

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO ROMANIAN PRESIDENT EMIL CONSTANTINESCU

HON. MIKE PARKER

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 15, 1998

Mr. PARKER. Mr. Speaker, for the RECORD I would like to submit a statement of tribute by my former House colleague David Funderburk to Romania's President who is visiting Washington this week.

A TRIBUTE TO ROMANIAN PRESIDENT EMIL CONSTANTINESCU ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN JULY 1998

(By David Funderburk)

Emil Constantinescu has been described as Romania's "Vaclav Havel." There are many reasons why Constantinescu should be classed together with Vaclav Havel the Czech dissident hero of the communist era.

Admittedly as a friend of Constantinescu I am not a completely unbiased observer. And after spending two years living in Romania during the 1970's and four years during the 1980's in Ceausescu's time, I never thought I would see a democratic President of Romania. For a few years following the end of the Ceausescu I looked with skepticism on some of the transitional figures of the country. Also I wondered how many of those new voices who seemed to be jumping on the democratic reform and free market bandwagon were for real. Emil Constantinescu has proven that he is for real.

Emil Constantinescu is the first truly democratic President of Romania after 42 years of harsh communism and 7 years of stagnation following the demise of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu.

Constantinescu is enlightened, well educated, pro-American, and a man of integrity with a historical sense of purpose for his people and their future.

The leading interwar political party—the National Peasant & Christian Democrats—emerged from the ashes of communism under the leadership of Corneliu Coposu, a giant figure who had been imprisoned under Ceausescu. Coposu, who was a national symbol of integrity and sacrifice for freedom, designated as the party's standard-bearer in both 1992 and 1996 the little known Geology professor and Rector of the University of Bucharest, Dr. Emil Constantinescu. During the transition period in Romania under Ilescu, Constantinescu gained political experience in his role as a leader of the opposition.

Romania's "Havel" Emil Constantinescu has in fact accomplished the following:

Led Romania to its first real democratic election victory in 1996 and peaceful transition with a platform incorporating the core values of Western civilization. And Constantinescu initiated the coalition Democratic Convention program called the "Contract with Romania."

Presided as a populist President living a spartan existence and working long hours in the midst of hardship for many workers in the country. He receives only a token salary and drives a small inconspicuous car without the motorcade fanfare of his predecessors;

Led an activist campaign to permanently tie Romania to the West, NATO and the U.S. (whose support Romania needs for its NATO aspirations). He has helped ensure that ro-

mania takes a leadership role in the Partnership for Peace collaboration. He helped lead the Romanians in giving U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1997 his biggest reception anywhere up to that time. And the same Romanians have indicated the highest level of support for NATO and partnership with America of any of the peoples of Eastern Europe;

Met with regional and other world leaders to demonstrate his determination to make Romania a peaceful island of stability in the volatile region. His outreach to the Hungarian minority and to neighboring Hungary as well as to neighboring Ukraine have been models of cooperation in the region;

Helped guide Romania through its most difficult economic crisis in the post-communist period by calmly accentuating the positive, and focusing on the big picture of Romania's goals of Western partnership and peace. His leadership has helped produce political stability and project optimism in the face of a not-always-supportive coalition government.

There is no doubt that Romania has some distance to travel before it's on a par with the West in terms of economic reform and even political stability. More needs to be done to make the investment climate attractive to U.S. companies and to complete the implementation of the economic reforms.

But change has been coming—gradually, steadily, inexorably. And most remarkably Romania has come a very long way since Ceausescu. Romania was left in about the worst possible position to reform with a Stalinist command economy, central planning and virtually no private sector.

The steady hand of Constantinescu's leadership has helped guide Romania as it goes through the toughest transition in Eastern Europe, without bloodshed, revolt or diversion from the NATO-integration course. Constantinescu is a visionary leader who focuses on the big picture of Romania's place in the world, and strives to help fulfill the dreams of ordinary Romanians to be given recognition, acceptance and respect by the West particularly by the U.S. Since we have the benefit of such a leader in Bucharest, we should move quickly during this visit to assist Constantinescu and Romania.

Washington—from the White House to Capitol Hill to the business community and media—has a special moment in history to do the right thing by this new Romania. Let's show our appreciation to President Emil Constantinescu and Romania and show our recognition for their historic longings, their geopolitical and strategic value to peace, and political stability in the region.

Let's take advantage of this special opportunity and welcome the new democratic President Emil Constantinescu—"Romania's Havel"—to Congress, the White House and America. It's something we will not regret.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 15, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, July 15, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

MANAGED CARE REFORM

The most important political issue today, and for the past decade, is health care. Sev-

eral prominent publications have identified health care as the defining issue of the 1990s. I agree. In meeting after meeting in southern Indiana I have noticed how persistently the question of health care comes forward in discussions. It is the issue that bubbles and seethes beneath the surface at all times simply because it is the most personal and real issue that touches the hopes and fears of every American.

POPULAR VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE

I find Hoosiers overwhelmingly want everyone to have access to health care services but they split on how to pay for that access. Hoosiers are usually skeptical of government action but I do not find them objecting to a prominent role for government to play in health care. They do not want a comprehensive plan like the one President Clinton proposed in 1994, but they do want to see the government assuring access to affordable health care, vigorously policing the providers of health care such as insurance companies, demanding more generous coverage from employers, and ensuring that their existing benefits are not cut back. Furthermore, they do not want to see any interference with the doctor-patient relationship.

When it comes to the issue of managed care, most people recognize that managed care plans have helped to hold down costs and provide preventive health care. But they also worry that managed care can sometimes interfere with the doctor-patient relationship and impede access to medical treatment. They want government to hold managed care plans accountable. The general view seems to be that Hoosiers will support tougher government oversight of managed care plans but they do not want the government to come in and take over health care.

MIXED SUCCESS

In light of widespread support for changes in the health care system, I am struck by the number of Hoosiers who say to me that they are quite satisfied with their own health care. Their personal experiences have largely been positive. They recognize the successes of the American health care system. Vaccination rates are up, premature births are down, more women are getting mammograms, and the move to managed care has saved billions of dollars in health care spending. They and their families are probably as healthy today as they ever were and for the most part they have affordable health coverage.

Nonetheless, underlying these successes is the fear that the system will not continue to work for them and be there in times of crisis. Hoosiers really worry about how they would handle a major illness, and they tell me again and again of acquaintances who were simply wiped out financially by a major medical problem. Many feel overwhelmed by the red tape and bureaucracy in today's health care system. They are uncomfortable that power has shifted in the health care system from the physicians to the insurance companies and managed care plan administrators.

CONGRESSIONAL OUTLOOK

President Clinton made health care a central theme of his first term in office when he

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