

hospital admitted that it had made a mistake. Oops. Instead of \$347,982.01, the actual charge should have been \$61.30. That is right, \$61.30. An overcharge of \$347,920.71."

The problem was found. End of story? No. The errant bill had been sent to Medicare and paid by Medicare. That is right, they had paid the bill.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. We have to find waste where it exists and stop that waste from happening but we do not have to cut anybody's Medicare at all. We want to save it so it is there for the seniors nowadays and for future generations.

Mr. LAHOOD. That is what we call waste, fraud, and abuse. That is an area that anybody that has been involved with Medicare, any senior citizen will tell you, there are all kinds of problems that people face. Some of us feel a responsibility to reform this program, to weed out, to ferret out the waste, fraud, and abuse and save the taxpayers millions and billions of dollars because we want to preserve the program. In order to do that we have to make these kinds of reforms that we are talking about.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I think some very valid points have been raised. Once again our friend from Ohio offers graphic evidence, anecdotal evidence of what can go wrong. My friend from Illinois made a very valid point, reaffirmed to me by the senior citizens of the Sixth District of Arizona. Waste, fraud and abuse is a shocking part of this problem. It is one element of the problem in dealing with health care coverage for seniors.

But, again, what we have to point out, and in my couple of moments here before we wrap up, I want to point out a couple of things. First of all, what we are doing with Medicare is improving and protecting and preserving the system, taking the average beneficiaries, cash award of \$4,800 this year, increasing it to \$6,700 by the year 2002. Also, what we are doing are expanding the choices, giving people more choices, not forcing anyone into the program. But if people like the current system, they are certainly welcome to keep this system.

The sad thing is that younger people have no choice. As I mentioned earlier, my young son, if we change nothing will pay over \$185,000 in taxes just on interest on the debt during the course of his lifetime. To the President's credit he did something called general rational accounting in his last budget where he projected the services for the next generation of Americans if we do not change anything, if we do not right size this Government. And taxpayers of the future, the average taxpayer would have to surrender 82 percent of his income in taxes to the Federal Government. We have seen it rise exponentially, from 3 percent of the average family of four's income in 1948 to almost one-quarter of the average family's income in 1994. We have to change

that not to build a great society but to build an even better society.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, just as Mr. HAYWORTH said, we have to do something and we have to do it now. My mother and father are both 78 years old. My daughter is 13. I have a son that is 24 years old. We have to save Medicare for my mother and my father. We have to balance the budget for my daughter and my son. We have to provide for the future. We have to save the economic viability of this country. And that is what we are all about.

It is beyond politics. We are serious. We want to save a country that is going to be a country that is going to provide the best living opportunities for our children and for our senior citizens. I think we can do no less. The time has come. We have a window of opportunity to do it now. And if we do not do it now, I am afraid it is going to be too late. So I think we have to stop the political rhetoric that is coming from the White House and from the other side. And we have to get serious and do something. I think we face a crisis as great as any crisis we have ever faced in this country and now as I said is the time to do it before it is too late.

I want a future for my mother and my father where they can have a good medical care. I want a future for my daughter and my son where they will not have to spend \$187,000 just on the interest on the debt, where they will not have a tax rate of 82 percent. I want a nation that is going to be strong and the greatest Nation to continue to be the greatest Nation on the face of this Earth.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia is very gracious. I guess I would like to wrap up by pointing out that President Bill Clinton ran in 1992 as the candidate for change and his behavior over the past 2 or 3 days, I think, clearly indicates that though he ran as a candidate for change he is the President of the status quo. The status quo is not going to get us into the next century for a brighter, better and more prosperous future for ourselves and for our children.

He ran saying that he was going to balance the budget and never presented to us a balanced budget proposal. He ran saying that he was going to end welfare as we know it, and he never presented a plan to be able to do that. And he also ran saying that he was going to give us a middle-class tax cut, and what he gave us was a tax increase. And furthermore, for him to do absolutely nothing in the area of preserving and protecting Medicare and making sure that it will be there for our seniors because, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, we will agree if the Nation is bankrupt, nobody will get good quality medical care, including our seniors.

And we have put forward these proposals to the President who keeps vetoing them and vetoing them. I personally think this is morally wrong for him to do that. He should be willing to sit down and negotiate with us and try to come to terms, but he is not doing that. And he really is playing politics with these issues, particularly in the area of Medicare.

We have put forward a reasonably balanced Medicare proposal and he is playing politics with the issue.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, let us just close with this, do we, members of the Republican freshman class, the sophomore class of the Republicans, do we want to shut down Government? Do we want Federal employees to be out of work tomorrow morning? Do we want the Republican Party to ruin this negotiation? Do we want one side to blink first?

The answer to all of that is no. What we want is a balanced budget. What we want is Medicaid restructured. What we want is welfare reform. What we want is tax relief for the middle class. And above all we want to save, protect and preserve Medicare.

We believe that there is plenty of room for a bipartisan agreement. Democrats and Republicans can come together for the children and the future of America. We are proud to participate in that process.

We hold our hands open for our Democrat colleagues who want to join us and we hope and pray that the President of the United States will work with the leaders of House and Senate to do what is best, not for either party, not for reelection, but for the American public.

I thank the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LAHOOD], for being with me, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON], the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT], the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH], a night-time regular, and the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. LEWIS], for this special order.

□ 2245

THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] is recognized for 50 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, while we await an understanding of the meeting taking place in the White House now between the President and the Republican leadership, let me review for my fellow Vermonters and for people throughout this country what I consider to be some of the most important problems facing this country, talk a little bit about some solutions that I think make sense to many millions of Americans, and then talk about how the Contract With America impacts all of that.

The first point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that some of the most important issues facing our country are, unfortunately, not talked about terribly often. They are not talked about by our Republican friends, they are not talked about by our Democratic friends, they are not talked about by the corporate media, and I think one of the reasons that we have a great deal of anxiety in this country is that people are hurting, they are in pain, they know that something is wrong, but they turn on the television, they read the papers, and they do not see that the realities of their life are being discussed, and I think that further alienates them from the political process, it confuses them, it gets them angry.

Let us talk about a few of the realities that are not widely discussed on the floor of this House, or on the television, or the radio:

No. 1, if you were to ask me what the most important reality facing America is, the reality is that for the vast majority of our people, some 80 percent of the American people, they are becoming poorer. People in America today, in large numbers, are working longer hours for lower wages. Since 1973, 80 percent of Americans have seen either a decline in their real wages or, at best, economic stagnation.

So that is the first reality that I think we have to talk about. When we turn on the television, or we look in the newspapers, and they tell us that new jobs are being created, the gross national product is growing, the economy is booming; what we have to say is all of those statistics are not terribly relevant to what is going on in the lives of real working people.

Mr. Speaker, real people today, working people today, are working longer hours, they are earning lower wages, and more and more of the jobs that are being created are part-time jobs, are temporary jobs, are jobs without good benefits. So that is the most important reality, and frankly, instead of discussing a whole lot of other issues that we spend huge amounts of time on in this Chamber, that should be the paramount issue:

Why is it that for the vast majority of our people our standard of living is in decline? Why is it that for family farmers in the State of Vermont they are receiving 50 percent of the income they received 15 years ago and are being forced to leave the land? And that problem exists not only for family farmers all over America, but for working people all over this country. That is the first reality that I want to touch upon tonight, and that needs a whole lot of discussion on the floor of the House.

The second issue is that while it is true that for 80 percent of our people they are experiencing a decline in their standard of living, there is another reality that is taking place which we hardly ever talk about, and that is we do not congratulate Michael Eisner,

who is the president of the Walt Disney Corp, for the hundred million dollars he earned several years ago. We do not give enough congratulations to Bill Gates, the major stockholder of Microsoft who is now worth \$9 billion. We do not talk too much about the fact that the major CEO's in this country now earn over \$3 million a year on average. In essence what we are not talking about is that while 80 percent of our people are seeing a decline in their standard of living or, at best, economic stagnation, the people on the top today are doing better than perhaps at any time in the modern history of the United States.

In the last 20 years, Mr. Speaker, the wealthiest 1 percent of American families saw their after-tax incomes more than double. The wealthiest 1 percent of American now owns a greater percentage of the Nation's wealth than at any time since the 1920's. So, yes, there are two realities that are taking place. On the one hand, the average American is seeing a decline in his or her standards of living. Women, who would prefer to stay home taking care of the kids, are now forced to go into the work force. The new jobs that are being created by our kids are often part-time jobs or minimum-wage jobs.

That is the reality that impacts on the vast majority of the American people, but the other reality that we do not talk about too often, we are kind of quiet about it, is that for the rich and the powerful, hey what is the problem? Things have never been better. Today the wealthiest 1 percent of the population owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. We do not talk about that too much. We do not talk about concepts like social justice in America. We do not talk about the fact that there has been an enormous growth in millionaires and billionaires while at the same time this country, the United States, has the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world by far. Twenty-two percent of the kids live in poverty, yet we are having a huge growth in millionaires and billionaires. Where is the justice? Why are we not talking about that issue?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that we do not talk about too often is to put our situation in a broader context in terms of what is happening in the whole world. There is no question but that much of the industrialized world is suffering economic problems just as we are. But it should be pointed out that whereas in the early 1970's the working people of the United States had the highest standard of living in the world, they earned the highest wages, they had the best benefits; today, according to various studies, we rank 13th in the world behind many European countries and behind some of the Scandinavian countries.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, you have read in the paper how BMW and other European companies are coming to the United States to start factories, often

in the South but in other parts of America. Why are European companies coming to the United States? And the answer is an answer that many people my age would have not believed possible if we had discussed this issue 20 or 30 years ago. They are coming to America for cheap labor because in Europe, in Germany, in France and Scandinavia you cannot find workers who are going to work for \$8 an hour or \$10 an hour. Those workers make significantly more than American workers, and European companies are coming to America for the same reason that American companies go to Mexico or American companies go to China, in search of cheap labor. That is an issue that we should be discussing in this House of Representatives: how does it happen that American workers are now a source of cheap labor for European companies?

Mr. Speaker, as bad as the situation is now for most middle-age workers, the situation is even more frightening for our young workers, and I think one of the reasons there is so much anxiety in this country is not only that middle-age people are nervous about what is going to happen to their lives, what is going to happen to their parents, they are worried about what is going to happen to their kids.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 15 years the wages for entry-level jobs for young men who are high school graduates has declined by 30 percent. That means the young men who are getting out of high school now are earning 30 percent less than was the case 15 years ago for high school graduates. Fifteen years ago when somebody graduated high school, they most certainly were not wealthy, they did not get a great job, but often there were jobs in a town in a factory that paid a worker a living wage. Today many of those jobs are gone, and the jobs that are available for our young men and our young women are flipping hamburgers at McDonald's and working at other service-industry jobs. Thirty percent decline in wages for high school graduates were men, and 18-percent decline for young women.

Mr. Speaker, the sad reality is that Americans at the lower end of the wage scale, our low-income workers, are now, if you can believe it, the lowest-paid workers in the entire industrialized world. Eighteen percent of American workers with full-time jobs, full-time jobs, are paid so little that their wages do not enable them to live above the poverty level. That is what is going on in America. That is what happens when you make \$4.50 an hour or you make \$5.50 an hour. But this economic decline does not only impact high school graduates, it is also impacting those people who have been able to go through college.

Between 1987 and 1991, the real wages of college-educated workers declined by over 3 percent. That is college-educated workers. Over one-third of recent college graduates have been forced to

take jobs not requiring a college degree, and that is twice as many as was the case 5 years ago. What a sad state of affairs when many people such as myself say, "Well, education is the key. We have got to make sure our people go to college." That is all very true, but there is another truth even for those young people who do get a college degree. Many of them are unable to find jobs which are commensurate with their education.

Mr. Speaker, when we read in the papers, and Mr. Bush used to tell us this, and President Clinton tells us this as well, that millions and millions of new jobs are being created, that is true. That is true. A lot of new jobs are being created, but the reality is that the majority of new jobs that are being created in America today pay less than \$7 an hour. Many of these jobs offer no health benefits, no retirement benefits, no time off for vacations or sick leave. In fact, more and more of the new jobs that are being created are part-time jobs or temporary jobs. If you can believe it, in 1993 one-third of the U.S. work force was comprised of "contingent labor." That means people who work for a few months and then lose their jobs, and that number is escalating rapidly.

In the last 10 years the United States has lost 3 million white collar jobs. We have lost 1.8 million jobs in manufacturing in the past 5 years alone. If we are going to try to understand why our wages are going down, why so many people are living in economic anxiety, we must address the issue of so-called downsizing.

Downsizing is a polite corporate term for throwing American workers out on the street, and this downsizing phenomenon is taking place at a frightening degree among some of the largest and most powerful corporations in America. Five companies alone, Ford, AT&T, General Electric, ITT, and Union Carbide laid off over 800,000 American workers in the last 15 years, just those five companies alone.

Mr. Speaker, you know when we talk about family values, when we talk about the importance of adults being good parents, of adult parents having the time to spend quality moments with their kids, one of the things that we should realize is that, as a result of the economic downturn and decline in real wages, the average American worker today is now working 160 hours a year more than he or she worked in 1969. The number of Americans working at more than one job has almost doubled over the last 15 years. In my rural State of Vermont it is now uncommon to find workers working not just two jobs, but three jobs, in order to bring home the bacon and to pay the bills.

□ 2300

I remember when I was in college, they used to give courses on what they called leisure time. They were worried then as technology developed and

workers would be working fewer hours, what would the American worker do with all of his or her spare time? Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they do not give those courses anymore. Nobody worries what the American worker is going to do with his or her spare time, because that worker does not have any spare time. Rather, they give courses now on how to deal with the terrible stress that families are under when wives do not see their husbands and husbands do not see their kids, because everybody is working at crazy hours, trying to keep their family above water.

Mr. Speaker, not only are real wages going down. There is another crisis that, certainly, this Congress is not dealing with, and in fact is making a very bad situation worse. That is that one-third of all Americans do not have adequate medical insurance, and the number is growing.

Two years ago in this House, we dealt with that goal. I disagreed with Clinton's plan, it was too complicated, too cumbersome, but at least he had a vision that said that every man, woman, and child in America should have health insurance. Now that that debate is over, the situation which was bad then is worse today. More Americans lack health care than was the case a few years ago. More Americans have inadequate health insurance, large deductibles, large copayments than was the case several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the ultimate reality of what is happening in this country today is that while the richest people are becoming much richer, while the middle class is shrinking and more of the middle class is falling into poverty, the other reality is that poverty has risen rapidly in recent years.

Poverty in the United States declined significantly between 1965 and 1973, and we hear some of our Republican friends say, "Well, the war on poverty was terrible, terrible." The war on poverty had an impact in reducing poverty in America, in moving us toward fewer poor people, when at a time the trend today is, unfortunately, in the wrong direction.

Clearly, one of the statistics that we as a nation should be profoundly ashamed of, profoundly embarrassed about, is that 22 percent of our children live in poverty, and this great Nation has the dubious distinction of having by far the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. I heard some of our Republican friends a moment ago talk to us about so-called welfare reform. I hope that they understand that the welfare reform proposal that they are advocating will increase the ranks of childhood poverty by another 1 million children in America.

Yes, we do need welfare reform. Yes, we do, but we do not need so-called reform which will add another 1 million children to the ranks of the poor.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk of social justice, we should also look at what goes on in the industrial sector of

America today. We should ask why in 1980, the average CEO in America earned 42 times what the average factory worker earned. Some people may say, "42 times? Does he heat 42 times more? Do his children have 42 times more than the workers' children?"

If you think that situation was bad, what we should appreciate is that today, the CEO's of the largest corporations earn 149 times what their workers earn. What justice is there in that? Corporate salaries zooming up, stock options for corporate executives going up, real wages for workers going down, CEO's earning almost 150 times what their workers today receive.

Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of discussion about taxation, and certainly taxation is an important issue. But what we do not hear a whole lot of discussion about is who is paying the taxes. Who is paying the taxes? In my humble opinion, the middle class and the working class. In fact, if you look at local taxes, State taxes, and Federal taxes, they are paying far too much in taxes. But on the other hand, when you look at upper-income people and when you look at large corporations, what we can say is those folks deserve to contribute more into our tax coffers, so we could deal with the Federal deficit, so we could take the tax burden off middle-income America.

Mr. Speaker, in 1977 President Carter, and in 1981 and 1986 President Reagan, instituted "tax reform." Of course, the Democrats controlled the Congress during that period, and supported that so-called tax reform. The result of those reforms was to significantly lower taxes on the wealthy and the large corporations and raise taxes on almost everyone else. Taxes on the very wealthy were cut by over 12 percent, while taxes on working- and middle-class Americans increased. One of those so-called reforms was a large increase in the regressive Social Security tax.

According to a study conducted by the House Committee on Ways and Means, the top 1 percent of taxpayers saved an average of over \$41,000 in 1992 over what their taxes would have been at 1977 rates. Mr. Speaker, we speak a whole lot about the Federal deficit, which is a very important issue, but what we should appreciate is that if 1977 individual Federal tax rates had still been in effect in 1992, the Nation's wealthiest 1 percent would have paid \$83.7 billion more in taxes, or about one-third of the national deficit in 1995. That is an important fact that we should keep in mind.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the richest 1 percent of the population own about 50 percent of the stock, massive tax cuts to corporations have also helped to enrich the wealthy and to cut back on Federal revenues. In the 1960's, corporations contributed 23.4 percent of the Nation's taxes. Today, they contribute only 9 percent. During the early 1980's, some of the largest and

most profitable corporations in America paid nothing in Federal taxes. By contrast, individual income tax increased from 22 percent of Federal receipts in the 1960's to 45 percent today.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked a bit, just a bit, about some of the problems facing this country. I think it is fair and I also talk about some of the areas that I think we need to move forward on if we are going to solve some of these problems. Let me just touch on a few of them.

No. 1, it is an absolute disgrace that in this country we continue to have a national minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour. Mr. Speaker, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has declined by 26 percent over the last 20 years. That means our minimum wage workers today are far poorer, have far less purchasing power, than did the minimum wage workers 20 years ago. The minimum wage in America must be raised. It must be raised so that if people work 40 hours a week, they do not live in poverty. That is why I have introduced legislation which would raise the minimum wage to \$5.50 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about why it is that American workers are seeing a decline in their standard of living, there is no question that we must address a very, very failed trade policy. It is not only that NAFTA has been a disaster, it is not only that most-favored-nation status with China is wrong, it is not only, in my view, that GATT is wrong. Our entire trade policy is failing.

I find it amazing that every day on the floor of this House we hear endless discussion about our national Federal deficit, which in fact is a serious problem, but we hear virtually no discussion about the trade deficit. The trade deficit this year will be, as I understand it, at the highest level in American history, about \$160 billion. Economists tell us that for every billion dollars of trade, we create 20,000 jobs. That means that the difference between a \$160 billion trade deficit, a neutral trade deficit, is over 3 million jobs, many of them good-paying manufacturing jobs.

□ 2310

Now, how long can we continue to go on seeing our industrial base get smaller and smaller; seeing more and more American companies moving to Mexico, moving to Malaysia, moving to China, where they can hire workers for 20 cents an hour?

Clearly, we must address the crisis in the deindustrialization of America. The crisis in our current trade policy, the crisis in which corporate America is creating millions of jobs all over the world, it is just that they are not creating jobs in America. Clearly, we must develop a policy which says to these corporations, "You have got to reinvest in America and not just in China or in Mexico."

Mr. Speaker, it also seems to me that we have got to make our tax system a

heck of a lot fairer than it is today. Today in America, we have the most unequal and unfair distribution of wealth in the entire industrialized world. We also have the most unfair and unequal distribution of income in the industrialized world.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, during the 1970's and 1980's, this Congress, and various Presidents, gave huge tax breaks to the wealthiest people in American and to the largest corporations, while at the same time they raised the Social Security taxes. They raised taxes on the middle class, and as a result of Federal policy, local and State taxes were also raised all over America.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people who are concerned about the complexity of our tax system, its burdensome nature, all of the loopholes that exist. I share that concern. It seems to me that we must move forward toward a simpler tax system without loopholes, but a tax system which is progressive. That means the more money a person makes, the higher percentage of their income they pay in taxes.

That means if middle income and working people are seeing a decline in their real wages, that has to be taken into account when we formulate our tax system, and the tax burden that those people are currently experiencing must be relaxed.

Mr. Speaker, I think that one of the surprises that the American people are soon going to see, and this Congress will soon see, is a revitalized labor movement. I fully support that, and was very delighted recently when John Sweeney, the former president of the Service Employees Industrial Union, the SEIU, became the president of the AFL-CIO. Rich Trumka, the former president of the United Mine Workers, became the secretary treasurer of the AFL-CIO.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we are going to see is a revitalized labor movement that is going to be more actively involved on the political front and far more actively involved in organizing workers into unions. The reality is that workers who are in unions, who are able to negotiate collectively with their companies, earn of course significantly higher wages than do nonunion workers.

Today, not every American worker wants to join a union, and those workers who do not want to join a union, they should not join a union. But there are millions of workers who do want to join a union, and we must provide legislation for those workers that gives them a fair opportunity to joint a union.

In my State of Vermont, and all over this country, there are workers who are trying to join a union, who are trying to organize for unions, who are being fired by their bosses with impunity. Employers can do it. No problem. There are elections that are being held and that after the union wins, the companies are appealing, and the bottom

line of all of this is that labor law today favors company and the bosses far more than the workers.

Workers join unions, but they cannot negotiate the first contract. The employer refuses to sit down and the workers give up and the union dissipates. I think it is terribly important when we talk about ways that we can improve life for ordinary Americans that we institute major labor law reform which says nothing more than, if the workers in a given area want to join a union, they have the right to join that union without being fired, without being harassed, without having to go through a dozen different appeals, without having their organizers fired by their employers.

Mr. Speaker, there are two other issues that I want to briefly touch on. In this Congress tonight for the last many months we have been talking a great deal about Medicare, and some of us are outraged that at a time when millions and millions of elderly people today, with Medicare under its present funding formula, today many, many elderly people are finding it very difficult to provide for their health care needs.

Mr. Speaker, Medicare does not cover prescription drugs. And in my State of Vermont, and throughout this country, large numbers of seniors cannot afford their prescription drugs. Medicare does not provide long-term care in nursing homes. So, the Medicare Program today is not terribly good in terms of providing for our senior citizens.

Clearly, it will become a lot worse if the Gingrich proposal goes into effect and Medicare premiums go up for the elderly and Medicare and Medicaid funding for hospitals is radically cut. The point is we are now forced in this Congress to fight and spend our energy fighting those cuts, but I think very shortly we should return back to the basic debate. That is not just stopping cuts in Medicare, but trying to determine why it is that this country is not doing what virtually every other industrialized nation on Earth has done, and that is to provide a national health care system which guarantees health care to all people.

North of Vermont there is Canada, and every Canadian has a little card. With that card they go to any doctor they want; they go to any hospital they want; and they do not take out their wallets. Mr. Speaker, know what? The poor are treated quite as well as the rich.

Does that system have problems? Sure it does. But what it has done is made sure that every person in Canada gets all of the health care they need without out-of-pocket expense. Throughout Europe and throughout Scandinavia there are different types of health care systems. Some work better than others, but clearly it is a terrible disgrace that in this country we have some 40 million Americans with no health insurance, and more than

that who have inadequate health insurance.

Clearly, we must again put on the table the fight for a national health care system; in my view a single-payer national health care system which guarantees health care to all people.

Mr. Speaker, when I go back to Vermont, and I am sure it is true for other Members who go back to their districts, they hear from their constituents, and their constituents say, "Government just is not working well. Why is government not working well?" And they are wrong. Government is working very, very well for those people who have a whole lot of money.

Mr. Speaker, if Americans are in the upper 1 percent, the upper 2 percent, are making \$300,000, \$500,000 a year, this Government is doing a great job for them. They have never had it better. Their tax rates have gone down. They have more power over their employees. Some of our Republican friends want to take away the restrictions which prevent them from polluting the environment. Government is working great for those people who are the upper-income people.

But, Mr. Speaker, for the vast majority of people it is true, Government is not working well. We have to ask why. That takes us to the whole issue of campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very scary proposition that in the last national election that we had, November 1994, when Mr. GINGRICH and the Republicans took power here and Republicans took power in the Senate, that all of 38.5 percent of the people came out to vote. That is pretty bad.

It is even more scary to understand the role that money has in the political process. Frankly, I get a little bit tired of hearing about all the millionaires and billionaires who continue to run for office. If we continue to have millionaires running for office and getting elected, not only to Congress but to seats in various State houses and Governors' offices, maybe we should change the name of this institution from the House of Representatives to the House of Lords, and be clear that what this is is a hall for the privileged ladies and gentlemen of the upper class who have purchased their seats by taking out their wallets and spending millions and millions of dollars to get elected.

□ 2320

That is not what democracy is about. We should not be buying seats in Congress or buying seats in the Senate or buying seats in Governors' offices all over America. Clearly, we need campaign finance reform. The elements of that reform to my mind most importantly must be a limitation on how much an individual can spend when he or she runs for office, let us have a level playing field.

No. 2, we should be matching public funding with small contributions. If somebody is able to go out and get a

significant number of checks for \$25 or \$50, we should match the public funding. If we do that, we will have a fairer playing field and the wealthy and the powerful will not be able to buy seats in the U.S. Congress and, therefore, have a Congress which supports their agenda.

Far too often politics in this institution is about is payback time, payback time. You contribute a whole lot of money to the party of your choice and lo and behold, you get huge tax breaks for corporations, tax breaks for the wealthy, and other Government policy which favors those people who have money.

The last point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that I think perhaps the most frightening development which is taking place in our country today is that tens and tens of millions of Americans, mostly low income and working people, are giving up on the political process. They do not vote. They do not get involved locally. They do not pay attention to what is going on. And in many ways, this country is becoming less and less democratic as a result of that.

If people out there, people throughout this country, think that politics is not important, that what happens in this institution is not important, pay attention to what is happening now. If you are a young person who works for a living and you are receiving an earned tax credit, understand that that earned income tax credit is going to be cut so that we can provide tax breaks for the wealthiest people in this country. Do you think that is important? It will be harder for you to raise your family.

If you think that politics is not important, we should ask the elderly people who will be forced to pay \$300 a year more in premiums for Medicare. We should ask those families throughout the country today who have disabled members in their family, who have children, who are going to see major cutbacks in Medicaid. That is what politics is about.

If you think that politics is not important and you are a young person trying to go to college and you do not have a whole lot of money, understand that as a result of politics, understand that as a result of decisions being made right here in this House of Representatives, it may be impossible for large numbers of working class young people to afford to go to college because of major cutbacks in student loans and in student grants.

If you are a veteran who has put your life on the line defending this country, understand that what politics is about is that veterans programs are going to be cut so that we can build more B-2 bombers that the Pentagon does not even want.

Yes, you may not think so, but politics is relevant to every person's life in America. The politics of what is going on here today is that the wealthy people to a very large degree own this in-

stitution. If you want to know what goes on, all you have to do is follow the money. The money is coming in and decisions are being made which reward those people who have the money. The only way to stop it is if the vast majority of the American people, the people who are working long hours and are not getting a fair shake in terms of the wages they are receiving, people who do not have health insurance, people who cannot afford to send their kids to college, the decent people of this country, the backbone of this country, if those people begin to stand up and fight for their rights, we can turn this institution around. We can turn this country around. But if you do not, then what will happen is the wealthy, small numbers of people but people with tremendous resources will continue to dominate this institution. That is what the struggle is about.

So I would hope that people who pay homage, Veterans Day just came, and we paid our respect and homage to the men and women who put their lives on the line, but what they did is fought to keep this country free and to keep this country a democracy. We are not honoring them, if we do not get involved in the political process, if we do not stand up and fight for policies which impact all the people of this country and not just the very wealthy. That is what politics is about.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. BARR of Georgia). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the House will now stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2347

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARR) at 11 o'clock and 47 minutes p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. OLVER, for 5 minutes, today.
Mrs. CLAYTON, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. WISE, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. FOLEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. ENGLISH, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. KIM, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. FOLEY, for 5 minutes, today.