

claimed that he was father of the Internet also gave us a very curious interpretation when he claimed that, because this espionage may have started in the 1980s, someone else was to blame.

Madam Speaker, if we are to use that as our standard, then I suppose we should blame Lyndon Johnson for the Navy spy ring that began its espionage in 1968. No, Madam Speaker, espionage is a serious charge and is a serious problem that we deplore at any time. But the challenge is not when it started but when we chose to do something about it once we had the knowledge.

Again, our President speaks of a strategic partnership with China. We know now in the fullness of time exactly what his strategic partnership meant. Take a look at the record. Take a look at the videotapes. Leaders of the People's Liberation Army and Chinese business interests giving to the Clinton-Gore campaign?

Madam Speaker, even though, in this environment of the emperor's new clothes, let me step forward as did the young girl in that tale by Hans Christian Andersen and say this, it is illegal, it is unpardonable, it is unconscionable for an American administration to take money from foreign governments.

□ 0945

#### WE MUST NOT PRIVATIZE MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MORELLA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare is poised today to vote on a proposal that would end Medicare as we know it.

The Commission's charge was to come up with a scheme for putting Medicare on solid financial footing and improving its value to seniors. They definitely came up with a scheme, a scheme to privatize America's best government program.

Under the Commission proposal, known as Premium Support, Medicare would no longer pay directly for health care services. Instead, it would provide each senior with a voucher good for part of the premium for their private health insurance coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government or to join a private plan.

To encourage consumer price sensitivity, the voucher would track to the lowest cost private plan. Seniors then would shop for the best plan that best suits their needs, paying the balance of the premium and paying extra if they want higher quality health care. The Commission proposal creates a system of health coverage but it abandons Medicare's bedrock principle of egalitarianism.

Today, Medicare is income blind. All seniors have access to the same level of health care. The Commission proposal, however, is structured to provide comprehensiveness, access and quality only to those who can afford them.

The idea that vouchers will empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is quite simply a myth. The reality is that seniors will be forced to accept whatever plan they can afford.

The Medicare Commission is charged with ensuring Medicare's long-term solvency. This proposal will not do that. Proponents of the voucher plan say it would shave off 1 percent of the Medicare budget per year over the next few decades. It will only do that by charging senior citizens more. In fact, Bruce Vladeck, a Commission member and former Medicare administrator, doubts Premium Support will save the government even a dime.

The privatization of Medicare is nothing new. Medicare beneficiaries have been able to enroll in private managed Medicare plans for some time now, and their experience does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort. Managed care plans are profit oriented, and the theory that they can sustain significantly lower costs than traditional Medicare simply has not panned out.

Profit-driven managed care plans do not tough it out when those profits are unrealized. Last year, 96 Medicare HMOs deserted 400,000 Medicare beneficiaries because the HMOs' customers did not meet the HMOs' profit objectives.

Before the Medicare program was launched in 1965, more than one-half of America's senior citizens did not have health insurance. Private insurance was the only option then for seniors. Insurers simply did not want seniors to join their plans because they knew the elderly would use much of their coverage. The private insurance market still avoids high-risk enrollees and, whenever possible, dodges the bill for high cost medical services.

What is perhaps most disturbing about the Commission's Premium Support plan is what it does not tell us. It does not tell us how we can make Medicare more efficient while still preserving its egalitarian underpinnings. It does not tell us how much the Nation can or wants to spend on health care for seniors. It does not give us options for reconciling what the Nation wants with how much we have or are willing to spend.

If we privatize Medicare, like the Commission wants, we are telling America that not all seniors deserve the same level of care. The wisest course for the Medicare Commission is to disband without delivering a final product. We should go back to the drawing board and we should construct a plan that builds on Medicare's strengths and ensures its long-term solvency. Selling off Medicare to the managed care industry is the easy way out and it is wrong.

REPUBLICAN AGENDA IS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS, LOWER TAXES AND SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House this morning.

I have the privilege of representing a diverse district. I represent the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs and Cook and Will Counties, bedroom communities like Morris, the town where I live, and a lot of corn fields and farm towns. Representing such a diverse district of city and suburbs and country, I have learned to listen, to try to find the common concerns and ideas and suggestions of the folks back home.

I find one very common message whether I am in the city, the suburbs or the country, and that is that the folks back home want us to work together to find solutions, and they are looking for real accomplishments as we face the issues that are before us here in the Congress.

I am proud to say that over the last 4 years this Congress has met that challenge. I am pretty proud of what we have accomplished over the last 4 years. We did some things that people told us that we could not do. We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years, we cut taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, we reformed welfare for the first time in a generation, and we tamed the IRS for the first time ever. Those are real accomplishments.

I find as I talk about those accomplishments, folks say, well, that is pretty good, but what will the Congress do next? What are the next challenges? Where will we look to find solutions for in Washington that really matter to the folks back home? And I find as I listen to the concerns of the folks back home, they really offer a simple series of questions and a simple agenda that they want us to be working on here.

My constituents tell me they want good schools, they want low taxes, and they want a secure retirement, and that is our agenda here in this Congress, I am proud to say. Our agenda, particularly on the Republican side, is simple, just like the agenda of the folks back home. We want to strengthen our local schools, making sure that our dollars get into the classroom and that our schools are run by local school boards and local school administrators and local teachers and local parents. We want to lower taxes, recognizing the tax burden has never been higher than it is today. We want to help the middle class by allowing them to keep more of what they earn, because they can spend it better than we can for them here in Washington. We also want to provide for a secure retirement by saving Social Security and rewarding retirement savings.