

Now, Mr. Speaker, we hear opponents on the other side say "You are offending the American people. They do not buy what you are doing. It is wrong." That may be the case. But let me just remind them of one plain and simple fact: Since Bill Clinton took office 3 years ago, there have now been as of today 182 publicly elected officials switch parties in this country; 182, Mr. Speaker. All 182 who switched parties, from Maine to Washington State, to the southern States, were Democrats who switched to the Republican Party. All 182 publicly elected officials, including 7 Members of the U.S. Congress, have now distanced themselves from this President.

□ 1630

So my colleagues on the other side may be right. Maybe the President has it all right and in the end this game of smoke and mirrors and images and perceptions will win. I think not. I think the American people are smarter than that, and these 182 elected officials who have switched parties and joined the Republican Party agree with us that this President must finally do what he said that he wants to do, and that is give us a detailed plan. If he does that, I will join with the Philadelphia Enquirer tomorrow, or tonight, and I will vote for a CR to get the Federal employees back to work, but I want to see the President's detailed plan.

Where is it and when will we see it? Now is the time, Mr. President. Provide us your detailed plan for balancing the Federal budget.

PRIVATE BUSINESSES WOULD NOT SHUT DOWN THE WAY GOVERNMENT HAS SHUT DOWN

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

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, last year there was a popular film in our country called "Dumb and Dumber." I often wondered why they did not call it "Dumb and Dumbest." Ah, because that would convey the message a little bit better. But now I understand the reason, unfortunately, is the dumbest idea has been reserved for action taken by this Congress.

I have been in public life 12 years, and I am sad to say that this furlough is the dumbest thing I have seen government do in my 12 years in business. I have come down to this well several times to talk about the furlough, which is, in effect, paying people either to stay home or telling them that they have to work and they are not going to get paid.

I have basically issued a challenge, a little contest, if you will, because I am still looking for one business, one business in this entire country that twice in the same year would get so mad at itself that it would tell its workers go home, stay at home, and I am going to pay you. I have not got a call from a

single business in this country that would do that.

I was on a talk radio show last week in my district, and I did have a caller who called in and said, "Well, I love what Speaker GINGRICH is doing and I support what he is doing." I said, "Well, let me ask you this, then. Would you, if you were using your own money, send your employees home, tell them to stay at home and that you were going to pay them?" And he hemmed and hawed a little and said, "No, I would not." I said, "Well, I find it interesting that we now have the leadership in Congress who has come here and said we are going to run Congress like a business when there is not a single business in this country that would run itself the way Congress is running itself right now." It does not make any sense at all.

Now, what should we be doing today? We are in special orders now, and the reason we are in special orders is because the Speaker and the majority will not let us even vote on a measure to get these people back to work. The Senate has passed it unanimously. The majority leader in the Senate was quoted as saying, "Enough is enough." And enough is enough. These are people who want to work, who should be working, and who should be getting paid.

Now, I hear Members from the other side come down into the well and talk about sacrifice and that there is a greater mission here and a greater good. Those are not people who talk to the people I talk to in my district, because I fielded as many calls as I could from employees.

I talked to a woman who works for the FBI in Milwaukee who commutes 100 miles a day, who has two foster children, who is living from paycheck to paycheck.

I talked to a woman who works in the U.S. attorney's office, who is being forced to work and is not being paid. There are people in our neighborhood, the husband works for the VA hospital, two small children, his wife is at home. He is required to work and is not being paid.

This morning I talked to a guard at the Oxford Federal Prison in Wisconsin. Three hundred employees are being required to work but are not being paid. I said, "Well, what type of people do you have at the Oxford Prison?" He said, "We have a lot of drug offenders. Most of the people here have violent pasts." We are asking Federal guards to guard people who have been convicted of murder and selling drugs, and we are asking them to work without pay.

Mr. Speaker, that is unconscionable. That should not happen in the United States. That should not happen in England. That should not happen in any country in this world.

Again, we hear the speakers on the other side talk about sacrifice. The gentleman from Florida earlier talked about how moved he was that he talked

to an older gentleman, a senior citizen on Meals on Wheels, and that gentleman said, the senior citizen purportedly said that he was willing to give up a meal in order to get a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to ask any citizen in this country to give up a meal so that we can pass a bill that has tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthiest people in this country. It is wrong and we should not be doing it.

Mr. Speaker, again, the Members on the other side talk about sacrifice, and it is necessary for these employees to sacrifice. Again, I was in my district talking to employees and they asked the obvious question. "What about you, Mr. Congressman? Why are you not sacrificing?" And to be honest, my initial response to them was, I have got a wife and I have got two children to support. And they jeered. They said so do we.

I had to go home and think about that. I had to go home and think about it, even though I voted every time to get these people back to work. I had to think about the fact that they are in the same situation as I am. I have a 1- and 3-year-old at home and a wife at home. I do not want to give up my pay.

But, Mr. Speaker, I decided today that I should do what many of my colleagues have done and that is to say that I will put myself in the same position as the other Federal employees. If we are asking them to sacrifice, well, then we should sacrifice, too. And I ask my colleagues to do the same thing, and that will end this misery.

IMPASSE ON FEDERAL BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ARE SEPARATE ISSUES

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

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, we face today two separate controversies, two separate controversies that have been combined and confused, deliberately and improperly combined and confused.

The first controversy is the impasse on the Federal budget. This impasse involves real and serious issues. The Republicans want to balance the budget and they want to make huge cuts in Medicare and in Medicaid in order to pay for a very large tax cut benefiting mostly the wealthiest Americans. Democrats, for the most part, want to balance the budget, but they want to do it while protecting Medicare and Medicaid, college loans, education, and the environment.

These are serious differences and serious issues, and their outcome will determine the fundamental direction the country will take over the next few years, and these controversies deserve real and perhaps lengthy and extended debate. But this controversy should not lead to a shutdown of the Federal Government.

This is the second separate issue, the unnecessary, deliberate, unconscionable shutdown of the Federal Government with all the suffering and pain that that implies and that brings forth for Government employees, for private contractors, for private citizens in all walks of life that have been talked about on this floor today.

Mr. Speaker, we have had over the years many budget disagreements between the Congress and the President. Many times appropriations bills were not completed and signed into law on time. This year, because of the unnecessary delay because we wasted the first 100 days of the year on the Republicans' contract on America, and we did not start working on the appropriations bills until April instead of in January, the situation was worse than usual. But these disagreements, failure to pass the appropriations bills on time, do not normally lead to an extended shutdown of the Federal Government.

We are told by the Republicans that the President is responsible for the shutdown because he vetoed appropriations bills. Presidents Reagan and Bush vetoed appropriations bills. That did not cause extended shutdowns of the Federal Government. The normal method of avoiding a shutdown of the Federal Government is to pass a continuing resolution saying that every department of Government will continue operating on the same rate of funding as it did last year, or perhaps at 90 or 85 percent or whatever is agreed upon indefinitely while the negotiations on next year's budget proceed.

That is normally done. But the Republicans will not pass a continuing resolution, the normal method of keeping the Government in operation while the controversy over the new budget is determined. They will not pass it.

The only reason for the Government shutdown is that the Republicans, led by Speaker NEWT GINGRICH, decided months ago that they would use the threat or the reality of a Government shutdown to attempt to blackmail the President into going along with budgetary solutions that he does not approve. This is wrong.

Our Democratic system provides the proper means to work out policy and budget disagreements. The majority in Congress in both Houses passes a budget. The President signs it or he vetoes it, the various appropriations bills. Then there is an attempt to override. If they cannot override, they have further negotiations and eventually a compromise. If they cannot override the veto, if they cannot negotiate and come to a compromise, eventually they take it to the people. They say the President is unreasonable in his vetoes, let us get a new President; or the majority in Congress is unreasonable in its bills and let us get a new majority, and the American people make the ultimate decision. But while this is going on, the Government continues to operate on a continuing resolution.

This year, the Republicans say, no, we cannot pass a continuing resolution because we do not trust the President. He does not keep his word. Obviously, I do not believe this to be true, but even if it were true, it is not material to this. The Republicans say they must keep the Federal Government shut down until the President keeps his word and produces a 7-year balanced budget according to CBO figures. And if he will not do that, they will not open the Government. They will make us all suffer. They will make the American people suffer.

But the Federal Government is not a plaything or a possession of the President. The Federal Government does not belong to him. It belongs to the American people. Opening the Government is not a reward to the President for good conduct and closing it is not a punishment of the President for unacceptable conduct. Closing the Government, holding the people who need Government services, whether that be welfare checks or SSI or Medicare or passports, holding it closed is holding the American people hostage. It is not a legitimate negotiating tactic no matter what one thinks of the President's negotiating tactics. It is an abuse of power.

Let us keep the two issues separate. Let us vote on a continuing resolution to reopen the Federal Government, and then let us work out the differences on a permanent budget.

REPUBLICANS BELIEVE THEIR BUDGET TO BE PERFECT; WITHOUT ROOM FOR NEGOTIATIONS

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, this has been a very interesting time for me, in the time I have been here, for all these years. First of all, if we buy the rhetoric from our friends in the Republican party, we have to assume that there should not be any negotiations on the budget; that the President should just sign the budget that they sent to him; that it is a perfect document, he cannot improve on it, it has all the cures for the ills that affect this country.

The President has real concerns, and so do the majority of the American people have concerns about the budget that the Republicans sent to the President of the United States, especially our senior citizens, our health delivery system, our hospitals, and I have just a whole list here from hospitals in North Carolina, veterans hospitals and private hospitals that say that this budget would be devastating to the delivery system to our senior citizens and to Medicare, not only in North Carolina but all across the country.

So we have to assume that the Republicans are saying that all we have to do, all the President has to do to put these people back to work is to sign their budget; that there is no room for

negotiations. There is no room for negotiations on the taxes, there is no room for negotiations on the cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

Throughout history, Mr. Speaker, presidents have had the option to veto legislation, and then we try to work out the differences, but we do not shut down the Government and inconvenience millions of people.

There is one facility that is very, very special to me. There is a VA Hospital in my district, in Salisbury, NC, and when I went there over 40 years ago, one of the first places we went—I was in an entertainment group, and we went to this hospital and we entertained the veterans.

□ 1745

And to this day, I go on a regular basis to entertain the veterans and to meet with them and to listen to their problems.

I want to tell my colleagues that our veterans' hospitals are in dire circumstances today, and I talked with a number of them today. Not only is their help getting frustrated; they are not being paid, and in one instance, a man who is used to getting \$500 to \$600 a week, he received \$141, and this is a man with a family. But it is beginning to trickle down to the care of these veterans in these hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, that is our brothers, our uncles, our parents. These are veterans that served in Korea and Vietnam and some as old as World War II, and through no fault of their own, they are being penalized by losing the services that our Federal employees provide to these veterans.

Mr. Speaker, it is just plain wrong for us to hold these Government employees hostage to debates that are going on at the White House down on Pennsylvania Avenue. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot put these people back to work. And, of course, one of the Presidential candidates says: No big deal. Who misses these Federal employees?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you who misses them. Those senior citizens that want to file for their Social Security, they have become 62 or 65 and they want to file for their Social Security. They cannot do it. We have the people that work in the hospitals that are looking after these veterans, and some of them completely incapacitated, and those nurses' aides and nurses that are carrying around the bedpans, they either are not being paid or are being half paid.

But guess what? The people that are perpetrating this hoax on the American people, every one of them is getting a full paycheck the first of the month. We could even be voting here today on a measure that says we are going to give up some of our pay, but they will not even allow that.

So, it is not just Federal employees that are being inconvenienced; it is average hard-working American citizens that believe in Government, that have