

to compete with the least common denominator in slave labor countries around the world and get back to the idea that we can pay our people a good decent living wage so they could provide for their families, send their kids to school and improve their standard of living.

Mr. SANDERS. The gentleman makes an extremely important point. When you hear somebody get up, and give a speech, and say that we have got to be competitive in the global economy, hang on to your wallets and start worrying very much because what the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY] is saying is that in south China the wages are approximately 20 cents an hour. Well, American workers, are you ready to compete? Do you think maybe we can get down to 18 cents an hour? We can get those jobs back. What about 15 cents an hour? To a large degree much of the discussion of the global economy is just that.

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It is asking American workers to lower their wages, give up their benefits, sacrifice our environmental standards in order to compete with desperate Third World countries where people are working for starvation wages. I think, as Mr. HINCHEY indicates, that should not be the paradigm under which we operate. Rather, we should be asking the question, why, in this great country, do we not develop policies which create decent paying jobs for all of our workers, a national health care system guaranteeing health care to all of our people, a fair tax system which takes the burden of taxes off the middle class and asks the wealthy to start paying their fair share of taxes, educational opportunity for all. Is that Utopia? I do not think so.

I want to ask Mr. OWENS a question: Recently, all over America, in my district, you have middle class people, husbands and wives, working 40, 50, 60 hours a week to afford to send their kids to college, because they understand that without a college education the kids are not going to make it to the middle class. That is simply the truth. Without a college education you cannot make it to the middle class.

Mr. OWENS, the Republicans recently have brought forth a proposal which would cut back on college loans, college financial grants. What impact does that have on the aspirations and dreams of the people in your district?

Mr. OWENS. What the Republicans are trying to do in their attempt to fulfill their contract against America, we call it against America, they say with America, in an attempt to do the undoable and bring the budget down to a level of balance by the year 2002, they are going to try to take \$12 billion out of the student loan program.

Already we have year after year reduced the number of grants available. The poorest young people going to college, we used to provide more grants. But we have steadily reduced the number of grants, so it is very hard to qual-

ify for a grant. You have to be very poor, because the amount of Pell grants available, the amount of money available for Pell grants is very low. We have deliberately emphasized student loan programs. Because after all, you have time to pay for it after you get out of college and get a decent job. Most of our aid now is in the form of student loans.

Now the Republicans are saying the student loan program should not be subsidized at all. What we do now is while a young person is in college, the interest on the loan is paid for by the Government. That is our contribution as taxpayers towards the student loan program. The students get out, pick up the loan, and they start paying the interest and principal until it is paid off. But the interest during the time they are in college is paid for by the Government, and if you take that away, that raises the amount the students owe. They are expecting to save \$12 billion out of the hides of the students when we want to encourage more people to go to college. That is the one answer to our economy, to become more and more sophisticated and educated.

Mr. SANDERS. If we could perhaps wrap it up, I think, in conclusion, the point that we are trying to make, we as three or four members of the Progressive caucus, and there are 36 other members, is that we think to a large degree the Congress of the United States is out of touch with the needs of working people, middle income people, and is here to a large degree to represent the interests of the wealthy and the powerful. We think that much of what is in the Contract With America benefits the people who go to the \$1,000 a plate fund-raising dinners. We think there are sensible public policies we can develop—we brought forth some of them this afternoon—that in fact we can raise the standard of living for American people, give people hope for the future, where today there is no hope.

I want to thank both the gentleman from New York, Mr. OWENS and Mr. HINCHEY, for joining me. We will do this again.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

BARBARIANS AT THE GATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, we just returned from recess this week, and it is a fairly slow week here in the Congress. But next week we will move into the process of finalizing the budget for the coming budget year, which begins

October 1. It is a situation which I am quite concerned about.

There is a kind of calm around here before the storm. As far as I am concerned, I feel a sense of dread before a massacre takes place, because that is what I feel is in store; a massacre of very useful programs is about to occur in this budget finalization process that is going to start next week.

We already have a \$17 billion rescission package. The majority party, the Republicans in this House, have already reached into this year's budget and pulled back \$17 billion, mostly from very good programs. So \$17 billion is being cut out of the budget that is now in process, now going on.

The budget year that will end on September 30, they are trying to take out \$17 billion. The Senate has passed their version of the rescission package, and a conference is about to occur. There is nothing to feel optimistic about there. They put back a few vital items. I heard the Senate is going to restore the Summer Youth Employment Program. The Summer Youth Employment Program employs millions of young people across the country every summer. That had been wiped out by the Republican-controlled House rescission budget. Now the Senate says they will put it back, and I hope that they do restore that.

But I hope the President vetoes the whole bill. I hope that he understands there are numerous other cuts in that same \$17 billion package, for instance, the cutting of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the tune of \$7 billion. You cut \$7 billion out of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and most of the money that is cut is for low income housing. I hope that the President will veto the whole package. But I dread what is going to happen with that package, that rescission package.

But beyond that, I dread the budget finalization process, because what has happened with the rescissions package is a preview of coming attractions, a preview of where this majority in this House is going.

It is not exaggerating to say that we are about to behold something similar to a group of barbarians burning down a city. It is not exaggerating, because we are going to destroy, and maybe this is a serious flaw, a serious weakness in the Constitution of the United States, that a party in power for 2 years can wreck havoc. It can destroy a great deal.

You can destroy the Department of Education by just denying funding. You can vote the funding out. It is difficult to vote down the authority for the agency, but if you don't fund it, you can destroy it, or so cripple it, until no matter who comes into power the next year, they will have to try to rebuild a crippled agency.

That has been the history of the Department of Education. It has always been a crippled agency. It came into