the privatization of Social Security, which would borrow trillions of dollars from the Social Security trust fund and drive it deeper into debt and imperil its opportunities to achieve solvency, but now he was offering something called progressive indexing, which would be a substantial cut in benefits under Social Security to middle-class recipients.

They were quite stunned to learn that those individuals who pay into Social Security every week from their paychecks, every month from their paychecks and all year long from their paychecks, that the President was now suggesting that they should take a cut in their benefits as a way of restoring solvency. They were not just stunned that the President was suggesting this one-two assault on Social Security, but they were also quite alarmed to learn that the President apparently has no intention of paying back the some $700 billion that his administration has borrowed from the Social Security trust fund, that the trust fund is, in fact, not being honored, the people that pay into that trust fund every year to the tune of some $160 billion, that that money is now being taken out to use for other functions of the government, whether it is the war in Iraq or whether it is the general spending of the government.

It is very clear that they want that trust fund restored. It is a trust fund. They are paying into it because they believe that that money is going to be put there, loaned to the government, replaced by Treasury bills, but it will be there for their use, for their annuities that they are buying every week when they pay into the Social Security fund.

But that is not what the President is suggesting. The President is suggesting, as he does in the budget that this House passed last week, that he will continue to borrow $160 billion out of the trust fund and, as he said when he went to West Virginia, it is really not a trust fund, there is no trust there, so apparently he is the first President since we started Social Security who has suggested that he may not pay the trust fund back.

That is just unacceptable to my constituents at the town hall in Martinez. I think it is unacceptable to the overwhelming number of the American public who believe that the reason they are paying into Social Security is so that they can have some level of financial security upon their retirement.

Social Security, for the current retirees, supplies over half of their retirement income. Sure, we all want to make it easier and better and more likely that Americans will save for their retirement. But that has not happened. Hopefully it will happen in the future. But Social Security is a very important part of people's retirements. When they look at the efforts by corporations to get rid of their retirement plans, when they look at the difficulty they are having as middle-class families to save not only for their child's education but for their retirement, they recognize how important it is that the Social Security trust fund be maintained.

But now this President comes along and suggests that that is not the case, that he is going to put an assault on that trust fund with the privatization of Social Security and then he is going to come along and cut the benefits to middle-class Social Security recipients who have paid into that trust fund throughout their entire working life. I think it is very clear that not only is this plan unacceptable to the vast numbers of Americans who have had a chance to take a look at it, but hopefully it will become unacceptable to this Congress as stewards of that trust fund.

But first and foremost, what the American people want us to do is to stop taking the money out of the trust fund to fund the rest of the government. We have got to honor what we set out to do in 1983 under the bipartisan agreement of Speaker Tip O'Neill, an icon of the Democratic Party, President Ronald Reagan, an icon of the Republican Party, when they sat down and hammered out a bipartisan agreement.

Part of that agreement was to create a trust fund, not some honey pot that any Member of Congress could go into and take out for whatever purpose they want but a trust fund for the retirement of millions and millions of Americans and their families.

It is important that we honor that, Mr. Speaker.

LOWELL STOUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Lowell Stout, a good friend who recently passed away in Hobbs, New Mexico.

Lowell was an attorney there. He moved to the area from Oklahoma after the Dust Bowl days in the 1930s. He always called himself a proud son of a sharecropper from Blaine Bottom, Oklahoma.

Lowell worked his way through school as a roughneck on drilling rigs. He also worked as an oil field roustabout. During the Korean War, he served in the Army. After his time in the service, he returned to Hobbs to practice law defending a variety of civil litigation matters. Later he began to specialize, representing the small guy in personal injury, plaintiff-related matters.

Lowell became a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers in 1981. He was selected to be included among the ''Best Lawyers in America.'' He was an early inductee into the Joe Roehl Circle of Honor which honors the finest trial lawyers in New Mexico.

I never asked Lowell if he was a Democrat or Republican. I suspect he was a Democrat. We never talked much about politics because we shared a common belief that the family was paramount. Lowell was the parent of Mark and Georgiann. Georgiann and I went to school together and graduated. She went on to San Francisco and lives there today. Son Mark stays in Hobbs. He and his wife Cindy have raised their family there.

The abiding memory of Mr. Stout is that he was always with his wife Liliane. They raised their family in Hobbs. He was a dedicated family man. In these days of partisan politics, I know that many times Mr. Stout disagreed with my opinions, but he frankly encouraged me to do the best that I could. He did the best that he could. I think that we ought to learn by his example: dedication and commitment to family, dedication and commitment to a wife.

Again, I salute Lowell Stout, a great lawyer, a fine human being, a friend and the father of friends of mine and the husband of a friend of mine.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 56 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Eternal Father, You are ever present to Your people, especially the young and the most vulnerable of society. As we pray for the Members of the United States House of Representatives today, we strain with eyes of faith to peer into the future. We know, Lord, that even now, You are preparing us for an uncertain age to come. By blessing this country with energetic and intelligent young people who have a clear vision of just what is right and a vibrant awareness of those suffering in the world, You are already providing our Nation with young leaders for tomorrow.

By Your grace, strengthen family life, that our young people mature in love and in freedom. Steeped in religious values, may they embrace the self-discipline and study necessary to achieve personal goals and realize their full potential.

May many young people be open to Your call to serve fellow Americans in public service, raise ethical standards in business, bring greater integrity and