

one of the governments whose debt the President proposes to forgive has no one to blame but themselves for pursuing socialist and statist policies, and often outright theft, that drove them in a hole in the first place.

Just how much is being taken away from victims in my state to fund the President's proposal? The Administration calculates that it will cost \$320 million to forgive the \$5.7 billion in mostly uncollectible debts owed to the U.S. Additionally, Uncle Sam is being asked to underwrite debt forgiveness to the World Bank and the IMF to the tune of \$650 million.

That's a total of \$970 million which North Carolina and other devastated regions desperately need, but will not get because money used to forgive the debts of foreigners is money that cannot and will not be used to assist hurricane victims.

Bear in mind, Mr. President, that the United States has already provided approximately \$32.3 billion in foreign aid to just these countries since the end of World War II. And the U.S. Government has already provided \$3.47 billion in debt forgiveness to these countries in the past several years alone.

If Senators study the list of countries, it turns out that the President seeks to reward governments who keep their people in economic and political bondage, and he proposes to do it at the expense of suffering Americans. The human rights organization Freedom House determined that only eight of the 36 proposed beneficiaries are "free" in terms of political expression. At least one on the World Bank's list of countries eligible to receive debt forgiveness is a terrorist state, and that's Sudan. Also included are the communist dictatorships in Angola, Vietnam and the military dictatorship Burma.

The Heritage Foundation determined that none of the countries in question are "free" economically. (The economies of the vast majority of the countries judged are either "repressed" or "mostly unfree" according to the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom.) Some countries on the World Bank's list do not even have functioning governments, such as Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

Only one of 36 countries voted with the United States more than half of the time at the United Nations in 1998 (that is Honduras, which supported the U.S. only 55 percent of the time). Make no mistake about it: this proposal diverts assistance from Hurricane Floyd victims to corrupt, economically and politically repressed foreign countries—many of whom are not even friendly to the United States.

Mr. President, my office has received a steady stream of visitors and mail urging Congress to support the "Jubilee 2000" debt forgiveness plan, which now includes the President's proposal.

It has been a well-orchestrated lobbying campaign.

But since the day Hurricane Floyd slammed into the North Carolina coast and dumped 20 inches of rain on the eastern third of my state, the phone calls and mail from North Carolina in support of debt forgiveness to foreign governments has dried up. The reason is clear: we have a natural disaster unlike any seen in 500 years here at home, and our duty is to help suffering Americans first.

Mr. President, I'm putting the Administration on notice here and now that the first priority shall be helping victims of Hurricane Floyd. Not until sufficient resources are dedicated to this effort by the federal government will I agree to Senate consideration of President Clinton's debt forgiveness to foreign governments proposal.

THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Mr. HELMS. Madam President, I was fascinated when I saw in the Washington Post this Sunday the front-page headline reading: "CIA Unable to Precisely Track Testing: Analysis of Russian Compliance with Nuclear Treaty Hampered."

The first paragraph of the story below that headline said it all:

In a new assessment of its capabilities, the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that it cannot monitor low-level nuclear tests by Russia precisely enough to ensure compliance with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. . . . Twice last month the Russians carried out what might have been nuclear explosions at its . . . testing site in the Arctic. But the CIA found that data from its seismic sensors and other monitoring equipment were insufficient to allow analysts to reach a firm conclusion about the nature of events, officials said. . . .

This surely was devastating news for a lot of people at the White House. Our nation's Central Intelligence Agency had come to the conclusion that it cannot verify compliance with the CTBT.

Mercy. I can just see them scurrying around.

But more amazing than this was the response of the White House spin machine. I've seen a lot of strange things during my nearly 27 years in the Senate, but this is the first time I have ever seen an administration argue that America's inability to verify compliance with a treaty was precisely the reason for the Senate to ratify the treaty. Back home that doesn't even make good nonsense.

Yet this is what the White House has been arguing all day today. This revelation is good news for the CTBT's proponents, they say, because the CTBT will now institute an entirely new verification system with 300 monitoring stations around the world.

Madam President, I am not making this up. This is what the White House said.

I say to the President: What excuse will the White House give if and when they spend billions of dollars on a "new verification system with 300 monitoring stations around the world"—and the CTBT still can't be verified? Talk about a pig in a poke. Or a hundred excuse-makers still on the spot!

If the Administration spokesman contends that the CTBT's proposed "International Monitoring System," or IMS, will be able to do what all the assets of the entire existing U.S. intelligence community cannot—i.e., verify compliance with this treaty—isn't it really just a matter of their having been caught with their hands in the cookie jar?

Let's examine their claim. The CTBT's International Monitoring System was designed only to detect what are called "fully-coupled" nuclear tests. That is to say tests that are not shielded from the surrounding geology.

But the proposed multibillion-dollar IMS cannot detect hidden tests—known as "de-coupled" tests—in which a country tries to hide the nuclear explosion by conducting the test in an underground cavern or some other structure that muffles the explosion.

"Decoupling" can reduce the detectable magnitude of a test by a factor of 70.

In other words, countries can conduct a 60-kiloton nuclear test without being detected by this fanciful IMS apparatus, a last-minute cover up for the administration's having exaggerated a treaty that should never have been sent to the U.S. Senate for approval in the first place.

Every country of concern to the U.S.—every one of them—is capable of decoupling its nuclear explosions. North Korea, China, and Russia will all be able to conduct significant testing without detection by our country.

What about these 300 "additional" monitoring sites that the White House has brought for as a illusory argument in favor of the CTBT? They are fiction. The vast majority of those 300 sites already exist. They have been United States monitoring stations all along—and the CIA nonetheless confesses that it cannot verify.

The additional sites called for under the treaty are in places like the Cook Islands, the Central African Republic, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Niger, Paraguay, Bolivia, Botswana, Costa Rica, Samoa, etc. The majority of these will add zero, not one benefit to the U.S. ability to monitor countries of concern. The fact is if U.S. intelligence cannot verify compliance with this treaty, no International Monitoring System set up under the CTBT will. This treaty is unverifiable, and dangerous to U.S. national security.

If this is the best the administration can do, they haven't much of a case to make to the Senate—or anywhere

else—in favor of the CTBT. The administration is grasping at straws, looking for any argument—however incredible—to support an insupportable treaty.

We will let them try to make their case. As I demonstrated on the floor last week, the Foreign Relations Committee has held 14 separate hearings in which the committee heard extensive testimony from both sides on the CTBT—113 pages of testimony, from a plethora of current and former officials. This is in addition to the extensive hearings that have already been held by the Armed Services Committee and three hearings exclusively on the CTBT held by the Government Affairs Committee.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold its final hearings this Thursday to complete our examination of this treaty. We will invite Secretary Albright to make her case for the treaty, and will hear testimony from a variety of former senior administration officials and arms control experts to present the case against the treaty.

I have also invited the chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee, Senator WARNER, to present the findings of his distinguished panel's review of this fatally flawed treaty.

Finally, the facts are not on the administration's side. This is a ill-conceived treaty which our own Central Intelligence Agency acknowledges that it cannot verify. Approving the CTBT would leave the American people unsure of the safety and reliability of America's nuclear deterrent, while at the same time completely unprotected from ballistic missile attack. That is a dangerous proposal, and I am confident that the U.S. Senate will vote to reject this dangerous arms control pact called the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

I yield the floor.

MEDICARE BENEFICIARY ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE ACT OF 1999

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I am speaking in support of the Medicare Beneficiary Access to Quality Health Care Act of 1999.

Congress faces historic choices in the next few weeks: managed care reform, campaign finance legislation, whether to increase the minimum wage, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But the problem is, Congress is long on disagreement and short on time. In all my years of Congress, I have scarcely seen a more partisan and divisive atmosphere than that which prevails today.

One area where Congress appeared ready to act this year is in addressing changes to the Balanced Budget Act, otherwise known as BBA, of 1997. I am disappointed that we have not yet done so. Rural States such as Montana have long battled to preserve access to quality health care. I daresay that the

State so ably served by the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, is in somewhat the same condition.

By and large, and against the odds, it is a battle we have generally won. Through initiatives such as the Medical Assistance Facility and the Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program, Montana and other relatively thinly populated States have providers who have worked diligently to give Medicare beneficiaries quality health care, but now these providers face a new challenge—the impact of BBA Medicare cuts.

From home health to nursing homes, hospital care to hospice, Montana facilities stand to take great losses as a result of the BBA. Many already have. One hospital writes:

Dear Senator BAUCUS:

The BBA of 1997 is wreaking havoc on the operations of hospitals in Montana. Our numbers are testimony to this. The reduction in reimbursements of \$500,000 to \$650,000 per year is something our facility cannot absorb.

Another tells me:

Senator BAUCUS: An early analysis of the negative impact to [my] hospital projects a decrease in reimbursements amounting to an estimated \$171,200. My hospital is already losing money from operations and these anticipated decreases in reimbursements will cause a further immediate operating loss. If enacted and implemented, I predict that we will have no choice but to reduce or phase out completely certain services and programs. . . .

Home health agencies report to me that in a recent survey, 80 percent of Montana home health care agencies showed a decline in visits averaging 40 percent. Let me state that again. Of the home health care agencies in my State, 80 percent report a decline in visits averaging 40 percent. These are some of the most efficient home health care agencies in the Nation. It simply is not fair that they are punished for being good at managing costs.

As for skilled nursing care in Montana, I saw the effects firsthand in a visit to Sidney Health Center in the northeast corner of my State. A couple of months ago, I had a workday at Sidney. About every month, every 6 weeks, I show up at someplace in my home State with my sack lunch. I am there to work all day long. I wait tables. I work in sawmills. I work in mines—some different job. This time it was working at a hospital. Half of it is a skilled nursing home; the other half an acute care center.

At the skilled nursing center, I changed sheets. I took vitals. I worked charts. They even had me take out a few stitches. After a while, I felt as if I was a real-life doctor doing my rounds with my stethoscope casually draped around my neck. One patient actually thought I was in medical training; that is, until I treated that patient. They also had me read to about 20 old folks for about a half hour.

I must confess that all but five immediately fell asleep.

At the end of the day, I had to turn my stethoscope in for a session with the administrators. The financial folks showed me trends in Medicare reimbursement over the last couple of years. They believe as I do, that the BBA cuts have gone too far.

So what do we do about it? Over the next few weeks, the Senate Finance Committee is likely to consider legislation to restore some of the funding cuts for BBA. Anticipating this debate, I introduced comprehensive rural health legislation earlier this year. The bill now has over 30 bipartisan Senate cosponsors.

Last week, I joined Senator DASCHLE and the distinguished ranking member of the Finance Committee, as well as Senator ROCKEFELLER, in support of a comprehensive Balanced Budget Act fix, a remedy to try to undo some of the problems we caused. The Medicare Beneficiary Access to Quality Health Care Act addresses problems the BBA has caused in nursing home care, in home health care, among hospitals and also physical therapy, as well as some other areas. In particular, I draw my colleagues' attention to section 101 of the bill.

Medicare currently pays hospital outpatient departments for their reasonable costs. To encourage efficiency, however, the BBA called for a system of fixed, limited payments for outpatient departments. This is called the outpatient prospective payment system, known as PPS. Thus far, it appears this PPS will have a very negative impact on small rural hospitals. HCFA estimates—the Health Care Financing Administration—that under this law, Medicare outpatient payments would be cut by over 10 percent for small rural hospitals. I don't have the chart here, but hopefully it is coming later. If you look at the chart, you will see some of the projected impacts on hospitals in my State.

Prospective payment is the system of the future, and Congress is right to use it where it works. But in some cases, prospective payment just doesn't work. Consider what happened with inpatient prospective payment about 15 years ago. In 1983, Congress felt, much as it does now, that Medicare reimbursements needed to be held in check. It implemented prospective payment for inpatient services. Enacting that law, it also recognized that for some small, rural facilities, there should be exceptions to prospective payment.

The basic reason is simple, because prospective payment is based upon the assumption that the efficient hospitals will do well and survive, and the nearby inefficient hospitals not doing well will fail, but that is OK because people can always go to the surviving efficient hospital. And the assumption, obviously, is invalid for sparsely populated