

war. But I can assure you that as I go around my district I hear no clamor or even a weak desire to go to war against Iraq.

Saudi Arabia had much more to do with the September 11 tragedies than Iraq did. I heard yesterday that one of the main financial backers of the terrorists is from Kuwait. Yet we are not talking about going to war against Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, nor should we. We have been too quick to get involved in ethnic or religious disputes around the world. We have been too quick to drop bombs on people who want to be our friends. We turned NATO from a defensive organization into an offensive one in Bosnia.

Chris Matthews on "Hard Ball" the other night said, "In the past we always had the world on our side because we did not go to war unless we were attacked."

He strongly questioned this eagerness to go to war against Iraq. He said in a recent column that the American people are being "herded into war." A war that he says will just lead to more hatred of the U.S.

David Ignatius, the nationally syndicated columnist for the New York Herald Tribune and The Washington Post wrote on March 15: "How can the United States sell a war against Iraq to skeptical Arabs and Europeans? A good start would be to level with them and admit there is no solid evidence linking Baghdad to Osama bin Laden's terrorists attacks against America."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have questioned this eagerness to go to war against Iraq. Yesterday, William Raspberry, the very highly respected columnist for The Washington Post, in a nationally syndicated column repeated words he had written a dozen years ago. He wrote: "The prospect of a bloody war with no price worth the tens of thousands of American lives it would cost can make you a little nervous. I am getting a little nervous. It is not that I doubt the ability of America's fighting forces to take out a third-rate power like Saddam Hussein's Iraq. My doubts concern the purpose for doing so. Saddam is being described as a ruthless and power-mad tyrant bent on achieving political control of the Arab world. I do not question the description, but it does seem to me that most of the current saber rattling is coming from Washington, not Baghdad." And Mr. Raspberry continued: "I wrote those words a dozen years back when the first President Bush was contemplating the invasion of Iraq. Why are we rattling sabers now? The reason I recall my earlier doubts is that they are so much a carbon copy of my present ones." Mr. Raspberry says: "Maybe it was a mistake not to wipe out the last scrap of Iraq's military power back then, not to mow down the surrendering republican guard like shooting fish in a barrel. But surely the failure to do so then cannot justify a unilateral attack now."

Mr. Raspberry said: "We should not become the playground bully of the

word." In 1990, Saddam Hussein, who I am not praising or defending in any way, had invaded Kuwait and was threatening to go further.

We had to act and I voted for the original Gulf War. However, we later found out the Iraqi military strength had been greatly exaggerated. The so-called "elite" Praetorian Guards were surrendering to CNN camera crews or anybody who would take them. Hussein has been greatly weakened since then in almost every way. Let us not exaggerate his strength this time. If he starts to attack us, I will be the first to support a war effort, but please let us not provoke war. Let us not change the name of the Department of Defense into the War Department once again. We should not try to be the policemen of the world. We should try as hard as we can to reestablish our reputation as the most peace-loving Nation on the face of the Earth.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Ms. WATSON of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON of California. Mr. Speaker, Medicare does not cover the cost of prescription drugs, and as a result, approximately 10 million medical recipients nationwide lack any prescription drug coverage. It is estimated by the Kaiser Foundation that seniors spend on average \$1,756 per year for prescription drugs.

Due to the extraordinary cost of prescription drugs, millions of seniors will, A, have to choose between proper medication and rent; B, have to choose between proper medication and groceries; or, C, have to suffer because of improper doses of unaffordable medicines.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge this Congress. How dare we. How dare we affect the quality of life for our seniors by withholding funding for prescription drugs. How dare we dismiss our seniors with a poorly funded mandate that will not cover their needs. How dare we allow our Medicare seniors to be squeezed by an industry lobby when life and death is on the line.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to honor our seniors, respect their age and wisdom and their contributions to America. Fully fund medical prescription drug coverage.

PERMANENT ESTATE TAX REPEAL

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House of Representatives will consider a proposal by the Republican majority to permanently repeal the estate tax.

Now, we had a vigorous debate over the estate tax last year; and I along with many others supported a reform

of the estate tax that would lead to the exemption of 99½ percent of the estates in the United States of America. But to take and permanently repeal the tax as will be proposed tomorrow for the largest estates will be an extraordinarily expensive measure and add dramatically to the deficit of the United States and ultimately undermine the Social Security trust fund of the United States.

Permanent repeal would cost \$740 billion, B, billion dollars, over the next decade after 2012. But if we were to instead say, well, let us exempt the first \$5 million of everybody's estate, now that seems like a pretty reasonable step. We do not want people, for instance, in my district or in Oregon who own forestry, tree farms, to go out and prematurely harvest the trees so they have to pay their estates taxes. We do not want people to have to break up their small businesses so they can pay their estates taxes. Those things are well and good. We could do that. We could easily do that.

The current law will exempt by the year 2009 the first \$3.5 million of each estate. So let us just round that up to \$5 million. So if we did that, that would reserve \$400 billion in taxes or \$400 billion of money that would not be drained from the Social Security trust fund to help pay for the retirement of the baby boom.

Now, it is true that there would be some 4 or 500 estates a year worth more than \$5 million who would have to pay taxes to support the 53 million people on Social Security.

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I believe that they can afford that burden. Some say, well, we know they should not pay taxes twice. Well, guess what, most of them will not pay taxes twice. In fact, the way the current laws are set up, many of these estates have unrealized capital gains, and if those estates are exempt from taxation, not even the lower rate of capital gains will be paid.

The American working people have to pay day in, day out a substantial portion of their income to Social Security, day in, day out a substantial portion of their income in income taxes, but these people with the estates worth more than \$5 million would never, ever pay a penny in taxes. The unrealized capital gains would be rolled over into the estates, the estates would be tax-exempt, all at a cost of \$400 billion to the rest of the United States of America, the rest of the taxpayers in this country.

This is not fair. It is not fiscally prudent, and the Republican majority should be ashamed of pushing this through at this time of financial crisis. We are looking at a \$300 billion deficit this year. The Social Security lock box that they had us vote on seven times, which I voted for seven times, has been busted open and depleted. There is nothing, nothing going into it over the next 10 years, and for the next 10 years