Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for that

kind yielding of time to me.

Mr. Speaker, this is a quote: ‘‘I’m

concerned about living with my conscience, and searching for that which is

right and that which is true, and I cannot live with the idea of being just a

conformist following a path that everybody else follows. And this has happened to us. As I’ve said in one of my

books, so often we live by the philosophy ‘Everybody’s doing it, it must be

alright.’ we tend to determine what is

right and wrong by taking a sort of

Gallup poll of the majority opinion,

and I don’t think this is the way to get at what is right.

‘‘Arnold Toynbee talks about the creative minority and I think more and

more we must have in our world that

creative minority that will take a

stand for that which conscience tells

them is right, even though it brings

about criticism and misunderstanding and even abuse.’’

That is excerpted from a 1967 interview of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today as a

part of a creative minority in Congress

who oppose this apparently inevitable

resolution granting the President the

authority to use force to remove Saddam Hussein from power. But I will not

be a silent minority. I know who Saddam Hussein is. I

know he has viciously killed hundreds

of thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq

with chemical and biological weapons.

I know he has murdered members of his

own cabinet; in fact, his own family. I

remember vividly his aggressions in

Iran and Kuwait and the SCUD missiles

he launched into Israel in the Gulf

War. I know the contempt he has

shown toward the U.N. and its weapons

inspectors as they attempted to en-

force post-Gulf War resolutions; and I

know that the world, and particularly

the Gulf region, would be a better and

safer place without Saddam Hussein in

power and those of his ilk in power.

But I also know that the resolution

before us is a product of haste and hubris, rather than introspection and humility.

I have seen President Bush confront the Iraq question with arrogance

and condescension, initially bullying

this Congress, our international allies,

and the American people with accusations and threats and tales of terror

eliciting fear in their hearts and minds.

President Bush has told us that war

is not inevitable, but does anyone really believe that? For months, this administration has marched inexorably

towards an attack on Iraq, changing its

rationale to suit the circumstances. I

have no doubt that, regardless of what

we do here or what Saddam does there,

we will go to war. I pray I am wrong.

The CIA today said Saddam is unlikely to initiate a chemical or biological attack against the United States

and presented the alarming possibility

that an attack on Iraq could provoke

him into taking the very actions this

administration claims an invasion would prevent.

I know, too, who we are. America has

never backed down from a just war.

From the Revolutionary era to the

Civil War, across Europe, Asia, and Africa, in two world wars, just a dozen

years ago in the Persian Gulf, and

countless missions to faraway places

like Bosnia, Kosovo, Liberia, and Afghanistan, America fought. We fought

with righteousness, determination, and

vision. We fought because principles

and freedoms were threatened. We fought because fighting was our last

choice. America has always fought with a vision to the future and has been merciful and generous in our victories.

But the White House has not offered

any vision for post-Saddam Iraq. As a

Nation founded on moral principles, we

have a moral obligation to prepare a

plan for rebuilding Iraq before we declare war. Iraq, like Afghanistan and

many of the other nations in the Gulf

region, is made up of many ethnic

groups that will compete for power in

the vacuum that is created by Saddam

Hussein’s ouster. But as important as

the tactical plans to overthrow Saddam Hussein are, we must address how

we intend to help the Iraqi people institute a democratic government.

I ask the President, can he not answer a few simple questions: Have we

completed the war on terrorism? What

happened to Osama bin Laden? Do we

know how long a war in Iraq would

last? Has there been any assessment

for the American people of how much a

war in Iraq will cost our economy?

Does he have any idea of the human

loss we should expect in a war with Iraq?

Instead of answers, he gives us bombast. Yes, we have all heard the rhetoric: Saddam is evil, Saddam hates

America, Saddam must be stopped, and

you are either with us or against us. If

you are not with us, we don’t need you.

But when the rhetoric is peeled away,

truth emerges. Mr. Speaker, I cannot go on but I say

to all of my colleagues, let us be the

creative minority. Vote against allowing force against Iraq.