

if we look at it from that vantage point in the years to come, it seems to me that we will be living with a lot of very, very important things. We will have had a stable economy during this time; we will have had a new relationship in trade that we can expand; the crime bill—I did not mention that; that is one that affects us everywhere we live—family leave, Head Start, national service. These are programs that are good. They are programs that I have been glad to be a part of helping put through here in the Congress.

Mr. President, I believe we are ready to move on some other items here. I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I had asked that we go into morning business. I ask that we return to regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNFUNDED MANDATE REFORM ACT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I was going to call up amendment No. 173. It was my understanding that the managers of the bill were prepared to accept this amendment, and now I am not certain if that is true. Since that uncertainty exists, I will withhold asking to move to consideration of this amendment, and I yield the floor.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Ohio, Mr. GLENN, has been making some comments with reference to the President's State of the Union Message, I believe.

Mr. President, has Pastore rule run its course?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair advises the Pastore rule will expire at 1:30, beginning at 10:30 this morning.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak out of order.

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

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I listened to a goodly number of our colleagues earlier today as they came to the floor to speak about the constitutional amendment on the balanced budget. I was glad to see the President last night give some time to that subject matter. I was glad that he stated that the proponents of a constitutional amendment to balance the budget have a responsibility to let the American people know up front the details as to just how the proponents propose to achieve that balanced budget over the next 7 years.

I listened to my friends with a great deal of interest this morning on the

floor, and I just have a few comments to make in regard to this subject. Many colleagues who support such a constitutional amendment are sincere in their belief that such an amendment is the answer to our budget deficits and is necessary to impose discipline on ourselves. I do not quarrel with their sincerity. They have a right to their viewpoints just as I have a right to mine.

I heard it said earlier today that Members of the House and Senate should show courage by voting for a constitutional amendment. Mr. President, courage is not needed to vote for a constitutional amendment to balance the budget. Courage is needed to oppose the constitutional amendment to balance the budget. We read public polls that 80 percent of the American people support a constitutional amendment to balance the budget. Courage is not needed to vote for something that the polls say 80 percent of the people want. Courage is needed to take the time to try to convince the American people that they are being misled. So those of us who vote against a constitutional amendment to balance the budget are swimming upstream, and going against the grain.

I believe it was Talleyrand who said, "There is more wisdom in public opinion than is to be found in Napoleon, Voltaire, or all the ministers of state present and to come."

I subscribe to that view. There is more wisdom in the people, but the people have to be informed in order to reach considered and wise judgments. The people have to be correctly informed if they are to form wise opinions. They also have a responsibility to do what they can to inform themselves.

It does not take courage, Mr. President, to vote for this constitutional amendment on the balanced budget. It just takes a politician's view of what is best for him or her politically at the moment. I urge Senators to show courage in taking the time to debate this matter fully and voting against a constitutional amendment on the balanced budget, at least until the proponents show Senators what is involved here—what is in this poke, along with the pig.

I hear it repeated over and over again that we need a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, so that we will be forced to discipline ourselves. Mr. President, no constitutional amendment can give us the political spine to make the hard choices necessary to balance the budget. Constitutional amendments cannot impose spine or courage or principle where those things may be lacking to begin with.

We do not need a constitutional amendment. If the proponents of a constitutional amendment have two-thirds of the votes in the House and Senate, and I would say they are very close to that, I would say they would need 67 votes in the Senate and 290 votes in the House. If they have 67 votes in the Senate and 290 votes in the House for a

constitutional amendment, they can pass any bill, now. It only takes a majority to pass a bill. If all Senators are here, it only takes 51 Senators to pass a bill, and only a majority of the House to pass a bill. So if the votes are in both Houses to adopt a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, the votes are here to produce simple majorities to pass bills and resolutions that will get the job done now. We do not have to wait 7 years.

In the final analysis, the discipline that is needed now will still be needed 7 years from now if this amendment goes into effect. That constitutional amendment will not cut one program nor will it raise taxes by one copper penny. In my judgment it will have to be a combination of both in order to deal with the extremely serious problem of balancing the budget.

The responsibility of balancing the budget 7 years from now will rest where it rests now: With the President of the United States and with the Members of the House and the Senate. If we lack the discipline now we are not likely to have much more spine, if any, 7 years from now. It will come right back here. Of course, many of those who vote for a constitutional amendment to balance the budget today probably will not be around, some of us, in the House and Senate, 7 years from now.

Mr. President, an immense hoax—that is what this is, in my judgment, a colossal hoax. It is supported by a lot of well-intentioned, well-meaning people. But in the final analysis, that is what it will prove to have been—a hoax. It is about to be perpetrated on the public at large.

It is this Senator's hope that the people will get quickly about the business of informing themselves of the ramifications of the so-called balanced budget amendment before it is too late. In my opinion, the American people could do themselves no better favor than to become very intimately involved as fast as they can with the details. And they should insist on their representatives in these two bodies to give them the details, and the probable impact of this proposal.

For almost every benefit being claimed by the proponents of this ill-conceived idea, the exact opposite of the bogus claim is, in fact, the truth. For example, the proponents claim that the balanced budget amendment will remove the burdening of debt from our children and leave them with a brighter future. This balanced budget amendment will do nothing of itself. The amendment would do nothing of the kind that is being stated. Even if we were somehow able instantly to be able to bring the current budget into balance, our children, our grandchildren, and their children would still be in debt and they would still be paying interest on that debt. Bringing the budget into balance so that there is no deficit this year or next year, or the