

process the first eight months of the year and hasn't been much of a participant since.

Clinton may find it personally satisfying—and his campaign advisers politically profitable—to let Congress battle itself bloody over the federal budget. But it is not good government, and it certainly isn't leadership.

Thanks to this impasse, the government may partially shut down Tuesday, an unnecessary bit of budget brinkmanship that wastes time and money, not to mention the damaging impact on the morale of the 800,000 or so government workers whose livelihoods are being treated so cavalierly.

Thanks to this same impasse, the government may bump up against the debt limit late next week and go into technical default. While domestic bond-buyers may not mind, seeing this as a promising sign of fiscal austerity to come, foreign bond-buyers may simply see us as deadbeats and drive up the cost of borrowing for years to come.

To the president and to Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Americans should say what generations of poker players have said when the pot was tied up with pointless bickering: "Gentlemen, shut up and deal."

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to resolve the issue before the Congress. We would not run a business like this in America, telling our customers that we may or may not be open tomorrow, that we may or may not be there to serve their needs. But at the same time, we have heard bickering from both sides of the aisle, heated rhetoric, about destroying Medicare, about hurting senior citizens.

I have told this story many times. My grandmother came from Poland. She came with a sponsor, a job waiting, a clean bill of health. She worked as a maid in a Travel Lodge motel, all to be part of this democracy. She depended on Medicare and she depended on Social Security. So I am one Member of Congress here to protect that.

But let us make no mistake about it: The balanced budget is necessary to restore fiscal sanity to this Nation. We are borrowing and borrowing and borrowing moneys that we simply do not have. Why are Members of Congress retiring in droves? Why is everybody saying they want out of this job? Because it is no longer fun to go around your community and say "no" to people.

For years you have been able to say I will give you a new Post Office, I will build you a new bridge, I will fix something in your community, I will build a new center for you, all with the taxpayers' nickel, all borrowed dollars. They went back year after year and said look at me, I am the hero, I have done all of these things for you, you must reelect me.

Now we go to Congress and get elected and say "no" to people and spending money and "yes" to balancing the budget, and people are mad at us. But by God, that is fiscal responsibility. It is happening in our families. It is required of our businesses. A balanced budget is no different than being an American consumer, an American business owner.

But I do think it is wrong we are holding this Government hostage and

not meeting at the White House this very hour to solve this problem. I do think it is wrong on both sides of the aisle that we are not seriously debating the issue as we sit here today. I do not think I deserve my paycheck after tomorrow if we are not going to be working. Congress should not get paid either. If the employees of the Federal Government are going to be told they do not need to be here, I think there are maybe 435 nonessential employees right here in this body.

I think it is time we faced the convictions we have. I think it is necessary we balance the budget. I think it is necessary to bring our fiscal house in order. But I think it is also necessary that both sides, Democrats and Republicans, stop the haranguing, stop the finger pointing, stop the name calling, and start debating the very issues that will save our fiscal sanity for the years to come.

I think it is that important. I think it is important for ourselves, for the seniors that live in our communities, for our children, and for America's future.

PASS SIMPLE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

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

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, this is a process that we are going through tonight, and unfortunately will be likely going through tomorrow with the shutdown of Federal Government, that should not be happening. In West Virginia there are over 17,000 Federal employees, many of whom will be furloughed. They will not be able to offer the services essential to West Virginia, and their own lives will be placed in uncertainty.

This is a terrible way to do business. The first day or so, people probably will not notice. It is true, Social Security offices will not be handling claims. A day or two you can get by. Over time, you see a steady degradation of Government services and the very important functions that Government employees perform.

In our own offices we have two district offices. The decision by the Republican leadership, as I understand it, essentially says that basically only legislative personnel can be working. We will be furloughing roughly half of the congressional staff. We will leave one person in the Charleston office and one person in the Martinsburg office to handle emergencies, but aside from that, our staff as well will be furloughed. Of course, the mobile offices, the ones that visit the county everyday, in a different county every day of the month, they will be furloughed as well. So I think it is a sorry state of affairs that Congress has reached this point.

I think though it is also important to look at what is at stake and why we

are here. There are actually two bills at stake, both basically simple. One says that you continue the Government services for about 2 to 3 more weeks. The second one would say that the Federal Government is empowered to continue borrowing to pay back debts.

In both cases the House has passed this bill, but, under the Republican leadership, measures were added that make those bills totally unacceptable. What should have been basically one simple sheet that says "Continue the government," or "You are empowered to continue to borrow money to pay pack debts," what could have been one sheet, two or three paragraphs, turned into hundreds of pages of special riders, strings attached, and basically trying to work to enact the Contract With America and the basic budget bill that is so much in controversy.

I think it should also be pointed out, I have heard allegations that somehow the President has not done his job. Let me look at the facts. The reason this has come about is because the budget bill needs negotiating, right? So people ought to be negotiating. The only problem is, there is no budget bill. There is no reconciliation bill. We have yet to get that on the floor of the House.

Incidentally, it is months overdue. By the same token, there are 13 appropriation bills that must pass the Congress and be signed by the President that make up next year's budget. They all are to be done by October 1. Six weeks later this Congress has enacted into law only two of the 13 bills. Eleven are out there somewhere, drifting in the nether world of this Capitol. So the President has had very little that he can actually begin negotiating on, because the Congress has not signed it.

Why not just go ahead? And I had this question on a talk show today at home, Mr. Speaker. "Why not go ahead, BOB, and just vote for this continuing resolution? Just vote for the debt ceiling. It is only a couple weeks, and send it on down to the President."

The trouble with that is this: If I voted for that debt ceiling the other day, I would have voted for a \$7 increase in Medicare part B premiums for every senior citizen in West Virginia, kicking them up from \$46.10 to roughly \$53 on January 1. Merry Christmas, mother and father. What kind of vote is that?

I would have voted for the Republican budget in effect, and put into play already many of the items that still need to be negotiated between the White House and Congress.

I would have been in effect voting for stiff Medicare cuts, one-third of which is needed to save the funds, only \$90 billion, not \$270 billion as is in that budget. I would have voted for Medicaid cuts that would have put West Virginia \$4 billion in the hole over a 7-year period. I would have voted for tax breaks for the wealthy and tax increases for low income working people. That is not a good deal. That should

not be attached to a basic, simple, continuation of Government services for 2 to 3 weeks.

Now, some have asked, is this not the way things have always been done, you have attached riders? First of all, never with this magnitude. Second, we have a unique situation here. In my time in Congress, I have never seen the day when two major items happen at the same time. You are faced with a shutdown of the Federal Government, that is tough enough, but the second is even more sweeping, you are faced with a default on the national debt, the first time in over 200 years that that happened. Both of those come to happen this week.

So that is why these votes are so significant. My hope is that this Congress stays in tonight, does its job, and passes a simple continuing resolution to keep the Government and a simple extension so that the Government can borrow money to pay back debts and the Government keeps functioning.

PLACING THE BLAME FOR A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. Speaker, it is going to be a sad situation across the Nation tomorrow—800,000 Federal employees will be sent home. It is a crisis in our Government that is totally unnecessary. It is a political crisis that was created here in this Chamber. You have to really recount the history of how we reached this point to understand how it was totally avoidable.

You see, the Republicans took control of the House of Representatives this year and announced they were going to do things differently. The first announcement they had was they would pass something called the Contract With America, something that Speaker GINGRICH had published in TV Guide and believed that since it appeared in TV Guide, he had a mandate from the American people. So he brought 31 bills to the floor of the House of Representatives. The Speaker, Mr. GINGRICH, and his Republican majority, considered those 31 bills and passed many of them and sent them over to the other body.

The net result of 100 days of deliberation and debate on those 31 bills on the Contract with America was to have signed into law three bills. Three bills, out of 31. So 100 days were wasted at the beginning of the session, and it cost us dearly. The Committee on the Budget, which had a big job already, was delayed in its deliberations because of all the time eaten up by this TV Guide strategy for the Contract With America, this so-called PR extravaganza. So the Committee on the Budget came in with their report exactly 1 month later.

The Committee on the Budget has to do its work and pass its resolution be-

fore the appropriations committees that come up with the spending bills can do theirs. So the appropriations committees were slowed down.

The net result was a traffic jam, the end of it on October 1, when the Republican majority in the House and Senate were required to present to the President 13 appropriations bills to keep government running. Six weeks ago, on October 1, they presented three bills. Three out of 13.

You cannot blame the Democrats for that. Republicans are in the majority. The Republicans are in control. One of the big problems they had was that the special interest groups all wanted to put an amendment on each of those appropriations bills. Some of the amendments were virtually outrageous. They had one 28 page amendment that they put on the Veterans Administration and HUD bill. This 28 page amendment abolished 14 environmental protection laws.

The lobby out here, the corridor, was lined with special interest groups and lobbyists in pretty shoes trying to get their amendments on the bills so that they could be somehow absolved from responsibility of clean water and clean air.

Well, they managed to do it the first two times. Finally, the third time, 54 Republicans bolted from Speaker GINGRICH and said "We cannot stand this anymore. We are going to vote with the Democrats." And they took that amendment off. That is just one bill. It is one explanation why only three of the 13 appropriations bills ever made it down to the White House.

So now we come to this situation where the government cannot continue to run because Speaker GINGRICH and the Republicans could not produce appropriations bills. So we passed something called a continuing resolution, keeping the government continuing in operation while we figure out how to solve the big questions.

The continuing resolution has been a time honored tradition around here. We sent them down to the President, they sign them, the government keeps going on for a few weeks while we resolve our differences. This time Speaker GINGRICH had a little tricky one to put in there, 9 lines out of a 53-page bill. And in those nine lines, he increased Medicare premiums on senior citizens as of January 1 by 25 percent. The Speaker knew better. The President said he would never sign it. The Democrats opposed it. We do not want senior citizens on Medicare paying 25 percent more in their premiums.

□ 1900

And so the President has said he will veto it. And now we face the prospect that the Federal Government will shut down.

Mr. Speaker, it is a sad situation. It does not reflect well on either party. It does not reflect well on the President or on Congress, but I think the President was right. The President was

right in vetoing that bill. There is no reason why we should demand Medicare premiums increases as a price for keeping the Federal Government in operation.

As a matter of fact, the gentleman from New Mexico, Senator DOMENICI, a Republican Senator, today came up with a reasonable compromise, and he is a reasonable man. He said let us freeze that Medicare rate and keep government in operation while we work toward a balanced budget, which we all want to see. That is a reasonable thing. Unfortunately, many of the Republican leaders said to him, sit down and be quiet, we have another strategy.

Their strategy, Mr. Speaker, involves not just shutting down the Federal Government but also, for the first time in the history of the United States of America, we run the potential of defaulting on our national debt. Now, none of us like the fact that America is in debt, but we are all proud of the fact that when we say the full faith and credit of the United States of America it means something. Not just here but around the world. That is our integrity. That is our reputation. That is our credit rating.

The Republicans, because they will not pass a debt extension limit, are jeopardizing that credit rating for the United States of America. That goes far beyond what is necessary. What we need is a bipartisan commonsense approach. Stop the political gamesmanship and do it immediately.

AMERICAN PEOPLE OPPOSE EXTREME REPUBLICAN BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, we all know that Speaker GINGRICH holds a doctorate in history, but over the weekend he may have earned a doctorate in revisionist history as well.

Mr. GINGRICH spend the weekend trying to blame President Clinton for this budget impasse. If we take a quick review of history, however, recent history, it reveals the true culprit is NEWT GINGRICH himself. Since April Speaker GINGRICH has been threatening to shut down the government and throw the country into default. Quite frankly, he is the only person that has talked about shutting the government down.

But now the day of reckoning has arrived and the Speaker has developed a very serious case of cold feet, so he is desperately trying to blame the President. The fact remains that it is the Speaker who put this blackmail scheme into motion months ago.

Take a look at what Speaker GINGRICH was saying in April. He said the President will veto a number of things and we will then put them all on this debt ceiling that everyone is talking about, and then we will decide how big a crisis that he wants, quoting the Washington Times April 3, 1995.