

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Democratic floor leader is in the Chamber. He has 25 minutes reserved.

I ask unanimous consent that I have 10 minutes of the 25 minutes the floor leader has reserved.

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

Mr. REID. I also ask the Parliamentarian to inform me when I have used 10 minutes.

A HEALTHY ECONOMY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I quote from the majority leader of the U.S. Senate in late February of this year, when he stated, "It is also true"—said Senator DOLE—"as some have said, that our economy is the strongest it has been in 30 years."

The business publication, Barron's magazine, that is looked upon with favor by the business community and has been for many, many years says:

In short, Clinton's economic record is remarkable. Clinton rightfully boasted that our economy is the healthiest it's been in 30 years.

This came, Mr. President, late in March of this year. DRI McGraw-Hill, late March of this year:

The normal economic indicators suggest that the economy is in its best shape in decades.

Mr. President, the statements that I have given here, the quote from the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, from Barron's magazine, and from DRI McGraw-Hill are not publications of the Democratic National Committee. We could not go further from the Democratic National Committee than the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, Barron's magazine, and McGraw-Hill, yet each of these state that the economy is the best it has been in decades.

I am the first to acknowledge that we can do better. But we are doing pretty good. We are doing real well. The reason I want to talk about this this morning is I understand from listening and watching very closely what has transpired in this Chamber, especially on the other side of the aisle, that there is some tendency to talk about how bad we are doing.

The economy is on fire. The economy is doing well. These are not statements. They are based upon statistics. The smallest deficit share of our economy since 1979. This will be the fourth year in a row where we have had a declining deficit. I, Mr. President, last year with pride talked about it was the third year in a row where we had a declining deficit, the first time in 50 years we had 3 years in a row with a declining deficit.

I said then, as I say now, it should be smaller, but 3 years in a row, the first time in 50 years, a declining deficit. This next year will be 4 years in a row with a declining deficit; the first time since the years of the Civil War that we

have had 4 years in a row with a declining deficit.

The lowest combined rate of unemployment and inflation since 1968. Strongest job growth. In fact, it is a stronger job growth than any Republican administration since the 1920's. Nearly 8.5 million new jobs added in just over 3 years. That is a faster annual rate of growth than from any Republican administration since the 1920's.

Mr. President, we have heard a lot of talk in years gone by about the Federal employment being too high. President Reagan, when he was Governor, used to rail about how big the Government was. Yet while he was Governor of California, the government of California got bigger and bigger. When he got off his job of being Governor, he had a radio program, and about one out of every two programs dealt with how big the Federal Government was. It is interesting to note, when President Reagan was President, the Government got bigger and bigger.

Vice President GORE, in this administration, was given the job to cut back the size of Government. The Government has been cut back. It is not talked about. We have over 200,000 fewer Federal jobs than we had 3 years ago. That is a cutback that is staggering. The smallest work force since the days of President Kennedy. Highest share of jobs in the private sector again since the 1920's. And 93 percent of all new jobs have been created by the private sector.

We have had the lowest inflation during any administration since the days of Kennedy, the strongest industrial production growth in 30 years. The industrial production has grown almost 4 percent annually. That is faster than any administration since the days of Lyndon Johnson.

Strongest business investment growth for an administration since the days of John Kennedy. Business investment has grown almost 11 percent annually. As I have indicated, that is a faster rate of business investment growth than any administration since John Kennedy was President.

Lowest mortgage rates in 30 years. Strongest stock market growth since World War II. Highest home ownership in 15 years. Strongest construction growth since Truman was President. Almost 900,000 new construction jobs have been created in just over 3 years. That is the fastest annual rate of construction since Harry Truman was President.

It is no wonder that Barron's magazine says:

Clinton has rightfully boasted that our economy is the healthiest it's been in 30 years.

Mr. President, we have had 10 Presidents since the Second World War. If we listed the Presidents, we would find we have had five Republican Presidents and five Democrat Presidents. But if you looked at job growth during the years of those 10 Presidencies, you

would find that Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were Democrats. The bottom five were Republican Presidents.

If you want to look at that same list of Democratic Presidents, you would find that they also led from 1 to 5 in economic growth. I think it is important that we here on the Senate floor make sure the record is clear and not try to frighten the American public.

We acknowledge that we need to do better. We acknowledge that we have problems that need to be looked into. We believe that the minimum wage should be raised. We believe that it is not a question of making sure that teenagers that work at McDonalds get paid more, because the vast majority of the people who earn minimum wage are not teenagers. Sixty percent of the people who earn minimum wage are women, and for 40 percent of those women, that is the only money they get for them and their families.

We believe one of the ways we can make the economy better is to raise the minimum wage. Why? Because it will tend to force people off welfare and cause people not to go on welfare. We need to do better, but we are doing well. The so-called misery index, the combined rate of unemployment and inflation, is at its lowest level since 1968. We think that is good.

Car manufacturing. The United States is in the world lead. In 1994, the United States surpassed Japan as the world leader in automobile production. The last time the United States was No. 1 was way back in 1979. In 1995 and 1996, America has and will retain its status as the world's largest producer of cars. There have been times in the history of our country when the business sector has done as well, but never have they done any better. Economic numbers point to the business community as being very happy with what is going on.

We can look at areas where not everyone can enjoy this, but a family that invested money in the stock market—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair informs the Senator he has reached the 8-minute mark.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

A family that invested money in the stock market, under the Clinton administration, for example, if they invested \$10,000, they would get almost a 50-percent return on that money, in fact a little over 50-percent return.

Jobs have been added, as I have indicated, and the fact of the matter is, Mr. President, they have been good jobs, high-wage jobs. Over 60 percent of the jobs added have been high-wage jobs.

So we have work to do. We have a lot more that we can do. There are a lot of people not enjoying the success of the economy that is doing so well. We have to try to make sure that we do a better job in allowing people to succeed in this great country that we have.

But I want everyone within the sound of my voice to appreciate the fact that

we as an economy, we as a country, are doing extremely well. We have to feel good. We have to have confidence in our economy, confidence in our Government. We can only do that by understanding that we need to work together in a bipartisan fashion to move the country along.

We can do that by, first of all, allowing up-or-down votes on the minimum wage, repeal of the gas tax, and if the majority leader wants to bring forward the TEAM Act, let us have a debate on that like we have done in the Senate for over 200 years.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I also say that my friend, my colleague from the State of Nevada, Senator BRYAN, is also going to address the Senate on a very important issue dealing with nuclear waste. I underscore and underline his statement and join with him in recognizing that we have some serious problems in transporting nuclear waste across this country. It can be avoided if we follow what, again, the President wants to do and not have the interim storage of nuclear waste.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN] is recognized.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I wonder if my friend and colleague will yield for the purpose of a unanimous consent request.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of the remarks of the distinguished Senator from North Dakota, that morning business be extended for a period of 10 minutes so I might be permitted to address the Senate.

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

Mr. BRYAN. I thank my colleague, and I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 10 minutes.

NOT GRIDLOCK, BUT A GAG RULE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, it has been kind of an interesting couple of days in the Senate, and I noticed in the newspaper this morning in the headlines the word "gridlock," which I am sure will please some in this Chamber, because yesterday they were trying to persuade the press to use the word "gridlock." They said what is happening in the Senate is gridlock.

What happened yesterday was quite interesting. Those who suggest this is gridlock in the Senate came to the floor of the Senate yesterday, offered a piece of legislation and then, prior to any debate beginning on that legislation, the same people who offered the

legislation filed a cloture motion to shut off debate that had not yet begun on a piece of legislation that had been offered only a minute before.

Someone who does not serve in the Senate or does not understand the Senate rules might scratch their head and say, "How on Earth could someone do that with a straight face? How could someone, without laughing out loud, offer a piece of legislation before debate begins, file cloture to shut off debate on a piece of legislation they have just now filed, and then claim that the other side is guilty of causing gridlock?"

Only in the Senate can that be done without someone laughing out loud at how preposterous that claim is.

This is not gridlock. It is more like a gag rule, where you bring a piece of legislation to the Senate because you control the Senate floor and you say, "Here's what we want to do, and, by the way, we're going to use parliamentary shenanigans to fill up the parliamentary tree so no one has an opportunity to offer any amendments of any kind, and then we are going to file a motion to shut off debate before you even get a chance to debate."

No, that is not gridlock, that is a gag rule. From a parliamentary standpoint, it can be done. It was not done when the Democrats were in control in the 103d Congress. We never did what is now being done on the floor of the Senate: filling the legislative tree completely and saying, "By the way, you have no opportunity, those of you who feel differently, to offer amendments."

But we will work through this, and we will get beyond this. I will say to those who claim it is gridlock, it is clear the Senate is not moving and the Senate is not acting, but at least the major part of that, it seems to me, is because we have people who decide that it is going to be their agenda or no agenda, and they insist on their agenda without debate, their agenda without amendments.

What we have are three proposals that have been ricocheting around the Chamber the last couple of days, and there is a very simple solution. We have a proposal called the minimum wage. Many of us feel there ought to be some kind of adjustment in the minimum wage. It has been 5 years. Those working at the bottom of the economic ladder have not had a 1-penny increase in their salaries. Many of us feel there ought to be some adjustment there.

The second issue is, the majority leader wants to cut or reduce the gas tax by 4.3 cents a gallon.

And the third issue is a labor issue called the TEAM Act.

The way to solve this, instead of linking them together in Byzantine or strange ways, is simply to bring all three measures to the floor one at a time, allow amendments to be offered and then have an up-or-down vote. This is not higher math; it is simple arithmetic. Bring the bills to the floor.

Our side has no interest, in my judgment, in filibustering on any of those

bills, at least not that I am aware of. I do not think we ought to filibuster any of those bills. Bring the bills to the floor, have a debate, entertain amendments, have a final vote, and the winner wins. That is not a very complicated approach. It is the approach that would solve this problem.

I listened carefully yesterday to a speech on the Senate floor that was essentially a campaign speech—hard, tough, direct. It was a Presidential campaign speech. You have a right to do that on the Senate floor. I do not think it advances the interests of helping the Senate do its business. I almost felt during part of that speech yesterday there should be bunting put up on the walls of the Senate, perhaps some balloons, maybe even a band to put all this in the proper perspective.

The Senate is not going to be able to do its work if it becomes for the next 6 months a political convention floor. I hope that we can talk through that in the coming days and decide the Senate is going to have to do its work. We have appropriations bills we have to pass. We have other things to do that are serious business items on the agenda of this country. I do not think that we can do this if the Senate becomes the floor of a political convention from now until November.

I want to speak just for a moment about the proposed reduction in the gasoline tax. Gasoline prices spiked up by 20 to 30 cents a gallon recently. When gasoline prices spiked up and people would drive to the gas pumps to fill up their car, they were pretty angry about that, wondering, "What has happened to gasoline prices?"

Instead of putting a hound dog on the trail of trying to figure out who did what and why, what happened to gas prices, immediately we had some people come to the floor of the Senate and say, "OK, gas prices spiked up 20, 30 cents a gallon. Let's cut the 4.3-cent gas tax put on there nearly 3 years ago."

I do not understand. I guess the same people, if they had a toothache, would get a haircut. I do not see the relationship. Gas prices are pushed up 20 to 30 cents so they are going to come and increase the Federal deficit by cutting a 4.3-cent gas tax.

I would like to see lower gas taxes as well, but I am not going to increase the Federal deficit. The Federal deficit has been cut in half in the last 3 years. Why? Because some of us had the courage to vote for spending decreases and, yes, revenue increases to cut the deficit in half.

The central question I have is this: If you cut the gas tax, who gets the money? There are a lot of pockets in America. There are small pockets, big pockets, high pockets, and low pockets. You know who has the big pockets and small pockets. The oil industry always had the big pockets. The driver has always had the small pockets.

Guess what? When you take a look at what is going to happen when you see