

Mr. Chairman, Fred Bastiat said in the dawn of this Republic that government is that great fiction through which everyone endeavors to live at the expense of everyone else. I am not sure if there are too many subjects other than earmark transparency being debated here today that hold more relevance to such a comment, and I am afraid that Members of both parties are unwilling to admit that.

It is critically important that we do because it comes down to the very core of who we are as Americans and whether or not we are still capable of self-governance, and whether or not we will allow the fabric of liberty that has been so carefully woven throughout the years to be torn asunder while we all stand by and watch.

So to that end, Mr. Chairman, let me remind Members of this body of some of the promises made by those in the majority only a few short months ago.

One prominent Member said explicitly, "We will bring transparency and openness to the budget process and to the use of earmarks." Another said, "We are going to adopt rules that make the system of legislation transparent so that we don't legislate in the dark of night. We need to have earmarks subject to more debate. That's what debate and public awareness is all about. Democracy works if people know what's going on." Of course this was after campaigning on the pledge to, quote, "make this House the most honest, ethical, and open Congress in history."

But, Mr. Chairman, these promises, though unequivocally made, have been unequivocally broken. Reforms designed to ensure openness, transparency and accountability have been trampled underfoot by the very Members who so vocally called for their enactment. We saw this most egregiously in March of this year with the emergency supplemental legislation, when funds were desperately needed to provide for our men and women in uniform and instead they were laden with \$21 billion in irrelevant pork-barrel spending.

Mr. Chairman, I am afraid we are seeing it again today in this capricious decision to blatantly shut the American public out of one of the most important and necessary duties of this House and our representative form of government, that of allocating taxpayer funds for the general good of the American people.

The chairman of the Appropriations Committee has arbitrarily decided that a few select Members of Congress are more capable of ascertaining the public good than the public is itself. Their actions imply that these Members should be allowed, behind closed doors, to decide where tax dollars are spent without being indebted in any way to the collective intelligence and scrutiny of the general public, the press, the media, the blogosphere, and the American people themselves, of course, who are given the charge to keep their elected Representatives accountable.

Mr. Chairman, in any other case, this would be called an oligarchy, the bureaucratic rule of the few over the many. It was this very arbitrary confiscation of power that once caused our Nation's founders to throw off the yoke of the Crown of England. A single

glance at the footnotes of history demonstrates clearly that breaching that dam sets up a dangerous and degenerative historical precedent.

James Madison in the Federalist Papers presaged this misappropriation of power that we are witnessing today when he said it this way: ``The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality. Yet there is no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party to trample on the rules of justice."

Mr. Chairman, I urge every Member of this body to recall our commitment to God and the people we serve, to preserve the rules of justice. Hidden slush funds, overseen by a very few people in the dark of night, that is not justice, Mr. Chairman. Camouflaged tax increases that could be the largest in history, that is not justice.

We come here in a moment of contention, but we can turn that moment of contention into a time to restore the transparency and accountability to this appropriations process, and I hope we do that, Mr. Chairman. I hope we vote for the gentlelady's amendment.