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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, Sovereign of this Nation, we praise You for the gift of authentic hope. More than wishful thinking, yearning, or shallow optimism, we turn to You for lasting hope. We have learned that true hope is based on the expectation of the interventions of Your spirit that always are on time and in time. You are the intervening Lord of the Passover, the opening of the Red Sea, the giving of the Ten Commandments. You have vanquished the forces of evil, death, and fear through the cross and the Resurrection. All through the history of our Nation, You have blessed us with Your providential care. It is with gratitude that we affirm, ''Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord.''—Psalm 33:12.

May this sacred season culminating in the Holy Week before us, including Passover, Good Friday, and Easter, be a time of rebirth of hope in us. May Your spirit of hope displace the discordant spirit of cynicism, discouragement, and disunity. Hope through us, O God of hope. Flow through us patiently until we hope for one another what You have hoped for us. Then Lord, give us the vision and courage to confront those problems that have made life seem hopeless for some people. Make us communicators of hope. We trust our lives, the work of the Senate, and the future of our Nation into Your all-powerful hands. In the name of the Hope of the World. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader, Senator LOTT of Mississippi, is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. For the information of all Senators, this morning the Senate will conduct a period for morning business until 12:30 p.m., to accommodate a number of requests on both sides of the aisle. It is still the hope that the omnibus appropriations conference report will be available for consideration today. Senators should be aware that rollcall votes are possible throughout today's session of the Senate. The Senate may also consider any other legislative or executive items that can be cleared for action. At this time I think it is safe to say we just are not sure whether or not action will be completed on the omnibus appropriations bill, and if not, what other action may be taken; but I am sure that the appropriators will be meeting and working on this problem and trying to find a solution. As soon as information is received on that, it will be conveyed to the Senators.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. THOMAS] is recognized to speak for up to 30 minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President. I ask unanimous consent that in that 30 minutes, I be permitted to speak for about 10 minutes, the Senator from Georgia for about 10 minutes, and the Senator from Texas for 10 minutes.

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

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are now well into this year, the second year of this congressional session, preparing to go on a recess, to go back to our districts, do our business. So it is sort of interesting to reflect a bit on where we are and I guess more importantly where we go.

It seems to me that this has been an extraordinary year, a year in which for the first time in 30 years, there has been a great effort to bring about a fundamental change in the operation of the Federal Government. Much of it, I think, results from the fact that the 1994 elections, at least to most of us, had a message. The message was, the Federal Government is too large, costs too much, and it is overregulated. And there are consequences, there are consequences to that.

Obviously, the consequence of being overregulated, one of them, is to keep a damper on the growth of the economy. It has to do with jobs, it has to do with wages. And we all want to change that.

The idea of overspending, of course, has a couple of consequences. One of them is that we enjoy the benefits, we continue to add cost to Government without paying for it, to put it on the credit card—on your credit card. And you will be paying for it.

The other is, of course, it takes more and more money from families, money that was earned by families, sent to the Government when more of it could be used by families themselves.

What has really happened over the 30 years is we tended to go ahead with the Great Society programs in the social arena. We tended to simply discuss here how much more do we put into the

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programs that have been there for a very long time. They are not all bad programs. But certainly after a number of years, there needs be to be a real look at whether or not those programs need to be there, whether, those, programs can be done more efficiently, whether, indeed, those programs can be transferred to local governments, closer to those who are governed, whether they need to be discontinued.

So I am very pleased, frankly, with this year, even though we have not come to closure on as many things as I hoped we would have. We still have an opportunity in this week. And this week has been a good week for that.

Nevertheless, the debate has changed entirely. The debate has changed from one of how much more money do we put into the program, to a real analysis of the program, a real change. Frankly, I guess being a freshman here makes it a little more exciting to help bring about that change, as the Presiding Officer would agree.

But it is something that I think most of us want to do, and we intend to continue to do that. I had the good opportunity this last week, Mr. President, as I often do, to go to schools in my district. I went to CY Junior High in Caspar, WY. They asked me to come and talk a little bit about politics and particularly the primary. I am always happy to do that. I am happy to do it for a couple reasons.

One is, of course, even though we sort of despair about politics and we call them politicians and all those things, politics is the way we govern ourselves. Politics is the way people in Caspar, WY, in my precinct where I am a precinct chairman, have input into what is done in this country, regardless of the party that they are in. So that is what politics is about. Obviously, I have urged young people to learn about it and become involved in it.

The other, of course, is the primary, which is a very interesting aspect of our society, particularly when we generally have two parties, a two-party system. So there is in general a difference between the parties. Indeed, there should be. It is legitimate that there be that. That is what gives people a choice on how they govern themselves.

Of course, generally, Republicans have been more conservative, the Republicans have been for less government, the Republicans have been for moving more government to the States. The Democrats, on the other hand, have generally supported more Federal Government and making more of the decisions there. Both of these are legitimate views. I happen to feel rather strongly about my view. I do not insist, however, that it is always correct.

But it has been interesting this week, I think, Mr. President, to see how many of the things we have talked about just in the last couple of days would tend to show that that is indeed the case.

The farm bill, we talked about the farm bill yesterday. It was a pretty clear choice as to where we go in the future. The choice is basically whether we continue to have a farm program—and I happen to come from a background of agriculture, and I can recall people, when I first got into agriculture in the 1960's, people saying, ''Hey, we have got to get out of this farm program. We have to get so we're producing for the market. We have got to get to doing something where farmers have more choices for themselves.'' We have not done that until now. Now we have an opportunity in this farm bill to move out over a period of adjustment into the marketplace, where we ought to be. It is pretty clear, a pretty clear division. We could see it on the floor yesterday.

Health care—we will work today, we will work this week, we have worked for a very long time on health care. There are some very clear definitions there as to whether we want to deal with health care in the private sector, where people can make their choices, where we have IRA's for health care, where we do something about private insurance, or whether we move, as the administration sought to, 2 years ago, to a Government-controlled program. It is pretty clear.

I think it is really important that we do understand that there are some philosophical differences here that have impact. I used to debate a Congressman from California, Mr. GEORGE MILLER, on issues about land and the environment, but we had to make it clear to begin with that we had a great difference of philosophy, because often we were not really arguing about the bill but arguing about philosophy. GEORGE MILLER would like to have the Government own more land. I tend to say there ought to be a limit, and private ownership ought to be sustained.

Jobs and wages—I think all of us are concerned about that. We see two very different approaches taking place. One is to encourage the private sector. The Republicans are saying we should do something about that, do something about capital gains so people are encouraged and given incentives to invest, to create jobs, do something about overregulation; on the other hand, our friends with a little different point of view, different philosophy, say, ''Look, we ought to get the Government involved here and put these corporations in different categories, and if they behave properly with respect to Government regulations, then we give them some sort of preference.''

I guess, Mr. President, what I am saying is, we talked a bit about differences, about choices. Obviously, no one agrees entirely with everything their party is for, but they find the party that most closely represents their point of view. That is what primaries are about. That is what elections are about. People ought to see where they are—the 10th amendment, the idea of involving the States more.

Mr. President, I think this has been an exciting year. I look forward to completing more of that fundamental change that has been brought about here. One of the final comments I make, it was interesting that the Chief of Staff of the White House was indicating the other day it is up to the Congress to deliver to the President the kind of bill that he wants. Let me suggest that is not exactly the way it is set up, in my view.

Under the Constitution, there are three equal divisions of the Federal Government—judicial, legislative, and executive. Each of them has the authority to make some decisions for themselves, and, indeed, the President has the perfect right to veto, and he should veto. That is his constitutional privilege. To veto does not mean the Congress has to continue to bring everything back until it meets his particular point of view. This is not a unilateral decision. This is a joint decision.

My only point is the White House needs to make some accommodations, as well. The way you make that work is after a couple vetoes, you do not send any more, and there is no opportunity for the President to work.

I hope we do come together. Certainly, we never will all agree. We do have the responsibility to move forward. We do have the responsibility to make the system work.

Mr. President, I hope that we can move on some of those things. We have passed a great number of items in this Congress, all of which have met the same fate at the White House. We will change that. We will have to change that, so that we can move forward and respond to those voters who spoke very clearly in 1994.

I yield to the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of my distinguished colleague from Wyoming. Many of my remarks will reinforce the point he is making. Sometimes we need to step back from the fray to sort of size up the situation we are in.

Here in the waning days of March 1996, over 3 years after the election of President Clinton, I think we can come to the conclusion that the President does not want a balanced budget. He does not want a balanced budget.

Those that might be listening would say, ''Well, how do you come to that conclusion?'' First, this recent budget we received from the President is his ninth attempt—ninth. He promised the American voters in 1992 that he would balance the budget within 5 years. He has yet to take an affirmative step to do that. In the first 2 years, he raised taxes in an unprecedented level—over 200-plus billion dollars. And the first effort he made was to add $20 billion to the deficit. That was his first financial overture to the people of the United States.

Well, we wrangled over that for a period of time, and finally the 104th Congress, this Congress, sent the President

a balanced budget, and he vetoed it. This Congress tried to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and he rose in opposition and defeated it. He caused six Members of his own party who voted for the exact proposition the year before to change their votes because he did not want a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, a discipline that would cause America to have to live within its means.

At the time he and his colleagues said, ''Well, we just have to have the will. We do not need an amendment to the Constitution. Congress just has to have the fortitude and utilize its own jurisdictional powers and pass a balanced budget.'' Lo and behold, we did. And he vetoed it, and he opposed the balanced budget amendment. Then he would not submit a balanced budget. Then the Government closed down twice.

Now we have the latest attempt in his last year of office under this term. He submits his ninth attempt. What does it do? Well, the first thing that happens is that 70 percent of the savings that theoretically would produce a balanced budget occur after he leaves office, if he is elected the second time. So all the work has to occur when he is long gone. As a world statesman, it is sort of like, ''Here, you handle it, America. You take care of it.'' Mr. President, 70 percent of the correctional devices occur after he is out of office.

It makes no structural adjustments in the area of Medicaid and Medicare. In the case of Medicare, he totally ignores his own trustees who have told the President, they have told the Presiding Officer, they have told me, our colleagues in the Nation, that Medicare will write its last check in 5 years. This budget ignores that crisis, and therefore is ignoring all those senior citizens dependent upon that program. Once again, ''Here, you handle it—later. We will look at that after the next election.''

Mr. President, these budgets talk of big, big numbers. They are hard to follow, even if you work on it every day, much less if you are trying to do the things that you are responsible for at home—get the kids up, get them fed, get them to school, get to the job, leave the job, someone is sick, get to the school, to the doctor, back home, one of the parents comes—we know the routine very well, Mr. President. Those families are the ones that are most impacted by the failure of this budget.

What it does to that family, that average Georgia family at home, is it leaves enormous burdens right on their shoulders and backs. That family today makes about $40,000. Both parents work, as I just described, and they have two kids. Under this plan that the President has given us, they are going to take about 20 to 25 percent of the total earnings—gross earnings—of that family and ship it up here to Washington. Another 10 percent—$3,000 to $4,000—comes out to take care of State and local government. This is an interesting figure: Out of the $40,000 they make, they will contribute $6,500 for the regulatory apparatus we have set up in America.

Under this President, it is going up. Just since he has been President, the bill for the regulatory apparatus has gone up $688 in the last 36 months. They are going to get to pay about $2,000 as their share of the interest on our debt, which we just increased last night.

When you add it all up, how much do they have left to do what we have asked them to do for the country? Remember what we asked them to do, Mr. President? We said raise the country, educate the country, feed it, house it, transport it, see to its health. What does this budget that the President has just given us leave for that family to do its work? About half. They have $20,000 to $22,000 to do all the work we have asked them to do and to build their dreams—to build their dreams. That is what this President's budget leaves for them.

When he vetoed a balanced budget, in effect, he took $3,000 out of their checking account—$3,000. Just think what that family could do with that. That is the equivalent of a 10- to 20-percent pay raise in that family. But this President thinks that the $3,000 is better used up here than in their checking account. Sometimes we wonder why people are so frustrated.

When we took that $3,000 out of their account and brought it up here, it reminds us that when they sent Secretary O'Leary and her aides and friends all over the world, flying first class, staying in the best hotels, it cost $3.7 million, which took 739 Georgia families to pay for that travel bill. It took all that they sent up here to pay for that travel bill. To send her to China took 170 Georgia families, my neighbors, just to get her to China. No wonder they are furious. To send her to India, it took 144 Georgia families—everything they have earned and worked for and sent up here went to get her to India. It took 140 families to get her to South Africa.

When the First Lady and her entourage went to Beijing, that took 499 Georgia families to pay for that. Here is the whopper: To send Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and his aides around the country and the world, it took 13,700 Georgia families. We ask them to raise the country, feed the country, house the country, educate the country, prepare the country for the future. And here we have 17,000 Georgia families, and everything they earn, all that hard sweat that came up here just to fund this kind of foolishness. This budget that we just got from the President leaves all that burden and all that apparatus right in place, and it leaves all that pressure on those families. And it is not right.

Sooner or later, the demand for balanced budgets, which leaves those resources in those families, will prevail, despite the opposition of this President.

Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Mr. President. What is the order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has up to 10 minutes.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to commend the Senator from Georgia. He really talked about the effect on people of wasteful, big Federal Government. He did not just talk about numbers on a page that do not relate to anything. He talked about how much it costs to have a bureaucrat waste taxpayer dollars, how many Georgia and Texas families it takes to pay for the waste in Government, families that do not have the ability to waste money because they are working so hard to do the things for their children that they would hope to do. So I thank the Senator from Georgia for bringing this into a debate about people and the effect on people's lives.

Balancing the Federal budget is not about the runaway Federal deficit, or the debt ceiling, or even about temporary Government shutdowns. It is about the future of our country, about what America will be like tomorrow and the next day and a generation from now.

Most Americans believe they are better off than their parents. But it is amazing how many Americans do not believe their children will be better off than they were. The American dream has always been about progress, about growth from one generation to the next, about generational improvements, that our children will have more opportunities, more choices, better lives than their parents. Why is it, for the first time in history, that a generation of Americans have lost hope, have lost confidence in our future? The answer is that too many people are in Washington, DC, making decisions about how to spend our money. For too long, Washington has spent more than it takes in.

I was listening to the radio this morning, and a man called in and he said, ''I remember a quote about Thomas Jefferson.'' Thomas Jefferson was brought the Federal budget, and his budget advisers put it on his desk. Thomas Jefferson had one simple question: ''Do we take in more than we spend? That is the only question that matters because if we do not take in more than we are spending, take it back, do something with it, that is the only question that you have to answer right.''

Thomas Jefferson said what we should be saying today instead of too many people in Washington spending our tax dollars the way they see fit and many times for the wrong reasons.

The President's budget proposal asks for $600 million for increased audits

and enforcement and $850 million, on top of the $4 billion already spent, to improve tax collection procedures. Americans want the Federal Tax Code to be made simple, fair, and uniform. But they really do not want billions more to be spent on IRS bureaucrats.

The President's budget fails to institute real work requirements for welfare recipients. It also guarantees that illegal immigrants will be able to receive food stamps. By refusing to sign the welfare reform legislation that Congress has sent to him twice, the President guarantees that welfare dependency will continue in the country and that the American people will continue to foot the bill. The working American will continue to foot the bill.

I believe that is why Republicans were elected in 1994—to end politics as usual. For decades, politicians came to Washington and put Band-Aids on a bad situation until the next election.

That is not what we are here for. We were sent here to offer real long-term solutions—not for the next election but for the generation.

That is why we are trying hard to do what we said we would do and balance the budget. It is why we sent a balanced budget to the President. But he has vetoed that balanced budget. The balanced budget is not about numbers. It is about people just as the Senator from Georgia was just saying.

I think of parents with children in high school afraid their children will not be able to attend college because they cannot afford the interest rates for college loans. I think of the newly married couple that wants to buy their piece of the American dream—a new home—but they are not going to be able to afford the interest rates on the mortgage. I think about working people in their forties and fifties who are trying desperately to set aside that little bit of extra money they are earning for their retirement security. And yet in the budget that the President has submitted it does not even allow homemakers to set aside $2,000 a year for IRA's like those who work outside the home are able to do. They are not even thinking about one-income earner couples that are sacrificing so that one spouse—the homemaker—will stay home and raise children. And I think of senior citizens who are depending on Medicare but are afraid that it may not be there when they really need it.

These are real people with real concerns and real fears. Unfortunately, instead of hope, President Clinton hyped the status quo. Instead of inspiring Americans to have confidence in their future, instead he incites fear.

It is wrong to ask that American people live within their means but not ask the Federal Government to do the same. Is it wrong to demand that Washington stop wasting taxpayer dollars? Is it wrong to demand an end to politics as usual?

That is what we are demanding—a return to principle instead of politics; a commitment to the next generation instead of the next election.

We are 4 years away from a new millennium. The year 2000 should be a new beginning. Where will we be in the year 2000? As we look forward to the year 2000, where will we be starting with what we need to do today?

As that ball drops in Times Square, and people all over our Nation are celebrating a new beginning, will we be firmly on the path to a balanced budget, and a growing economy? Or will the deficit still be eating away at the working people's livelihood in this country? Will we have reformed the welfare system, or will it continue to undermine the work ethic destroying families and ruin the very lives of people who are receiving welfare? Will we have reduced the excessive tax burden on the American family leaving them with more of their money in their pockets or will we continue to have taxes that takes people's extra money so they cannot put it away for saving for their retirement? Will we have reformed Medicare so that our future generations will know that it will be there for them so that it will be stronger? Or will we have continued on the path that we are on now? And will Medicare be 2 years away from going out of business so that seniors in this country really will have to fear whether it is going to be there for them?

In short, Mr. President, will we have continued business as usual for these 4 years that we have been elected to make change, or will we have kept the promise that we made to the American people?

I hope that in the year 2000 we will have said this year there is no more politics as usual, no more excuses, that we kept our promises in 1996 so that in the year 2000 when we are celebrating a new beginning we will indeed have a strong and thriving economy, and that we will have American families with the hope that their children will be able to have a better life than they have had just as so many generations in the past have been able to hope.

Mr. President, the time to prepare for a new beginning in a new millennium is right now, and we are missing that opportunity with a budget by the President that does not speak to tax fairness and equity for the working families of this country. We are trying to make a difference.

The President has vetoed welfare reform. He has vetoed a balanced budget. He has vetoed middle-class tax cuts. All of the things that he promised and all of the things that we promised—and we are trying to deliver—have been vetoed by the President.

The time is now for us to put partisanship aside and do what all of us said we would do for the American people—balance the budget. That is our commitment. And, Mr. President, we have a chance to keep our promise. And that is what we are trying to do.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized to speak for up to 20 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I need.

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

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this is, it seems to me, a time to talk about change in this country. I think the central question is what kind of change will make this a better place in which to live?

We have had a lot of struggles in our history in this country about what the role of government is. Is there a role for government? What kind of government, and how much government do we want? We have struggled over the decades with that question.

I go back to the early 1900's which relates to the struggle we had over the question of food inspection. I have told my colleagues this before. Some know it because of the readings they have done. But even then we began the struggle over all of these issues.

On the issue of food inspection, Upton Sinclair wrote a book at the turn of the century. He did an investigative book on his discoveries in the meat, packing plants, I believe in Chicago, where he discovered that in the meat packing plants they had rats running around the plants. And they were trying to, of course, control the problem of rats in the meat packing plants. That is a pretty big problem. So they would put out bread laced with arsenic and lay it around the meat plants. And the rats would eat the bread, and die. And they would throw the rats and the bread and the meat down the same chute, and out comes mystery meat on the other side sold as sausage in some location somewhere in America to an unsuspecting consumer. Rats, arsenic, poison bread, meat and sausage.

Upton Sinclair wrote about that—about the outrage of that, about the threat to this country's health as a result of that. And guess what happened? The debate in this country turned quickly to the question of how to stop that. How do we prevent that? How do we assure ourselves that our food supply is safe?

We created in this country a level of government that says we are going to inspect food so that when you eat food you are not going to eat mystery meat laced with bread and arsenic that was used to poison rats. Even then we had people who said it is none of government's business; let the private sector decide. Well, arsenic and rats in meat are the public's business.

Oh, we have gone several stages from that. And in the mid-1960's half of America's senior citizens had no health care. They reached an age where they were not working. They reached retirement age, and did not have any money; nothing really to speak of. And they had no health care coverage.

I remember driving one fellow to the hospital some 55 miles away when I