

whether it was productive or not. That is a loss of \$138 billion in personal savings or maybe 1.3 million new cars and light truck sales. If you sell the cars, you have to produce the cars.

That is what the economy now tells us could have happened had we had not taxed it at the rate that Bill Clinton and the Democrats taxed it in the 1993 tax act. That is \$42.5 billion in durable goods orders that were not ordered. The list goes on and on.

We have always known that the way you get out of the financial troubles our Government is in is to expand the economic pie, create new jobs and from that take a reasonable tax to pay for the largesse of Government while at the same time trying to reduce the growth rate, trying to control it. You do not continue to tax or you get the kind of uneasiness that I think is now being experienced by the American people when they say: Well, yes, I still have my job but the reality is I did not get a pay increase. More importantly, I still have my job but I am paying higher taxes with no pay increase. So what I have is less buying power, less ability to provide for my children, and in this instance for working women in our society they took the greater hit once again in a slow, flat economy of the kind that was produced by this tax increase.

So let us move on. Let us repeal the gas tax. Let us return billions of dollars to the American consumers, to the American entrepreneur, to the American small business person, to the job creators and to the workers of our society. That is where productivity comes from. That is what will grow us out of our problems.

I urge this Senate, most importantly I urge my colleagues on the other side to work with us to solve this problem, not to block us, not to force us into stagnation and not to say to the American people once again we hear you but we just do not feel your pain.

I yield back the remainder of my time, Mr. President.

Mr. FORD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I will not take but just a moment.

REPEAL OF THE GAS TAX

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, earlier, we were required and asked to object to a bill being brought up without being notified, and that was Megan's law. We did not know anything about it until it was offered, at least I did not. We did not have an opportunity. What we do around here is hotline to see if any Senators have any objection or if they have any amendments. And so we knew that there were amendments and we would like to improve the bill. And so therefore we were required to object.

I do not think there was any motive there to stop the law. It will pass. We just had some Senators I think who wanted an opportunity to amend. And

so I think that is where we are on the debate here. We talk about the tax, 4.3 cents. You would think it was going to save the world. But the minute we take it off and we do not assure that the consumer will receive it, the oil companies increase it a nickel.

I bought gasoline last night, 2 cents higher today. We did not take the tax off and have not changed anything. We put the tax on 3 years ago, gasoline went down. They were telling us put on more tax; maybe it will be cheaper. Mr. President, 3.8 million barrels of gasoline is what is being used today, about 8.4 is the maximum amount of gasoline that can be produced in this country today. That is running it at full speed. And we have not had a new refinery in over 20 years.

So what you are going to find, taking the speed limit off, taking the speed limit off has helped. Four of every 10 vehicles purchased get only 14 miles to the gallon. And so regardless of what we do here, we lose.

Now, if we do not want to reduce the deficit, you have to offset it from something else. How are you going to offset it? They threw out slurringly on Sunday they were going to take it out of education—you know, I hate Government anyhow. That was the statement. Well, they had to retract that the next day. And how are you going to offset it?

So what we would like to do, or what I would like to do is to find out how you could assure that the consumer gets 4.3 cents because you are going to cut it someplace else. Once you reduce the 4.3 cents and not assure the consumer receive the 4.3, you are going to reduce the budget some place else because you have to have an offset.

So the consumer probably, with the approach here, is going to lose twice. One, they will not see the 4.3 cents, and you are going to cut the budget someplace else. So they get hit twice.

So I think we ought to be sure that when we reduce the gasoline tax—and I think we are going to be able to vote for that—but let us be sure that the consumer receives it and that the big oil companies do not have a windfall, because the 4.3 cents now is reducing the deficit. It has had 4 consecutive years in reduction of the deficit. We have about 8.5 million new jobs in a little over 3 years. Oh, I can hear the crocodile tears that, "We could do better if you would listen to us." I remember the 1990 tax.

If we are not reducing the deficit, how in the world are you going to get to a balanced budget? If the deficit went down, it was back when President Clinton took office—\$300 billion. If it was still there, and suppose President Clinton had not won and it was still there, under past procedures, under past administrations, it would go up \$300 billion a year. That was not under ours. You say, "Well, that is a Democratic Congress, and for 6 years you had it right here—control." I tell you, the President had the same kind of wet

pen that this President has, the same kind of wet pen on the same desk in the same room. All they have to do is speak to him to get 34. That is all he needs. But how many vetoes did we get?—caved in. He said it was not going to increase taxes, and did. All he had to do is put the pen to it. You fussed at the President for vetoing. Look at the mess we were in when you would not veto. So you can brag and plead and fuss.

I would like, if we could, to try to find some way to get this Senate back in order, to get it back on track, to try to do something that will help people and get a balanced budget up. We argue over these things that are sound bites. It is \$389 a page to have your speech put in the RECORD, and we will have 10 some mornings, and they will all say the same thing and cost the taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars; \$389 a page. That is when it is electronically. Otherwise, it is over \$400. Every time you make a speech here—and I do not make very many—every time you talk, the page in that RECORD is \$389. So I just want you to know that every time we hear 10 speeches, it costs tens of thousands of dollars. It has been hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars in speeches anti the President, and his popularity is better today than it has been any time. So keep knocking. I think you ought to keep knocking—sour grapes, you know.

I think one thing that we ought to do to get it on the right track is that they ought to run the race for the Presidency out in the field and not every little item that comes up here saying to the Democrats, you cannot vote, you cannot offer an amendment, you cannot vote on one of your amendments.

So we are going to have to start getting this place in a position where it is respected.

Are we limited to 5? I did not know that. I apologize to the Chair. I did not know we were limited to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, there is an agreement on 5 minutes.

Mr. FORD. If I reached the 5 minutes, I did not want to charge the taxpayers any more than \$389. I hope I did not use up a page of the RECORD.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNETT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I will abide by the admonition of the senior Senator from Kentucky and make sure that I fall below the \$389 limit.

Mr. FORD. I just wanted you to know how much it costs per page.

THE DEFICIT

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I want to touch on a few issues quickly, some which the Senator from Kentucky referred to and some that we are talking about generally.

First, on the deficit being close to \$300 billion in 1992; it is half that now.

When I campaigned in 1992 for election, I said that the deficit will come down regardless of what happens, and every politician in Washington will take credit for it coming down. One of the major reasons it will come down, having nothing whatever to do with any politician in Washington, is that we will finish paying for the savings and loan bailout. That is moving through the system like a pig in a python, and once it finally is digested and taken care of, you will go back down to the same level of deficit you had before we had the bailout of the savings and loan. A lot of us will look at each other and say, "Aren't we heroes? Look. It has come down." When in fact all that really happened is that we are paying off a one-time obligation, and that was completed.

The other reason it comes down is because the cold war is over and we have had substantial downsizing in the Defense Department. The President talks about 270,000-and-some civilian employees no longer on the payroll. Yes, and over 200,000 of those are in the Defense Department having to do with base closures and other downsizing activities in the Defense Department.

The structural deficit is as persistent and pernicious as it ever was, and the size of the civilian work force unrelated to the cold war is as big and as obtrusive as it ever was, and we are kidding ourselves with these short-term numbers to think that something serious and long term is taking place.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the two issues that are on the floor; first the minimum wage, and then the TEAM Act. I am willing to vote on the minimum wage at any time. I intend to vote against an increase in the minimum wage, and I do so for the following reasons.

If we increase the minimum wage, we eliminate jobs, and we eliminate jobs primarily among middle-class white suburban teenagers. You may say, "Well, that is fine. We do not owe these middle-class white suburban teenagers anything. So let us eliminate their jobs." I was a white suburban teenager in a middle-class family, and I started work at 14 when the minimum wage was 40 cents an hour. That dates me, I recognize, around here. I got a nice raise when the minimum wage went to 75 cents an hour. I did not need the money. The money was not the issue. The issue was that I learned that I had to be at work on time. I learned that I had to put in a good time at work. Looking back on it, the work I did, frankly, was not significant to the corporation. They could have done without it. But as long as they were paying me that low wage, it did not hurt them that much to have me around, and I liked to think I at least made things a little more comfortable if not more profitable.

It was the most significant learning experience of my young life. It was

more significant than many, if not most, of the classes I took in high school. It was more significant in setting the pattern of my life and work habits in my life than the extra-curricular clubs that I went to and the other things I was involved in. It was a tremendously worthwhile experience, as I am sure it is for the other middle-class teenagers who are experiencing their first work opportunity, a work opportunity that will be outlawed if we raise the minimum wage to the point where the employer says, "Well, I cannot afford it anymore, and I will cut it off."

Virtually every employer who has contacted me on this issue has said, "If the minimum wage goes up, I will eliminate jobs." I say to those who get so excited about how low the money is, why is it more moral for a person to be unemployed at \$5.25 an hour than it is for that person to be working at \$4.25 an hour? Somehow, I do not see the social benefit in having somebody unemployed at a high rate whereas they could be working at a lower rate in an entry-level job.

THE TEAM ACT

Mr. BENNETT. Finally, on the TEAM Act, as it is called, I want to make these observations.

Going back to a headline that appeared in a local U.S. paper—I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to continue for another 3 minutes.

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

Mr. BENNETT. The headline coming from another circumstance but driving to the heart of this issue said this: "Why are the liberals afraid of democracy?"

This had to do with another circumstance where liberals were complaining about people voting on an issue and saying that the Government should dictate it. Why, said the speaker at this particular symposium, himself a liberal, "are the liberals afraid of democracy? Are they afraid they would lose? Why are the unions afraid of the TEAM Act? Are they afraid that workers, speaking for themselves, exercising democratic rights, will in fact end up in a circumstance that might be good for those workers? Do they not trust the workers?"

Here are the kinds of things that are illegal now, without the passage of the TEAM Act, in terms of discussions between workers and businesses. They cannot discuss an extension of employees' lunch breaks by 15 minutes. That is illegal. They have to have the union discuss that in their behalf. They cannot discuss the issue of decreasing rest breaks from 15 minutes to 10 minutes. You would think they could get together, exercise their democratic rights, rights of free speech, to talk about that? Oh, no. Under the present law that is illegal. The union has to be the one to do that.

How about sitting down with management and the workers to discuss

tornado warning procedures? Oh, no, we cannot trust the workers to have that kind of discussion. They may give away the store. We have to have the union there to protect their rights. The union must decide, not the workers who are directly involved.

How about rules about fighting? Oh, no, we cannot have that discussion with the workers. We have to have that discussion with the union.

Sharpness of the edges of safety knives? No, we cannot have the people who actually handle the safety knives discuss that with management. We have to have the union there. The list goes on and on.

I am willing to vote on minimum wage. I am willing to vote on TEAM Act. I am willing to vote on the gas increase. I am not willing to have some people in this body say to us, "You can vote on the ones that we think are important, but we will not let you vote on the ones that you think are important."

I say, in closing, to those who are so concerned about the minimum wage, why, if it is such a vital social benefit for so many people, was it never mentioned by the then-majority party for the 2 years that they held both the Presidency and the Congress? Never once did it come up when they had the opportunity to control the agenda, control the veto, and control the passage through here. They did not even mention it, let alone raise it. Now, all of a sudden, it is an amendment that must be offered to every single bill.

I think the coincidence is that \$35 million has been pledged in support of the President's campaign by the labor unions, and the decision has been, suddenly, well, it is important. So now we will bring it up, even though we never did when we were in charge.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

THE THREE PROPOSALS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, to lay a framework here, we have three proposals that are before the Senate offered by the majority leader, Senator DOLE of Kansas. We have an opportunity to repeal a 4½-cent gas tax that was imposed by President Clinton in August 1993. This is the gas tax that the President, while campaigning, said should not be imposed because it is especially harsh on the poor families in our country. But when he became President, he changed his mind and imposed a 4.3-cent gas tax that, as I said, is very, very difficult for the poorer sectors of our society to deal with, the rural sectors, rural communities that have to utilize gas extensively in their travels and in their work. This has added a deficit in a family checking account between \$100 and \$200 per family.

It is interesting we are discussing that on this day, because May 8 is the first day that wage earners get to keep