Mr. Speaker, while we were in our districts late June

and early July, celebrating the anniversary of our independence day, we

handed over to the citizens of Iraq the gift of their independence, 2

days early no less.

Barely on anyone's radar screen, sovereignty passed from the

Coalition Provisional Authority to the new Iraqi provisional

government. By most barometers, except for the naysayers of this

administration, this was a big success. In the United States, we kept

our word of giving the Iraqi people back their country. On Wall Street,

in Asia and in Europe, the stock markets rallied. Gas prices continued

their slide down: Average gasoline prices tumbled 7 cents a gallon from

mid June to mid July, according to the new report from AAA. But to whom

was this triumph most important? The free Iraqi people.

As I say, there are naysayers who likely did not celebrate this good

news: The radical Islamist world, terrorists, al Qaeda, and a few

political partisans. To them, it is not about Iraq, the people, it is

about the President they want to see fail.

On what grounds do I say this? Well, on Monday, June 28, CNN heard

Wendy Sherman, a former State Department counselor in the Clinton

administration, say ``I hope we have turned a corner, but obviously I

think we need a change in presidents to really change the corner.''

The President overthrew a brutal dictatorship, he arrested Saddam

Hussein, he has since handed him over to Iraqi courts, restored or

built new infrastructure, and set up a provisional government within 1

year following the attacks, and we need a change in the Presidency? Mr.

Speaker, if you had to pick a team, would you rather play with those

who see victory or those who see defeat?

Now, back to the Iraqi people. A recent poll of 2,200 Iraqi

households by an Iraqi firm shows that half of Iraqis interviewed

believe Iraq is headed in the right direction; 65 percent think they

will be better off; 73 percent believe the handover of authority to the

interim government will improve the current situation.

The Iraqi people now enjoy an administrative law system with

sovereignty, justice, and rights of free expression, justice, thought,

and conscience. That such optimism abounds following decades of

tyranny, war, and terror reminds me of a speech by a citizen of a

former colony of the British empire at its waning days, spoken at their

handover, a citizen who made an impassioned plea for his countrymen to

march into the destiny before them and create a land of democracy and

freedom. That was August 14, 1947, by the eventual prime minister, Mr.

Nehru, when he gave his speech on the granting of Indian independence.

Of course, there are spectacular differences, Mr. Speaker, between

the two countries and the situation. India was a colony of another

nation, not a sovereign country; whereas, Iraq has been hostage to an

internal tyrant of their own blood and nationality. However, the mood

of a nation and a people on the cusp of a new day, standing in the sun

on their own, with the blessings of the free world, is somewhat

transferable.

Mr. Nehru's entire speech is inspiring and lyrical, but there are two

particular passages I find applicable to the handover the world is

watching now. Nehru begins, ``A moment comes, which comes but rarely in

history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends,

and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is

fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to

the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of

humanity.''

Mr. Speaker, the Iraqis too are the soul of a nation, long

suppressed, finding utterance, and I wish them the joys and the

blessings of liberty. And I close with this uplifting benediction of

Mr. Nehru's. ``To the nations and peoples of the world we send

greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering

peace, freedom, and democracy.''

Nehru admonished his fellow Indians that it would not be enough to

work for peace within India's border, or the border with Pakistan, but

that to be truly

peaceful citizens of the world, Indians must cooperate with their

international neighbors in ``furthering peace, freedom, and

democracy.''

I wish and I hope that citizens of Iraq will think this, and think

not only of civil rest within their great nation, but the opportunity

for the dawning of a new day across the troubled swath of their

neighborhood of the world.