

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES June 25, 2003

Does Tony Blair Deserve a Congressional Medal?

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this legislation for a number of reasons. First, forcing the American people to pay tens of thousands of dollars to give a gold medal to a foreign leader is immoral and unconstitutional. I will continue in my uncompromising opposition to appropriations not authorized within the enumerated powers of the Constitution- a Constitution that each member of Congress swore to uphold.

Second, though these gold medals are an unconstitutional appropriation of American tax dollars, at least in the past we have awarded them to great humanitarians and leaders like Mother Theresa, President Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and others. These medals generally have been proposed to recognize a life of service and leadership, and not for political reasons - as evidenced by the overwhelming bi-partisan support for awarding President Reagan, a Republican, a gold medal. These awards normally go to deserving individuals, which is why I have many times offered to contribute \$100 of my own money, to be matched by other members, to finance these medals.

I sense that this current proposal is different, however. No one is claiming that British Prime Minister Tony Blair has given a lifetime of humanitarian service like Mother Theresa, or demonstrated the historical leadership of a Ronald Reagan. No one suggests the British Prime Minister, leading the avowedly socialist Labour Party, has embraced American values such as freedom and limited government, as Margaret Thatcher attempted before him. No, Tony Blair is being given this medal for one reason: he provided political support when international allies were sought for America's attack on Iraq. Does this overtly political justification not cheapen both the medal itself and the achievements of those who have been awarded it previously?

I find it particularly unfortunate that the Republican-controlled Congress would nominate Tony Blair to receive this award. His political party is socialist: Britain under Blair has a system of socialized medicine and government intervention in all aspects of the commercial and personal lives of its citizens. Socialism is an enemy of freedom and liberty - as the 20th century taught us so well. It is the philosophical basis for a century of mass-murder and impoverishment.

In May, a British television poll found that Prime Minister Blair is the most unpopular man in Great Britain. A brief look at his rule leaves little question why this is so. He has eroded Britain's constitutional base- recently abolishing the ancient position of Lord Chancellor without any debate. He has overseen a huge expansion of government, with the creation of costly "assemblies" in Wales and Scotland. He also has overseen changes in Britain's voting system that many believe open the door to widespread voting fraud. In short, he is no Margaret Thatcher and certainly no Winston Churchill. Yet today Congress is voting to give him its highest honor.

Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to be generous with other people's money. I believe the politicization of this medal, as we are seeing here today, really makes my own point on such matters: Congress should never spend tax money for appropriations not authorized within the enumerated powers of the Constitution. When it does so, it charts a dangerous course away from the rule of law and away from liberty. I urge a "No" vote on this unfortunate bill.