different people, asking them what was on their mind and what they were concerned about. The one thing that came through loud and clear at every meeting with every group was the fact that they are beginning to feel that working families in this country, the middle class of America, the backbone of this country, are falling behind. Husbands and wives are both working hard, playing by the rules, beating their heads against the wall, pushing their credit cards to the limit, worrying about paying for the kids' education, worrying about their own health care, worrying about whether that pension is going to be around.

Mr. Speaker, I thought to myself as I worked across the State that, when I come back to Washington, each day as we sit up here and debate the important issues I am going to try to hold those issues against that basic concern that I heard across Illinois. What is it we are doing on this floor of the House of Representatives that will respond to that?

Frankly, I do not think cutting Medicare benefits responds to those concerns, putting an additional burden on senior citizens and their families. I do not think the idea of tax breaks for people making over $150,000 a year makes any sense at all with our budget deficit, and that does not help the working families. Cutting back on education? Heck, most of those families are praying that their kids will qualify for a Federal college student loan. It is their only ticket to get that higher education and have an opportunity, and yet on this floor we are talking about cutting those opportunities.

So I hope in the weeks ahead we really can address this in a bipartisan fashion. I hope we can all be sensitive to the concerns of what has really been the strength of America now for 50 years, the strongest, most vibrant and growing middle class in the world. I hope we all are not taking pride in the politics of Washington. I hear people almost boasting about a train wreck that may occur. ''We may close down Government,'' they are saying with some level of pride. We should not be proud of that fact. Democrats and Republicans ought to sit down together and work out the problems. That is what we were sent here to do, and that is what we are paid to do.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EVERETT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST THROUGH LOBBY REFORM

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

Mr. BRYANT of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today the House will be given the opportunity to move forward on the most dramatic reform of this institution in the way it does business that will be considered this year. Unfortunately it has not been allowed to be considered prior to now in a serious way, and by that I am talking about an effort to reform the rules under which this House operates with regard to lobbying and lobbyists. Today on the legislative appropriations bill conference report that comes back a motion will be made to not approve; that is, to vote against the previous question. We hope that that motion to oppose the previous question will be successful; that is, that it will be defeated, the previous question will be defeated, and, as a result, we will then bring up a rule which will allow consideration of a proposal to prohibit the receipt of gifts by Members of the House of Representatives from lobbyists and also a provision to regulate the way in which lobbyists go about their business in this institution.

About 5 weeks ago the United States Senate took up this matter and passed it. It did so with dispatch, and now in the United States Senate it is against the law for a Member of the Senate to accept a gift in excess of $50 or a gift in excess of $100 from any individual source in any one year. It is a proposal that does not go as far as many of us hoped, but it goes a long way. It is a dramatic change and takes us in the direction of many of the State legislatures who have already grappled with this matter and already imposed rigorous requirements on their own members, leaving now the House of Representatives of the United States as the only remaining bastion of freebies for its Members from the lobby.

My view is that the vast majority, the vast preponderence of the Members of this institution, do not accept and are not affected by this kind of activity in any respect whatsoever. But it is incumbent upon us to instill in the public a strong sense of confidence in this institution, and the reports over the last few years have Members flying across the country, and taking free golf vacations, free ski trips, free junkets of various types from groups that are interested in lobbying this House to enact legislation in their favor are disturbing to the public, and rightfully so.

Today, if the previous question on the rule is defeated, we will take up the House Concurrent Resolution 99 as an amendment to the legislative appropriations bill, which would, as the Senate did, say that no Member of the House will be able to accept a gift with a value of greater than $50 in terms of meals and entertainment or any type of gratuity and no more than $100 annually, $100 annually from any single source. Gifts of less than $10 will not count toward that $100 limit, but anything over $10 will count toward that.

The effect of that will be to put an end to the grossest abuse of, in my view, the public trust and put an end of the activities which have gone on here for 200 years, and gradually, and I think to this date, to some extent fatally injured the public's view of this institution. There are many exceptions to this. It is written in a way as to be reasonable so that Members of Congress can go about the representational activities as normal human beings. They will be able, of course, to take a meal at a public gathering, to take a meal when they are making a speech to a group and so forth, and minor acceptance of small things that are really part of a social gathering will not be affected in any way whatsoever.

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It will state that these abuses of the public trust, these abuses of this institution's prerogatives, have gone on in a much heralded fashion, particularly in these new magazine shows on television which will no longer be permitted.

Well, as I said, this is not all that we had sought. You know, this House passed legislation much stronger than this in the last Congress, twice. First the bill passed, and then the conference report passed. Unfortunately, it was filibustered to death in the Senate at the very last minute and killed before it could take action.

Today we are on the verge of making history again, and there really can be no objection to what we are trying to do. All we are trying to say is the kind of activity that the public disagrees with, and rightfully so, is not going to be allowed anymore of this institution.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1-minute speeches here today we heard a lot of talk about what Members found when they went home. I guarantee you the one thing that would have been unanimous in every town meeting in the country is that Members of the House of Representatives should be allowed to take free meals, free tickets, free trips, free vacation, and free golf from the very people that are hired to come here and influence the outcome of legislation in this place.

Today we have an opportunity to do the public's will. We have an opportunity to vote against the previous question on the rule and the conference report on the legislation appropriations bill to allow a rule to come up that allows us to take this matter up. It is simple. Protestations that we have heard in the past from some leaders in this institution that somehow or another we do not have time to deal with this matter; to the contrary, we have plenty of time to deal with the matter. We do not even need to take a lot of time. Vote no to the previous question today. Let this come up. Cast a vote for the American people and for the integrity of this institution.