Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I do think

it deserves a bit of reiteration that the Iraq Watch has been meeting

some months now, and that the record is fully available, not only

through the normal aspect of the Congressional Record, which is

available to the population of the United States nationwide, but it is

also available, I know, on the Web site that I have set up, and I

believe other Members can do the same should they wish. What I am doing

now for those who are listening and have an interest, it now is on my

Web site. The Iraq Watch in its entirety appears.

So we have a kind of cyber-archive now of what we are doing with Iraq

Watch. And it will be interesting, I think, in time to come to go back

over it and see where we were, where we were going. Not because we are

standing here on the sidelines, merely commenting as we go along, but

rather we are trying to stimulate debate, trying to stimulate

discussion, trying to stimulate the body politic through the means

available to us here in the House.

We are the people's house. For those who just may be tuning in now,

going down the cable channels and seeing C-SPAN, what are they talking

about tonight, we are talking about our sons and daughters. We are

talking about the blood and treasure of the United States. We are

talking about the basic values of this country. We are talking about

whether we are falling into the trap of a neo-imperialism, a 21st-

century version of imperialism that would be anathema to values of the

United States, the United States as we have known it and as we have

wanted it to be.

And in that context, I would like to read an excerpt from David

Fromkin's new book called: A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the

Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East.'' Again, for

those who, and I will repeat it at the end of my excerpt as well, David

Fromkin's ``A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

and the Creation of a Modern Middle East.''

And I am quoting:

``Churchill, when he took office as Colonial Secretary [1921],

brought with him a broad strategic concept of how to hold down the

Middle East inexpensively. While he was still Secretary of Air and War

[1919-20], Churchill had proposed to cut Middle East costs by governing

Mesopotamia,'' which essentially is modern-day Iraq, ``by means of

airplanes and armored cars. A few well-protected air bases,'' he wrote

at the time, ``would enable the Royal Air Force to operate in every

part of the protectorate and to enforce control now here, now there,

without the need of maintaining long lines of communication, eating up

troops and money.

``Viewing imperialism as a costly drain on a society that needed to

invest all of its remaining resources in rebuilding itself, the bulk of

the British press, public, and Parliament agreed to let the government

commit itself to a presence in the Arab Middle East only because

Winston Churchill's ingenious strategy made it seem possible to control

the region inexpensively.

``Thus the belief, widely shared by British officials during and

after the First World War, that Britain had come to the Middle East to

stay at least long enough to reshape the region in line with European

political interests, ideas, and ideals, was based on the fragile

assumption that Churchill's aircraft-and-armored-car strategy could

hold local opposition at bay indefinitely. In turn, that assumption was

another expression of the underestimation of the Middle East that had

typified British policy all along. It had shown itself when [Foreign

Secretary Edward] Grey disdained the offer of an Ottoman alliance in

1911; when [Prime Minister Herbert] Asquith in 1914 regarded Ottoman

entry in the war as being of no great concern; and when [War Minister

Horatio] Kitchener, in 1915, sent his armies to their doom against an

entrenched and forewarned foe at Gallipoli in an attack the British

Government knew would be suicidal if the defending troops were of

European quality, Kitchener's fatal assumption being that they were

not.

``In 1922 the British Government had arrived at a political

compromise with British society, by the terms of which Britain could

assert her mastery in the Middle East, so long as she could do so at

little cost. To British officials who underestimated the difficulties

Britain would encounter in governing the region, who indeed had no

conception of the magnitude of what they had undertaken, that meant

Britain was in the Middle East to stay. In retrospect, however, it was

an early indication

that Britain was likely to leave,'' unquote, from David Fromkin's ``A

Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottomon Empire and the Creation

of the Modern Middle East.''

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting there is a direct

parallel. I am suggesting that the history of the Middle East is not

something that just suddenly occurred in 1990, or 1989 and 1990, with

Saddam Hussein moving into what is now Kuwait.

I suggest that there is a history here, a long history here, a

detailed history here. I suggest that mistakes were made in the past as

to what could and could not be done in the Middle East, particularly in

the area known as Mesopotamia; in other words, modern-day Iraq. And

they are well on the way to making the same mistakes over again for the

same reasons that they were made before, because we think that we can

impose a United States' version of a 21st-century imperialism, and that

all of the cards will fall on the table in place, that everything will

operate as we wish it to operate and that we can in fact control

events.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, is he

aware that when Ayatollah Seestani sent people into the street or

encouraged people to go into the street in these demonstrations, that

the cry was one man one vote?

Mr. Speaker, it is of course one man, one vote,

because our governing council recently ruled that women would no longer

have the political rights that they had under Saddam Hussein. We are

going to take a step backward from Saddam Hussein's government who, at

least on paper, had women as the equal of men when it came to their

political rights.

So if the governing council that we appointed has its way, it will

retreat from that which we have struggled to achieve in the United

States. You may have ethnic equality, you may have racial equality, but

you are not going to have gender equality. That is for sure. They

really mean it when they say one man, one vote.

Mr. Speaker, oh, yes, I can tell the gentleman right

now, there are women's groups organizing all over Iraq at the present

time, demanding that they get their rights back from the group that we

are supporting which is supposedly bringing them democratic freedom.

So the plain fact of the matter is that not only is this call out in

the street for direct elections, but they are, in fact, utilizing the

concept of a single person and a single vote, hopefully.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for Mr. McClellan

or anyone else to do that when the President himself in the space of

the last week or so has indicated at least twice that he did not know

the facts, that he was anxious to find out what the facts were, that he

too, presumably meaning ``in addition'' would like to find out what was

going on or what had happened.

Now, this is the President of the United States. Hundreds of people

are dead, thousands of people have been grievously wounded.

Speaking of the prestige that the gentleman referred to, that has

been literally destroyed the world over. We now have the Secretary, the

spectacle, the spectacle of the Secretary of the State now wondering

whether or not he would have made the same recommendations had he had

other information, at the same time when many of us here were saying,

let us take a deep breath, let us be sure we know what we are doing.

The inspections are working; the inspections were underway.

We were not getting the information back that the administration

wanted to hear. That is the difficulty. My memory is not in such

difficult straits that I cannot recall what happened during those

times. I realize we are now at a point that would understand only too

well where inconvenient thought is shoved down the memory hole. We

simply put it out of sight and pretend it did not happen. The plain

fact of the matter is that there were cries all across this country, an

outcry all across the country saying that the inspection process has

not yet completed its task. We need to do that at a minimum before we

go to war.

It is one thing for people to talk about supporting the troops. It is

one thing to talk about whether the definition of imminent is the same

for everybody across the spectrum, but you cannot say that a political

policy which has failed to do the minimum necessary before there is a

commitment to war is something that needs to be defended in the name of

defending the troops.

Mr. McClellan or the President, neither Mr. McClellan speaking for

the President nor Mr. Bush can get off that easy, nor can they claim

that this is a situation that needs now to be explored in the aftermath

of this tragedy.

I submit that we are now in a situation that needs further

explanation. My understanding now is that we have announced that we are

going to be leaving on the 30th of June of this year. We are now in

February. March, April, June. We are talking about in 100 days we are

ostensibly going to turn over authority to somebody or something in

Iraq. Is there anybody here who can tell me who is going to have

authority, what institutional framework or structure is going to

exercise that authority? I cannot find out who it is.

Is it going to be United Nations inspectors? No, they have been told

they were inadequate. Is it going to be United Nations observers or

administrators in some form? They left. I understand that the United

States now in

some fashion is in discussions with them as to whether they will come

back in. To do what? With whom?

It is very interesting, one need only go to this issue of the New

York Times Magazine for February 1, this past Sunday, and this article

on what the Shiites really want. A quote from a U.S. official, ``We can

fight the Suunis, but we cannot fight the Shiites, not if they organize

against us. There are too many of them.''

Is that what we have been reduced to? Is that what the policies are

involved here? If you want to talk about imminent danger, how about the

imminent danger of people demanding direct elections so that they can

conduct their own affairs.

This is the situation that we find ourselves in today. This is the

situation that we have to confront. This is a situation that will not

allow us to continue to merely stand on the side and observe the

President trying to get the facts. He should have had the facts before

he committed us into war. And he should get the facts now on what it

takes in order for us to be able to exert such influence as we can in a

positive way now that we have entered into this imperialist dream of

imposing our authority on Iraq in the wake of Saddam Hussein's capture.

If the gentleman would yield, I think I can provide

you with an answer of what a weapons of mass destruction-related

program activity was.

I will be happy to do so. What we have discovered,

we said if we can only get to those Iraqi scientists, they have the

answer, which was just what was going to happen with the U.N.

inspectors. What did we find out when we got to those scientists? The

scientists told us that they were destroying the weapons of mass

destruction and that the program activity was destroying the weapons of

mass destruction. That is what the activity was, and these scientists

were doing it, and they had papers to show it. If we could just get to

the papers of those Iraqi scientists, that would tell us what happened.

Yes, they destroyed the weapons of mass destruction.

What Saddam Hussein was doing, a ruthless lying dictator, was

ruthlessly lying about what he was doing. He wanted to give the

illusion that there were these weapons, because he wanted to give the

illusion that he was some great and powerful dictator, and we were

buying it. That is the problem here is that we are actually relying on

the veracity of a lying, ruthless dictator.

Maybe part of the reason for that is we have been relying on his

goodwill all along anyway. If I have to hear one more time about

weapons that were used on his own people, I would like to ask the

President, was that before or after the Secretary of Defense in another

capacity was congratulating him for it and getting his picture taken

with him and shaking his hands? Was that before or after this country

was giving approval to Saddam Hussein to use those weapons and making

certain that he knew that that was not going to interfere with our

support, tacit or otherwise, for his war against Iran?

So, yes, there were program activities all right, program activities

that we needed to know about in detail so that we could present an

accurate and truthful picture to the American people.

We would be up to our eyeballs in it.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, having

been a probation officer at one time in my checkered career, I can tell

my colleagues a little bit about con men and how they operate. I will

tell you how a con succeeds. A con succeeds not because of the special

insight of the one perpetrating the con. The person who does that, the

con man, is not depending even on his own skill. He is depending on the

desire of the other person to have the conclusion that they want to

have come out. It is preordained they want the con. You cannot succeed

with a con unless the other person is playing into it with you. They

think they are getting something for nothing, or they think that

something they want very much to be real is actually going to happen.

You are going to win; you are going to succeed; you are going to be

able to work the angle; you are going to be able to get something that

somebody else does not have.

All you have to do is look at the record of the desire of the

advisers to Mr. Bush and their determination to reenter the Middle East

along the same lines as I read from the Churchill imperial era, and to

come back into with their version in the 21st century, they want those

weapons to be there. They wanted to take any scrap of information that

came in and turn it into proof positive that what they wanted to do and

the policies they wanted to follow of going in there and having a war

with Iraq was something that was substantiated by the information that

they were getting. It did not matter that it may have gone the other

way. It did not matter it was ambiguous, tenuous, or that it was

fragments.

What mattered was, is something was being said about it, and they

were bound and determined to turn that into information which could be

construed as being supportive of having to go to war. No matter what

happened, they were going go to war.

I find it very, very instructive that the Secretary of the Treasury's

book that has just come out has been denounced along with him. He

apparently has turned into an apostate, too, in the process simply by

saying that these impressions and his honest impression as related in

his book was that from the moment he entered service to the Bush

administration, that they were determined to go to war; that no matter

what happened they were going to go to war.

So as we take a look at this and see what happened in the past, that,

it seems to me, is prelude to the future. And so I suggest for our

upcoming Iraq Watches that we take up the question, then, of what is

going to happen on June 30; who are we going to be dealing with; what

are the circumstances under which authority is to be turned over in

Iraq by the United States; is this going to be yet another election

ploy? Because the Bush administration is trying to use support for

troops being synonymous with support for the war for election year

purposes now, and I am very anxious to find out whether this transfer

of authority is also going to be used for election purposes or are we

going to actually be able to do something that will advance democracy

in Iraq. I think we need to concentrate on that.

And none likely to come.