et cetera. I would like to address the issue of cloning in general but more specifically the issue of human cloning.

As my colleagues may be aware, I do have a scientific background, although not in the life sciences. I have to say that I am not the least surprised that we were able to clone a sheep and will not be the least surprised if someday we will be able to clone a human being. However, I strongly believe it should not be done.

We have through the years tampered with the normal reproductive process, particularly as it relates to animals. First evidence of that was artificial insemination. Today most of the mammals produced for food, for dairy production, and so forth, begin life through the process of artificial insemination. We have even proceeded beyond that through surrogate parenting, selecting not only a father of choice but also a mother of choice, using in vitro fertilization, and placing the embryo in the uterus of an animal which is very good at carrying young and giving birth to them. But now we have reached another stage where we have through cloning created one animal which is in all regards identical to the animal from which its DNA was taken.

Immediately the specter arises of doing the same for humans. I can assure you that, if we do not take steps to prevent research, in fact a human will be cloned.

Mr. Speaker, I do applaud the President for this morning issuing a moratorium on the use of Federal funds for human cloning experiments. As he says in his comments,

There is much about cloning that we still do not know. But this much we do know: any discovery that touches upon human creation is not simply a matter of scientific inquiry. It is a matter of morality and spirituality as well.

The President's view is that human cloning would give rise to deep concerns, given our most cherished concepts of faith and humanity. Each human life is unique, born of a miracle that reaches beyond laboratory science. The President believes we must respect this profound gift and resist the temptation to replicate ourselves. That is precisely the danger we face, that individuals with substantial amounts of money and very large egos would decide that they are such a great gift to humanity that in fact they should be cloned, so that there would