

OCTOBER 30, 2001

SHAME ON THE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today submitted a Congressional Record statement on the recently approved Republican so-called economic stimulus package. The Following is Schakowsky 's statement:

Mr. Speaker: I am disappointed, but not surprised, by what took place in the House of Representatives last week. By the narrowest of margins, the tired old agenda of tax cuts for the rich and giveaways to the corporate interests and big business scored another victory in the Republican-controlled House.

Bob Herbert described it best when he wrote in *The New York Times*, on Monday, October 29, 2001:

he Republicans who control the House thumbed their noses at the ordinary Americans who will absorb the brunt of the economic downturn and shamelessly gift- wrapped yet another bundle of tax cuts for the very well-to-do."

He added: *"With Americans fighting and dying both at home and abroad, we are understandably in a season of patriotism. That patriotism should not be soiled by wartime profiteering."*

The Republican so-called economic stimulus package is described by Mr. Herbert as having *"very little to do with economic recovery. It's about using the shield of war and economic hard times as a cover for the perpetual task of funneling government largesse to the very rich."*

It should come as no surprise that there are some in Congress who will push their one-track agenda no matter what. If our nation is experiencing an economic downturn, then the answer is tax cuts for the top. If our nation is recovering from a terrorist attack, then the solution is more Treasury money to the big corporations. And if our Armed Forces are engaged in battle half way across the world, then a tax cut for the wealthy and well connected is the patriotic thing to do.

Since 9/11, the American people are holding their government to a higher standard, and are placing extraordinary trust in their elected officials. Shame on those public servants who abuse that trust.

I hope my colleagues will carefully read Mr. Herbert's op-ed and consider his arguments.

The New York Times, Oct. 29, 2001

SHAME IN THE HOUSE

By Bob Herbert

"Ask not what your country can do for you . . ."

It has been 40 years since John F. Kennedy, standing hatless and coatless in the bitter cold of a snow-covered capital, delivered the lines that turned out to be the most stirring and most famous of his presidency. If you listened closely last week, you could hear an echo of that moment on the Senate floor. On Wednesday morning, in an address to his colleagues, Senator Edward M. Kennedy said: "Now we have seen, perhaps more clearly than ever before in our lives, how we are all in this together -- how if even one of us is hurting, all of us hurt. Our first thoughts on September 11 were about others, not ourselves."

Senator Kennedy, now 69 years old, spoke movingly of the acts of extraordinary bravery and selflessness exhibited by Americans both at home and abroad in this sudden war against terrorism. And he called on the nation as a whole to adopt that spirit of selflessness as the new standard "by which we measure everything we do."

"The standard is clear," he said. "To seek what is right for our country, and not just for ourselves." He said it is essential that Americans not "strive for private advantage in a time of national need."

Not everyone is listening.

Senator Kennedy's speech was, specifically, a call for fairness and common decency as Congress moves ahead with its effort to help revive an economy that was faltering before Sept. 11, and has since been thrown into very serious trouble by terrorism and war.

But last week, as the House narrowly passed its version of an economic stimulus package, the dominant motive at work appeared once again to be greed. The Republicans who control the House thumbed their noses at the ordinary Americans who will absorb the brunt of the economic downturn and shamelessly gift-wrapped yet another bundle of tax cuts for the very well-to-do.

In Senator Kennedy's words, the House proposal, which contains more than \$100 billion in tax cuts for corporations and individuals, "merely repackages old, partisan, unfair, permanent tax breaks -- which were rejected by Congress last spring -- under the new label of economic stimulus. The American people deserve better."

With Americans fighting and dying both at home and abroad, we are understandably in a season of patriotism. That patriotism should not be soiled by wartime profiteering.

The House package is a breathtaking example of cynicism and chutzpah. The bill's primary author, Representative Bill Thomas, a Republican from California, piously proclaimed that there is an urgent need to help businesses because they are the nation's

employers. "They're the hardware store," he said, "the diner down the street, the gas station on the corner."

And then you look closely at the legislation and find that it overwhelmingly favors the giant corporations, with tax breaks approaching \$1.4 billion for I.B.M., more than \$800 million for General Motors and \$670 million for General Electric.

It's a stimulus package in name only because the Americans who are the most strapped -- the consumers who would take any relief that they received and immediately pump it right back into the economy -- get the least. The package has very little to do with economic recovery. It's about using the shield of war and economic hard times as a cover for the perpetual task of funneling government largesse to the very rich.

Nearly \$2 trillion in tax cuts were passed just a few months ago, but that was not enough. True greed knows no bounds.

The political analyst Kevin Phillips, in a commentary on National Public Radio, said: "Neither house of Congress has ever passed this kind of major tax bill in wartime, and no one in the House assumes that the Senate will accept it in whole. But the more extreme the House bill, the further that will drag the eventual compromise in that same inexcusable direction. The only real solution is a public outcry, tens of millions of pointing fingers and voices saying, 'Shame.'"

Forty years after the inauguration of President Kennedy, the most favored and least needy among us are proving themselves to be masterful at finding what their country can do for them.