Mr. Clinton, that may work for a while. But, unlike P.T. Barnum's theory, Abraham Lincoln had a much better one. ''You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time.'' And that is a truth that we can count on.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the freshman task force have given us a very real chance for meaningful campaign finance reform. I am committed to seeing that this opportunity is not lost. It is incumbent upon this Congress that we honestly address the many flaws in the current system by which we finance our campaigns. I believe the very credibility of not just this Congress but of the entire institution is at stake.

The sad reality is that the American public holds Congress in very low esteem. We cannot reasonably expect to effectively carry out our duties as Congressmen if we lack credibility.

Whether we want to admit it or not, the fact is that our campaign finance system is jeopardizing our own credibility. We should not fool ourselves into believing that the problem is only the illegal activities that occur during campaigns. Quite to the contrary, the real problems stem from what is legal.

I hope that we will address, Mr. Speaker, the growing problem of the way soft money is influencing this system; and the sooner we do it, the better we will be in terms of getting back our own credibility.

TIME TO MARK END OF AN ERA

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is time to mark the end of an era, and that era lasted only 2 years.

On January 23, 1996, just 2 short years ago, the President declared in his State of the Union address that ''the era of big government is over.'' Now it appears that that era is over.

When we came to Washington just a few years ago, we were looking at a $250 billion deficit as far as the eye could see. We set to work to eliminate programs to reform the entitlements; and, as a result, we are looking at the first balanced budget in a generation.

Last August, we had an agreement with the President. We set very tough spending caps for the next 5 years. That is represented here by this blue line. The red line shows what the President is supporting this year in his budget. He is talking about spending over $100 billion more than we agreed to last August, and he is also talking about raising taxes and fees by over $100 billion.

Unfortunately, it sounds like the era of big government is not over, but the era of talking about the era of big government is really over.

□ 1015

ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE KID DAY

(Mr. SANDLIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, the words today for the children of America are praise and encouragement. Today is national Absolutely Incredible Kid Day, a day each of us can reach out to the young people in America in our lives and let them know how much we appreciate them. Sponsored by the Campfire Boys and Girls, Southwest Airlines, Yahoo, PaperMate and caring individuals all across this great Nation, Absolutely Incredible Kids Day is an annual event designed to bring adults and children closer together by encouraging children in a positive and meaningful way and letting them know how important they are in our lives. The goal of Absolutely Incredible Kids Day is for every child in America, every child in America, to receive a letter from an adult in his or her life encouraging him, praising him and letting him know that he is appreciated. It is a simple goal, but a goal that can make a great difference in a child's life.

Last year was the Inaugural of Absolutely Incredible Kids Day. Participation throughout the country was absolutely enormous. Everyone from the President of the United States to employees of corporations, to caring individuals sent a letter to let a child know that he or she is special. I urge all my colleagues to reach out to the children of America. As a father of 4, I agree and encourage Members to do that and tell them that it will make a difference.

THE REAL MEANING OF CONSERVATISM

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I hear from my liberal friends that labels do not mean much anymore. If that is true, then why do liberals believe that Americans are undertaxed, and conservatives know that Americans are overtaxed? Why do liberals attack Republican proposals to cut taxes, while Republicans fight so the middle class will not be forced to send so much of their income back to Washington?

Mr. Speaker, when families complain that it is harder to get ahead today than it was in their parents' day, one big reason is because government takes so much more of their family income. Whether one parent works or both parents work, Washington stands as an obstacle to families getting ahead, by taking money out of their pockets and pouring it down the black hole of wasteful and ineffective Washington bureaucracies.

The tax burden keeps going up and up while the government's ability to deliver on its promises keeps going down and down. Washington must offer a better deal to America's families. It is the responsibility of Congress to promote that dream.

RAISE MINIMUM WAGE

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, minimum wage workers in America make less today than they did in 1968 when inflation is taken into account. That really is outrageous and it is time to raise the minimum wage. You cannot raise a family on $5.15 an hour these days, even when you are working full-time. A minimum wage family earns $10,700 a year. That is just not enough.

Republican Members, it is worth noting, made more money in the days when they shut down the United States Government 2 years ago than a minimum wage worker made in full that entire year.

Democrats have a proposal to increase the minimum wage from $5.15 per hour to $6.15 per hour by the turn of the century, 50 cents a year. This body needs to recognize the importance of millions of Americans who get up every single morning and who go to work in our factories, in our office buildings and in our restaurants. We need to raise the minimum wage. I urge the Republican leadership to schedule that kind of a vote today and help working middle class families in this country.

SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, a White House official was quoted in the New York Times last month referring to ''our continuing campaign to destroy Ken Starr.'' Listen to that again, and I am quoting, ''our continuing campaign to destroy Ken Starr.'' Here is a White House spokesman openly acknowledging their despicable strategy to destroy Judge Starr, the special counsel named by a 3-judge panel to investigate allegations of serious wrongdoings by the President.

Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party thinks it is okay to smear the independent counsel? Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party does not care that the White House was in possession of 900 FBI files of Republicans, in gross violation of law and the civil rights of American citizens? Am I to conclude that the Democratic Party

does not care if the integrity of our judicial system is violated, that obstruction of justice and lying under oath is okay if it is done by a Democrat? Am I to conclude that the President is in fact above the law because the Dow Jones is doing great?

Where are your outraged voices, Democrats? Your silence speaks volumes.

DISASTER IN THE DOMESTIC OIL PATCH

(Mr. WATKINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak out on a situation that is vital to the security of this Nation of ours. An emergency exists, a disaster exists in our domestic oil patch. Oil prices have dropped below $12 a barrel and soon will be below $10 a barrel. These are the lowest prices, the newspapers say, in over 10 years. When adjusted for inflation, it is down below the 1973 shock. Oil production in Oklahoma is at the lowest level since 1914. While Saudi Arabia and Venezuela are playing Russian roulette with each other in a price war, they are killing the small oil producer in the United States and killing our independence from foreign-oil.

At present we are importing approximately 60 percent of our oil in this country from Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. The remaining 40 percent is produced mostly by domestically small, marginal wells. These small marginal wells are in jeopardy.

We must enact an emergency package in 1998 and put a long-term energy policy in for this country. Our National security depends on such action.

TAX CODE TERMINATION ACT

(Mr. LARGENT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LARGENT. Mr. Speaker, it is that time of year. The trees are budding, flowers are blooming, and tax accountants and attorneys are sharpening their pencils. That is right. It is the tax preparation season. April 15 is just around the corner. Taxpayers everywhere are pulling their hair out trying to decipher this year's Tax Code. They are not alone. Even the paid professional tax preparers do not understand the Tax Code, and neither do the 110,000 employees at the Internal Revenue Service who are paid $9.8 billion to implement the Tax Code.

What is Washington's response? At best they talk a good game. They say we should scrap the Code, use it as an applause line at political functions, and get a standing ovation when they say it.

It is springtime. It is time for new beginnings. Let us begin by implementing a new Tax Code. Let us say adios to the Tax Code in 2001 and join 190 Members of Congress who have signed on to pass H.R. 3097, the Tax Code Termination Act.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

(Mr. CHAMBLISS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, March 20, 1998 is National Agriculture Day across this country. It is fitting on such a day to thank the farming families who work hard every day to produce the finest food and fiber in the world. Our country's entire farming community deserves a pat on the back for a job well done.

Despite highly unusual weather patterns that adversely impacted farming communities around the country, our farmers remain optimistic, and the American Farm Bureau reports that supermarket prices have fallen for the second consecutive quarter.

Georgia's farmers have stood up to the worst El Nino had to offer. It is now imperative that the Federal Government extend relief to those folks in disaster areas. In addition to this natural disaster, crop insurance has failed to honor the commitment to provide a safety net to our Nation's farmers facing extreme conditions and crop losses.

Georgia's farmers not only help the U.S. produce the highest quality, most affordable food in the world, but their contribution to our local communities is overwhelming. Let us acknowledge the farmer on National Ag Day by recognizing that they deserve as much as they provide.

Finally, as you sit down to supper tonight, take a moment to thank the folks that made it possible, the American farmer. They deserve it.

□ 1030

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2870, TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION ACT OF 1998

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 388 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 388

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2870) to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to facilitate protection of tropical forests through debt reduction with developing countries with tropical forests. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on International Relations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on International Relations now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 6 of rule XXIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 388 is an open rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 2870, the Tropical Forest Protection Act of 1998. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided between the Chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on International Relations.

The rule makes in order as an original bill for the purpose of amendment the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute now printed in the bill, which shall be considered as read. The rule also allows the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to accord priority and recognition to Members who have printed their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Such amendments will be considered as read.

In addition, the rule permits the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone votes on any amendment and to reduce to 5 minutes the time for voting after the first of the series of votes, provided that the first