There are so many examples that I could give of the fact that the government has come under the control of bureaucrats. One of the best came up recently in regard to the National Reconnaissance Office. It came out last year that they had spent $310 million building a new building that nobody knew about, a 1 million square foot building, $310 a square foot.

I would simply say this. It is time that we give the government of this country back to the people of this country and remind the Federal bureaucracy that they are working for us, and not us for them.

IT IS TIME TO REPEAL THE DAVIS-BACON ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUNN of Oregon). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House this evening.

Earlier today the Education and Economic Opportunity Committee did something that the General Accounting Office suggested we do in 1979: We began the process for eliminating the Davis-Bacon Act. Davis-Bacon is not right for America in the 1990's. It might have served a role in 1931 when it was originally formatted, but today, it is an outdated law. It has to be changed.

What Davis-Bacon requires is that workers on Federal construction projects be paid a wage at or above the level determined by the Department of Labor to be the prevailing wage in the area. Since 1937, the prevailing wage provision has been extended by many statutes to involve construction, financed in whole or in part by the Federal Government.

In 1979, the General Accounting Office recommended the repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act. They stated that it appeared to be impractical to administer. Davis-Bacon is impractical to administer due to the magnitude of the task of producing an estimated 12,400 accurately and timely generated prevailing wage determinations.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is the Department of Labor trying to determine prevailing wages in specific job categories around the county for every country. It does not make any sense in 1995. Prevailing wages can be determined very effectively through the competitive bidding process.

I would like to yield to my colleague from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] to just give us an example of what happens when the Department of Labor tries to determine prevailing wages throughout the country.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a quote from George Will. He says:

> Although there is stiff competition for the title, 'Dumbest Thing the Government is Doing,' a leading candidate is the government's refusal to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act.

Mr. Speaker, guess who said this? Milton Friedman:

> Davis-Bacon is not outdated; it never made sense. From the outset, it was special interest legislation designed to have the taxpayers provide a subsidy in concealed form to members of the construction unions and to the union leaders. It never should have been enacted, and it should be repealed.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, let me also just inform some of my colleagues of what is happening. In the State of Oklahoma, two wage analysts have been responsible for handling the data submitted to and generated by the Department of Labor for the 11-state region that includes Oklahoma. What has happened in Oklahoma?

In mid August the U.S. Department of Labor faxed copies of 49 WD10s. This is the form that various people voluntarily submit to the Federal government. It was indicated that several of the projects were entirely bogus and virtually all of the submitted forms contained grossly inflated or otherwise inaccurate information. The end result: Taxpayers end up paying more for construction than they otherwise would have to.

Among the bogus WD10 forms is a form indicating the use of seven asphalt lay-down machines and seven roller finishers for an Internal Revenue Service building in downtown Oklahoma City. In reality, the parking lot is very small, fewer than 30 total spaces, and is made of concrete, not asphalt. A bogus form intended solely to drive up the rates on the prevailing wage scale.

Specifically in the case of the asphalt lay-down machine operators, the bogus wage and fringe benefits were 44 percent higher than the union collective bargaining agreement and 30 percent higher than the prevailing wage rate in existence at that time. A clearly fraudulent attempt to take money from the American taxpayers.

At best, in 1995, the Davis-Bacon wage rates reflect a 7-year-old reality. The average prevailing wage study is 7 years old. At worst, they reflect a fraudulently manipulated wage well above market rates.

We do not need to reform Davis-Bacon. It cannot be reformed. It cannot be fixed. It does not make sense in 1995. It did not make sense in 1931. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from Michigan.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, for example, electricians in Philadelphia average $15.76 per hour on private contracts, but the prevailing wage for them is $37.97. There are many similar examples, as you point out.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, we need only use the same wage determiner as used in the Private sector, which is supply and demand. Only the market can accurately set wages that reflect reality.

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

[Mr. POMEROY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

[Mr. MINGE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

CONGRESS NEEDS MORE HEARINGS ON MEDICARE

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

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, the debate on Medicare has spiraled out of control. To cut $270 billion from this senior program, without proper debate and substantial information, will only hurt the future of the program.

Medicare is one of most critical issues that Congress will consider this year. It only makes sense to hold hearings, and discuss changes with not only Members but also with seniors who will be greatly impacted by these changes. It is unthinkable that senior's access to health care will be reduced or eliminated without allowing them a chance to voice their opinions.

I continue to hear from hundreds of seniors in my district, urging me to protect their benefits. They are worried their small monthly incomes will not allow them to pay higher fees for Medicare. I have even heard from older Americans who are not yet eligible for Medicare. They are telling me that health care must be changed in this country but that the budget must not be balanced on the backs of the elderly. If we increase the monthly premiums of Medicare, then we must also be prepared to address the issue of seniors who cannot pay these premiums and how elderly Americans will have access to health care. I am afraid too many will have to go without.

I have also heard from hospitals in my district, many of them in rural areas. Most of the revenue for these hospitals comes from Medicare patients. These hospitals are already struggling with soaring costs and to lose them would be devastating to the rural communities in my State. If Medicare reimbursements are cut even further they will have no other choice but to simply go out of business.

I feel Congress must make efforts to save Medicare by strengthening and improving the system, not destroying it. For many seniors, Medicare has not only improved the quality of their lives, but for many it has extended their life. With 99 percent of Americans over 65 currently having access to health care, Congress must not forget

the extraordinary success and impact this program has had on our country.

Any changes that are made hastily will be devastating to the program and to the seniors that depend on Medicare. Although this program is in need of reform, it must not be done without debate and discussion and it must not be done by taking away health care from seniors who depend on it for their survival.

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

[Mr. WISE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

[Mr. GENE GREEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE MUST BE ALLOWED TO PERFORM ITS WORK

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

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, yesterday a very alarming happening occurred in the House Agriculture Committee. For the first time in recollection, the leadership of this House took away the prerogative of the Agriculture Committee for doing its work, in this case on a reconciliation bill. It was not that the Agriculture Committee was not trying to do its work, and I take great exception to a statement that was made by the chairman that says, ''This situation, which has caused the differences of opinion, has been made more difficult because our Democratic colleagues have opted for a destructive role in the process.'' I do not see how anyone could make that statement with a clear conscience.

Mr. Speaker, we had a Democratic alternative, we have a Democratic alternative, and we will fight for that alternative, and that alternative for the budget reconciliation process says that basically we think $400 billion in cuts from Medicare and Medicaid are excessive, that the additional cuts in education being proposed are excessive, and that the $13.4 billion in cuts from agricultural programs are excessive when they are used for purposes of granting a tax cut. We will show on this floor that there is an alternative and we hope that there will be 21 votes for that alternative.

However, yesterday the leadership of this body decided that unless the Agriculture Committee reports a politically correct solution, we do not want to see it. That is disturbing.

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No witnesses have ever been called on the Freedom to Farm Act. I am the ranking member of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities. I was never informed that there were ever considered to be hearings on the Freedom to Farm Act. The only time we heard about it is when it came from the leadership of this body in suggesting that that is the way we ought to go to the reconciliation committee.

We have a Democratic alternative. It was voted on in the Ag Committee and it was voted down predictably because we do not have the votes and I understand that. But I think it stretches the point when we say when there were 2 Republicans who offered an alternative and some of us who even disagreed with the 13.4, the majority of Democrats voted for a bipartisan substitute, but we were unable to get votes from the Republicans for that. It stretches the imagination and it stretches the truth when we read and we hear what is going on.

It bothers me greatly when the leadership of this House suggests to the Committee on Agriculture that unless you do our will, our bidding, we may even consider eliminating the Committee on Agriculture, and put it in writing.

Now, I do not know what is going on, but as a Member of this body who has traditionally participated in bipartisan action, who shares the frustration of the American people that we are constantly fighting Democrats and Republicans, I do not know what is happening in this body now when the hand of bipartisanship is not being offered, in fact it is being cut off regularly.

When we look at what happened yesterday in the Committee on Agriculture, it is a very disturbing trend. I hope that as we proceed now to the budget reconciliation that the general public will begin to understand there are alternatives out there, there are ways to balance the budget by the year 2002, and it does not require gutting rural America, health care, it does not require an absolute total change in philosophy of farm programs.

Let us never forget for a moment, are we not all blessed to live in a country that has the most abundant food supply, the best quality of food, the safest food supply at the lowest cost of any other country in the world, warts and all? All of the criticism we are hearing from the editorial boards that agree with the Freedom to Farm Act because they want to eliminate farm policy, should we the American people not stop for just a moment and say, maybe just maybe American agriculture is doing a few things right? And not have to follow blindly a philosophical leadership of this House that does not have a clue about farm policy and agriculture but has a great philosophical belief that somehow, someway by eliminating farm programs we are going to do better?

It is not a budget question, it is a philosophical question. The sooner we start debating these things on this floor and in the Committee on Agriculture and not getting mad and taking our bat and going home, the sooner we will get on with the kind of policies required for this country to see that we continue to have this abundant food supply.

REPUBLICANS PROPOSE CUT IN MEDICARE PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUNN of Oregon). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. HILLIARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, the general public is outraged at the Republicans' scheme to destroy Medicare, especially since it is common knowledge that the Republican proposal is cutting $270 billion from Medicare just to give wealthy persons a tax cut.

The new and fresh Republicans are supposed to represent the people, not the Republican Party. Several recent polls indicate that the American public is highly skeptical of Republican efforts to cut Medicare.

Let us listen to what the American people are saying as set out by a series of independent polls that have recently been taken. Seventy-one percent of Americans have very little or no trust at all in House Republicans to handle the Medicare financing problems. This was a poll taken by the Associated Press.

Sixty-eight percent of Americans place no trust in the Republicans on the issue of Medicare. This is by a Time/CNN poll.

Fifty-three percent of Americans oppose the Republican plan to offer vouchers to seniors as a way of reducing costs. This is an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll.

Only 19 percent of Americans offered support for a Republican plan to make large cuts in Medicare. Yes, this is by Time/CNN. CNN, right in the heart of the South.

Seventy-five percent of Americans oppose cutting Medicare to pay for tax breaks. Once again, NBC/Wall Street Journal.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, 76 percent of Americans believe it is more important to maintain Medicare as it is than reducing the budget deficit. That needs to be repeated; 76 percent. That is from CBS.

All of these polls are independent in nature. None of them have anything to do with the Republican or with the Democratic Party.