

I will tell you what I think we need to do. Half of your conference over there agrees we need to balance the budget in 7 years, and what I say is the President will not come around, let us forget about the President, let us sit down with the conservative side of the Democratic Caucus with us and come to terms on a 7-year balanced budget so we can do a veto override, and we can reopen the Government, and we can all go home for Christmas.

But I bought a Christmas tree, and I brought my wife and daughter up here, and I am willing to stay as long as it takes.

THIS IS A HOSTAGE SITUATION

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

Mr. PETERSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this is a hostage situation. I know from which I speak. I was a hostage of the Vietnamese Government for six Christmases. I knew what was going on at that time. As a hostage in Vietnam I knew what my options were. I really had a feel of the paralysis of the circumstance, and I could live with that. I was a volunteer, just like so many of our brave men and women that are in Bosnia right now are volunteers to serve their Nation, and I would take my hit. I did not have any problem with that. But what we have here is a nation, an entire nation, every citizen of the United States, being held hostage to the radical extremist portion of the Republican Caucus conference.

Now maybe they can justify that. Maybe that is OK. Maybe they are OK out there writing the new Dickens Christmas Schrooge Carol based on new circumstances, modern circumstances. Maybe in fact they all wish to be the Christmas Scrooge because they are holding not only the Federal employees who have been furloughed, they are holding this entire country hostage to an ideology that the country is not buying into.

The United States citizenry is not extreme, they are not radicals. They are God-fearing, compassionate, logically thinking people, and they cannot understand why it is that we as a House of Representatives cannot sit down and agree to disagree; first of all, to get down to some negotiations, but then to get to the point of compromise, yes, compromise, the word "compromise" which has been for whatever reason essentially destroyed in its definition. In fact we are using the term "compromise" in its worst categorization, which would be to suggest to compromise one's values.

We are ultimately going to have to compromise, my colleagues. We are ultimately going to have to do the people's business. We are ultimately going to have to answer to the mainstream of America as we deal with this budget issue.

Extremist, radical ideas are not America's ideas. There will be a price to pay if the radical elements continue, and that price will be paid at the ballot box next November because that is how it works here.

The question is who, in fact, is in charge? Who is in charge? Who is leading here in this national government? We have lost our leadership. Clearly the Republican side has lost its leadership because they have failed to keep the motors of government working, which is their contract with America as a majority. It is their contract to keep the offices of the government running. They have purposefully shut them down, and they have done so, in fact I believe, with malice. We need to move on.

THE BLAME GAME

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

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today I listened to the President in his news conference, and he was talking about essentially in the same way and with the same terms as the previous speaker about extreme freshmen, 73 individuals that are holding up the Government, and you know it is the same old story: the blame game.

By the way, I remember a President by the name of John F. Kennedy, and I remember when the Bay of Pigs tragedy happened, and President Kennedy stood up and said, "I take the blame, the buck stops here." But what I heard from President Clinton today was that it is the freshmen that are causing this problem, those extremists.

It reminded me not too long ago when we had the tragedy in Waco. The President said, "It is not my fault," and the Attorney General had to take the blame.

He is never to blame. It is never his fault.

He has offered four budgets that do not keep his word with CBO scoring, but it is not his fault. There were three bills on his desk that he could have signed that would have got the Government up and running again, Commerce, Interior, and VA-HUD, that would have put the people back to work, but he vetoed them, and he blames the freshmen.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about those extreme freshmen just for a minute. What is extreme, and I asked this the other day, what is extreme about wanting a balanced budget in 7 years? Seven years, not tomorrow, not next year, not 2 years from now, but 7 years. A glidepath for 7 years that is going to actually spend basically \$3 billion more than what we are spending now. There are no cuts. We are going to be spending more money. As I said, a glidepath towards a balanced budget that will provide a future for our children and our grandchildren, that will not allow this country to go bankrupt. What is extreme about that? Trying to save the economic viability of this country.

Medicare. The President said we are extremists, that we are going to cut, slash, kill Medicare. There is only a 2-percent difference between the Republican plan and the President's plan. Basically \$138 difference over a year period of time in the year 2002 on what would be spent per individual.

What are we talking about here when we are talking about extremists and radicals? Individuals that want to save Medicare for their mothers and fathers. My mother and father are 78 years old. I want to save Medicare.

□ 1800

Why would I do anything to hurt the most precious people that I know? I do not know when this rhetoric is going to stop, but it is time that we get serious about balancing the budget. It is time we do have serious negotiations, but the President is not willing. He is the one that is not willing. He is the one that broke it off last night. He is the one that said, in one instance through the Vice President, that, "Well, we cannot go specifically by the CBO. We have to have other numbers in there." Then he comes back later and he said, "That was not what we meant. We are willing to go by CBO scores now."

What are we dealing with here? Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I wish the President would just come forth, put a budget on the table that would provide for a balanced budget in 7 years and that would allow the CBO to score it to see if the numbers are right. I think we would be willing to then look at, what is he talking about, Medicare and taxes? We are willing to look.

WE CANNOT FORGET THE POOR IN OUR NATION IN ORDER TO MAKE THE WEALTHY WEALTHIER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest. I, too, am tired with the rhetoric. No matter which way you put it, there are real people out there being affected. I am from a regional city with many, many, many Federal employees. I, too, have gotten messages: Stick with the President.

I am from a city and a district that has one of the most well-known medical schools, one of the most well-known dental schools. A medical school that has four Nobel Prize winners there now in my district. None of them are for these cuts. All of them understand that when we put the bottom line to it, there are a few more dollars being added. So no, there is not a cut as such; but what we have forgotten to be honest with the people about, there are a million more people going into the system to share these dollars. When you put that many more people

into a system, those dollars will not spread broadly enough.

When these dollars do not spread, the individuals see it as a cut because the services are simply not there. We can call it whatever we want to call it, but when the services are not there, the choices are not there, and people are having to pay more out of their pockets. When offsprings of these senior citizens are having to pick up the tab, when spouses are having to give up their job security and their homes to pay bills, they see it as a cut. We can count the dollars, whatever we want to do, it is a cut for the people. They feel it. They know it when they feel it.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing this just the opposite than what America has promised. We are punishing the poor and the most vulnerable to help the rich. That is not the way it has been intended. You can say that we are giving a tax break to persons making \$75,000 a year, but when you are taking away from those who are making \$25,000 or less, that is punishment of the most vulnerable population. When we take away Head Start, when we take away education funds, we are doing just the opposite of what our society needs to cope with tomorrow. Any way you look at it, that is hurting all of us, because we hurt our future.

Every nation that is doing better economically has a history of investing in their human resources. That is their people. We are refusing to do that. We are in the shape of a Third World nation, but it is OK if you are rich. It is the poor, the disabled, the elderly, that are being affected, and our children, which is this Nation's future.

Anyone who thinks the rich children are safe while we let poor children wander around in the wilderness of poverty, hunger, and the lack of education is in a different world than reality. Every child's future is at stake, not just the wealthy. We can get up here and talk all we want to talk about saving the future for our children, taking away the price tag. Let me assure you, when we remove food, when we remove shelter, when we subject the poorest children to water that is not safe, food that is not safe, and continue to dump in the neighborhoods where air is not safe, do not think we are not going to pick up the tab. We are going to pick it up through hospital bills, we will pick it up through prisons, but we have the responsibility and we will pick it up somehow.

We simply cannot forget the poor in our Nation just to keep making the wealthy wealthier. It does not work. It does not work, no matter what gender, no matter what color, no matter what the origin of birth. It does not work for any of us.

It is time for all of us to come to the table, forget the rhetoric, forget we are going to do just a revolution for the sake of revolution. We have to think about human beings. These are human beings we are affecting. These are living, breathing people. I say to you, it is time, it is time for us to give attention to the most vulnerable.

PASSING A CONTINUING RESOLUTION WOULD LET PEOPLE HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to maybe digress here. I wish some of the speakers who have spoken earlier were here. I have been around here for quite some time, and some people have a tendency to kind of rewrite history here.

The people that continually come to this well, and the good gentleman from Florida who practiced medicine in Florida, he said he was so concerned about his parents, and I feel sure he is, and is glad he still has his parents with him. Some of us do not have that privilege. But their rhetoric does not match up with the record of the Republican Party.

I remember back early on when Ronald Reagan first came to office, the first budget David Stockman sent to this House called for the \$125 cut for the oldest, neediest senior citizens in this country, to cut out the \$125 for these senior citizens. I can also remember, and I look at the RECORD back when Medicare was established, and it got no support. In fact, the majority leader in the Senate said he fought, he fought very, very hard to try to see that Medicare would never become a reality. Social Security was not supported by the Republican Party. Certainly Medicaid was not supported by the Republican Party.

The folks say to me, they say, "We are going to give senior citizens a bigger choice. We are going to let you do, and you are going to get an insurance policy. We are going to give you some choice." One of the things that they crucified Hillary Clinton and President Clinton for was to try to get people to move into HMO's and these areas. I can just imagine if I go to Prudential or some carrier that carrier health insurance and I say, "I want to get some insurance," and they say, "How old are you?" I say, "I am 66 years old. I have had open heart surgery. I have heart disease. It will get progressively worse." "Well, I'm sorry about that, but we cannot handle you," and the anxiety that it gives to our senior citizens.

One of the gentlemen mentioned it is only like \$100 or \$150 a year. That does not sound like much to a Member of Congress here, but I have people who come into my district offices in North Carolina every day, senior citizens living on fixed incomes that have to make a determination whether they are going to pay their monthly bills or whether they are going to get a prescription filled. It is not just the Medicare and the Medicaid that is so wrong with the budget that the Republicans have passed. It goes to other areas. Unless they have taken it out recently, you have the spousal impoverishment

that is in the bill. If one of the couple has to go into the nursing home, the existing spouse no longer can protect their property. Their children can be liable for that homestead or what have you. It is just a cruel hoax, this entire bill. It is not just the Medicare and Medicaid portion of it. It is all across. There is a mean spirit through this entire budget.

The gentleman spoke down here and said the President sent up a bill which we voted on the other day which was a total hoax. There was not one day's hearing. They took some quotes out of some statements that had been made months and months ago and put together a bill with not one day's hearings. It did not even go to the Rules Committee, and they brought it here on this floor and try to pan it off. It was a charade, it was a phony bill, it was a phony vote to embarrass the President of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to get to another point. My grandkids, if you will permit me to be personal, my grandkids are coming here this weekend. They are going to spend Christmas with me. I do not have to leave this town. The gentleman made the remark his kids are coming. He is probably going to fly his wife and kids up from Florida to be here for Christmas. We can stay here for Christmas. But there are thousands and thousands of American citizens out there that do not take part in this debate, they had no part in this, and they are going to be absolutely frustrated during the holidays. They are going to be concerned about it.

Let me just remind my colleagues on the other side, they talk about a revolution that took place in November. Let me just remind my colleagues that 60 percent of the American people said, "A pox on both of your parties. We did not vote for any of you." Your Contract With America said when you were going to balance the budget, you did not go far enough and say we are going to balance the budget, but we are going to cut Medicare, Medicaid, we are going to do away with clean water, all these things. Had you added that into the contract, the numbers would have gone down drastically.

Why do we not do a continuing resolution, let people have a merry Christmas and a happy new year, and same to you, Tiny Tim.

AMERICANS WANT AN HONEST BALANCED BUDGET

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

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a couple of things during this span, as we wait for the rule to come down from the Committee on