Mr. Speaker, I thank

my colleague from Illinois for yielding

me this time.

I rise today in strong opposition to

the amendment offered by our friend,

the gentleman from South Carolina

(Mr. SPRATT). The amendment in the

nature of a substitute basically puts us

in a position of having to go to the

U.N. and get a resolution of support or,

if the U.N. cannot act or will not act,

requires the Congress to come back and

to have another vote.

I think one of the points that is missing

in this debate is that it seems as

though people think the President is

not acting in a unilateral way.

We are the only superpower on the

face of the Earth. We as a Nation, as a

result, have a responsibility to lead. I

think that the underlying resolution

does, in fact, strengthen the President’s

hand to lead and to continue to

build multilateral support. I believe

that the amendment offered today basically

undercuts the President’s ability

to continue to lead us and to build

a multilateral action.

Secondly, the President is being very

deliberate about this. This effort has

been under way for the last 8 weeks.

The President continues to consult

with Members of Congress in both bodies,

continues to work with our allies,

continues to work with the U.N., and I

think all of us would agree that the

President made a forceful case for action

because he was at the U.N.

Again, the amendment that we have

before us handcuffs the President in

terms of his ability to continue to

bring about positive action at the

United Nations.

Now, we have 16 amendments passed

by the United Nations over the last 11

years dealing with chemical and biological

weapons. What makes us believe

that Saddam Hussein or anyone

else who is going to act, if in fact the

U.N. would ever act? But more importantly,

why would we want to put the

security and the freedom of the people

of our country at risk or put them in

the hands of the U.N. Security Council

in hoping, maybe, that they will act.

The fact is in 1991 during the Gulf

War we had a debate here and we kept

hearing the same thing we are hearing

now: wait, wait, wait. If we had waited

any longer in 1991, the Iraqi regime

would have been into Saudi Arabia and

we would have had a much larger crisis

than we have. The fact is that we have

waited for a long time to bring this regime

to a halt and to take away their

threat, and I believe the underlying

resolution done by the majority leader

and the Speaker, along with the minority

leader, gives the President the

strongest hand possible in terms of

building a multilateral coalition and,

most importantly, protecting the

American people whom we are sent

here to represent.