

purify and clean that pristine body of water. But today we are here to talk about the employees of Plum Island.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. It is always a pleasure to work with him across district lines, across State lines, but for the common good and for a common purpose.

The interesting thing about Plum Island is that over the 50 years of its sensitive and secure research, there have not been any significant accidents or issues that might concern us, but the question has to be raised: If all of the operating engineers, the people that operate the boats, the people that operate the water systems, the people that operate the incinerators and the air-conditioning systems of this sensitive biological research facility are taken off the island and are not there because of this strike, the people who are licensed to operate all of these facilities are not there and we bring in outside workers from other facilities around the country, which bear no relationship to this kind of research, what risks exist? I realize that the managers say everything is great, everything is fine. I do not believe it. I think that there is a security issue that we have to be concerned about. I think that the sensitive mission that takes place out there is being disrupted because of the strike, and it is over a few nickels and dimes of health benefits and health care.

Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous situation for us to be in, when this body has authorized and appropriated literally billions of dollars in the fight against international terrorism and yet we are shortchanging reliable, honest, decent workers right here at home, right out there on Plum Island.

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with all of the comments and associate myself to them of the gentleman from Connecticut. One of the things that is hard for other people to understand is that when you look at the cost of living on Long Island and certainly out in that region, it is very costly, and to bring this to conclusion would be the right thing.

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#### CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT PLUM ISLAND RESEARCH CENTER

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

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House today and to share in a colloquy with the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS), and to continue this discussion that we have been having on Plum Island and Plum Island issues.

We have been talking about the need for this debate that is taking place about 50 cents for health care benefits to come to conclusion. One of the things that I have offered up, as I have been in constant communication with

the members and the leadership of Local 30, and I have been in constant communication with the White House on this issue, and I have spoken to the Under Secretary and to the Secretary of Agriculture on this issue; I have spoken to a number of people at LL&B on this issue to bring this thing to conclusion, and we have offered a mediator to come in to mediate these problems.

The gentleman whose name was put into consideration, and, I may add, has been accepted by the union as a viable alternative to the strike that we have going on out there, is the Commissioner of Labor for Suffolk County, Jack O'Donnell. Jack has a long and rich history in negotiating labor disputes between government and between labor and guiding them to a successful and complete resolution in the best interest of all parties concerned. We have not heard back from LL&B as to whether or not they would accept Mr. O'Donnell as the mediator, but we would encourage them to please consider this. It is very, very important that we bring this to conclusion.

There is an issue about safety on the island. We care very deeply about that. Plum Island's animal disease research work is being done at bio-safety level 3. We are concerned that any change in that would have a Draconian effect on the safety of the community and the people who live in that area, as it would now be able to do diseases and work on diseases that have no known cures. So one of the things that I worked on on the Committee on Science, as Plum Island was moving to homeland defense, was that an amendment be added that for any change in operation, the Department of Agriculture or the new Homeland Defense Department, must notify Congress so that we can have our voices heard on this decision, so that those who work on the island, those who live in that community, and those who share a common boundary with Plum Island can make sure that their quality of life is safe.

I yield now to my colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS), representing the Second Congressional District, as we share common ground, not only with the Long Island Sound, but with workers on Plum Island.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York. I have had the opportunity to go to the picket line in my district in Connecticut and meet and talk with all of the workers there. They want to get back to work. One of them said his wife is 7 months pregnant. He is concerned about the future of his job. She is concerned about whether he will have enough money over the next couple of months so that they can deal with the arrival of a firstborn.

Many of these workers have been out there for many years. They enjoy their work and they are good at it. But this contracting and recontracting and recontracting has degraded the numbers

of the workforce and has put tremendous burdens and pressures on them. To take away pay and benefits at the same time and to ignore binding arbitration requests and, in fact, it appears to ignore a request for mediation that was supposed to have taken place on September 4, is ridiculous under the circumstances.

Let me just share with the Chamber one situation we had a few years ago with the Naval Underwater Warfare Center in New London and in Newport, Rhode Island. When that facility was consolidated in Newport, all of the scientists who lived west of New London were now going to have to commute for an hour and a half to work. Many of the senior scientists retired or resigned because they did not want to do the commute. If Plum Island happens to be shut down because management cannot accommodate the marginal requests of the workers, where is this research going to be moved to? Ames, Iowa. And all of the dozens and dozens of skilled scientists and workers out there are going to have to make this critical choice: Do I move to Iowa, or do I find another job?

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation here which is ridiculous, because the capabilities of this facility that has been operated smoothly for 50 years is now at risk, and at a time when bioterrorism and threats to the food supply are so critical, it is absurd, it is absurd that the debate over these nickels and dimes for health care should be allowed to be sustained.

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Mr. GRUCCI. As my colleague will attest to, the work done at Plum Island has been exemplary. Those in the scientific community, those in the maintenance field, those who work on Plum Island have done an outstanding job, and it has just come to my attention that the teams did meet yesterday. We are hoping to bring them to conclusion.

I see that my time has expired, but let me close by saying I am squarely in support of the union and the labor movement on this. I think they are right. This is an issue of 50 cents, and for LL&B to close out any opportunity for them to come to conclusion is wrong. We need to bring this to a successful end.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JEFF MILLER of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. DAVIS of California, addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.