

Travis Heying/DN

Roxanne Weidner of Omaha protests outside a GOP dinner featuring House Speaker Newt Gingrich at the Holiday Inn at 72nd and Grover streets in Omaha Monday.

Protest

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standing under the silence of a small tree away from the shouting crowds.

He said protesting would not do any good without campaign reform.

However, he said he supported the protesters because he and his wife relied on Medicare. Both had serious

illnesses, and he was laid off a few years ago.

"We need Medicare," he said quietly, "desperately."

Newt

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Speaker, do you think it would be a good idea for the First Lady Hillary Clinton to visit Boys Town?"

Gingrich said he would not be the one to invite her, but if the little girl wanted her to come then that was enough of an invitation.

Another child stepped up with the question: "How did you get to be so famous?"

"I'm real noisy," Gingrich said, laughing.

The last child asked Gingrich who his favorite "Boys Town" movie character was.

"Well, that's too easy," he said, smiling. "It's Spencer Tracy because he's the one who reaches out and helps everyone."

Gingrich said watching "Boys Town" gave him a sense of hope, love and caring that people can't find in many movies today.

Gingrich took a tour through the Boys Town "Hall of History," where Peter showed him the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for his role in the "Boys Town" movie. Tracy presented the Oscar to Boys Town founder Father Flanagan.

After the tour, Gingrich attended a short press conference.

He addressed the future of Boys Town's youth when he dismissed the notion that the Republicans were making harmful cuts to student federal financial aid.

"What we're doing right now doesn't cut federal financial aid, I think," he said. "Balancing the budget will save the student who borrows \$11,000, \$2,167 in repayments over a 10-year period."

By lowering the interest rate and making it easier to borrow, he said, students would be free of debt.

"I think we'll save the young people of America billions of dollars," he said. "We're trying to make sure these young people don't have to pay off our debt."

Boys Town mayor Tyrice Ellebb of Chicago said he was grateful the Speaker finally visited Boys Town, but did not agree with all of Gingrich's political views.

He said Gingrich was wrong to say Boys Town was greater than the government.

"He's saying Boys Town is great in everything we do," Ellebb said. "We have our problems, too."

Gingrich came to Boys Town while in Omaha attending a benefit luncheon for Republican Rep. Jon Christensen.

Several past U.S. and state senators and city and state dignitaries also attended the \$100-a-plate fund-raiser.

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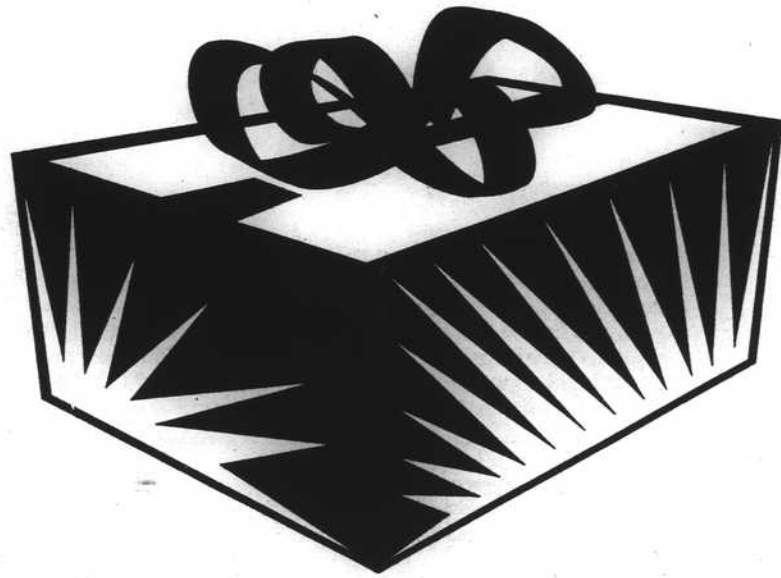
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