would then, I suppose, in all prudence, have to advise Members that pending action by the other body, we might be prepared to be working Saturday as well.

Mr. GEPHARDT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, obviously, betting is not allowed on the floor of the House, but I am sure that was a friendly wager and not a bet.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman, I appreciate that. It is actually a penance that is paid for rhetorical aberrations.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, to reiterate again, I am sure the gentleman said it, but I want to make sure others heard it, the gentleman said there was a likelihood that we would be in session on Saturday and Sunday of this weekend, is that not correct?

Mr. ARMEY. I am afraid that is correct, and I think it is only fair that we advise Members of that possibility.

Mr. GEPHARDT. I thank the gentleman.

EXECUTIONS IN NIGERIA

(Ms. PELOSI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, on November 10, Nigeria's military junta, under the leadership of Gen. Sani Abacha, hanged eight human rights activists, including Ken Saro-Wiwa, president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people, and seven other human rights activists.

Mr. Speaker, this was an insult to humanity, and this behavior was outside the circle of civilized human behavior. ''Nigeria is one of Africa's most richly endowed countries,'' the New York Times wrote in a recent article, ''but a succession of military dictators has looted it and left its people impoverished. Since he seized power in 1993, General Abacha's tolerance for corruption and international drug dealing and his gross abuse of human rights have made matters considerably worse.

''Mr. Saro-Wiwa was targeted because he had been an effective leader of the Ogoni people who inhabit Nigeria's main oil-producing region. He mobilized campaigns to win compensation for environmental damage caused by the oil industry and pressed for a modest share of oil revenues to be diverted from the pockets of the military toward the needs of the Ogoni people.'' The editorial goes on to say, ''This popular movement has brought military repression to Ogoniland.''

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Saro-Wiwa was executed, and he did nothing wrong. He did nothing wrong except speak out for the Ogoni people, for environmental protection, and for the end of the degradation of the environment of those people.

I think this Congress should call on Shell Oil Co. to use its leverage to encourage democracy and freedom of expression in Nigeria. I am pleased to say that the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank has decided not to make a $100 million loan to Nigeria. I hope that this Congress, this House of Representatives, will speak out forcefully against the Nigerian Government and its repression of the Nigerian people, and that we should remember Mr. Saro-Wiwa for the hero that he is.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the full article which appeared in the New York Times.

The article referred to is as follows:

[From the New York Times, Nov. 9, 1995]

A DEATH SENTENCE IN NIGERIA

Gen. Sani Abacha's military dictatorship is moving quickly to execute Ken Saro-Wiwa, one of Nigeria's leading environmentalists and minority-rights leaders, after convicting him on trumped-up charges in a military court. Yesterday Nigeria's ruling council confirmed Mr. Saro-Wiwa's sentence.

Only outside intervention, especially by the United States and the international oil companies whose business keeps the Abacha regime afloat, can now save his life. President Clinton should speak out on Mr. Saro-Wiwa's behalf without delay.

Nigeria is one of Africa's most richly endowed countries, but a succession of military dictators have looted it and left its people impoverished. Since he seized power in 1993, General Abacha's tolerance for corruption and international drug dealing and his gross abuses of human rights have made matters considerably worse.

Mr. Saro-Wiwa was targeted because he has been an effective leader of the Ogoni people who inhabit Nigeria's main oil-producing region. He mobilized campaigns to win compensation for environmental damage caused by the oil industry and pressed for a modest share of oil revenues to be diverted from the pockets of the military toward the needs of the Ogoni people.

This popular movement has brought military repression to Ogoniland. The alleged crime for which Mr. Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders have been sentenced to death, the killing of four moderate Ogoni chiefs, occurred during clashes between moderates and a militant young faction.

Mr. Saro-Wiwa was not even in the vicinity when these clashes occurred. The United States State Department has protested the lack of due process, and the British Foreign Office has strongly deplored both the trial and the death sentences. But more is needed, and fast.

International businesses should normally try to stay clear of domestic politics. But the direct connection of this case to the oil industry, the reliance of the Abacha regime on oil revenues and the looming threat of international sanctions make this an exception. Oil companies, especially Shell, historically the main producer in Ogoniland, as well as two American-based companies, Chevron and Mobil, should use their influence with Nigeria's Government in Mr. Saro-Wiwa's behalf.

TransAfrica, the African-American lobbying group that led the economic boycott campaign against apartheid in South Africa, has been urging an oil embargo against the Nigerian dictatorship. That is a drastic step, but it begins to look like the only way to slow General Abacha's ruinous course. By executing Mr. Saro-Wiwa, the general would powerfully strengthen TransAfrica's case. Justice demands not only the commutation of Mr. Saro-Wiwa's sentence but his immediate release.

THE BUDGET BATTLE

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Madam Speaker, last September the Republicans sent a continuing resolution to the President so that the Government would not shut down on October 1. We put in that continuing resolution enough time and money so that we could operate through all of October and part of November.

What did the President do? He ordered in travel brochures to see about his pending trip to Japan this week. When we asked him last week what he was going to do, he went out on the golf course last Friday.

We think there is a fundamental policy difference between ourselves and the President. We think that we need to protect our children's future. We need to come up with a plan that balances the budget in the year 2002 without any tax increases.

The President thinks it is a little bit better to work on his putting stroke out on the south lawn of the White House. We are not going to vote for a debt ceiling that does not have fundamental change in it.

We believe, as the last Democratic CBO director does, that the President is defending the low ground when he talks about Medicare premiums.

Let us make a few things perfectly clear. Medicare part B is optional. If the senior citizens do not want to pay the premium, they do not have to.

Madam Speaker, I submit for the RECORD the following article from the Wall Street Journal about the Medicare part B premium:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Nov. 14, 1995]

MEDICARE PREMIUMS ARE TAKING CENTER STAGE IN BUDGET BATTLE BETWEEN CLINTON, REPUBLICANS

(By Hilary Stout and Laurie McGinley)

WASHINGTON.—Laura Tyson, one of President Clinton's top economic advisers, went on national television this weekend to declare a ''defining difference'' between the White House and Republicans in the escalating budget debate: the issue of Medicare premiums.

And last night, President Clinton vetoed legislation to keep the government from temporarily closing down today largely because of an $11 difference in monthly Medicare premiums.

The irony is that the GOP Medicare measure, which would raise the monthly premiums a few dollars to $53.50 instead of lowering them on Jan. 1 as current law prescribes, is something that the administration could probably support in another context.

''I think, in a sense, the president is defending the low ground on this'' says Robert Reischauer, former director of the Congressional Budget Office, now an economist at the Brookings Institution.

BEST WEAPON

Mr. Clinton objected to the stopgap spending bill for a number of reasons—including, he said, because its deep, across-the-board cuts would hurt education and environmental protection programs. But the White

House chose to make Medicare premiums the focus of its public attacks. The president's advisers believe Medicare is their best weapon in the budget fight, and they have sought to turn the entire budget debate into a battle over the federal health program for senior citizens. Public opinion polls suggest this strategy is working.

Yet the Medicare premium increase itself isn't a do-or-die issue for many elderly and consumer groups, not even for the powerful American Association of Retired Persons. ''What we have said is that we recognize that seniors need to be part of the solution,'' says John Rother, legislative director for the group, which has 33 million members. ''And that sacrifice is better borne by premium increases'' rather than through higher deductibles and copayments, which affect the sickest beneficiaries the most.

Here's what the premium battle is all about: Five years ago, the last time the federal government shut down because Congress and a president were squabbling over the budget, the eventual legislative deal wrote into law the dollar-amount of Medicare premiums for the ensuing five years. The idea was to set the amount elderly beneficiaries would pay at 25% of the total program cost, with general tax revenues subsidizing the rest. (When Medicare was first enacted 30 years ago, the elderly were expected to pay 50% of the premiums.)

But because the program costs didn't rise as much as lawmakers anticipated, the 1995 charge, $46.10 a month, actually amounted to 31.5% of the premium costs. That was to be rectified Jan. 1, 1996, when the law prescribed that premiums would be set at 25% of costs, no matter what the dollar amount was. That means they were scheduled to actually drop, to $42.50 a month.

But Republicans want to save the Treasury money—and, Democrats charge, pay for their proposed tax cuts—by keeping the premiums at 31.5% of costs, which would amount to $53.50 a month. Administration officials accuse Republicans of trying to balance the budget on the backs of the elderly and trying to sneak their budget priorities past the president by attaching them to the temporary spending measure. Republicans contend that it would be irresponsible to lower premiums.

A RESPONSIBLE THING TO DO

The decision to set premiums at 25% of costs, despite the dollar amount, was part of President Clinton's 1993 deficit reduction package, which passed Congress without a single Republican vote. A number of Democrats involved in those negotiations say that they didn't expect premiums to actually decrease because of it. In fact, many privately believe that keeping premiums at lest at current levels is the responsible thing to do.

Mr. Reishauer said, ''31.5% as part of a fundamental structural change in Medicare is entirely appropriate, especially when combined with a surcharge on upper-income beneficiaries,'' as called for in the GOP plan. ''Medicare is a very expensive program. And it's going to have to be one that's supported not just by the general taxpayer and those paying payroll taxes, but also by the beneficiaries.''

An idea put forth by some Senate Republicans to freeze premiums at $46.10 in the stopgap spending measure stumbled yesterday afternoon, but some lawmakers were hoping to make it the basis of a future compromise. An administration official involved in the budget deliberations privately concedes that keeping Medicare premiums at the current level ''wouldn't be the worst thing in the world'' in the context of an overall balanced-budget package. But, the official adds, accepting any Medicare compromise with the GOP would be politically tough.

The other objection is a procedural one—but it, too, is laden with politics. Instead of saving the Medicare premium increase for the giant balanced-budget package, Republicans attached it to the temporary spending measure, designed simply to keep the government running while the White House and Republican congressional leadership negotiate a balance-budget deal. President Clinton calls this ''blackmail.''

A STRONG MOTIVATION

But the GOP has a strong motivation for pushing the issue now. Most elderly people might not notice the proposed increase if it is enacted soon.

That's because Medicare premiums are deducted from beneficiaries' monthly Social Security checks, and Social Security recipients are scheduled to get a 2.6% cost-of-living increase as of Jan. 1. That means the average Social Security check will rise to $720 from $702, according to the government. If Medicare premiums grow to $53.50 on Jan. 1, recipients' checks will still be higher after the monthly Medicare deduction—$666.50 on average, compared with $655.90 today.

But if Republicans wait to negotiate higher Medicare premiums in a budget deal, Medicare premiums will fall on Jan. 1 as scheduled, then spike up. And the GOP would most likely take the public blame at the worst possible time—the beginning of a presidential election year.

The timetable for the GOP becomes even more urgent because the Social Security Administration needs to know the premium by tomorrow in order to make the changes for the monthly checks that go out Jan. 3, according to an agency spokesman. He said the agency's computer experts are trying to figure out a way to move the deadline back a few days.

The AARP's Mr. Rother insists that higher premiums should be considered only as part of a comprehensive Medicare-overhaul package, not as an add-on to the stopgap spending bill. ''The issue of premiums is part of the larger questions surrounding the shape and size of Medicare,'' Mr. Rother says.

Both he and other advocates of the elderly are concerned about the premium increase in the context of the entire GOP health program. ''When it comes to 31.5%, assuming it's in the Medicare budget bill,'' and not in the stopgap spending bill, ''we can live with it, provided there are protections for low-income people,'' says Gail Shearer, director of health-policy analysis for the Washington office of Consumers Union, which publishes Consumer Reports magazine.

Currently, the poorest beneficiaries receive Medicaid subsidies to help pay for Medicare premiums, copayments and deductibles. Under GOP plans to revise Medicaid, the health program for the poor would be turned over to the states in the form of block grants. The legislation would require states to spend a certain percentage of their funds on the poor elderly, but, with premiums rising, advocates are worried the aid won't cover everyone who needs it.

STILL COMING OUT AHEAD

	1995	1996 current law	1996 GOP proposal
Average monthly Social Security payment	$702	$720	$720
Monthly medicare premium deduction	46.10	42.50	53.50
Actual monthly Social Security check	655.90	677.50	666.50

□ 1900

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

PRIORITIES MUST BE ESTABLISHED IN BUDGET

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I bring to the floor today some of the mail I have received, and I want to share it, both pro and con, for what we are doing here in Washington.

Gloria Chamberlain from Stuart, FL:

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FOLEY: Please do not give in to the Democrats in Washington concerning the budget or Medicare. The polls are wrong and the people are with the Republicans. Stay firm and tell the White House that big government days are over. Thank you for all you are doing and please stand firm.

Mike Salyers, Fort Pierce: ''Support what you are doing. Hang in there. Need a balanced budget.''

Diane Crisco, Port St. Lucie, FL. Balance the budget. She does not care if Government shuts down. Solve immigration problems.

Lisa Carroll, Stuart, FL. Do not back down. We must balance the budget.

Mr. Gus Heck from Stuart. Mr. Heck wants Congress to drop the riders in the continuing resolution and debt resolutions.

Richard James of Stuart. ''Get rid of add-ons. You are holding the President back from signing CR because of extra stuff on bill. Stop holding America hostage. Very angry. Voting Democrat next time.''

On Medicare we got a lot of responses from seniors. We sent out 117,000 requests for information. We have received over 6,000 back. Many people support us but would like to stay on the regular Medicare plan. Would consider an HMO.

Ms. Presensky from Fort Pierce somewhat opposes, wants to know more. Stresses take away fraud not benefits. She cannot get an HMO where she lives. We are hoping to change that. But she wants decreases in food stamps, decreases in foreign aid, decreases in welfare, and increases in veterans benefits.

We have Ms. Sutter from Port St. Lucie. Strongly supports the Republican plan. Would stay with regular Medicare, and she can do that. Supports Medicare, decreasing food stamps, decrease in the National Endowment for the Arts, decrease in the B–2 bomber, decrease in foreign aid, and a decrease in welfare. Supports