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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord, merciful and gracious God, bless Congress today. You lead all into the desert in search of salvation. There light and darkness are bold and relentless, each night falling suddenly on the Nation's brightness. For in Your presence the barren land is timeless. As the cold mountains are once again awakened by the pounding, shake us into Lenten awareness.

Forty years seems hardly a lifetime anymore. Yet Your people wandered aimlessly through purification longing for Your promises to be fulfilled.

Forty days seems far longer than a month's time now. Yet removed from the crowd, Moses and Jesus climbed the desolate stage of this mountain to seek Your face.

This year make our annual desert story victorious by Your Holy Name. May Passover and Christian Pasch bring forth the first vestiges of peace. For this we pray now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN POSES A MOVING DISASTER

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, how much more simply can I say it, that shipping nuclear waste back and forth across this country 96,000 times is simply unsafe. Sure, proponents of the Yucca Mountain Project would say that some 3,000 shipments have already been made to destinations in America without any incidents. But let me say, I am sure that the elevators in the World Trade Center operated faultlessly until September 11. We cannot use the past to predict the future.

Mr. Speaker, terrorist threats against one of these many shipments is a real danger, and it would be foolish to disregard it. Moreover, the news program "60 Minutes" last year said that train accidents due to track failure are happening at a rate of nearly 1 every 24 hours. Just a few months ago the city of Baltimore was nearly shut down due to a chemical train accident.

Mr. Speaker, I am not willing to gamble on transporting the deadliest

substance known to man back and forth through 43 States, especially when DOE has no strategy or plan for the possibility of disaster. We need to protect our communities and constituents, protect our Nation. I urge Members to vote "no" on Yucca Mountain.

WHY ALL THE GIMMICKS?

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, remember the Social Security lockbox? Republican leadership had us vote on protecting Social Security with a lockbox eight times over 5 years. But now, of course, the lockbox has been ripped opened and plundered, and over the next 10 years it will finance tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans.

Now there is a new gimmick. Hey, certificates. Certificates suitable for framing on the wall and hanging next to the Enron stock certificate. They will be just as valuable. That is their new gimmick.

Mr. Speaker, why all of the gimmicks? Because they are proposing a privatization plan that will undermine the foundations of Social Security, cut benefits, increase the retirement age; or, phenomenally, increase the debt. They have yet to say how they are going to pay for their risky privatization plans, taking 2 percent, doubling the problem that Social Security has. Instead of Social Security running out of money in 2038 and only being able to pay 73 percent of benefits after that time, they have a plan that will run Social Security out of money in 2024. That is not a great plan.

THE AXIS OF EVIL

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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