Mr. Speaker, I will give the gentleman a nonanswer

answer. The nonanswer is we could pose another question, which is why

did the first President Bush not go in and eliminate Saddam Hussein

when he had that information as well? And that is an interesting

historical issue, but it is one that is not pertinent to why I came

here tonight, and I would like to address that issue.

I think the issue is that Congress has a responsibility to fulfill

now, which is to hold the administration accountable if, in fact, it

created a false impression in the American people. And this is an

interesting academic issue, whether it was contacts or collaboration or

something more, but the bottom line is the President enjoyed some

popular support for this war based on two pillars: the first pillar

being his assertion that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, and

that has now by and large been shown to be a falsehood; and the second

pillar was that Saddam Hussein was responsible for killing over 2,000

Americans on September 11.

And that was the impression that this President created. In fact, in

a poll taken in September, 2003, 69 percent of Americans said they

believed Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the attacks.

Here is the question I have, and then I will answer it: Where did 69

percent of the American people get the impression that Saddam Hussein

was personally involved in the attacks of September 11? Did they get it

from just reading The New York Times? I do not think so. Did they get

it just watching Dan Rather? I do not think so. Did they get it from

reading the penny press at home? I do not think so. They got it from

President George Bush, who did everything possible to create the

impression that Iraq was associated with the attack, an ally, in the

attack of September 11.

Why do I say that? Because that is the language President Bush used.

On May 1, 2003, he said: ``The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance

in the campaign against terror. We have removed an ally of al Qaeda and

cut off a source of terrorist funding.''

The interesting thing that I challenge anyone to show me, the

September 11 Commission reached what appears to me to be a factual

conclusion. It appears to me to be the most rational conclusion I think

we can make on the evidence we have. They said: ``We have no credible

evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the

United States.'' That is what they said. I believe that is most likely

to be true.

When did President George Bush ever say we have no credible evidence

that al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States? When the

President of the United States was urging another war, a preemptive

attack on another country, without significant international

assistance, and when he would believe that if a misimpression was

created by the American public, it could lead to the wrong conclusion,

did this President come forward and say the truth, which was there may

have been some contacts, some discussions, between al Qaeda and Saddam

Hussein's agents, they were way back in 1994, there was no active

collaboration that took place, but I want to make sure the American

people understand this one central tenet, because I want to make sure

there is no confusion here: As far as we know, Saddam Hussein was not

behind the attacks on September 11, and I do not want anybody starting

a war based on this false impression.

Did the President of the United States ever level with the American

people and say that? No, he did not. This was an impression that he

knew he was creating. If the Members would go see the movie the ``Flim-

Flam Man,'' starring George C. Scott, it was about a great guy who

understood how to create impressions to get people to take action. And

there was an impression created that Iraq was responsible for the

deaths of over 2,000 Americans. And it is most unfortunate.

The reason we have come here tonight is to talk about the fact that

it is unhealthy for a democracy, for a President to create false

impressions that end in war, and this President created two massive

false impressions. One that this demonic monster, Saddam Hussein, who

we all agree on a bipartisan basis is a demonic monster, had weapons of

mass destruction and that we were threatened with a mushroom cloud; and

the second, he allowed 69 percent of the Americans to believe that

Saddam was the one who attacked us, and that is an undemocratic action,

and it is wrong, and he ought to be held accountable for it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment. I want to

pose a important question to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) if

he could help us out.

My comment is on the difference between connection and action and

collaboration. I do not think there is any question that there had been

some communication between al-Qaeda and some Iraqi officials. I think

we all agree on that, and have for a long period of time. The September

11 Commission reported that back in 1994, bin Laden had essentially

asked for help from Iraq but Iraq said no deal. We are not going to

help you.

And from that, the September 11 Commission concluded, a bipartisan

commission concluded there had been no collaboration and there had been

no active work between the two. In fact, the two highest bin Laden

associates we have in custody have adamantly denied that any ties

existed between al-Qaeda and Iraq.

I think an accurate picture that has been stated is that there were

some contacts and that bin Laden had asked for help and Iraq had

refused to give him help. And yet the President started this war. Now,

the question I have is what was the President trying to do in this

conversation with the American people? It appears to me that he was

trying to create an impression in the American people that Iraq was

behind the attack of September 11. Let me give you just one quote that

fits into that impression. On September 14, 2003, Vice President Cheney

said ``If we are successful in Iraq, then we will have struck a major

blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base

of the terrorists who have had us under assault now for many years, but

most especially on 9/11.''

That is just one of hundreds of statements made by this

administration that to me was responsible for creating an impression in

at least 69 percent of the American people that Iraq was behind it and

that this was pay-back time. In fact, I remember seeing a tank as it

entered Baghdad with it was lettered on the side ``pay back time.'' And

I can understand why soldiers felt that way if the President of the

United States was creating an impression that Iraq was responsible for

September 11.

It was not an impression that led this country to war that bin Laden

had asked for help, but Iraq had said no, that is not the salient

feature that led to this war. What led to this war was the President

succeeding in creating an impression in America that Iraq was behind

this venous and evil attack against us on September 11.

So the question to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton) if I can

ask him, just kind of two questions, does he share my view that

probably a majority of Americans had the impression as the result of

its Federal Government's dissemination of information, the

administration, that Iraq was behind in some fashion, or associated

with the attack on September 11?

And if that is true, does he think the President of the United States

did enough to be candid with the American people to tell the American

people that no, we do not have any evidence of collaboration resulting

in the attack of September 11. Sincere question.