after the Civil War we were down to about negative $3 billion. Ever since then it has gone down.

Debt is not really serious compared to the total assets of the country. That is from Congressman PETER STARKE.

Mr. BOUSQUET: Good afternoon, Congressman SANDERS. The remark by Congressman STARKE is not true. $5,403,449,382,255.58 is a problem. This country knows it just as well as I do that this country is in trouble. Although the national debt has gone down in the 1990's, it is still very, very high.

Some of the facts: There are 267,204,471 people roughly in America. The debt increases $722 million everyday. At this rate each citizen's contribution to the debt to make it go away is $222,000.15, and that means a baby, a child and a man, and infant, whatever.

Mr. BLAIS: What we are asking is why is it our responsibility to pay for Government debts and what is Congress doing honestly to bring us out of debt and what is the future for our kids going to be like? From what I have gathered there has been a lot of—I do not how to explain it but there have been many attempts to bring the debt down, and yes, it has gone down some by cutting budgets and whatnot, but in the last roughly 55 years there hasn't been any major decrease in the debt that we have.

Mr. BOUSQUET: It is obviously going down, and I see that. Why cannot we keep on going down and try to get it to a reasonable $50 million or a reasonable $25 million. The debt is still going up but it is not increasing as rapidly. The only possible solution that I can come up with is cutting back on something and it could be a number of things. The budget is divided up into sections, right? One of the highest is armed forces. We need defense, granted, but it is too high, I think, and that is my personal opinion. I do not know the background behind it.

Mr. BLAIS: Well I have to say like Government funding for—I mean, I cannot give you exactly but I know a lot of things that are Government-funded aren't going anywhere and haven't been going anywhere in the last I do not know how many years, and I would take a deep look at what everything is producing and how much money you are giving them and look at it from there.

THE BUDGET

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, May 28, 1997 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE BALANCED BUDGET: AGREEMENT AND LONG-TERM CHALLENGES

Last week, with my support, Congress approved a budget resolution for fiscal year 1998 which provides a blueprint for how Congress and the President intend to balance the federal budget over the next five fiscal years. The budget resolution reflects the recent budget agreement worked out between the White House and congressional leaders, and marks the first concrete step in enacting a balanced budget. Congress will work over the next several months to make specific changes in law, including spending cuts, tax changes, and entitlement reforms, which will aim to bring the budget into balance by fiscal year 2002.

The budget resolution proposes to balance the budget over five years, while providing a net tax cut of $85 billion. The highlights of the budget plan include $139 billion in cuts in discretionary spending, $170 billion in entitlement spending cutbacks, and $13.2 billion in interest savings. Changes in the Medicare program will ensure the solvency of the hospital fund over the next 10 years. Defense and education spending will rise slightly. The resolution also assumes that $16 billion would be spent over five years to provide health insurance for up to 5 million children who are currently uninsured.

Congress must now work out the details of a balanced budget on several different tracks: discretionary spending, through the 13 annual appropriations bills; entitlement spending, including spending on Medicare and Medicaid; and a separate measure to make changes in tax law. The expectation is that the tax package will include a reduction in the capital gains tax and estate taxes, as well as a child tax credit and a deduction for higher education expenses.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

I voted for the budget resolution because it provides a reasonable plan for balancing the federal budget in the next five years. A strong economy and two budget agreements in 1990 and 1993 have helped reduce the deficit from a high of $290 billion in the early 1990s to the current level of $70 billion. The recent agreement worked out between the President and Congress will close that gap, provided, of course, that the economy continues to grow.

The plan endorsed by Congress last week provides for an historically modest level of deficit reduction. This year's agreement is expected to reduce the deficit by a total of $204 billion over the next five years. The 1990 agreement, in contrast, produced $593 billion in deficit reduction and the 1993 accord $487 billion.

I do have some concerns with the current plan. First, it does not provide adequate funding for infrastructure. I voted for a substitute measure which would have increased highway and transit funding by $12 billion over five years and provided additional resources to Indiana and other states which receive less than they pay out in federal gas taxes. Unfortunately, the House defeated the amendment by a two vote margin. Second, the budget plan could have achieved balance more quickly if we had deferred or limited the scope of tax changes. Third, the package did not include enforcement mechanisms to ensure that we hit deficit reduction targets each year until the budget is in balance.

LONG-TERM BUDGET CHALLENGES

Most importantly, the budget agreement does not address long-term challenges to the federal budget. There is little in this agreement to avert the spending problems caused by our aging population. Once the Baby Boomers (i.e. those born between 1946 and 1964) start to retire early in the 21st Century, huge demands will be placed on Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid and other entitlement programs, but the budget agreement is silent on these issues. The Medicare reforms in the agreement, for example, would provide a ten-year fix to the Part A (hospital) trust fund. The budget plan makes no changes in the Social Security program, and only minimal changes to Medicaid, the program which pays for much long-term care for the elderly.

The demographic changes facing this country in the next century are staggering. First, the number of elderly Americans will increase very rapidly as Baby Boomers reach retirement age. The Social Security Administration estimates that over the next 35 years the number of people age 65 and older will double. This population change, combined with the fact that people will be living longer, will place strains on federal retirement and health care programs. Federal spending on Social Security and Medicare now constitutes almost 7% of national income. By 2030 those two programs will consume almost 14% of national income.

Second, the growth in the labor force will slow dramatically as the Baby Boomers retire. The Social Security Administration projects that, because of a declining birth rate and other factors, the average rate of growth of the labor force will slow from the current rate of 1% annually to 0.2% in 2010. This trend is significant because, under the current Medicare and Social Security systems, workers help pay for retiree benefits through payroll and income taxes. With more retirees and fewer workers, the average worker would have to pay significantly more in taxes to maintain the current level of benefits for the average retiree.

The challenge for Congress is to address these problems in the nearterm before they overwhelm the federal budget. There are numerous proposals for reforming entitlement programs. Some have called for raising the retirement age, reducing or means-testing benefits, of limiting cost-of-living adjustments. Others have called for privatizing the Social Security system so that government exposure to future costs is limited. Still others have proposed converting Medicare and Medicaid into managed care systems in an effort to curb costs and limit services.

CONCLUSION

Balancing the federal budget will be an important accomplishment. As the 1990 and 1993 deficit reduction agreements have shown, smaller deficits mean greater private investment, stronger economic growth, and more job creation. The real test will be keeping the budget in balance into the next century. This year's agreement, while providing a short-term fix, does not address the long-term problems associated with an aging population and shrinking workforce. We must now begin to find solutions to these challenges.

TRIBUTE TO KEY LARGO ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

HON. PETER DEUTSCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 1997

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Key Largo Elementary and Middle School for being selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a 1996–97 Blue Ribbon School Award winner. The Key Largo School was given this prestigious award because of its excellence in preparing our young people for the challenges of the next century. Through the school's strong leadership, ingenuity in teaching, and commitment to the community, the Key Largo School is a model for all elementary and middle schools throughout the State and the Nation.

Located in the Upper Florida Keys, 105 miles from district services in the Lower Keys, the Key Largo School has used their geographical challenges as a way to enhance educational opportunities for the students as well as the community. For more than 20 years, the school has successfully practiced school based management which has encouraged risk taking, accountability, and the management of the entire school budget at the school level.

Today, the school educates 1,293 students from 3 years old to 15 years old providing