

The premeditated train wreck that was announced last April is occurring. There is not anything unknown about this. "We are going to do it. The President is going to do it our way or no way."

I have been around here a little while and I have heard that before. I believe the best interests of this country are to give us a clean debt ceiling, give us a clean continuing resolution, and then we can work out the legislative problems after that.

I think we would find that things would move a lot faster than trying to tear up the country and to tear up the financial stability of this great Nation of ours.

I hope we can get a clean debt ceiling, a clean continuing resolution, and that the majority would do their work and give us the appropriations bills so the President would have an opportunity to sign those, and we can continue with the things all of us want to, and that is work towards a balanced budget.

I yield the floor.

A BUDGET PROMISE

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, in the middle of last week, at the suggestion of one of my colleagues from Washington State in the House of Representatives, most of the Washington congressional delegation and several Members from other States in the country began a campaign to allow people in the United States to speak out in a tangible and dramatic fashion their desire that we stop coming up with excuses and pass a budget which could promise a balance to the American people.

We wanted individual citizens throughout the country to be able to say we have loaded enough in the way of debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren and that it was time to stop, time to chart a new course of action. The way in which we proposed to do this was to suggest to each and every individual in the country that he or she, if she wished the President to sign a balanced budget bill, should send the President a pen, a pen like the one I hold here in my hand, or, for that matter, a No. 2 pencil, or, in the case of the very children who will be saddled with the debts that we have run up in the past and that this President insists that we continue to run up, even a crayon. We suggested any writing instrument, in other words, Mr. President, except for a red pen, on the ground that there was a sufficient amount of red ink in Washington, DC, already.

This announcement took place on Wednesday of last week. On Friday afternoon I was present at radio station KVI in Seattle, a talk radio station, which had not much more than 24 hours earlier taken up this call and had suggested sending those pens either directly to the radio station or to some two dozen drop-off points throughout western Washington.

By the time I reached the KVI studios, there were already huge piles of envelopes containing pens—some without notes, almost all with return addresses, some with short notes to the President—stacked on the table surrounding the microphones in the studios. They numbered in the thousands, produced simply by that single radio station.

Others in the State of Washington have taken up the cause. This morning the National Taxpayers Union held a news conference attended by myself and by the junior Senator from Georgia and my colleague in the House of Representatives, together with one of these radio talk show hosts, to ask that this cause be taken up by other radio stations across the United States. If those stations have anything like the success that we had, there will literally be hundreds of thousands, perhaps up to five digits, of pens delivered to the White House, each and every one of which asks the President to sign a bill. No more excuses, no more deferrals, no more putting off to next year what we should do this year, but a set of laws, a set of changes and directions that will clearly promise us a balanced budget no later than shortly after the turn of the new century.

It is ironic, I believe, that we should have to insist that the President of the United States do this because when he was a candidate for President, Mr. Clinton promised to balance the budget in 5 years. He abandoned that promise on being elected. And by the beginning of this year, 2 years after being sworn in, he submitted a budget that would never be balanced, in fact, a budget that would never have deficits of less than \$150 billion a year.

Later, he said perhaps he could do the job in 10 years, then 9, then briefly 7, now back to 10, but that he could only do it if he were allowed to set the assumptions, to play with the statistics, so that balancing the budget would become an easy task without any significant changes in spending policies in the United States, a tactic which has been used briefly by Presidents, both Democrat and Republican, with unsurprising results—increasing rather than decreasing budget deficits.

In addition, the proposal which we have been debating today, the reconciliation bill which will come before this body before the end of the week and be sent to the President before the end of the week, does much more to keep the President's original promises than simply to balance the budget, as important and difficult as that task is. It also keeps the President's promises, since abandoned, to provide a tax cut for middle-income Americans, and it will also keep the President's promise, to which he continues to give lip service and little more, to end welfare as we have known it.

It is over a bill that will carry out these promises of the President of the United States that all of the current furor takes place.

Rather than to promise to sign that bill, the President has committed himself to vetoing it. As of the moment at which I speak, he has vetoed one of the two much more modest interim measures that would allow him both time to veto that bill and to discuss with Members of Congress what alternative approach to the same goal he would adopt without causing the Government of the United States to come to a halt.

I am not sure precisely what the consequences of this course of action will be. Two bills, one of which has already been vetoed by the President and one of which is likely to be passed here later today and vetoed before the evening is up, will cause a certain degree of disruption. A veto of the reconciliation bill, a repudiation of the President's three promises, will, I suspect, cause somewhat more in the way of disruption because it will be the last of a series of actions on the part of the President that belie his promises and commitments as a candidate in the early days of his Presidency.

So far, the President has been unwilling, in any rational and thoughtful fashion, to discuss these goals. So far, he simply says he will not even begin to discuss them until preconditions are met which guarantee that he will never have to discuss them seriously. I suspect, however, that as has been the case so frequently in the past, once the shoe begins to pinch, the President will be willing to discuss this serious question, and I believe he will find Members on this side of the aisle willing to discuss everything with him except for the underlying premise that we must come up with a realistic method of balancing the budget. Once that principle has been reached, we can reach an agreement and the President can use one of those hundreds of thousands of pens to sign a balanced budget.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are in morning business, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct, with time limits of 10 minutes.

A SHUTDOWN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me comment on some of the discussion that has taken place on the floor of the Senate today. First of all, I think if there is a shutdown of the Federal Government, there will be no credit in any corner of this town, only blame and, in my judgment, justifiable blame. We ought not be at this position. We should not get to the point of a shutdown of Government services. We

ought not have a train wreck. And we certainly ought not have any kind of a default on the amount of money that is owed by the Federal Government.

It seems to me logical that the leaders of Congress and the President should and will sit down and discuss the issues that are between the two sides and resolve them. It is interesting to me, this is not even the stadium where the contest is going to occur. The major contest on the reconciliation bill is going to occur in the stadium sometime in the month of December. This is the bridge on the way to the stadium. The continuing resolution and the debt ceiling issue come to us with attachments, little extras added on, that those who put them on understand the President will not accept. So it does create a circumstance where we now have an 11th hour problem.

I hope this gets solved between now and midnight tonight. There is no reason for the Government to shut down. But I do want to say, those who have made a case today on the floor of the Senate that this occurs because they have a plan and no one else does, because their plan will work and no other plan will, because their plan calls for a balanced budget and no one else wants one, is just hogwash. That is simply not the case.

The case here is not a difference on the destination. I do not know of anybody in this Chamber who does not think there needs to be a balance between spending and revenues.

We need to balance the Federal budget. There are many different ways to get to that point. And the debate, as aggressive and as significant as it is, is a debate about priorities.

We ought to be debating priorities. It only behooves the political process, in my judgment, to have one side which says, "Roll over and play dead," while the other side says, "Here is the only way, here is the road to a balanced budget." I tell you what all of this is about, in my judgment, when you take a look at the priorities. It is about money.

There is an article in the Washington Post about a speech given by the Speaker of the House, Speaker GINGRICH, which says that the problem in this country is that we need more campaign cash. We need more money spent on political campaigns. Of course, that defies traditional opinion, and certainly defies the judgment that I hold. There is too much money in politics and too much money in campaigns.

The Speaker says the problem is there is not enough money; we need more spending on political campaigns. What a lot of nonsense.

The problem here, even on these issues, is money. Those who have are going to do just fine under these priorities and those who do not have so much are going to find they are going to have some problems. That is where the difference in priorities come in.

Let me just show a couple of quotes to my colleagues. These are not from a

Democrat. They are from a Republican, Kevin Phillips, a Republican political analyst. Here is how he says it—again, not a Democrat—a Republican sees it.

He says:

The revolutionary ideology driving the new Republican Medicare proposal is also simple: Cut middle-class programs as much as possible and give the money back to the private sector business, finance, and high-income taxpayers.

That is not a Democrat or a partisan. That is a Republican observing the problem with this plan, these so-called reforms.

One more from Kevin Phillips, a Republican analyst, who says it this way:

Remember, at the same time as the Republicans proposed to reduce Medicare spending by \$270 billion over seven years they want to cut taxes for corporations, investors, and affluent families by \$245 billion over the same period. This is no coincidence.

Again, not a Democrat speaking, a Republican speaking about the dilemma of this plan.

I simply observe this. This notion that everyone is to tighten their belts and this plan towards a balanced budget requires equality of sacrifice, and everybody in America is told it is time to buckle up, that we are going to hunker down and solve this problem—well, it is not quite true. What has happened this year is we have seen the priorities in the appropriations bills and the authorization bills established that, in my judgment, are not the right priorities for the country.

Yes, we should cut spending, and there are ways to cut spending in significant areas of the Federal budget. But the fact is that we, of course, have not gotten the appropriations bills done. The Congress has passed only a couple of appropriations bills that have gone to the President. Most of them are not passed. It is months late.

The reconciliation bill, which is now going to be the subject of this debate in December, is 5 months late. June 15 is date by which the Republicans who run the Congress are required to have a reconciliation bill passed by the Congress. It is 5 months late. The reconciliation bill has not even had a conference.

Those who would be expected to be conferees on the Democratic side are unaware of any meetings held, not invited to any meetings, 5 months later no reconciliation bill, and all of the appropriations bills that are not done—that is most of them—the fact is that they have not been done largely because of hangups and disagreements among Republicans. They cannot agree among themselves. They have very controversial issues that hang out there. So the bills do not get moving.

If all the appropriations bills were passed, we would not have a shutdown tonight because all of the appropriations bills would be law. But they are not passed. Even those that have been passed by one Chamber or another demonstrate to me that it is not a case of people saying, let us all tighten our belts.

I have in my mind the defense bill. That came to the floor of the Senate, and it had a requirement, or request, by the Secretary of Defense which says, here is what we want for the defense of our country. Guess what? The conservative Senators said: We want \$7 billion more. You do not want to build star wars right now. We want to build it. You do not want to build B-2 bombers. We insist you buy 20 of them for \$30 billion. F-15's, buy more; F-16's, buy more; two amphibious assault ships, we do not want to choose between the two. Let us buy both, one for \$900 million, one for \$1.3 billion.

I could read the rest. UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, a whole series of add-ons that were not requested by the military, not by the branch services, the Air Force, the Marines, the Army, the Navy—not by the Secretary of Defense. Just by conservatives standing on the floor saying: We are not spending enough; we want to spend more.

The only two areas where they want to spend more is, one, when the defense bill comes to the floor, they say, let us spend money not requested. And, second, according to the Speaker, let us spend more on political campaigns. We do not have enough spending in political campaigns.

I do not have the foggiest idea where people get these notions. There is too much spending in political campaigns. That is the problem. It ought to be cut down.

Guess what? All those folks who spend money on political campaigns are not going to grimace when they see this new Republican revolution because the fact is, they are treated with kid gloves. It is the other folks that have to tighten the belts that grimace a little bit when they see the results of their programs.

My point is that this is a legitimate debate about priorities. But even as we debate priorities about where to cut spending, as we do that, there is no reason at all to allow the Government to shut down tonight. Leaders of Congress and this President have a responsibility, in my judgment, to sit down and think through this, and to clearly decide immediately to pass a continuing resolution and a debt extension that is clean, that gets us into the middle of December when we are going to have the real debate about the reconciliation bill.

No one ought to shy away from the debate about priorities. That is what this is all about. There is no problem with that. But it does not make any sense at all for us to be hung up on the continuing resolution and debt extension with provisions put on each of them in a manner where it is well known the President will be required to veto.

So my hope is, between now and midnight tonight, the President and the leaders of Congress can agree on a clean continuing resolution and a clean debt extension. There is no reason to

hang Congress up and have the Government shut down and default on debt in the next couple of weeks. Let us have this debate about priorities. But let us do that in December on the reconciliation bill.

But I did want to take the floor today simply to say this is not as it is characterized by some as one side of the aisle wanting to cut spending and the other side does not. I think I have just demonstrated in at least one of the largest areas of Federal spending where there is precious little appetite to do anything other than to spend more by conservatives who come to the floor. It is a big jobs program. There is no belt-tightening when that bill comes up.

I hope when we debate and sort through these priorities in the middle of December and write a reconciliation bill that we will do the best with what each side wants: expanding economy, more jobs, and better opportunity in the private sector. We also want to ensure fairness in the spending priorities and budget priorities here in the Congress.

I think when Kevin Phillips, who is not a Democrat—a Republican—evaluates the set of priorities that is brought to us now by the Republicans, it demonstrates once again that there is plenty of room for disagreement, and I think also plenty of room for compromise hopefully in the middle of December when the American people would expect us to reach agreement. But, between now and then, there is no excuse to have the Government shut down or to have a default at the end of this evening.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

PAYMENT OF VETERANS' BENEFITS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I was in Amarillo, TX, this weekend dedicating a veterans' hospital addition, and I met a couple from Friona, TX. He is a disabled veteran. They were concerned about news reports they had heard over the weekend that veterans' benefits would not be paid if the Government is shut down.

I am taking to the floor because I want to make sure that the veteran from Friona, TX, and every other veteran in this country knows that veterans' benefits will be paid December 1 unless this administration decides that that is not the priority. I hope this administration will not do that.

Veterans' benefits are a priority. Veterans' benefits are an entitlement. Never before have veterans' benefits not been paid when there has been a temporary shutdown of Government.

So I came back to make sure. I talked to the budget committees. I talked to the veterans' committees. We consulted the Congressional Research Office to see if there was any merit in this alleged nonpayment of veterans' benefits, and in fact we were told that they had never heard of anything like that. And in fact unless the adminis-

tration made the decision affirmatively to pay welfare recipients but not veterans, that in fact veterans would be paid.

So I wish to take the floor to tell the veterans of this country that most certainly they will be paid. There is cash flow to do that regardless of whether there is a continuing resolution or if the President vetoes the continuing resolution there are funds to pay the veterans' benefits, the next ones of which go out December 1. So I think it would be highly appropriate if the Veterans Administration would reassure the veterans of that because they are getting mixed signals.

In my home State of Texas, some veterans' offices are saying, of course, checks are going to go out, and some Veterans Administration offices are saying they do not know; that it is up in the air. And then there are reports that reporters calling the Veterans Administration here are getting the word that they will not go out. So there is confusion by the administration on this point. But there is no confusion on the part of Congress that veterans' pay is absolutely essential, that it is covered, and that the checks will go out December 1.

So I hope that the Veterans' Administration will, indeed, clarify this so that our veterans are not worried that their payments are of lesser stature than those of welfare recipients in this country.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

REPUBLICAN PLAN

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, while I was presiding, I was desirous of responding to some of the things that had been said about the subject of this morning's business by a number of the Members of the Congress, specifically one from North Dakota.

During the course of his remarks, he talked about a plan, about the fact that the Republicans have talked about the plan that we had that we are going to discuss, that we have sent to the President that will reach a balanced budget in a period of 7 years, as if somebody else had a plan. I suggest that there is no other plan. If there is a plan, I have not seen it.

The Senator was talking about repeating some of the things that had been said over and over again having to do with reducing Medicare in order to give tax breaks to the rich. I want to say, every time I hear that, that the Republicans had no intention at any point of reducing Medicare. The Republicans gave a program that would have the effect of increasing Medicare by approximately 6.4 percent each year. That would be if a person were getting the maximum Medicare, as accorded today under the current law. That person would receive \$4,800 a year. At the end of the 7-year period, that same individual would be getting \$6,700 a year.

There is no way to say that that could be considered as a cut in Medi-

care. To say over and over and over again, with redundancy that is unbearable, that the Republicans are going to try to use cuts in Medicare—which I just talked about, that there are no cuts in Medicare—to give tax breaks to the rich is being unreasonable. Mr. President, 90 percent of the tax breaks that would come from a \$500 tax credit per child would go to families under \$100,000 of income.

But I want to get down to the point where he was talking about our Nation's defense. He was talking about the Senate bill that was too high, talking about the appropriations bill that was actually some \$7 billion more than asked for by the military. I think we all know, being realistic, that when there is a Democrat in the White House, the military is going to be influenced by what that Democrat or a Republican in the White House might want.

We saw what happened back in the 1970's when we had a Democratic President in Jimmy Carter, and we saw our defense budget going down, going down and, of course, the social programs going up. Until such time as 1980, we did not have enough money for spare parts, and we found it necessary after 1980, up to 1985, to increase spending on defense by about 40 percent.

We do not want that to happen again, and yet we have seen during the course of this administration cuts in our defense budget to the extent that right now we are where we were in 1980.

This concerns me, because right now there is a crisis that is taking place and a decision that has been made by this President to send up to 25,000 troops on to the ground in Bosnia. You can talk about doing this and act like the budget is going to remain static during this time, and yet the foreign policy of this administration has put more and more money into humanitarian gestures, Mr. President, to the extent that he has had to come back to this Congress for emergency supplementals.

This is the position we have found ourselves in: We have a Republican-elected House and Senate. We have control. The Republicans gained control in the 1994 elections. And yet we have a President who sends our troops off on humanitarian missions, having no relativity to our Nation's defense. We sent them off to Somalia. Of course, our troops went to Somalia in December under the last month of the Bush administration. And yet, once that humanitarian mission, as described by President Bush when we sent the troops over to Somalia, was over, we time and time again pleaded with President Clinton to bring our troops back from Somalia. There was no mission there that related to our Nation's security interests. Yet, he did not bring them back and they did not come back until 18 of our troops were murdered in cold blood and dragged through the mud through the streets of Mogadishu.