

better because when the data is bad, change it. Everybody knows that.

Instead of getting to work on lowering prices on day one, like he said he would, the President has spent his days plotting the rebirth of a gilded age with tariffs and tax cuts. That was a time when the rich got richer while everyone else got screwed.

Trump tells a different story.

We were at our richest from 1870 to 1913. That's when we were a tariff country. . . . We were a very wealthy country, and we're going to be [that way again].

So I just want to make clear, yes, I am a partisan. Yes, I think Donald Trump is screwing up the economy. But it is really important for us to understand they actually do have a theory of the case, and that is the golden age from 1870 to 1913. I didn't say that; the President said that. I didn't say "Hey, these guys think a recession is worth it." They said a recession is worth it.

It is true that in the gilded age, some people were very wealthy then. Robber barons and business tycoons built enormous empires on the backs of working people, who had little to show for it. Profits boomed. Billionaires emerged. Regular people suffered in tenements and on factory floors, and poverty was everywhere. But the gilded age is exactly what the President is trying to recreate.

Whether it is tariffs on our largest trading partners that will jack up the price of our food or our homes or our cars or mass layoffs of the people who inspect our food or keep the skies safe or care for our veterans or the tax cuts for the richest people to ever exist, funded by slashing regular people's healthcare and hard-earned retirement savings, all of this is about taking money from people who don't have enough and handing it over to people who already have more than anyone has ever had.

Whether you voted for Trump or not, whether you believed he would be good on the economy or not, whatever sort of side of the political, tribal, ideological, partisan, algorithmic divide that we are all experiencing in our little filter bubbles on Instagram and TikTok and Twitter and wherever else we get our disaggregated information, this economy sucks. People are paying too much.

It is the intentional policy of the President's economic team to recreate a time when—until just about 50 days ago, everybody agreed we should never go back to that time. Kids working on factory floors, people working 70 hours and not able to feed their family, unprecedented disparity between the extremely wealthy and everybody else—that is what they are explicitly going for.

This is not me putting spin on the ball. That is what they are saying. That is what the Commerce Secretary is saying. That is what the Treasury Secretary is saying. That is what the President of the United States is say-

ing. This is their plan, and it is going according to plan.

These people have the ability to short things and ride the volatility and monetize all of the craziness and make side deals and do crypto and park their assets here and there. They make money no matter what. But if you are retiring next month with a 401(k) or an IRA or a 403(b), you just got screwed. Trillions of dollars of wealth were eliminated.

And the President sprang into action. Why? For what purpose? To help his buddy sell cars on the White House lawn. I don't have a preference for electric cars or nonelectric cars. I don't care. That is fine. But what a weird thing to spring into action about when everybody is getting kicked in the face economically except his buddies.

#### FOREIGN AID

Mr. President, it wasn't so long ago that a Senator stood on this floor and said the following:

Foreign aid as a part of our overall budget is less than 1 percent of the total amount the US Government spends. I promise you it is going to be a lot harder to recruit someone to anti-Americanism and anti-American terrorism if the United States of America is the reason one is even alive today.

The person who said that was not me. It wasn't another Democrat. It was then-Senator, now-Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Marco Rubio was one of the strongest supporters of foreign aid and specifically the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID. He introduced bills to leverage USAID, to fight human trafficking, advance women's economic empowerment, and reduce violence globally. He called on the Agency to, among other things, provide humanitarian relief to Colombia, support free and fair elections in Burma, promote internet freedom in Cuba, and advance democratic values in the Indo-Pacific.

Speaking in 2018, he said:

Anybody who tells you that we can slash foreign aid and that will bring us to balance is lying to you. It's just not true.

So to witness the evisceration of USAID and foreign aid more broadly under his leadership as Secretary of State—Secretary of State and Acting Administrator of USAID—has been honestly shocking. This is someone who 2 months ago was confirmed by the Senate 99 to 0. He is someone who throughout his time in the Senate believed in the power and jurisdiction of this institution; someone who, while we disagreed on policy a lot, consistently showed moral clarity on the basic belief that America ought to be on the side of the good guys, on the side of democracy and freedom. But he has sidestepped Congress at every turn on this issue.

As lead Democrat on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee overseeing funding for foreign and national security policy, I have been working with my colleagues to press Secretary Rubio

publicly and privately for answers. We have sent numerous letters with dozens of questions, virtually all of which have gone unanswered.

These aren't out of the ordinary, partisan, gotcha questions; they are the normal things that your clerk from the Appropriations subcommittee would say "Hey, can you tell us what this is?" and "Please inform us per the law." This is like normal, mundane, workaday correspondence—nothing.

We are supposed to get notifications about changes, and we have gotten nothing.

Then, on Monday, 5 a.m. eastern time, there is a tweet from him saying that the review of foreign aid that was supposed to take 90 days is now complete and that 5,200 contracts are gone—83 percent of the whole enterprise—and they will consult with Congress about what remains. But the last part is not true. There has been no consultation with Congress at all during this process.

There has to be as a matter of law, and the Secretary ought to come to Congress and explain to us—not Pete Marocco, whom we didn't confirm, who most people in the public have never heard of, who is widely viewed as a controversial figure. He came in, closed-door briefing, 1 hour, and you know what—he had a hard stop, had to go at 11.

Do you know what he did at 11? He went with Federal marshals to another Federal Agency and barged in the door, and that was found to be illegal. That was his hard stop. He only had an hour to talk to members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because he had to get on to commandeering a building with Federal marshals.

As of today, we still have no idea which programs were cut and which still remain. They gave us a stack of programs, but it was like we were in a classified session, right? When you are in a classified session, they might give you a paper, and then there is staff that politely but firmly take the paper back so you don't accidentally take a bunch of classified stuff out of the building. They acted like the stuff they are doing on appropriations is somehow top secret. It is not top secret; they just don't want anyone to know.

We don't know how or even whether Secretary Rubio intends to reprogram the funds for the programs that were eliminated, and we are still waiting to hear how he intends to operate the remaining programs going forward. Weeks and months have passed, and we still don't even have the most basic information.

Here is what we do know. I am going to try to calm down here. Here is what we do know. Multiple laws are being violated at once—the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, which established USAID as an independent Agency; the Impoundment Control Act, which says the President can't delay or refuse to spend the funds Congress appropriates just because they have a different policy view.

The Impoundment Control Act is not ambiguous. It says that a President cannot decide what they spend based on a policy preference. If it is in the law, it is in the law; they have to execute on it.

Their opportunity to exercise their leverage as a separate and coequal branch is to threaten to veto a bill if it has something they don't want to spend money on, but once that law is enacted, their discretion is gone.

The appropriations bills for State and foreign ops, which, among other things, set minimum funding levels, prohibit the creation of new programs, the suspension or elimination of existing programs, and changes to Agencies without prior consultation with and notification to Congress—nobody did that.

You can love these cuts. I assume some people love these cuts. You can hate these cuts. I hate these cuts. But one thing you cannot say is that this administration is following the law and fulfilling its duties in consulting with Congress. In the meantime, millions of people will die. Millions of people will die.

Our sudden withdrawal has pushed people in Syria, Sudan, South Africa, and so many other places to the verge of starvation, disease, and death.

I learned when I was 28 that when you are an elected officer, you better be very careful what you say. I said some casual words one time. I still remember what I said. I won't repeat them. I was on Hawaii News Now, and someone asked me a question, and I was tired. It was the morning show. And I said something just overly casually, and it really hurt people. So ever since then, I have tried to be as precise as I can be. Now that I am in the Senate, even more so do I have an obligation to not say anything that is untrue but also just to be careful not to be too provocative.

So I say this advisedly: Millions of people will die because of the U.S. Government executive branch. This is a global humanitarian catastrophe about to happen on America's watch.

When I became ranking member of the subcommittee, one of the first things I talked to Chairman LINDSEY GRAHAM about was: How do we make things work better? Where can we better align our priorities?

I am open for business if the enterprise is lawmaking, and I am absolutely opposed if the enterprise is lawbreaking.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Vermont.

#### TARIFFS

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I want to speak about the reckless tariffs that the Trump administration, Donald Trump, is inflicting on the American consumer, the American worker, American businesses—especially with respect to Canada.

Canada is Vermont's largest trading partner. We are not alone. Thirty-four

States count Canada as its largest trading partner. We regard Canada as an independent friend, not as a prospective 51st State. And the reason we have that view toward Canada is because of the incredibly constructive and positive relationships we have had with that wonderful country for years.

But with respect to these tariffs, last year, trade with Canada accounted for 35 percent of Vermont exports and 67 percent of our imports and 56 percent of our total trade. One in four businesses in Vermont relies on trade with Canada. Vermont's economy is almost entirely made up of small businesses. They operate on the tightest of margins. Ninety-nine percent of Vermont's businesses, 76,878, are considered small. They support 60 percent of Vermont employees, that is 156,000, and these businesses cannot—they cannot—afford to absorb a 25-percent hike on imports from our largest trading partner.

Take maple syrup, for example. Vermont produces 51 percent of the maple syrup consumed in the United States. And by the way, these are small farmers or small land owners. For farmers, it supplements their income in a very difficult margin business when they are having a dairy operation as well. But Vermont's maple syrup industry expects millions of dollars in losses if the tariffs go through.

And that may surprise some, but Vermont imports \$408 million in maple products, primarily maple syrup, from Canada, and we reprocess it and sell it. The four largest maple syrup equipment manufacturers are located in Canada. Tariffs will make it far more expensive for our Vermont sugar producers, maple sugar producers, to buy that equipment.

This is an industry that has grown almost 500 percent in production over the past 20 years, and we are about to let all of that growth go down the drain with these reckless tariffs.

Vermont's maple syrup producers are also concerned that the loss in market share will result in people turning to other products instead of Vermont's liquid gold, with customers possibly turning to far inferior but more affordable products like corn syrup or agave if the price of syrup is too high.

These tariffs will also smash our farmers. Vermont farmers rely on organic grains and seeds and fertilizers that are imported from Canada. In that respect, all of our States on the northern tier are especially connected to potash and grains from Canada. And Trump's tariffs will raise prices on fertilizers, grains, and seeds, on lumber products, and machinery equipment from Canada that Vermont farmers rely on.

And, understandably, Canada—as are other countries that are subject to the Trump tariffs—is imposing retaliatory tariffs on the United States, and that includes, of course, Vermont. That is going to make our sales much more difficult. Nearly half of the farmers polled in February said U.S. agricultural tar-

iffs would result in the decrease in exports.

And, of course, we saw that that happened big time in the first Trump administration, particularly hammering our Midwest grain and soybean farmers. Those markets have not come back. The markets now are for Argentina and Brazil. What is the point of our own government doing something that so hurts our farmers for no benefit for the United States? This was a bad deal for our farmers during the first Trump administration.

And a USDA study from 2022 found that retaliatory tariffs led to a significant reduction in U.S. agricultural exports to the retaliating partners. The study found that export losses from 2018 to 2019 amounted to more than \$27 billion.

And if you remember what happened then is, Trump wanted to get right with the farmers so he took away their market, \$27 billion in sales, and then went to the taxpayer to make up the difference for those farmers. Every farmer I know, they would rather be selling what they grow rather than getting a government Trump subsidy.

The tariffs are also going to hurt consumers. There is no question about that. Grocery prices will be up. The price of eggs is up 19 percent from the end of the year and could climb to 41 percent this year.

Meanwhile, the President is reposting articles on social media telling people to shut up—shut up about the price of eggs. Did he talk about anything else during his campaign?

His tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China would directly cost the typical U.S. household over \$1,200 in purchasing power. And people in Vermont—and I know in your State, Mr. President—they are struggling at the end of the month to make that checkbook balance. They can't afford that \$1,200 hit. And some economists are estimating it could be an increase as much as 3,900 for the average American household.

Jobs and homes, the trade war could cost 400,000 good-paying, blue-collar jobs. The trade war will increase the cost of a home. You know, in Vermont we have a wood products industry. We export timber to Canada. It is milled in Canada, reimported to the United States, to Vermont, to help us build homes. A 25-percent increase on that imported lumber is going to go straight to the cost of an already unaffordable home. What sense does that make?

Trump's tariffs will raise gas prices for us in Vermont 25 to 40 cents a gallon. We get a lot of our petroleum products from Canada.

It is going to cost more in home heating fuel, and that is a tough expense for Vermonters. And it is going to cost more in electricity. We, for years, imported electricity from Hydro-Quebec and other sources of power in Canada. So folks who have high electric bills, they are going to get higher; who are paying more than