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EDITORIAL

Learn from past

Reduce spending first, then increase taxes

Now that the initial euphoria over President Clinton's call for sacrifice to reduce the national debt and curb the deficit is beginning to fade, it is time to take a realistic look at Clinton's proposals. More importantly, it is important that his legislative strategy come under scrutiny.

The first part of Clinton's plan calls for Congress to vote on a \$30 billion stimulus package by April 2. However, revised figures showing the Gross National Product growing at a rate of 4.8 percent in the final quarter of 1992 might mean such a package isn't appropriate.

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen has called the program "psychological." Labor Secretary Robert Reich told CNN on Monday that the package could be more than \$30 billion. Faced with reducing the deficit, Clinton could find some money in waiting on pushing a stimulus package.

The next step in Clinton's plan will come in the late summer, when his tax increases and spending cuts will be debated in Congress. Conservative Democrats, such as Rep. Jim Slattery of Kansas, are insisting that the spending cuts and tax increases be tied closely together.

Nebraska Sen. James Exon stated that "in a budget, spending cannot exceed revenue." Leon Panetta, Office of Management and Budget director, conceded that passage of the program will be difficult, and a compromise with fiscally



David Badders/DN

necessary.

Some Republicans, left out of the budget process so far, are suggesting that the spending cuts be voted on first, to be followed by the tax increases. It is a proposal that is worth consideration.

History demands that spending cuts come first. In 1982, Ronald Reagan signed TEFRA, the largest tax increase in history. Reagan did so with the express understanding that for every dollar in tax increases, Congress would vote \$1.59 in spending cuts. The tax increases sailed through Congress, but the cuts were conveniently forgotten.

In 1990, George Bush broke his "no new taxes" pledge, but again with the promise that Congress would pass spending cuts. Once again, the tax increases passed first, but the spending cuts never surfaced. As a result, the deficit went from \$160 billion in 1990 to \$300 billion in 1991, and the economy slid into a recession.

If President Clinton is truly serious about reducing the deficit, he should insist on having the spending cuts first. Then the tax increase package should be submitted to Congress, and should not exceed the limit of the total spending cuts approved. Republicans say the package as is includes \$1.75 to \$18 in taxes for every \$1 in cuts; Democrats say it is balanced, which means that the deficit will not be reduced.

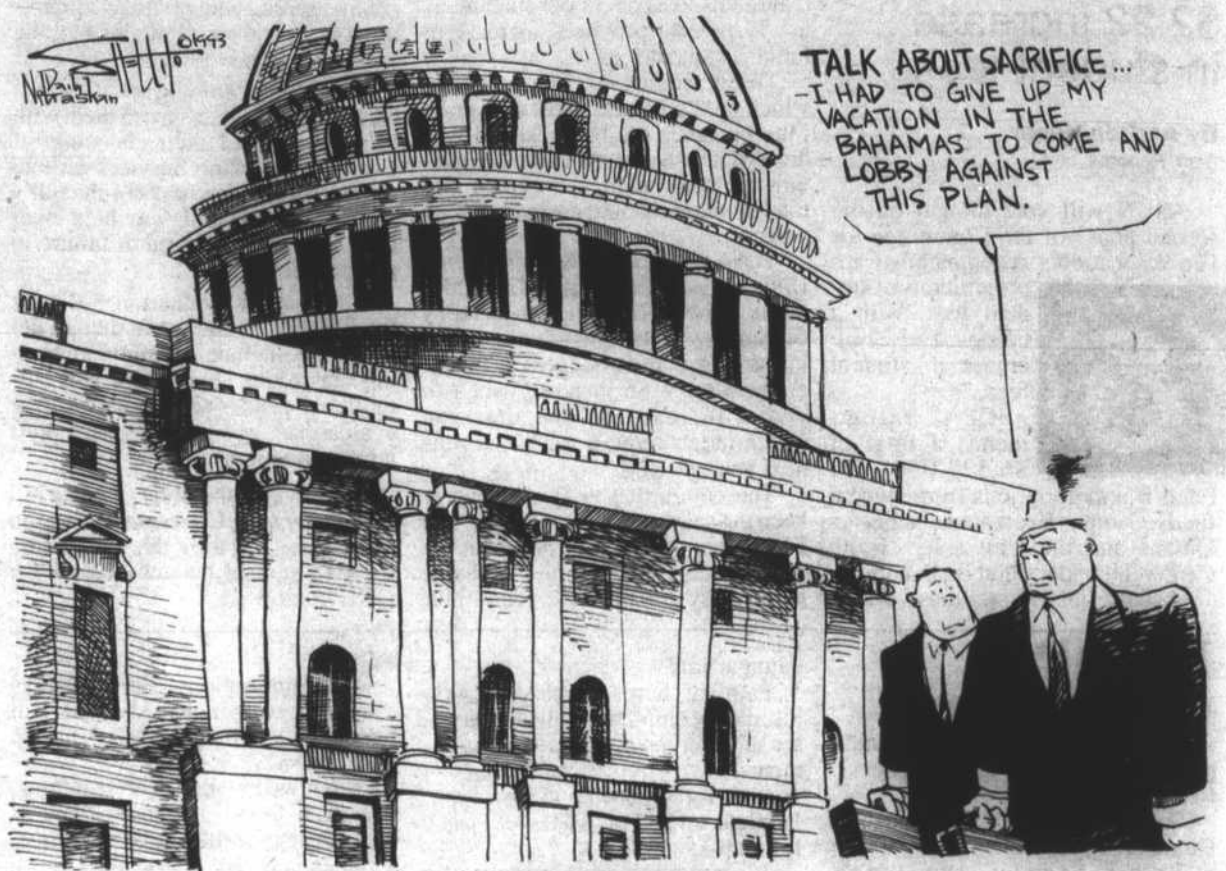
It is time to stop the rhetoric about the budget. Cut first, tax second and wait for the deficit to come down. If it does, then Clinton can claim to have made a difference. If it does not, then he may learn the hard lesson about taxes that George Bush did.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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SAM KEPFIELD

Government's job not parenting

I blame Macauley Culkin for all this.

To my list of phrases I'm sick of hearing, I add two words — "home alone." The child-savers that populate our social service agencies and district attorney's offices are in danger of exceeding their powers, propelled by images of an insufferably cute tyke.

Last weekend here in Lincoln, a 19-year-old mother left her three-year-old daughter alone in her apartment while she went out for the night. A neighbor heard the child crying, entered the apartment and called the police.

The little girl is now in a foster home, and the mother is in jail on charges of felony child endangerment. The state may take custody permanently. Bad parenting? Yes. Criminal? Hardly.

Look beyond the obvious feel-good rhetoric about having "saved" the child from a possible horrible fate while left alone by an obviously uncaring mother and what you see is a dangerous overintrusion by the state into family privacy.

When a similar event happened in Chicago, the media circus at O'Hare Airport when David and Sharon Schoos were arrested on their return from Acapulco was a sight to boggle the mind. There were more cops and reporters present than is usual for serial killers.

To be sure, an intensive investigation has revealed that the Schoos may have done more than leave their two daughters home by themselves. Prosecutors brought 63 counts against them, and to their credit, the Schoos told the district attorney that they were fighting the charges.

I applaud their decision. Someone in the DA's office ought to be disbarred for the way this matter has been handled, beginning with the leaks about the arrest itself, making it bigger news than the Israelis hauling in Adolf Eichmann.

The prosecutors are engaging in



It summarizes perfectly the whole problem with the child-protection system in this country today. These people obviously have their priorities screwed up.

more than "creative charging" — where you indict someone for everything possible no matter how tenuous, and get them to plead guilty to the real charge if you're so kind as to kick the other charges. I know how it's played — I've done it myself. The words "malicious prosecution" spring to mind.

In Texas and Minnesota, courts have held women liable for monetary damages to their children. The theory of recovery is that the women knew, or should have known, that their spouses were abusing the children and should have stopped it.

If you winced during the '92 campaign when some alleged that Hillary Clinton wanted children to be able to sue their parents, here you have the end result. In the Minnesota and Texas cases, kids are going after mom's homeowners insurance policy — which covers negligence — for a fat sum.

Howard Davidson, director of the American Bar Association's Center

on Children and the Law, said "It's creative lawyering for the benefit of the kid."

It is, and that Davidson would admit as much worries me. It summarizes perfectly the whole problem with the child-protection system in this country today. These people obviously have their priorities screwed up.

When conducting witch hunts for mothers who leave their kids home alone becomes priority No. 1, the real and tragic problem of parents who horribly abuse their children is ignored. By ignoring the real abuse, and focusing on what may properly be termed bad parenting, the child-savers are trivializing the whole issue.

Maybe they get frustrated about not being able to save children of poor parents from physical abuse, because it's such a numbing problem. In their angst, the child-savers turn to the controversial cases, those with well-off parents so callous as to leave their children alone while jetting to Mexico, to whip up public outrage. This, too, will get tiresome, and then what? Prosecutions for letting kids eat too much junk food?

The parents leaving their children home and the mothers unable to stop abuse may not be candidates for sainthood, but are they criminals? Is jail the answer for bad parenting? Wouldn't the children be better off with their real parents, rather than shuttled around a foster-care system that can do more harm than good?

Isn't it time to cut down on the activist role of child-savers, and protect families, however imperfect, from this assault on their integrity? With government trying to supplant the traditional parental role, it's small wonder that our children seem as lost as they do.

Leave parenting to the parents, and governing to the government.

Kepfield is a graduate student in history, an alumnus of the UNL College of Law and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

India

I was very upset by the article "Sewer aromas smell in India" (Diversions, Feb. 25, 1993), written by Mark Baldrige, the Daily Nebraskan's Arts and Entertainment editor. The article was supposed to broaden the views of our students on international travel, but with sentences like, "But India stinks," it only showed how ignorant our Arts and Entertainment editor remained.

If he wanted to experience "the Third-World smells," he did not have to travel far; ghettos of the big American cities have the right samples. Only

he would not dare go there.

Vesna Kilibarda
graduate student
mathematics

Mark Baldrige

(DN, Feb. 25, 1993):

If you traveled to some of the bigger cities in the United States like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, etc., you would know the filth and squalor that you associate with Third-World countries exist in abundance here.

In several places in Chicago we observed sewage oozing out of pipes and flowing into the streets. There

was stinking garbage strewn all over the place. People were indiscriminately throwing trash out of their apartment windows onto the streets below. And there were people openly urinating in public on the sidewalks.

Is this much different from what you saw in India? If we went home and described the United States to our friends there, solely based upon our experiences in the big U.S. cities, would they not get a distorted impression of this country?

Sanjay Shenoy
senior
electrical engineering