

Personal responsibility, Mr. GINGRICH? It is not even close. It is arrogance.

And we also heard this talk about a family-friendly Congress. That is a hoot. That is a real hoot for Members here.

□ 1830

You see Members dropping out in droves because of this schedule and the madness that we have gone through for the past year.

But forget us for a moment. Think about the innocent families that are being disadvantaged by this shutdown. Think about those families and the impact that they feel. A young woman calls me, a college student, had a chance to go on a mission for a church to Haiti over Christmas. That was going to be her gift to poor people, and she could not get a passport. Another family called, having tried to sell a home in their family estate for month after month, had to cancel the closing because the Veterans' Administration cannot process papers because of the Gingrich shutdown.

Now the Gingrich folks say this is a matter of personal responsibility. It is a matter of principles. Let me tell you, it is not a matter of principle if it is somebody else's paycheck on the line. It is a matter of principle to put your own paycheck on the line.

The reason I became so angry and objected a minute ago to the District of Columbia appropriation is because the bill that should have been brought to the floor would include a bill from the Senate that has my bill in it, "no budget, no pay." A bill that says when the budget shuts down, we stop issuing congressional paychecks.

You know what would happen if Members of Congress did not get their paychecks? This crisis would be over in a heartbeat. Over in a heartbeat. You would start counting the case for these paid vacations and recesses and realize you are not going to get paid. I have given up my congressional salary during the shutdown. It is painful for me and my family.

I guarantee you if every Member of Congress did it, if Speaker GINGRICH did it, if Mr. DELAY, who considers him some constitutional officer of some kind, or Mr. ARMEY did it, they would think twice about another recess while this Government is shut down. They would think twice about congressional junkets and trips. They would think about doing the business of this country.

Why in the world are we taking it out on all of these innocent people, hundreds of thousands of people? If you have a problem, show your statement of principle, show your character, put your own paycheck on the line. Do not take it out on the innocent people across this country.

Let me close by saying this: We are seeing the face of modern Republicanism, the face of Gingrich Republicanism, and it is a mean face. It is a face

that looks for innocent victims. Is it any wonder that the Democrats and President Clinton have second thoughts about the Gingrich budget plan? We see what they will do with the Government shutdown. Imagine what they will do if they get to write this budget for the next 7 years.

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE OF SEPARATION OF POWERS

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

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, in all of the debate and the rancor over the current budget problems that we are facing, some other more fundamental problems seem to be being lost. One of those I was reflecting on today and would like to bring to the attention of this body, and that is a pattern of conduct on the part of this administration, an attitude, if you will, on the part of this administration, to disregard constitutional powers involving the separation of powers between the different branches of government, namely the Congress of the United States and the presidency.

Mr. Speaker, since assuming my seat in this Congress last year, I have witnessed a series of constitutionally suspect acts and pronouncements by the current administration, beginning with the administration's unilateral and unauthorized bailout of the Mexican peso, through the White House's cavalier approach to Congressional authorization for approval of U.S. troop deployment in Bosnia, to the recent pattern of circumventing Congressional authority over the government's power to borrow.

I have seen, Mr. Speaker, a deeply disturbing and troubling trend, raising the specter of an administration overstepping the proper and constitutional bounds of executive power.

It is no secret, Mr. Speaker, that from the beginning many of us in this Congress viewed the administration's Mexican peso bailout as unwise monetary policy. The practical legacy of that ill-advised decision will reverberate to the national detriment through the financial community, and indeed our local communities, for many years to come. These problems will occupy me and me colleagues on the Committee on Banking and Financial Services in the coming months.

What troubles me, Mr. Speaker, from a constitutional perspective, is the way in which the administration finessed the underlying legal issue of whether the President and the Treasury Secretary had the authority to jeopardize our national treasury in the first instance.

When I wrote to Treasury Secretary Rubin questioning the legality of using U.S. resources to guarantee the government securities of another country, I received assurances from his general counsel that "This is a consideration of

monetary and foreign policy," and that it is "an area that is properly left to the discretion of the President and, acting with the President's approval, the Secretary of the Treasury."

Mr. Speaker, such a response does worse than insult the intelligence, it ignores the Constitution. The administration's attitude on executive prerogative was demonstrated again during the debate over the deployment of troops to Bosnia. In the November 23, 1995, edition of the Tampa Tribune, for example, Clinton spokesman McCurry was asked about the funding for this mission. He said "The importance of the mission that we must undertake here will not be circumscribed by funding." He then assured, Mr. Speaker, reporters that the President "Will figure out how to pay for it, one way or another."

Mr. Speaker, I worry greatly that "One way or another" is a thinly veiled reference to move in a way that is constitutionally impermissible. Mr. Speaker, it is black letter constitutional law that with the Congressional power of appropriation in Article I goes right to specify how appropriated monies shall be spent, a congressional and parliamentary understanding more than 300 years old.

This cavalier attitude by the President and his staff on Congressional approval represents an entirely unaccountable shift in the constitutional understanding that has governed the relationship between the several branches of the Federal Government for over 250 years. This problem with the abuse of executive power has most recently been demonstrated by the administration's approach to the debt limit and the misuse of government trust funds in violation of Congressional power to set borrowing limits, power vested in the Congress by the Constitution. The use of government funds by the Thrift Savings Board clearly demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, that this Executive Branch is issuing new debt instruments and thwarting Congress' exclusive power to control the national debt.

In light of this pattern of conduct, Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge that this body, this Congress, and its appropriate oversight responsibility, initiate hearings and begin to take strong measures that will restore the proper balance between these two branches of the government. This looming notion of "Government by Executive" has plainly gotten out of the control, and the people of the United States, in Congress assembled, should not tolerate these such usurpations of their authority vested in them by the Constitution.

CONGRESS SHOULD TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP GOVERNMENT RUNNING

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

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, earlier today during a one-minute I mentioned that what I see going on in this Congress and this House is just pure lunacy. You know, under Webster's Dictionary, lunacy is intermittent derangement. I recognize that here. It is insanity. That has been mentioned here. Great or wild foolishness, a lot of that, and a widely foolish act.

There is no question in my mind that what has been going on in this House of Representatives since the December 15 is lunacy. You know, I can remember back when I was a young person we had a name for people with lunacy. They called them lunatics. There is no question in my mind that in this House today we have got a whole bunch of lunatics. They do not understand really how this government is supposed to operate.

They do not understand that under the forefathers, this government, under our Constitution, was developed as a tripartite, three-body, system. We had the Congress, the Supreme Court, and the President. They are coequal. One is not better than the other. One is not supposed to be more powerful than the other.

Then in a range of appropriations, they gave the House the power; taxation the same; the power to initiate legislation, only the House. But then they gave the President the power of veto, and they said if you want to override that veto, it takes two-thirds of each house to do it.

That is the way this Congress had operated for over 200 years, until 1995. In 1995, our imperialistic Speaker, Speaker GINGRICH, and the radical Republicans decided that is not the way that this government should operate any longer. Oh, no. We are not going to do that anymore. If we do not get our way, on our so-called, and I say so-called, seven-year balanced budget, if the President does not sign it, which he did not, he vetoed it, then we are not going to appropriate funds for various agencies of the government, which they have not, Labor, HHS, D.C., foreign aid, or if the President vetoes it, then we are not going to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government while we negotiate with the President. We are just going to shut the government down.

That is what has happened. And, lo and behold though, these people that suffer from this disease of lunacy now also suffer from a disease of irresponsibility, because they say it is not our fault. We did not do it. They are not man enough to accept the responsibility of what they decided, to run the government by shutdown. Oh, no, it is the President. I heard the majority leader just this morning on TV; it is the President's fault. The President is shutting the government down.

The President does not appropriate one penny. Folks, he has no power under our Constitution to appropriate one penny. He can only sign a bill. If he decides to veto it, then the House has

the right to try and override; if not, then pass legislation continuing it. Like I say, that is what we did under Reagan, while I was here, under Reagan, Bush, Carter before him, everybody.

That is the way it happened. But no, not under this group. No. Shut the government down, but do not accept responsibility. Place the responsibility somewhere else.

I even had some of these freshmen tell me earlier, before we broke for Christmas, that this is just the start, too, folks, because next year they say when we do the appropriation bills, if the President does not sign it and he vetoes it, there will not be a CR, there will not be another bill, we will just shut it down. And guess what? When I said, you know, this one we have here, this is back in December, it may last for several months, they said good. Good, we save that much money. We will not be spending the money.

What kind of government is it where people say it is good to tell people you have got to work, but you are not going to get paid? That is what happened. That is happening today. Or those of you who do not work, you are going to get paid?

Not only that, at the same time, they keep getting paid all the time. And they do not do anything. We have not done anything in this House for a month.

HOW MUCH GOVERNMENT CAN WORKING PEOPLE AFFORD?

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

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, as Congress and the Clinton administration continue negotiations to balance the Federal budget, I am reminded of the question I heard from residents in Georgia's Third District last week: How much government can working people afford?

I want to repeat that question: How much government can working people afford?

Today the combined Federal, State, and local taxes consume nearly 40 percent of the disposable income of working Americans. Federal taxes place the harshest burdens on taxpayers. In 1994, the average American family turned over 25 percent of its income to the Federal Government. That compared to just 2 percent in 1954.

During the 1950's and the early 1960's, the Federal Government managed to pay for the national defense, build a nationwide Interstate Highway System, deliver our mail, and provide other vital government functions while living within its means. Today the Federal Government spends \$500 million per day more than it collects in taxes and revenues. We are \$4.9 trillion in debt. Interest on our national debt is the third largest single item in the Federal budget, topped only by Social

Security and the national defense outlays.

Federal entitlement programs are responsible in large part for our national financial predicament. Today working Americans are paying the bills to provide health care to the elderly, the poor, and the disabled. Today working Americans are paying the bills to fund numerous Federal welfare programs that create a lifestyle of government dependence. Today working Americans are paying the bills to subsidize various Federal programs for farmers, students, cities, counties, States, businesses, and the list goes on and on, which brings me back to the question I heard from my constituents: How much government can working people afford?

We Americans are a fair and compassionate people. We believe in providing the benefits of Federal programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, for which people have paid for and earned. We also believe in helping those who want to help themselves. We are providing the programs that will help those citizens in our society who have encountered difficulties. But we must reform those programs that encourage government dependence as a way of life for millions of Americans.

□ 1845

Mr. Speaker, working people pay the bills. They provide the funds to pay for all Federal programs and they must pay for the Federal debt and the interest that accrues because of irresponsible deficit spending.

While Democrats criticize tax breaks for fat-cat corporations and businesses, who do they really think pays the corporate taxes? The working people of this country, Mr. Speaker. That is who pays corporate taxes. Corporate taxes are built into the cost of products and services purchased by consumers.

When a consumer goes to the store and buys a product or purchases a service, he or she does not get two receipts for that product or service. They get one receipt for the item and within that one receipt are all the taxes that have been paid on that product. Instead, this consumer has only one receipt rather than two. No receipt for just the tax portion of the profits earned on the sale of that item.

American workers pay the bills for all government programs and for all services. How much more government can they afford?

Mr. Speaker, I urge President Clinton to join Congress in our effort to preserve Medicare, to change welfare, and to provide tax relief for working Americans and pass a 7-year balanced budget. This is the only way we can provide a Federal Government that working people can afford.

WE ARE OUR BROTHERS' AND SISTERS' KEEPERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.