Sam, who will order your lunch for a cut of the money, or, B, choose your own lunch, or, C, skip lunch and stay hungry?

We have a program that chooses A, give your money to Uncle Sam, who will order your lunch for a cut of the money. President Clinton and his Congressional allies would have you believe that any change in the current system would mean choice C, that kids would go hungry.

Nothing could be further from the truth. My colleagues and I believe we should choose B, to give block grants to the States and allow decisions to be made closer to our children, which empowers families and our local communities.

We are growing kids, not the Government. Our plan will increase funding for Women, Infants and Children programs and school nutrition programs by 4.5% each year. As you see from this chart in each year from 1995 to the year 2000, the red chart shows a yearly increase of the food programs for school nutrition of 4.5 percent and an even larger increase for WIC programs.

The GOP growth in school meals is very clear, the huge increase. You see the increases, 3.6 percent, 4.5 percent, and 4.5 percent. The same is true with WIC programs. I wish to point that out. The GOP also grows the WIC programs. In this case we see that a line goes up, the CBO baseline WIC funding and the GOP WIC funding, which is even higher.

By eliminating the Federal middleman and the 15-percent administrative costs that were used to run the current program, our plan will make more resources available to feed more children.

Our proposal creates two separate block grants—one to address family nutrition needs and one to address school nutrition needs, which preserves the family and rewards work.

The family nutrition block grant will allow States to promote the good nutrition, health and development of women, infants and children and to provide healthy meals in child care, head start, summer camp, and homeless shelters.

Under the block grant, funding for family programs, including vital programs to help women, infants, and children, will be $588 million greater over the next 5 years than in the current programs. With increased funding and less bureaucracy and paperwork, States can assist more of our children.

The school nutrition block grant allows our schools to provide breakfast, lunch, before and after school meals and low-cost milk to our children. We know that hungry children cannot learn—that is why we propose to increase funding for school meals 4.5 percent each year for 5 years. We are sensitive to the needs of our children. We are committed to providing healthy meals and thus creating a proper learning environment.

Furthermore, the school nutrition block grant will enable more meals to be served to more children.

We are proud to be part of a caring solution that helps our children grown, not our Government bureaucracy.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

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

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, last week President Clinton visited Patrick Henry Elementary School in Alexandria, VA, to have a bite to eat. He dined on federally subsidized beef tacos and coleslaw and corn and fruit. The point of his visit was to try to convince the American people that the Personal Responsibility Act would slash the money that funds the current school lunch programs. Frankly, that is a lot of suckatash.

The President and those who oppose welfare reform are not telling the truth to the American people. The Personal Responsibility Act would direct that money to go where it is most needed, away from the Washington bureaucrats and toward low income children. The idea is to help those who have the greatest need.

I apologize for injecting real facts into this otherwise lively debate, but let us look at the numbers. In 1994, the Federal appropriation for the school lunch program was $4.3 billion. The Personal Responsibility Act would allocate block grants to the States of $6.7 billion next year, rising to $7.8 billion in the year 2000.

So funding for school lunch programs will increase by 4.5 percent each year over the next 5 years. Let me repeat that again. School lunch programs will increase by 4.5 percent each year. Now, people can argue about whether that is good or bad public policy, but, please, do not mislead the public by calling it a cut.

There has never been a time during this debate when those of us who favor welfare reform have voted for decreasing spending for school lunch programs. Our intent is to better serve children, not the Washington bureaucrats.

How does this bill work? We will transfer power away from the Federal food bureaucrats in Washington and give more authority to the States where it belongs. At the same time, we will focus the program more efficiently to ensure that at least 80 percent of the money goes to children from low income families.

States will have the flexibility to use the grant funds to support what they find to be the best programs for their individual school districts. They can decide how to meet the needs of children and families in their areas. This plan makes school nutrition programs easier to operate and more cost-effective by reducing paperwork. It caps administrative costs at 2 percent, and it helps ensure that meals are appealing to children by allowing greater choice at the regional and local level. We are not cutting funds for our children; we are eliminating the Federal bureaucrat as the middleman.

Federally funded beef tacos may be what we have become accustomed to, but the diet we have become accustomed to here in Washington is not necessarily healthy for the American people. The States should have the opportunity to see if they can feed more children more efficiently with more money. That is what we propose to do.

Frankly, as a parent myself, it makes a lot more sense to me for someone to be able to talk directly with his or her local school board about school lunches than it does to have to speak to the Agriculture Department or Committee on Agriculture here in Washington. It is not as through Federal overmanagement makes beef tacos, coleslaw, corn and fruit taste better.

I hope that those who are so wedded to the present system finally will begin to tell the truth to the American people. The debate becomes clearer when it is understood all the distortions and false accusations are coming from people who understand that we are not proposing state school lunch cuts, but they want to avoid the real cuts other unrelated programs later on.

But opponents want to preserve the country's huge welfare state, so they launch this fear attack now as a preemptive strike. Well, my view is while we need nutritious lunches in our schools, we need a whole lot less baloney here in Washington.

□ 1915

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

[Mr. KILDEE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

REFORMING THE WELFARE SYSTEM AND FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

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

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, one of my favorite Presidents was Ronald Reagan, and two of my favorite expressions that he used, and some Members will remember in some of the debates, he would use the phrase, ''Well, there you go again.''

He used that expression when people would attempt to distort the facts. We have heard it again tonight. ''Well, there you go again.''

One of my other favorite expressions from President Reagan was one that I use often around my office, and, that is, ''Facts are stubborn things.'' I almost wish we could bring those charts