

are only doing this to extend the investigation, to drag it out, so that it eventually wears out the American people and they are able to hide behind that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is something that should be stopped. I think the President should not claim executive privilege, he should get on with the investigation, he should make a clean breast of all this before the American people so that the American people know the facts.

THE PRESIDENT'S HISTORIC VISIT TO AFRICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, as we watch the historic visit of the President to the Continent of Africa, to be able to put into perspective this very important trip for it highlights many issues. For many, it was thought that this was a trip to talk about trade and economic development and opportunities of partnership on the issues of trade and economic development between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa, but we are finding that there is much more that can occur and that will occur, and I think it is vital for the countries that the President is visiting to be singled out for their individual merits and as well to acknowledge the problems and the future efforts that will be needed to enhance Africa's international position and as well its friendship and partnership with the United States of America.

I would like to personally acknowledge my appreciation for my own hometown newspaper, the Houston Chronicle, which has taken a great interest not only in the President's visit but the whole new opportunities that may be available, not only for this Nation but for Texas and Houston. They had a very large article on the issue of trade in the African Growth and Opportunity Act, explaining its viability and possibilities for large corporations but particularly small- and medium-sized businesses. They offered and editorialized their support for the African Growth and Opportunity Act and, as well, as I said earlier, they have a reporter from the Chronicle traveling with the President. Likewise, one of my local television stations, ABC Capital Channel 13, is as well viewing this as an important effort.

But what do we expect to see? Many of the news footage yesterday showed the President warmly received by the President of Ghana who has been re-elected democratically and has shown an economic recovery in that country that competes well internationally. We saw a crowd that was, in its excitement, pushing toward the President, and I hope that we understood that his reaction was to protect those who were being crushed in the front and no other reaction other than to recognize how well he was being received.

But do we realize the leaps of faith and success that Botswana has experienced, another country that he will visit, having had democracy for 31 years? As long as it has been an independent country, it has been democratic. It has had few Presidents. The economics of the country is amazing. Housing is there, but yet it has a severe and serious HIV problem, and when I visited in December they offered to say that there were individuals who have seen six members of their family buried due to HIV. Uganda, who has implemented an economic program to increase the employment of the underemployed and unemployed, and yet has some problems which we will work on and need to expose as relates to the rebels' action in parts of that country in doing heinous acts; but the President stands against that, and we must emphasize human rights along with his visit to Rwanda.

As I listened to my colleagues talk about the Balkans, human rights violations and tragic genocide and ethnic cleansing are going on in Africa, and those of us who believe in human rights must stand up against it. It is important for the President to be in Rwanda to talk about these extreme abuses and the tragedies against families and children. It is all right for us to see that, but we must see that in the context of the whole Africa.

And that is why it is so very important as we visit this continent that the President also visits and interacts in South Africa and visits with Nelson Mandela, the father of Africa, who through his peaceful existence for 27 years of incarceration helped bring about the end of apartheid, and now South Africa has its position as one who can lead Africa in the course of economic development and human rights.

Then the President's visit to Senegal is extremely important as he realizes the tragedy of slavery. I hope that this will generate a healing process, and I hope that many who will view this will acknowledge the importance of this trip, Mr. Speaker, and that we will work together to heal any racial divide and, as well, bring us together around issues like an apology to African Americans because we have seen the connection and the viability and the positive relationship.

CONGRATULATIONS TO INDIA'S NEW PRIME MINISTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my congratulations to the newly-elected leader of the world's largest democracy. Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee has sworn in last week as the Prime Minister of India. India's Parliament will hold a confidence vote later this week on Prime Minister Vajpayee's new government. Pending

the outcome of the confidence vote, the Prime Minister is poised to lead the world's second most populous nation into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, the new Prime Minister is a veteran political leader in India who was once introduced by Prime Minister Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, as the future Prime Minister of India. He is a member of the party commonly referred to as the BJP, which has been described as a nationalist party. While some media accounts have portrayed the party in a negative light, Prime Minister Vajpayee has shown every indication of his intent to follow a moderate course. He has already reached out to India's neighbors, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, expressing the desire to build on recent efforts to foster friendlier relations among the nations of south Asia. In fact, the Prime Minister also intends to oversee the foreign affairs portfolio. During the 1970s Mr. Vajpayee served as Foreign Minister in a coalition government and won widespread praise for helping to reduce Indo-Pakistani tensions.

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He has also indicated that he intends to stay the course on the free-market reforms that have transformed India into one of the world's most dynamic emerging markets.

Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Vajpayee has also spoken of his commitment to maintain the secular principles of India's constitution.

I had the opportunity to meet the new Prime Minister last year in New Delhi, then in his capacity as leader of the opposition in the Parliament. I also met with members of his shadow cabinet, many of whom will now assume the leadership of the various ministries.

I found Mr. Vajpayee and his colleagues to be sincerely dedicated to building a better future for India's nearly 1 billion people, continuing the free-market reforms while better developing the nation's infrastructure.

Given the negative characterizations of the BJP as a chauvinistic or fundamentalist party, I was impressed by the party's grassroots strategy of building alliances with regional parties representing India's many ethnic and religious groups.

Perhaps most important, as a visiting Representative of the U.S. Congress, and by extension of the American people, I was very happy to hear of Prime Minister Vajpayee's strong desire to work for close ties between India and the United States.

True, there have been some voices in India expressing concern about protecting India's culture from too much American or Western influence, but the leaders of India's new government have made it very clear, in my meeting with them and in the countless other forums, that they welcome U.S. trade and investment.

In fact, BJP leaders often point out that their party was at the forefront of

calls to introduce free-market reforms in the Indian economy. This increased trade and investment translates into additional revenues for American companies and good jobs, I believe, for American workers.

It also means the prospect of better opportunities for the people of India, a growing market for American goods and services, and a long-term stability in a strategically vital region in the world. All in all, it is a win/win situation.

Mr. Speaker, obviously the United States and India are not going to agree on every issue. There will undoubtedly be occasional diplomatic tiffs between our administration and the new BJP government. But the underlying relationship between the United States and India is based on shared values of democracy and a commitment to economic development.

The people of India have spoken through elections in which more than 300 million people participated. While no single party gained a majority in the Parliament, the BJP won a plurality and has been given this historic opportunity to form a government. As a legitimately elected head of government, Prime Minister Vajpayee deserves our respect.

Expressions of congratulations have poured in from around the world. President Clinton called the Prime Minister, and the two leaders had a 10-minute conversation that focused on continuing on the path of strong bilateral ties. I hope that those who have viewed the BJP in a critical or suspicious way in the past will join me in congratulating the Prime Minister and wishing him and his government well.

I also wanted to point out that India's Parliament has elected as its Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi, a member of the TDP party. His election shows the BJP's willingness to form coalitions with other parties and to provide key positions of leadership for members of other parties.

Mr. Speaker, many of our Members of the House, both on the Democratic and Republican side, are members of our Congressional Caucus on India. And we look forward to the new government's relations and improved relations between the United States and India, because we do believe it is very important to continue the strong ties and the closer relationships that have grown in the last few years between our two countries.

ECONOMIC EQUITY FOR WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to lead a special order on economic equity for women. I expect to be joined by other women Members of Congress,

perhaps by some men as well. They would be welcome. I have already been joined by the energetic and able gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), to whom I will yield in a few moments.

I come to the floor this evening during this special Women's History Month, Mr. Speaker. During this month, women Members, and we are proudly 50 Members strong in this House, of course, when you consider that there are 440 Members, we are the first to concede that we are proud, but not pleased, but we are proud to honor Women's History Month by participating in a number of floor speeches simply to keep before this body what I know most Members would not want to forget, and that is that women's issues increasingly dominate much of what concerns America, often as family issues.

This evening I want to devote my own time to discussion of specific aspects of economic equity, but I remind the body that this general subject covers a multitude of problems, among them old-fashioned discrimination against women in everything from sports to jobs, women's new rise in small business, women's special place as now primary in their dependence for their economic survival and benefit on a whole set of gender neutral economic programs, among them Social Security.

We say watch when you change Social Security, particularly when you talk about privatization, that you do not forget who lives the longest and who is most dependent on Social Security, and consider whether or not they will quickly and freely enter the market, particularly since it is low wage workers, among whom women are the predominant group who are most dependent on Social Security.

The earned income tax credit where many women, this very month, simply would have thousands of dollars in reduction in pay were it not for the earned income tax credit, which goes in this country predominantly to women who are, again, the low paid workers of America, minimum wage.

We got a minimum wage through, I think in no small part because this body understood it was talking about women, women vote, and women understood that that vote was a women's vote because two-thirds of those who qualify for the minimum wage, in a very real sense, to our shame, are women and women with children at that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and thank her for coming to the floor to speak on an aspect of this subject.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues from the Women's Caucus as we work to bring greater attention to the issue of economic equity for women.

I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for her valuable leadership, both of the Women's Caucus and on this critical issue.

I do want to note that, in her notice for this special order on economic equity for women, she cites a quote from the United States Bureau of the Census. And I would like to read this quote into the RECORD. It says, "The median earnings of women with a strong commitment to workforce were \$23,710 while those of men were a substantially greater \$32,144."

I would like to bring notice to this, not only for the important data that is below that points out the discrepancy between the earnings between men and women, but as an example of how we use census data over and over again in our everyday lives to know where we are as a Nation, where we are going as a Nation. Without good data, we are just another opinion.

This is one example of how the census data helps us track the progress or lack thereof of women in the workforce and that we, likewise, need to work for a fair and accurate census that is coming up.

Mr. Speaker, the Women's History Month is traditionally a time to highlight women's achievements and an opportunity to increase public awareness of the unique contributions women have made throughout history.

It is true that American women have made great strides. Women break through more personal and professional barriers every day, and we all should take pride in these many accomplishments. But we cannot afford to rest on these laurels, because the facts also show that there is a great deal of work that needs to be done.

The sad reality is, almost 35 years after the Equal Pay Act was passed, there is still a huge wage gap. In fact, women earned equal pay in only two out of 90 jobs tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1995.

While the wage gap has narrowed by 15 percent since 1981, white women still make just 74 cents on the dollar to a male dollar. The situation is worse for the women of color. The wage gap for African-American women is 64 cents to the male dollar. For Hispanic women, it is 53 cents. This fact should make us all angry. We should all be indignant when women are not paid the same as men for the same exact same job, comparable work.

Pay inequity is yet another example of the lingering sexism and racism that is still in our society. Most of the wage gap cannot be explained away by differences in education, experience, or other legitimate qualifications. Even among recent college graduates, women earned 15.7 percent less than male graduates. While there has been some real progress, there is still a cultural bias against, in some cases, women workers.

There are still antiquated perceptions that women possibly do not need