COMMENTS ON SELECTION OF HOUSE CHAPLAIN

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, was not prepared to speak today, by I think the record does need some correction.

We met, as my cochair, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), said, we had endless meetings. We narrowed the 38 to 17. We narrowed those to six. Then we decided, we at the next meeting, we would reduce the six to three. We interviewed the 17, and then we re-interviewed the six.

We decided that we would send them, and ''we'' as a group, without instructions from the leadership on either side of the aisle, that we would send the names to the leadership unranked, and, as the Speaker said, in alphabetic order. And that is exactly what we did.

Now, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I met with the Speaker, the majority leader and the minority leader in the Speaker's rooms, and we presented the three names. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I both said we personally thought that Father O'Brien was the best. But that was our personal opinion, that was not the statement from the committee. The committee clearly intended that the decision be made by the three leaders, without any bias for what we had done. Our job was to go out and advertise, bring in applicants, interview them, narrow the field to three, and send the names up to be picked by the leadership.

This Speaker should be commended for opening the process. Three of the last four Democrat Speakers were Catholic. They never considered a priest. Over 50 years of the last 60-some in the history of this House, the Democrat party has been in charge. They never considered a priest.

So I think that we have said enough. The record was we did not rank these people, and the decision was to be made by the leadership without bias.

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CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET—FISCAL YEAR 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. UPTON). Pursuant to House Resolution 446 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 290.

□ 1655

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 290) with Mr. LAHOOD (Chairman pro tempore) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. When the Committee of the Whole House rose earlier today, 40 minutes of debate remained on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) has 17½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) has 22½ minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, before we were delayed for the proceedings that just concluded, I was involved with the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) in carrying out the statutory rights that we have as members of the Joint Economic Committee to discuss the budget in the context of our economy and the various aspects of the economy that may have something to do with policies of our government.

I would like to turn to another subject. I discussed Fed policy at some length earlier, and I would like to spend a few minutes discussing one other set of issues that had to do with the potential effect of high oil prices on the economy as we move forward.

As I said before, overall economic conditions are strong. Rising oil prices and gasoline prices are one of several economic issues, however, that concerns millions of Americans.

This week Energy Secretary Richardson began a trip to OPEC nations to try to convince them to lower sky-high oil and gas prices. I believe the administration should release some oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, like several other Members do, but there is another source of pressure also available to help American consumers.

A review of the situation reveals that U.S. taxpayer dollars are being provided to nations involved with the OPEC conspiracy to raise oil and gas prices. Consumers across America are outraged when they pull up to the pump and view each day or each week the rapid price increase in home heating fuel and gasoline prices over the last few months. In the section of the country where I live, that is the Northeast, I am from New Jersey, of course, we are especially hard hit because of our dependence on home heating oil.

OPEC's supply restrictions are a primary reason for these price hikes, I think all Americans know that today, and many Americans are justifiably angry at the oil producing nations and their allies. These citizens would be even more angry if they knew their hard-earned tax dollars were being funneled to key oil producing nations by the United States Government. That is right, billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars are being funneled to oil producers such as Algeria, Venezuela, Indonesia, and Mexico. These U.S. resources are first contributed to the international monetary fund, the IMF, and then lent to various nations at cut-rate rates.

The oil producers are now borrowing from the IMF at interest rates of about 4.7 percent, much lower interest rates than typical taxpayers can get on their home or their car or their credit card loans. Interest rates this low do not make any economic sense. Subsidies are being provided by taxpayers, our constituents, to these borrowing nations who are Members of OPEC who are forcing up the price of petroleum.

Many argue that this is a way to provide foreign aid or to promote U.S. interests. However, the IMF is not supposed to be an aid agency, and much of its activity does not reflect U.S. interests. Only a year ago I had to act to force the IMF to stop a planned mission to Iraq, another oil producing Nation that is also an enemy and on the U.S. list of states that sponsor terrorism.

□ 1700

If taxpayer subsidies to several of the oil-producing nations cause them to argue against OPEC supply reductions, this would be consistent with the argument that U.S. subsidies to the IMF and its borrowers were in our Nation's best interest. However, this is not the case. These oil producers cooperate with OPEC even after receiving IMF loans. In other words, they take our money and act against us anyway. In fact, at least four of these oil-producing nations have been among the most active borrowers of the IMF over the last 2 decades. One of these, of course, is Algeria, traditionally one of the hard-line price hawks in OPEC.

I am currently drafting legislation to address this situation, and I hope to have the grand support of Members from both sides of the aisle. We will address the situation by exerting pressure on oil-producing nations that are subsidized by U.S. taxpayers through the IMF. The U.S. Government should tell these countries in no uncertain terms that past aid extended through the IMF demands reciprocity now. The perpetual IMF borrowers should be reminded that the U.S. is the largest single source of IMF funds and that the U.S. will not support continued IMF borrowing by unfriendly nations. The U.S. Government, including the U.S. representative on the executive board of the IMF, should pressure oil-borrowing producers to undercut the OPEC cartel and let market forces lower oil prices. U.S. taxpayers are under no obligation, Mr. Chairman, to subsidize OPEC or its allies as they conspire to keep oil prices high.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN PRO TEMPORE

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Chair will remind all Members to remove charts and exhibits from the well of the House when they are not being utilized in debate. The point is, if Members are not utilizing these, they should not be exhibited. When the Members come to the well, they can use them; but when they are not in the well, they should be removed.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE).