Mr. Speaker, one cannot doubt that the American

objective in Iraq has failed. Those are not my words. They were written

last week by William F. Buckley, the godfather of modern American

conservatism.

In a column entitled, It Did Not Work, Mr. Buckley urges an

acknowledgment of defeat in Iraq. If President Bush has lost William F.

Buckley, then his Iraq policy is in a heap of trouble.

By the way, I am eager to see if Mr. Buckley is labeled a treasonous

coward, as my friend and colleague Mr. Murtha was when he made similar

points a few months ago.

Who could blame Mr. Buckley, or anyone else with a pulse, for that

matter, at arriving at this conclusion?

While we were away for our district work period, the bombing of a

Shiite shrine ignited the most gruesome carnage that Iraq has ever seen

since the war began nearly 3 years ago. The Washington Post reported on

its front page this morning that a staggering 1,300 people died in last

week's sectarian violence.

The Post reported,

Is this what looks like, Mr. Speaker?

But we should not be surprised. It is not as if no one saw this

coming. Those of us who opposed the Iraq war before it even started

warned that an invasion would open up a Pandora's Box of ethnic strife

that we would be unable to tame, that could lead to full-blown civil

war.

The administration's Iraq policy is a tragic blunder of historic

proportions. I can hardly believe that we have sacrificed 2,300

Americans and spent a quarter of a trillion dollars all so Iraq could

slip into chaos and lawlessness, with the political process now hanging

by the flimsiest of threads.

My heart weeps for our soldiers who have been put in this impossible

situation. Various news reports describe some of our troops as hanging

back during last week's violence. Why? Because rather than being able

to calm the uprisings, they know that their very presence is actually

one of the main catalysts for the violence in the first place. No

wonder a new poll shows that our servicemen and -women in Iraq believe

we should leave and we should leave soon, with less than a quarter

agreeing with President Bush that we should stay as long as it takes.

Here you see a complete folly that is our policy. Our preemptive

occupation lit the original match that grew into this uncontainable

inferno. We do not have a hose to put it out. In fact, we pour gasoline

on the fire every single day, a fire that is destroying Iraq, killing

our soldiers, sending them home wounded almost beyond repair. And for

what reason? If we are doing more harm than good, if we are a force for

resentment and divisiveness, rather than peace and stability, what are

we doing there?

Mr. Speaker, it has never been clearer that it is time to bring our

troops home.