EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

February 2, 1977

HON. JAMES J. BLANCHARD
OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. BLANCHARD. Mr. Speaker, several days ago Ms. Fenwick and I wrote to the Czechoslovak ambassador to protest that country's harassment of dissidents in violation of "Charter 77" statement calling for the human rights guaranteed by the Helsinki agreement.

On January 31, 1977, I received a reply from the ambassador, Dr. Jaromir Johanes, enclosing a press release from the Ministry of Information. The release included statements from a number of Czechoslovak citizens denouncing the "Charter 77" statement and referring to it as "slanderous" and "right-wing" in character.

In order that those of my colleagues who are interested in this matter may judge the document for themselves, I am including it in the Record.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 27, 1977] MANIFESTO CHARGING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

[Note—Following is the text of Charter 77, a Czechoslovak human-rights manifesto cited by the State Department yesterday as evidence of rights violations. It is translated and published in the current issue of The New Leader, dated Jan. 31.]

Law No. 120 of the Czechoslovak Collection of our country on February 13, 1976, includes the text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which were signed in behalf of our Republic in 1968 and confirmed at the 1975 Helsinki Conference. These pacts went into effect in our country on March 28, 1976; since that date our citizens have had the right, and the State has had the duty, to abide by them.

The freedoms guaranteed to individuals by the two documents are important assets of civilization. They have been the goals of campaigns by many progressive people in the one-party systems of the world, who have significantly contributed to a humane development of our society. We welcome the fact that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has agreed to enter into these covenants.

Their publication, however, is at the same time an urgent reminder of the many fundamental freedoms that are still happily enjoyed in our country only on paper. The right of free expression guaranteed by Article 19 of the first pact, for example, is quite illusory. Tens of thousands of citizens have been prevented from working in their professions for the sole reason that their views differ from the official one. They have been frequent targets of various forms of discrimination and chicanery on the part of the authorities or social organization; they have been denied any opportunity to defend themselves and are practically the victims of apartheid. Hundreds of thousands of other citizens have been denied the "freedom from discrimination," cited in Article 26 of the first pact; they live in constant peril of losing their jobs or other benefits if they express their opinions.

PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL CURSES ARE CITIED

Contrary to Article 13 of the second pact, guaranteeing the right to education, many young people are prevented from pursuing higher education because of their views or the views of their families. Classless citizens worry that if they declare their convictions, they themselves or their children will be disqualified.

Exercising the right to "seek, receive and impart information regardless of frontiers and of whether it is oral, written or printed," or "imparted through art,"—Point 2, Article 13 of the first pact—can result in persecution not only outside the court but also inside. Frequently this occurs under the pretext of a criminal indictment (as evidenced, among other instances, by the recent trial of young musicians).

Freedom of speech is suppressed by the government's management of all mass media, including the publishing and cultural institutions. No political, philosophical, scientific, artistic or literary activities have been permitted from the narrow framework of official ideology or aesthetics is permitted to be produced. Public discussion is prohibited. Public defense against false and defamatory charges by official propaganda organs is impossible, despite the legal protection of one's conscience and honor unequivocally afforded by Article 17 of the first pact. False accusations cannot be retracted. False accusations are used to frustrate their victim's right to seek legal redress. Open discussion of intellectual and cultural matters is out of the question. Many scientific and cultural workers have been persecuted, fired, or otherwise discriminated against simply because some years ago they legally published or openly articulated views condemned by the current political power.

Religious freedom, emphatically guaranteed by Article 18 of the first pact, is systematically curbed with a despotic arbitrariness: Limits are imposed on the activities of priests, who are constantly threatened with the revocation of government permission to practice when they manifest their religious faith either by word or action lose their jobs or are made to suffer other representations. Religious instruction in schools is suppressed at certain.

A whole range of civil rights is severely restricted or completely suppressed by the effective method of subordinating all institutions and organizations in the State to the political directives of the ruling Party's apparatuses and the pronouncements of highly influential individuals. Neither the Constitution of the CSSR nor any of the country's other legal procedures regulate the contents, form or application of such pronouncements. The government has issued orally, unacknowledged, and beyond the control of the average citizen. Their authors are responsible only to themselves and their own conscience. Under the guise of so-called "counterintelligence" on the activity of the legislature as well as executive bodies of the State administration, on the mass media, on the mass, social, economic, and other political parties, business, factories, schools and similar installations, and their orders take precedence over the law.

POLICE ACCUSED OF SURVEILLANCE

If some organizations or citizens in the interpretation of their rights and duties, become involved in a conflict with the directives, they cannot turn to a neutral authority, for none exists. Consequently, the right of assembly and the prohibition of its restraint, stemming from Articles 21 and 22 of the first pact, the right to participate in politics and the right to equality before the law, in Article 26, all have been seriously curtailed.

These conditions prevent working people from forming effective establishments or organizations for the protection of their economic and social interests, and from freely using their right on strike as provided in Point 1, Article 6 of the second pact. Other civil rights, including the virtual banning of "willful interference with private family and home life," included in Article 17 of the first pact, are gravely circumscribed by the fact that the Interior Ministry employs various practices to control the daily correspondence such as telephone tapping and the surveillance of private homes, watching mail, shadowing individuals, and recruiting a net work of informers from the ranks of the population (often by illegal intimidation or, sometimes, promises), etc.

Mass arrests are violent.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs in the decisions of employers, inspires discrimination by authorities and organizations, influences the organs of justice, and even sometimes, the organs of the mass media. This activity is not regulated by law, it is covert, so the citizen is unable to protect himself against it.

In the cases of politically motivated persecution, the organs of interrogation and justice violate the rights of the defendants as stated in Article 14 of the first pact as well as Czechoslovakia's own laws. People thus sentenced to jail are being treated in a manner that violates human dignity, impairs their health, and attempts to break them morally.

Point 2, Article 12 of the first pact, guarantees the right to roam the country, is generally violated. Under the pretext of "protecting the State security," contained in Point 3, departure is tied to various illegal conditions. Just as arbitrary are the procedures for issuing visas to foreign nationals, many of whom are prevented from visiting Czechoslovakia because they had some official or friendly contact with persons who had been discriminated against in our country.

Some citizens—privately at their places of work, or through the media abroad (the rights of freedom of information)—have drawn attention to these systematic violations of human rights and democratic freedoms and have demanded a remedy in speeches and writings. But they have no response, or have themselves become the objects of investigation.

The responsibility for the preservation of civil rights naturally rests with the State power. But not on it alone. Every individual bears a share of responsibility for the conditions that we are therefore also for compliance with the enacted pacts, which are as binding for the people as they are for the government.

The feeling of this corenponsibility, the belief in the value of civic engagement and the readiness to be engaged ourselves, whatever the need to seek a new and more effective expression, gave us the idea of creating Charter 77, whose existence we publicly announce.

On February 13, 1977, the National Council of Czechoslovakia has submitted a general complaint to the government, and of the organization of people of various convictions, religions and professions, linked by the desire to work together for the defense of human and civil rights in Czechoslovakia and the world—the rights provided for in the enacting international pacts in the Helsinki and the Vienna documents, and in numerous other international documents against wars, violence and social and mental repression. It represents a general declaration of human rights.
EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

The Myth of Voter Apathy
(By Alexander E. Barkan)

We've just come through a national election. Many concerned with it were preoccupied not so much with the question of who would win but more with who would lose. To show up, "What if we held the election," they asked, "and nobody comes?" As such, the issue was placed on the back burner to allow the outcome. Newspaper headlines and other media comments on "apathy" in the Presidential race were so common some thought it must be third-generation apathy that they're suffering from. Apathy, voter frustration, and mistrust are not unimportant, of course, but the notion that elections are merely a means to an end is used to show that they're inflated. Almost always in an election year, voter interest is slow to generate. While the media and the candidates are all in a dither and immersed in political matters, voters—many of them—keep one eye on the pennant races, the World Series, other conventions...for those few weeks, their interest picks up perceptibly, then peaks in the final days of a campaign.

One problem is that registration in all but a few states has closed out—500,000,000 Americans have not registered. Meanwhile, millions of others have been discouraged from registering in the first place by red tape that makes registration at least inconvenient and often a challenge to one's ingenuity and perseverance. A New York Times poll found many of them—registered or not—may have difficulty registering because it was too hard for them.

Performance
It's been too hard for too many too long, and the labor movement believes it's high time to erase the pointless laws that limit voter participation. It is time to enact a universal voter registration law. The Federal government should take on the responsibility of registering voters. Our people will vote if it's made easier for them.

This year, approximately 150 million Americans were of voting age and eligible. About 70 per cent, or 105 million of them, were registered. On Nov. 2, more than 80 million voted—which was a record number, if not a percentage.

So, almost 80 per cent of those who were registered voted. Not too bad, and good enough to suggest that millions more would have turned out had they been able simply to get in line on Election Day and make their choice known.

Strong evidence undergirds this belief. In Wisconsin, a recently enacted state law permits votes to forget in the 1972 election. Enforce- completely, just walk up on Election Day, provide a driver's license or other proof of age and residence, pay a $1 registration fee, and pull the lever. About 200,000 unregistered Wisconsinites voted Nov. 2, creating an actual increase in voting participation over 1972. Voter participation was up 5 points above the national average of 54.4.

In Minnesota, the case was made as compellingly. Under a similar state law, more than 22 per cent of eligible voters were registered, who voted was 7 per cent—but not more than 20 points over the national average. Walter Mondale's presence on the national ticket surely helped, but not that much.

Registration by Mail

In neither Wisconsin nor Minnesota was there fraudulent voting. Administrative problems existed, if any, were minor. Cost nothing extra.

As an interim step to universal registration, the trade-union movement is push- ing for a mail-in registration by-mail laws. In the past two years, sixteen states have adopted them. In most, experience with the law has shown it to be a step in the right direction. In Texas, Ten-

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH SCHECHTER

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, at an honorary luncheon February 15, the Westside Jewish Community Center will commemorate Mr. Joseph Schechter's many years of devoted service. The occasion will mark the initiation of the 1977 United Jewish Welfare Fund Campaign, Mr. Schechter's favorite charity.

Now in his eighties, Joseph Schechter arrived in the United States from Bessarabia, Russia, in 1898. He founded and successfully developed a metals and aluminum business. Since retiring in 1953, he has worked tirelessly to help and raise funds for community organizations. He has served as a member of the board of directors of the Westside Jewish Community Center, the United Jewish Welfare Fund, and more recently has served on the Area Council on Aging for Los Angeles City and County. As a volunteer staff worker, Mr. Schechter has worked on almost all standing committees of the center. He is a zealous fundraiser for community services to young and old.

Yet, for Joseph Schechter's present and past value to us as a most exemplary citizen, I am proud to commend him to you. It is a privilege to do him honor, and to look forward to having the benefit of his help for many years to come.

PERHAPS NOW, POST CARD REGISTRATION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL
OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, in our last election over 80 million Americans participated in the exercise of democratic freedom by casting their ballots. While that is a record number, there still remain approximately 10 million people who, while eligible to vote, do not do so because of various bureaucratic barriers placed there by the States.

A short while ago, I introduced H.R. 2347, a bill which would establish through the Postal Service a system of post card voter registration. This legislation would make it easier and more convenient for Americans to exercise this most basic of rights. It is my hope that if this bill or the concept embodied therein, were to become law, the result would be a much stronger Republic as more Americans would participate in the process of selecting their elected representatives.

Organized labor has been one of the principal supporters of a universal registration system. They have been instrumental in bringing about registration by mail systems in several States throughout the country. From the research that I have been able to ascertain, the 16 States that have adopted registration by mail statutes in the last 2 years, the experience has laid to rest many of the arguments employed by those who argue against a universal post card registration law. This is not to say that my bill or any legislation similar to it would be completely free of any fraud. However, I maintain that if we are to achieve the goals that our Founding Fathers envisioned for us, it is up to us as the people's representatives to work tirelessly to make the system fraud-free and thus insure the validity of the results.

In the January 24 issue of Newsweek, Alexander Barkan, the national director of the political arm of the AFL-CIO, sets out the reasons why the Congress must enact a universal registration statute. I believe that the principles that Barkan is indeed worthy of sharing with my colleagues, as this Congress will most certainly take up the issue of post card registration. In that regard, I would hope that the time is right for bringing this article, and study my legislation on the subject. Mr. Barkan's comments follow: