Mr. Speaker, like many senior Democrats, I supported

George Herbert Walker Bush in going into Iraq the first time. I also

served my country in World War II, and I know a little about the

military.

But I want to talk about this curious process that we are going

through today. I want to talk about this resolution. If we look, the

Committee on Rules has given us a closed rule. No Democratic amendments

are allowed. No real discussion is permitted. And it says so in the

report. If my colleagues do not believe me, they should get a copy of

it. No Democratic sponsors. Very little Democratic support or

consultation on this side with the Members.

If we want to have bipartisan support for what we are doing over

there, there is a way to do it. It may well be my Republican colleagues

do not know it. But a little consultation over here could be useful. I

think my colleagues on the Republican side should know what the problem

is. It is where we make an affirmation that the United States and the

world have been made safer with the removal of Saddam Hussein and his

regime. Have we really been made safer? Let us look at it. We have

committed the entirety of our military to serve over there. We have

nothing to meet a problem which might exist in Korea or somewhere else

where there are atom bombs and weapons of mass destruction now readily

available. No weapons of mass destruction have been found. Mr. Kay and

Mr. Blix both said none. The President said they are there. Now the

President has admitted they are not. And, of course, my Republican

colleagues now want to purge themselves of responsibility for what is

evidence of some kind of either disingenuous behavior or outright

dishonesty in committing us to a war on the theory that there were

weapons of mass destruction there.

Now we also have our Republican colleagues in the curious position

where they say that al Qaeda is operating there, and al Qaeda probably

is operating there, and we must ask again if we are safer because al

Qaeda operates there. The fact of the matter is there is no evidence at

any time previously, and the administration has to admit it, that al

Qaeda or any terrorist group was functioning out of Iraq. That is

something that has now been manufactured in the teeth of admissions by

the administration that that kind of situation does not obtain.

I do not want to say whether the administration has deceived the

American people intentionally or otherwise. That will be decided by

history, and we are going to have to let the Republicans and their

administration decide whether it was an exercise of supreme

incompetence or whether there was dishonesty or some curious mixture of

the above. I do not want to pollute this debate with that kind of

discussion.

But I do want to point out some things. We are not safer now with the

troops that we have all committed over there and the inability to

address problems that exist in Korea or elsewhere in the world where

people might stir up trouble, or in Iran, immediately next door, or,

for that matter, in Pakistan, or in other places where there are

dictators who are anxious and willing and able to make trouble. We are

not stronger in this country because we have committed, as my good

friend from Pennsylvania says, 150-some billion dollars. The number is

actually more like $186 billion over there.

That is money that will not be available for schools and education

and health. It is money that is not going to be able to assist us to

deal with threats to the security of this Nation from other causes,

from the risks that exist in the other countries that do make trouble.

This is the defect of this process. If we want to deal with this

thing of our commitment in Iraq, I say to my Republican colleagues,

address it in a real bipartisan way. Let us consult. Let us work

together. Let us consult together so that we can pull together in the

interests of the United States. Because every man and woman in this

Chamber wants to bring those young people home safe, with dignity and

honor. Every person in this Chamber wants to see to it that we win over

there. And every American in this Chamber is committed to seeing to it

that we not only bring our people home safe, but to see to it that we

win, and that we now do correct the problems of having committed

ourselves to what was essentially a very unwise war on the basis of

unwise statements which had little or no basis in fact.

That is the way we should be addressing this issue. We should not be

bringing forward to the House something that looks like a pronouncement

from the Republican National Committee that has all of the

bipartisanship that one can find in such an undertaking. We should be

talking and working together about how we bring Americans together now

to address this question. Patriotic Americans are still entitled to

speak their thoughts. Patriotic Americans are still entitled to have

answers to why we are in this mess. And sensible, intelligent men and

women are entitled to ask why we are in this mess.

Mr. Speaker, history tells us what we are looking at. The British

went in in 1920 to Iraq. They left Iraq after a dozen years of warfare

over there. They had lost thousands of British troops' lives, hundreds

of millions of pounds, each one of those pounds was worth somewhere

between $50 and $100 U.S. dollars today, and they still were not able

to win, to get the peace that they wanted, to establish a world in that

area where things would go the way honest and decent human beings

wanted it.

Iraq is a country which is driven by racial and religious

differences. We have the Sunnis, the Shi'ias, we have the Kurds, the

Turkmens, the Catholics, the Christians, and the Chaldeans over there.

None of them like each other and all of them distrust each other

intensely.

We are losing today about one American every day, one American, dead;

but thousands of them maimed and killed in the most gruesome of ways.

We need to understand that we have to pull together. This is not the

mechanism for that.

These people over there and the United States are not more safe

because of this. We are not focusing on international problems which

threaten us. We are not able to spend the resources which we need

because we are spending them over there and cannot now spend them over

here on schools and education and health and other things that are

important to our people.

This is the wrong way to proceed. I say shame.