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House of Representatives

The House is in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Senate

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1995

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Sovereign God, ultimate judge of our leadership of this Nation, shake us fully awake to the realization that we are accountable to You for what is happening in Government during our watch. We confess that the Senate has become a combat zone for a wretched war of words as we deal with the issues of a balanced budget. Negotiations with the administration have deadlocked in an internecine, no-win battle. We are talking at each other; we are not carefully listening to each other. We have lost sight of the time-honored purpose of debate: to lead to creative compromise and synergized solutions.

Once again, time has run out and progress is debilitated. Help us to give up gamesmanship and rise to greatness. Overcome the brinksmanship that has led us to the brink of another impasse. We confess our deep need for Your grace to capture our attitudes and for Your guidance to untangle the negotiations. Again, we ask You to help us put our trust in You and recapture our trust in each other. Give us courage to replace the party spirit for the spirit of patriotism. In our blessed Lord's name. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COVERDELL. Thank you, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, today there will be a period for morning business until the hour of 12 noon with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each. Following morning business, the majority leader may resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2127, the Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

The Senate may also continue debate on the Department of Defense authorization conference report. And it is hoped that at some point today, the Senate will be able to set a time certain for a vote on the adoption of that conference report. Senators should therefore be aware that rollcall votes are still possible throughout today's session of the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COVERDELL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for not to extend beyond the hour of 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Wyoming.

BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I had hoped to be in Wyoming, as a matter of fact, this weekend, but I had hoped—sincerely hoped—that we would be working at solving the problems we have, and we do have some problems.

But I do want to comment a little. On the way in, I heard the President speak this morning. Frankly, I was surprised that his tone was that he had been offended, as a matter of fact. He indicated that the Republicans had shut down the Government. I have to tell you, I do not believe that is the case at all.

Although it does not matter who it is, the fact is he promised 25 days ago to bring a budget to be balanced in 7 years based on CBO numbers and has not done that, and that is the problem.

Mr. President, it is much more difficult to look into the future and seek to give the leadership that is necessary to mold the Government into a form that will be useful for generations to come. It is much easier to defend the status quo. It seems to me that is the real issue.

The real issue is the growing Government, the growing debt, the growing

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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interest, and the first opportunity that we have had in 25 years to change that. Frankly, the President has been the obstacle of causing that to happen, and I am sorry for that.

Mr. President, there is a great deal more to a balanced budget than arithmetic, even though that is what is talked about, of course. But it seems to me it is the most important issue that we have had before this country in a very long time. Not only because of the arithmetic, not only because we have a \$5 trillion debt, not only because we pay \$260 billion a year in interests, and growing, and because it is the largest line item in the budget, that is not the only reason.

One of the reasons is responsibility. We are coming into a new century soon, and I think all of us have some responsibility to give some thought to how we want to make the transfer of this Government and this country to new generations with debt that will cost a newborn \$187,000 during their lifetime on interest alone. Is that the kind of a country we want to bring forward, the kind of country where we have enjoyed the benefits of high spending but have not been willing to pay for it, just put it on the credit card of somebody else? The credit card is maxed out.

It also has to do with the concept and the size of the Federal Government, how intrusive and how large and how much spending is involved. I happen to be one of those who believe the Federal Government should be smaller, that we should, indeed, consider those things that could be done better by the States, some that do not need to be done at all by Government, that should be done in the private sector.

I think we ought to spend a little more time with oversight, taking a look at those programs, many of which have been in place for 30 years, the Great Society programs, welfare particularly, and evaluate how effective it has been in terms of its purpose. We have more poverty today than we did when it began. Everyone wants to help people who need help and help them back into the workplace, and that has not been what has happened.

So we ought to take a look at making some change, and there is great resistance to change, and the President is leading that resistance, I think because he has to support the liberal wing of his party, but he is absolutely refusing to take a look at evaluating programs and see if, indeed, there are some ways we can do this job better.

So here we are. The administration has produced four budgets, none of which has balanced, and has produced a great deal of demagoguery. Even the press, the national TV, the most notable one was "Nightline" that was on Tuesday night, showed clips of where we were, one including the First Lady 2 years ago saying what we need to do is reduce the growth in Medicare to somewhere between 6 and 7 percent annually. We have to do that. The Repub-

lican plan is more than 7 percent, and yet the White House says we are going to gut the program, do away with it.

The fact is, the trustees said if we do not do something, it will be broke. We know that. Someone the other day, some 40-year-old said, "I'm very concerned about Medicare for my mother and Social Security." He better be worried about himself. His mother is OK in that program, but you cannot continue the program as it is.

So we have a great deal of demagoguery going on. I happened to serve in the House with Leon Panetta. He was chairman of the Budget Committee, and he came in 4 years ago saying you have to do these things, you have to slow down this entitlement growth. He was the one who was saying that. Now he says the Republicans are uncaring, have no compassion for wanting to do the same thing. Give me a break.

If we are going to have a country where we can come together with public policy, where we can make some decisions based on facts—there have to be some facts—I certainly understand and encourage differences in philosophy and I have a considerable amount of difference in philosophy with some of my friends on the other side.

BERNIE SANDERS and I are good friends. BERNIE SANDERS is from Vermont. He is an Independent, but he is a Socialist. That is his political philosophy. We did not agree on anything, and I understand that, because his idea is the more government you have, the better it is; the more money you can take out of the private sector and spend publicly the better. I do not agree with that. And the majority in this Congress does not agree with that, but it is a philosophy, and that is OK. But you ought to balance that philosophy when we make decisions with facts—facts.

The President said that we are shutting down because the Republicans would not negotiate. The fact is that the Republicans now have had about three different programs that do balance the budget. Their proposal yesterday would have added to Medicare, to Medicaid, to the earned income tax credit for the working poor, 75 billion dollars' worth, and \$25 billion more in Medicare. That was the proposal at this time. Republicans came to that so there would be legitimate bargaining.

This comes from the Washington Post—it is not Republican propaganda, I do not think. They featured a number of novel ways to balance the budget. They are talking about the administration yesterday, who came to negotiate. I quote from the paper:

The White House proposal featured a number of novel ways to balance spending and some traditional ones, such as selling Government assets. This major new savings of \$54 billion, however, comes from the use of the more optimistic economic assumptions of OMB.

The President signed the law 25 days ago to say these negotiations, this bal-

anced budget, will be on CBO numbers, Congressional Budget Office numbers. I can imagine how tired people are of hearing CBO, OMB, and all that. The fact is, though, that as the President said in his State of the Union Message 2 years ago, we all need to use the same numbers. He chose CBO. He now refuses to use them because they can cook the books with the numbers they use at the White House. It is pretty simple to balance the budget if you have your own projections of what growth is going to be, that there will be no turndown in the economy. Of course. Then, furthermore, they said if that does not work, we will get more revenue by reducing the tax reduction.

There are lots of ways to balance the budget, and that, of course, is what some of my friends on the other side say. But they say, "We want to do it the right way." And they think the right way is to raise taxes so you can continue to spend, and that is the way you do it.

So, Mr. President, we are engaged in a difficult thing here, a difficult negotiation. I do not think anyone is happy about the Government coming to the brink of another furlough. No one wants to do that. But I can tell you that people are pretty dedicated on this side of the aisle to the fundamental proposition of balancing the budget and making some changes for the first time in 25 years—changes that will affect all of us for a very long time.

So there are some issues—and debt is one—that we continue to go on. It was \$5 trillion and it is higher now. Even under this balanced budget in 7 years, that debt will go up \$2 trillion more in 7 years. You all are going to pay for that. All of us. The younger you are, the more you are going to pay. That is too bad.

Responsibility? We are responsible to do better than that, all of us. Whether you are here or in Cody, WY, whether you are a cowboy, a railroader, we are responsible citizens, and a democracy goes with the freedom of responsibility. One of those responsibilities is that, if we want things collectively, you have to pay for them. This idea that somehow we sure enjoy the programs, but we do not want to pay for them does not work.

Change. We are responsible to bring about change. It is easier to stick with the status quo and to use Lyndon Johnson's pen and veto the bill and say, by golly, we are going to stay with the old Great Society. It does not work, but we are going to stay right there.

The other is all talk and no action. The White House has the bully pulpit and cannot do it. The real issue, of course, is an honest balancing of the budget, so we reduce spending from the level it is—and it will still continue to go up at more than 3 percent—but to be able to pay for what we say, and do it by real numbers. Some of the folks say, "You guys are in a adolescent food fight back there." I am sure it looks more petty than pretty, but the fact is

that it is a real debate, a real culmination of a year's work, now to decide whether we are successful in balancing the budget or whether we go on as we have in the past, and that we do it in 7 years. Everyone in this place, since I have been here this year, the first thing they do is stand up and say, "I am for balancing the budget," and they go on to find 100 reasons why they cannot do it. But they want to do it in the right way and that is to raise revenues so we can keep spending at this level.

So, Mr. President, there are lots of problems here, but I think we need to really come to the snubbing post and say to ourselves we are willing to make changes and bring the changes forward that are based on real numbers and then vote. If you do not want to balance the budget, fine, say so. But let us get some figures out here that legitimately say this will balance. Let us not have smoke and mirrors and say we have balanced it, but gosh, we have just done it with projections. They do not have to do that. We have a set of numbers. They may not be right. No one knows whether they will be right. But they are the same numbers and we are dealing from the same deck. That is what we need to do.

So, Mr. President, I feel very strongly, as I know many, many do. I am offended, frankly, by the opponents of balancing the budget saying we just do not have any compassion. We are going to throw kids out in the street or not have schools or not have Medicare. That is poppycock. That is not true. I am offended at the idea that somehow they have more compassion than I do. I do not believe the Federal Government has any more compassion than my State of Wyoming. We are as concerned about our kids as anyone. In fact, we are more concerned about our kids than they are about our kids, of course. So that is not the issue.

If we want to really talk about compassion, we ought to talk about what is going to happen in 15 years when you do not have any money except for a handful of entitlements—and that is where we are. Everybody knows that. We do not have the leadership or the gumption to come up to it to make the decision.

Mr. President, I hope that happens, and I hope that we will give our country a strong future by saying we are willing to make the tough decisions and balance the budget and to look out for the future, and we are willing to pass on a country that will be better than the one we have been involved in.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

THE BUDGET

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate your giving me an opportunity to step aside from presiding to make a comment or two about the dilemma that we find ourselves in today.

The first point I want to make is that, from my perspective, we are dealing with a lineage of broken promises here.

I have been somewhat dismayed by the confusion in the public about what is going on, but I guess it is understandable, given the size of the megaphone the President of the United States has. I will just run through several events that occurred over the last 2½ years.

First, when the President was a candidate for the Presidency in 1992, he said in his campaign that he would balance the budget in 5 years. He would balance the budget in 5 years. We are now 3 years later and about to enter the next Presidential election cycle, and he has yet to submit a balanced budget of any kind or of any form. "I will balance the budget in 5 years," and he is arguing with us about trying to balance it in 7 years. A very meaningful promise to the American people is in the trash can.

Two years later, he came before the American people and the Congress. First he said, "I will not submit a budget." Then he said, "No, I am going to submit a balanced budget." So we waited and we received his budget. It was unbalanced at a level of \$200 billion per year as far as anybody could see. "I am going to balance it in 5 years." He forgot that. Then, "I will submit a balanced budget," and he did it and it was not balanced. It was not even close. It was so off the mark that the Senate, on two separate occasions, rejected it in a humiliating way—99 to 0, every Republican, every Democrat. On the second attempt, I think the vote was 96 to 3, something like that. Total rejection.

Then we passed for the first time, this Senate and the House, for the first time in almost 30 years, a balanced budget act and sent it to the President. We said we were going to do that, and we did it. It went to the President, and he vetoed it, killed it, which led to the current moment of negotiations between the Congress and the President.

Just before Thanksgiving he and his negotiators, the President and his negotiators, agreed late one evening with the leaders of the Congress and ultimately voted on by the Congress that he and we would produce a balanced budget in 7 years and we would use the same set of numbers. That is real important. We say CBO, and that means Congressional Budget Office. That is the entity that the President said is the best authority in his State of the Union Address. A month later, the President had offered nothing.

Then, finally, at the beginning of this week he gave us the outline of a budget that was immediately declared out of balance by upward of \$400 billion. It was ridiculed in the press and by every-

body who saw it, so he said, "Well, I'm going to really give you a balanced budget Friday at 10 o'clock." I have to tell you, Mr. President, I never believed they were going to do it, which is the second point I am going to make in a minute. Sure enough, midday Friday, his negotiators came to the Budget Committee with two sheets of paper. This was their good-faith attempt, two sheets of paper, and no budget, just a handful of numbers on it—it could have been done in 20 minutes—and we are dealing with the budget of the United States of America. They could have done this in 20 minutes, and it was \$75 billion out of balance. He had no intention of submitting the balanced budget.

They had already purchased television ads Thursday to say that the Republicans shut the Government down. This is scripted. This is raw politics. The problem is, you are dealing with real lives and a real democracy. There are 20,000 troops headed to Europe in the Balkans. They never intended to submit a balanced budget. This is why they waited until the very end. They knew exactly what we would say. We would say this is not what we promised America. We both promised a balanced budget using CBO, Congressional Budget Office, numbers and you come in at the last minute, you spend the whole month producing nothing, and you come in at the last hour with nothing so that you could stand up and say, "Those radical Republicans, hard-hearted, shutting the Government down," meanwhile they were buying television ads even before the last meeting to run across the country saying, "Republicans shut the Government down." Pretty offensive politics.

This is a classic struggle between a people and their representatives, trying to bring the financial affairs of our country under control. Eighty to ninety percent of the American people want a balanced budget, and they want it right now. They are tired of things as they have been. There is only one person standing between America and a balanced budget—his name is William Jefferson Clinton. He happens to be President of the United States. He singlehandedly defeated the balanced budget amendment by getting his leadership to change their votes. He has yet to offer the Congress or the American people a balanced budget.

We all understand that his view of how to get a balanced budget may be different than ours. We welcome him to put his plan on the table, and then we can get down and work together, according him some of his wishes and according us some of ours, all of us fulfilling the demand of the American people, who said, "Balance your budgets. We have to. Our businesses have to. You have ignored it, and you have made the country hurt because of it."

This is not the typical political exercise, Mr. President. I want to remind our colleagues that a commission, chaired by Members of the Senate, Senator KERREY of Nebraska, Senator Danforth, former Senator from Missouri,