Mr. Speaker, Last Sunday Vice President Cheney appeared

on NBC's ``Meet the Press'' and provided a vivid example of George

Santayana's admonition that

After 3\1/2\ years of bloody combat; after our Nation has lost more

than 2,600 of our military's finest; after thousands more of our brave

men and women have been wounded; after we have spent more than $300

billion; with no end in sight to the insurgency and Iraq plunging into

civil war; and after finding no weapons of mass destruction, the very

basis of that war, the Vice President told the American people that

Never mind that the next day the Washington Post published an article

on the front page entitled

which revealed that the

Marine Corps Chief of Intelligence had recently completed a report that

concluded the prospects for securing Iraq's western Anbar province are

``dim'' and that there is almost nothing the U.S. military can do to

improve the political and social situation there. According to Vice

President Cheney

Never mind that our invasion of Iraq was predicated on the need to

neutralize Saddam Hussein's active nuclear weapons program and destroy

his stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. But no weapons were

ever found. According to Vice President Cheney

Never mind that retired senior military officers, former U.S.

diplomats, and a wide range of military and foreign policy experts see

our efforts to pacify Iraq as undermined by a host of mistakes the

administration has made in the prosecution of the war, including the

failure to bring enough troops to secure the peace and the catastrophic

decision to stand down the Iraqi army. According to our Vice President,

Never mind that our troops went into battle without adequate body

armor and up-armored vehicles. According to the Vice President,

Never mind that countless billions have been spent on reconstruction

with little to show for the effort, many billions unaccounted for.

According to Vice President Cheney,

Earlier this year House and Senate Democrats unveiled our ``Real

Security'' agenda that lays out a blueprint for a new direction in

Iraq. Our plan calls for the establishment of full Iraqi sovereignty,

provides for the responsible redeployment of our forces to better

protect our troops and to facilitate the transfer of authority, and

provides oversight, vigorous oversight, of the prosecution of the war

and the reconstruction of Iraq. This new direction in Iraq was rejected

by the Republican majority in the House, which has endorsed the

President's stay-the-course policy in Iraq, a policy which amounts to

nothing more than more of the same.

The majority in this House is complicit in this failed policy through

its failure to oversee the war and to hold accountable those officials

who have failed our troops and the American people. That failure of

oversight and the need to hold people accountable has plagued Iraq from

the very beginning, and because this Congress, this Republican

Congress, refuses to hold the President to account, we keep making the

same mistakes over and over again.

On April 26 of this year, in the International Relations Committee, I

asked the administration witnesses in our first hearing on Iraq whether

they could name any individual who had been held accountable for the

myriad failures in prosecuting the war on Iraq. The witnesses were

silent for an interminable 14 seconds before the Assistant Secretary of

State replied The answer,

however, is no one has been held accountable.

That lack of oversight, the absence of accountability, the stubborn

refusal to acknowledge that mistakes have been made has brought us to

the precipice in Iraq. But as the Vice President revealed so clearly

last week, the senior officials in our government still blithely

insist, If we had to do it over again, we would do exactly the same

thing.

Our troops in Iraq, their families here at home, the families of

those who have served deserve better than a stubborn insistence that

all is well when it is not, that no mistakes have been made when there

have been many, that no correction in course will be made because to do

so would acknowledge error. That is unacceptable.

The Democrats will provide a new direction in America. The Democrats

will provide a new direction for our national security. There is no

time more than now when a new direction is necessary.