

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. REID. Parliamentary inquiry.

It is my understanding that the procedure now before the Senate is that we are in morning business, and that we are each allowed to speak up to 10 minutes. Is that true?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. LEAHY. I am sorry. I understood it was 5 minutes. That is why I requested 10 minutes.

I ask that I simply seek recognition under the normal order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know that the distinguished Democratic leader is going to speak here on the floor in a few minutes to describe the offer that was made and, apparently, rejected by the Republican leadership. And I would hope that Senators and the public would listen to it. I say this because I have a feeling in many, many ways that if we were left to the situation where the Democrats and Republicans in the Senate were able to work together on this, with the White House, we would have a solution to this impasse.

Certainly, we would have a solution that would put a lot of hard-working men and women back to work, people who cannot afford to miss paychecks and who want to be at work, people who have mortgages to pay, children to educate, parents to care for, have medical bills to pay, car payments to make, and can ill-afford to lose paychecks, especially when there are jobs that need to be done and people want to do them.

I say that I think we could work it out between the Senate and the White House. It appears to me, however, that the other body and its leadership do not feel it is possible and that they say there is nothing that can be done. I see this remarkable situation where the other body simply recessed even though appropriations and spending bills begin—spending bills by custom; revenue bills by Constitution—begin in the other body. They have left.

They have this fiction of waiting for the call of the Chair. But, in fact, their leadership has decided they would recess and that they would leave. They are shirking their duty. They are being paid. They ought to stay. They ought to stay and work this out for those tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of men and women who are not being paid, who are loyal Americans, who have given a great deal of their life and effort to this country and want to keep this country going.

We have a situation where we have become the laughing stock of the world. The President of the United States cannot go to a major economic summit in Japan at a time when perhaps a greater danger to this Nation is

perhaps not the deficits we now face but our trade deficit. At least much of the deficit we owe to ourselves, but our trade deficit involves countries abroad who are eating our economic lunch.

Every time we have \$1 billion more in our trade deficit, we lose tens of thousands of American jobs. The President was going to represent this country at a meeting in Japan where we could at least talk about that with the country that has the greatest trade imbalance with the United States, but he has to remain here. He is remaining here at work. The distinguished Presiding Officer is remaining here at work. I am here at work.

I wish the Republican leadership in the House would let the House come back to work, because, Mr. President, there is one thing that ought to be very evident to everybody: We are not going to pass a Gingrich budget. We are not going to pass a Clinton budget. We are not going to pass a Dole budget. We can pass a budget for the American people. We will pass a budget that reflects the views of both Republicans and Democrats of the House and of the Senate and of the President because, frankly, under the Constitution, under the laws and under the history of this great country, we are all in this together.

So I urge everybody to stop thinking there is going to be one party that is going to win everything in this. That may work in a game of marbles on a playground in kindergarten. That does not work here. This is not a playground, even though it may appear that way to some. It is not kindergarten, although it may appear that way to some. It is not a game of marbles, even though it may appear that way to some. This is the budget of the country, the most powerful, greatest Nation on Earth, the most significant democracy history has ever known, the largest economy in the world, and we are standing here because some feel they may have been slighted or some feel that they must make a point that will fit on a bumper sticker in next year's election, congressional or Presidential.

Mr. President, I am one Democrat who says let us have Democrats and Republicans sit down. Set aside short-term political gains and do what is best for this country. Stop thinking that we will have a Speaker Gingrich budget, or a leader Dole budget, or a President Clinton budget, but rather that we will have a budget that can take the best of the proposals of each of the three, and let us work at it.

We have had proposals here. The distinguished Senator from North Dakota and I have voted for a budget that would give us a balanced budget within the 7 years. We all want that. But before we balance a budget that intends, in large part, to slash very needy programs so that a tax break can be given to people at the highest level, let us ask if that is what the American public really want.

Do they want to see money for education cut so that the most wealthy in this country can have a tax break? I doubt it.

Do they want to see nutrition programs for the most needy in this country slashed so that the wealthiest can get another tax break? I doubt that the American people want that.

Do they want to see Medicare and Medicaid attacked to that the wealthiest in this Nation can have a tax break? I doubt that very much.

If we are going to be saving money, let us protect the most in need. And if there is extra money left over, let us apply it to the deficit. Let us apply it to the deficit, not to another tax break for the wealthiest who already pay less in taxes than any industrialized nation on Earth. We do not need to put it there. If we really want to do something for our children, rather than giving it as a tax break for the wealthiest, apply it to our national debt, apply it to our deficit.

In the deficits that grew up during the Reagan and Bush era, today we spend nearly \$1 billion in interest—in interest alone—almost every day, \$1 billion just in interest on the deficits and the increase in the national debt built up during the terms of only two Presidents, Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Let us be honest about that. Some who were the greatest proponents of the Reagan deficits have stood in the last 2 days on the floor of this Senate and said, "We have to do something about this terrible deficit." Well, I tell them that virtually our whole deficit is caused just by what we pay in interest on those profligate days in the eighties where we made huge tax cuts and huge defense buildups and borrowed the money from the next generation to pay for it.

That is what happened then, Mr. President. What happens now, though, is what happens now. Today, we have hundreds of thousands of people out of work needlessly. We have hundreds and hundreds of thousands more who will be out of work because of the ripple effect, whether it is the people who want to get into our national parks, whether it is those who will not be able to borrow money for their mortgage, VA loan, or anything else, whether it is those who want to make new claims in Social Security.

Think of the hundreds of thousands, even millions of people who will be out of work because of the Government programs that have stopped, Government programs that all of us, Republicans and Democrats, have supported, whether it is in the VA or whether it is in our various mortgage programs or Social Security or anything else.

Let us say, OK, everybody has made their political point. They can use them in their ads next year. Let us sit down and remember, we are not going to have a Republican House or Republican Senate or a Democratic House or Democratic Senate budget or Presidential budget, but together we can

have one that serves the best of this country.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ABRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). The Senator from Michigan.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I want to speak today on a couple of topics.

First of all, I would like to lend my voice of support for the proposal that was earlier discussed by the Senator from Maine, Senator SNOWE, in regard to legislation she introduced, legislation I am a cosponsor of, to treat the salaries and pay of the Members of Congress in the same fashion that other Federal employees are being treated during this period of Government shutdown.

I share the opinion the Senator from Maine expressed very effectively earlier that it is important for the public to understand that those of us in Congress are no different than anybody else and that we should live by the same sets of rules that govern the rest of the people of similar status as we; and that is, the laws of the country should apply to us the way they apply to the rest of the country.

We did that earlier this year. We ended a long period of time in which Congressmen and Senators were exempt from any laws which people back in our States were forced on a daily basis to adhere to. In the same vein as Federal employees ourselves, we should be required to be treated in the same fashion as the Federal employees whose families this week have been confronted with the issues surrounding the Government shutdown.

Also, I am intrigued by and likely to support the amendment that Senator BROWN discussed in his remarks. I have long felt, in fact, in my campaign I talked about the need for us to place some sort of incentive for the Members of Congress to bring about a balanced budget that they all campaigned on but went to Washington and somehow found very elusive.

The notion of in some way treating us like the officers of a corporation that is running in the red intrigues me a lot, and it is very appealing, I think, to citizens across this country. If the country keeps running big deficits, it hurts the country. If a business runs big deficits, it hurts the business. When the business runs those deficits and is hurt, it is its owners, its managers who ultimately pay a price, and normally that comes in the form of seeing their salaries reduced.

In the same vein, it strikes me perhaps we, as the Nation's stewards of our economy, should have the same kind of responsibility and the same sort of incentive that people running a company have to make sure that we do not run a deficit.

So I look forward to working with the Senator from Colorado to try to

come up with a proposal or a program or an amendment that could address that set of incentives as well.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to talk briefly about why at least those of us who supported the Balanced Budget Act Friday night, who have been so strongly keeping committed to the notion of balancing the budget in 7 years, adhere to this position, because I think those Americans who are watching us in Washington, probably from time to time are wondering why are the stakes so high, why is it so critical that this budget be balanced and the sooner the better, not in 10 years, 9 or 8 years, but in the 7 years we have talked about?

The answer is, a balanced budget means important things to virtually everybody in this country. To average working families, Mr. President, it means a chance to keep more of what they earn.

Most families in our country pay interest on something, some pay interest on car loans that they have taken out; some pay interest on home mortgages, some pay interest on student loans, some pay interest on all of the above. Of course, there are many other items that people borrow money from lending institutions for today, and these interest rates are a big price that they pay along the way.

Putting the Nation's budget into balance means those interest rates we pay are going to come down. It means average families who work hard in this country and want to keep more of what they earn will see rates come down and see more money in their own pockets, instead of sending those dollars along to the persons from whom they have borrowed the dollars. That means more money to pay for children's education, more money to spend on other family necessities. In short, average working families get to have more control over their destinies.

Putting the budget into balance also means a lot for young people in this country. I mentioned already the impact of the student loans and interest rates paid on those loans. Let us talk about a young person who is looking forward to getting out of school in the near future and going to work and earning their own living and addressing their own needs, starting their own families, and so on. Considering the current rate of our national spending growth and the deficits we have been generating and projecting that on into the future, without restraint, means that young people today are confronting a debt burden that is incredibly large.

Already, earlier the Senator from Arizona talked about the impact of these deficits on a child born in 1995. It is estimated that a child born this year, Mr. President, will, in their lifetime, pay \$187,000 just to pay their share of interest on the national debt that already exists and will grow during their lifetime. That would mean, Mr. President, that if we do not bring this

spending spree, this sort of unlimited credit card type of Government operation under control, we will pass on to the children of our country a lot less opportunity than we inherited. It seems to me that all of us have a responsibility to take care of our own bills—not to pass them on to the next generation.

The Senator from Vermont talked about these deficits, and I recognize that they are not just deficits that started today. They have been building over time. One of the reasons I ran for the Senate last year and I think a lot of the other people in the freshman class ran, was to come down here and end the way business had been conducted—no matter who was in the White House, no matter who controlled Congress, because our objective is to try and set the Nation on a new course.

So as we continue this discussion, as we continue to strive to find common ground with regard to starting the Government, we should not lose sight of the overall objective—the objective for this Senator, at least, is to bring the budget into balance in 7 years so the families of this country will be able to keep more of what they earn, so that the children of this country will not grow up with a huge debt burden confronting them and spend too much of their time working to send money to Washington and to pay for their parent's bills, so that our Nation can compete even more effectively in a new century in which global competition will dominate even more than it does today.

For those reasons, I am very proud of what we did Friday night, that for once, despite all the conversations and talk and claims, and so on, that have gone on for many years about balancing the budget, we actually did something about it. We ended the talk and put a bill before the House and before the House of Representatives which, if enacted, would balance the budget. I am proud to say I voted for that bill, and I am proud to say that the bill passed.

For once, Mr. President, on Friday night, we took a stand that was more than just rhetoric. It was a commitment to a specific piece of legislation that would accomplish the balanced budget we all talk about in Washington, and that people have talked about here for a quarter century. After 25 years of rhetoric, Friday night, we did something about it.

Mr. President, I am glad I was part of that effort.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have not heard all of the presentations on the floor today, but I am sure I would agree with some of what has been said in the context of the shutdown of Government.