

it sprung on them as a September surprise for seniors, why it is they are hiding their plan.

I think the reason is clear to any close observer of what is happening to Medicare, why it is that our Republican colleagues are, in fact, mediscared when it comes to revealing the details of their plan to alter and decimate the Medicare system.

The whole plan is based on two premises. No. 1 is the premise that it is not so much about Medicare that they are concerned, but they need a certain amount of money and it just so happens that what I have always viewed as the Medicare trust fund, but what they seem to see as the Medicare slush fund, has moneys coming into it that are available to meet their need to provide some tax shift and relief for the most privileged few in our country. It is really not a battle about Medicare. It is just that there are Medicare funds there that they want to use for something else.

The second and the most significant premise about these so-called reform plans that the majority leader does not want to fall on his swords on and is not dumb enough to fall on his sword on, is that all of the various approaches that have been conceived in the name of reform are based on one simple premise, and that is that health care is just too cheap for our senior citizens; they are not contributing enough to their Medicare.

In fact, even though they contribute more on the average as a proportion of their income than any other age group in this country, although they have no Medicare coverage for prescriptions, which is an extreme cost for many of our Nation's seniors or for the families that are backing up their parents, although there is no real effective coverage anywhere for long-term health care, for the long-term health care needs of many of our Nation's seniors, these so-called reform plans are based on the assumption that our seniors are just getting by with having to pay too little and that they ought to have to pay more with reference to their health care.

One of the concepts that is being advanced, and all of these concepts we get not from anything that has been said at this microphone or anywhere on the floor of this House, because to this very day, since this idea of junking Medicare as we have known it has come out from our Republican colleagues, from day one, they have been as silent as this microphone to my left is at the moment when it comes to detailing their plans. They have been mediscared to come to this floor and level with the American people and tell the American people what it is that they are doing. They have yet to utter a word of specifics.

There are a number of internal memos that, thanks to the freedom of the press in this country, reporters have investigated and they have talked to staff members and they have gotten

contact here and there, and some of the Nation's leading news periodicals, relying on those Republican staff members and off-the-record comments, have begun to get the details of what is about to be sprung on it two months from now in September.

One of the ideas that is about to be sprung on us is the idea consistent with the approach that American seniors are just not paying enough out of their pocket for their health care, that we ought to discourage them from buying insurance, the MediGap insurance that many seniors purchase in order to cover what Medicare does not cover now.

The theory, according to these investigative reports is that, relying on Medigap insurance, seniors just do not have to pay enough for their coverage.

The second idea is to raise monthly fees, and the third is to actually raise the age at which people can qualify.

All of these suggest that the American people need to get more informed about the September surprise for seniors that our Republican colleagues plan to pose with reference to Medicare.

SOLVENCY OF MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SCARBOROUGH] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, now I have heard it all. It is the Republicans that are mediscared? I am sorry. I thought it was the President of the United States, a Democratic President of the United States, that had his Medicare trustees go out and study the solvency of the system.

He did that and they came back, and they came back with a conclusion that I am sure made the President of the United States uncomfortable. The Medicare trustees, three of whom are in the President's own Cabinet, came back and told the President of the United States: Medicare is going bankrupt in 7 years. Let me repeat that. The Medicare trustees came back and said: Mr. President, Medicare goes bankrupt in the 2002.

Yet, since that report has come out, we have seen nothing but speeches like the one that we just heard talking about how mean-spirited the Republicans and the conservative Democrats are for actually daring to step forward and try to save Medicare.

We have seen the minority leader come to the microphone and continually show a picture of two senior citizens, Ma and Pa Middle America, and say, it is the mean-spirited Republicans that are going after Ma and Pa America because they are coming in and they are going to change the Medicare system.

Let me tell you something. That is demagoguery. I am sorry. That is all it can be called. When the person stands behind that microphone and knows in 7

years that those senior citizens that they are coming up proclaiming to protect will be part of a Medicare system that is bankrupt and they are too afraid to do anything about it and they attack those who would dare to step into the fray and try to save Medicare, that is demagoguery defined. It is what is worse with Washington politics, somebody standing on the sideline doing nothing but pointing fingers at the other side when they dare to tackle a problem that the other side is afraid to touch.

Do you want to understand this debate? Do you want to understand in the end where the lines are drawn in this debate? Just remember this, and I will repeat it one or two times so you can remember it. Medicare is going bankrupt and the House Democrats are doing nothing about it. Medicare is going bankrupt and the House Democrats are doing nothing about it. Medicare is going bankrupt, bankrupt, and the House Democrats are doing nothing about it.

I have two choices. I can go back to my mother 7 years from now and my father 7 years from now and tell them in Pensacola, FL, "I am sorry, mom and dad, that this system is bankrupt, but 7 years ago when the Board of Trustees came back on Medicare and told me that it was going bankrupt, I lacked the political courage to do anything about it because I was afraid what the other side might tell me."

I am not going to do that. Let me tell you something. It is not just Republicans, House Republicans, that are being left out on the line. The House Democrats have abandoned their President. Say what you will about President Clinton, say what you will, but even he recognizes that Medicare is going bankrupt and the House Democrats are doing nothing about it.

Mr. Speaker, they can come behind this microphone all they want and say how mean-spirited it is all they want, but it does not change a basic fact. Medicare is going bankrupt and the House Democrats are doing nothing about it.

I will not wash my hands of this matter and there are leaders throughout Washington that will not wash their hands of this matter. We will reform Medicare to save it and I hope somebody on the Democratic side will do the same thing.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to avoid personal references to the Members who have participated in the morning hour debates.

SHORTFALL IN MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May