

antidrug measures possible. H.R. 2259 did not meet that standard.

MEDICARE BILL HAS WRONG PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, today, the process did not afford the opportunity for a very full discussion of the Medicare bill on the House floor, and so I wanted to take this opportunity to express my dismay and disappointment with the action of the House today, renegeing on the basic health care protection that has existed for older Americans and for others that are the beneficiaries of Medicare for the past 30 years.

The fact is that Medicare is in trouble today, my colleagues. It is in trouble because the Republicans, this new majority that is in control, has not given the type of consideration, the type of deliberation, that has been the hallmark of much of what has been considered in the past in this Congress.

I think we are seeing a breakdown really of the committee system here, where the committees, even though this proposal has made some 8 months ago, 7 months ago, no proposal was forthcoming; and we end up with a 1,000 page bill on this floor that dramatically and drastically changes the policy.

I think, for starters, that the priorities are all wrong in terms of what is happening with the budget. The fact is that the \$270 billion, it has been repeated today, that is saved in Medicare is not necessary for the Medicare trust fund. In fact, of course, much of it will be used for other Republican priorities that are in the budget. This is not a bipartisan budget, this is very much a partisan effort in this House, and I suspect the same reaction in the Senate.

There are 245 billion dollars' worth of tax breaks and not tax cuts, tax breaks that go specifically to some people in our society, taking away tax breaks from others. In fact, an article in the Wall Street Journal today indicates that those that have incomes less than \$30,000 under the Republican tax plans will actually end up spending or actually end up paying more in taxes. Those under \$30,000 will pay more in taxes under the tax plans that have been advanced by the House and by the Senate. That is wrong. I think these are the wrong priorities.

I think the right priorities are to deal with health. If anybody wants an example of what is wrong and where we are today as compared to some time ago, this last year we were talking about extending health care to those that did not have it. We found that there are 40 million Americans from working families that had no health care. Today, that number has risen by nearly 1.5 million. There are more families that do not have health care. They

do not have Medicare. They do not have Medicaid. They do not have a private health insurance plan through their employer or through their own means. They are without.

What is happening today is we are not talking about meeting the needs of those 40 million plus in American working families. We are talking about renegeing, pulling back on the Medicare system today to the tune of \$270 billion today for tax breaks for the rich; and we are talking about next week taking \$182 billion out of the Medicaid system. That is a system for the kids in this country, 16 million children, other millions of other people that would be denied the opportunity for dignity, for health care.

These are programs that are for the American family. These are the programs that were put together so that we could meet the needs of our families, for my parents, and for others that might be disabled, that have the fortune to have a good, long life.

The funny part about it is I keep talking about all the trust funds today, trust fund A and B, but the trust fund A has never been responsible for one dime of our deficit in this country, and the same is true of most of the Social Security programs, are not responsible for the deficits in this country. That is not what has created the deficit. Part B because of the health care costs is a contributor.

□ 1900

But the fact is that we cannot just, when the cuts are made, they are not just cuts. They are cuts that are made with no opportunity. You are not empowering senior citizens to challenge the system simply by giving them choice. You do not give them choice in this bill. They have choice today. They have HMO's, they have preferred physician options. They have those types of choices already today.

This offers nothing new. What you take is you are taking away the very tools they need to challenge the cost of what health care is today, taking away the ability to pursue fraud, taking away the legal system, the ability to challenge the medical doctor when in fact they make a mistake, when they do something wrong, taking away the accountability in this bill, taking away \$270 billion and any ability or most of the ability for older Americans and for others in this health care system to really deal with that.

In other words, you are making them pay more, considerably more for the part B premiums and giving them less in benefits, capping the benefits. Read what is in your bill. Read what is in your particular proposals. You have not done so. You do not know what it is.

I think there are many Members in this body from what I can see that do not even understand what current funding means with regard to Social Security and Medicare, where the workers today are paying for the bene-

fits of those that are receiving them and we are usually ahead about a year. That is what current funding is, but they do not understand it. They cannot predict it. But yet they are up here cutting \$270 billion in Medicare benefits to give tax breaks to their wealthy contributors and their special interests. It is wrong and it should have been defeated today, not passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHAMBLISS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE BILL WAS WRITTEN IN THE SPEAKER'S OFFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, the rules of debate here in the House are rather constrained at times, and they were constrained this evening as we had the opportunity to witness at the close of this great debate a bit of graceless gloating from the Speaker of the House, Mr. GINGRICH, about the victory that everyone on all sides knew was going to occur here today. They provided no opportunity, of course, to ask him a question, much less to respond immediately to his comments, but those comments deserve a response.

It is true that this Chamber is almost empty at this moment. Of course, our Republican friends are out popping the champagne corks, celebrating as is their right the fact that they really got those seniors. They are able to be out there saying, well, our buddies are going to really like that tax break we are able to provide now, and we taught those seniors a lesson when we took \$270 billion out of Medicare so we could fund our tax break for the rich.

But Members will recall specifically, though they are celebrating now, that when the Speaker spoke he began by reading to us the names of the family members in his family and how much they were interested in what was occurring here today. Then he proclaimed with the greatest magnanimity there were so many who had contributed to the raiding of the Medicare system today, it is peculiar that omitted from that list of all those who helped was the Golden Rule Insurance Co. You will recall that it was only a week ago that CBS Evening News reported that Golden Rule, which had complied with the golden rule by contributing over a million dollars to the Republican party, stood to be one of the major beneficiaries of this so-called Medicare reform since they are the prime promoter of the so-called Medisave Program.

The truth of the matter is that this particular bill, not 10 Members of this House knew what was in it until about

the time the debate began. And all this hoopla about how we had everybody involved and there were task forces and so forth. The truth of the matter is this bill was written by one person, Speaker GINGRICH, sitting in his office with one special interest lobbyist after another coming in. These task forces that existed, they were just an excuse for democracy. Instead of having the normal committee process operate, little task forces would meet and go in and out of the Speaker's office, in secret, where the American people had no opportunity to observe what was happening.

Can you imagine raiding the Medicare trust fund to the extent of \$270 billion and not allowing one senior citizen in this country to testify on the specifics of the bill that provided for that raid?

Yet, my colleagues, that is precisely what happened with this new spirit of democracy and all the task forces and all the inclusion. The bill was written in the Speaker's office. The committee process was basically eliminated. I understand they are even considering the possibility of eliminating committees and perhaps just substituting a committee of one to write all of the legislation in this House.

You know, I have discussed this morning a bit tongue in cheek the fact that there was a painting that kind of summarized what was happening to seniors today, a painting by a famous American artist of the last century called plucked clean. It seemed to me that it symbolized what was happening here as our seniors were plucked clean and having to face higher deductibles and higher premiums and higher costs for health care at the time they were stretched to the limits.

Well, really, I think this same painting is a little bit symbolic of what is happening to democracy in this House. Instead of a proud eagle of democracy, democracy is being plucked clean in this House, because next week we are about to have the same thing happen. We have got something called reconciliation that is coming up, not the kind of reconciliation that happens between husband and wife. This is not a divorce unless it is the divorce between the reality of the real lives of the middle-class families that are working to make ends meet in this country and the Republican rhetoric that we hear on this floor.

No, indeed, we are talking about a bill that is going to do all kind of mysterious things that have never received a hearing. It is going to rewrite laws that committees refuse to pass, and all of that is about to occur next week without the Members ever having seen the bill and without there ever having been even a final hearing.

What we should be talking about next week is a gift ban on the gifts that tie lobbyists and legislators and a reform of the lobby process. Apparently under this Speaker we are going to continue to write laws in secret that bind the American people, like was

done today in secret working with various special interest lobbyists to get the law written their way. The American people deserve to have this out in the public. We need to reform this Congress and change business as usual as much as we need to protect the seniors of our Nation and prevent these kinds of Medicare raids.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. TAUZIN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DEUTSCH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DEUTSCH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. DORNAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DORNAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. TOWNS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

POLITICAL APPOINTEES ABUSING THEIR POSITIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, there is much talk throughout our Nation about reforming the way Washington, DC operates. The people are upset about the way politicians have been conducting business. One reason that people are upset is because they see political appointees abusing their position using tax dollars to work on reelection campaigns instead of doing the jobs they are paid to do.

Mr. Speaker, last week the people of eastern North Carolina got a firsthand example of that abuse. A Clinton political appointee in the Department of Agriculture was assigned to contact one of the newspapers in my district. He not only called to use the agricultural appropriations bill to campaign against Republicans, he also called to campaign against Medicare, student loans, and other issues.

What in the world is an Under Secretary of Agriculture doing campaigning about programs that have absolutely nothing to do with his job on taxpayers time?

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that the Clinton administration talks about the need for reform but at the same time they are using taxpayers' dollars to campaign for reelection.

He called to talk about how much the Clinton administration cares about rural North Carolina, but at the same time the Clinton administration is recommending policies that would destroy the economy of rural eastern North Carolina.

As Gene Price, the editor of the Goldsboro News-Argus stated in an editorial, and I quote:

Bill Clinton is the biggest enemy of the tobacco farmer ever to sit in the White House.

Tobacco farmers aren't stupid. The man who has been going for their jugular ever since he has been in Washington now has the gall to send his emissary on a scare-the-hell-out-of-'em mission telling North Carolina farmers the Republicans are threatening their tobacco program.

I further quote Mr. Price:

Republicans and conservative Democrats in Congress should not be fooled. Certainly the Third District's WALTER JONES, Jr. sees the President's campaign for what it is.

Mr. Speaker, the Goldsboro News-Argus is right. The President's campaign is exactly that, a political campaign paid for with your tax dollar. Every single Member of Congress from North Carolina, Republican and Democrat alike, voted for the agriculture appropriations bill. It is the Clinton administration, not Congress, that is trying to destroy the tobacco farmers.

Mr. Speaker, it is the Clinton administration that is now trying to classify nicotine as a drug. It is the Clinton administration that is trying to put families that have grown tobacco for generations into the same category as Asian poppy growers.

Now this same Clinton administration has the gall to have its political appointees call my district to say that he, Bill Clinton, is worried about what the Republicans might do to tobacco. The bad news, Mr. Speaker, is that this kind of hypocrisy only adds to the cynicism about all people in public life. The good news is that the people of eastern North Carolina have long ago figured out the Clinton crowd. The working people of eastern North Carolina who pay their taxes, go to church and play by the rules know that there is very little relationship between what this administration does and says and really what it does and says in reality.

Mr. Speaker, no matter how many Clinton political appointees call my district to say otherwise, the people of eastern North Carolina know that an administration that is trying to destroy the tobacco farmer does not care about rural North Carolina.

In the future, Mr. Speaker, I would advise the President to have his political appointees confine their campaigning to Hollywood or to San Francisco