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C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol St.
#650
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear C-SPAN:

From time to time I get an opportunity to see your very interesting morning call-in show, and, in fact, today's show has just ended. I tried to call - I'd prefer to call because I think TV is best as a live medium - pictures and sound. However...

First a couple of small questions and comments before I get to what's on my mind: Is the very attractive Ms Bingham a member of the great Louisville Bingham clan who ran the even greater Louisville newspaper for so many years? I never think of the Courier-Journal without thinking of Marse Henry Watterson who is reputed to have said, when he was criticized for severely berating the Governor of Kentucky, "Things have come to a sad pass when a man can't even cudgel his own ass anymore".

And, mentioning Fred Barnes - he is probably the stupidist man in public print and television in America today. He is a shameless authoritarian bigot, reactionary, and yahoo.

I'm concerned about the various proposals for a "balanced budget amendment". In the abstract and as a matter of good government a balanced budget should always be our goal- we shouldn't need an amendment to remind ourselves of that simple fact. (But we also shouldn't need an amendment to provide equal rights to all citizens- but we do.)

A balanced budget would, presumably, in time, reduce the Federal government's need to borrow to zero. Without U.S. government obligations to be traded what would happen to world financial markets? Without government paper how would the Federal Reserve control the money supply? Without U.S. government bonds what other "safe haven" would exist for investors in chaotic economic times? Without government financial instruments wouldn't the money supply shrink suddenly, drastically, and destructively?

Is Keynesian economics to be declared irrelevant? How will the government be able to cope with recession and depression if it cannot indulge in deficit financing in times of need? Is deficit financing to be reserved solely for the destructive uses of warfare?

Would a balanced budget require that in good times the government could not amass a surplus and perhaps pay off a portion of the public debt - if any existed?

What is to prevent the Congress and Administration from putting more and more items "off budget" so they would not be effected by the amendment? If that happened it would'nt be long before the "budget" became irrelevant to our real operations and things would be just about as they are now - for better or worse.

Most worrisome, the Republican amendment seems to be aimed at reduction of federal spending and concomitant tax reductions or at the very least prevention of any tax increases. They propose a two-thirds majority to raise taxes - would they also propose a two-thirds majority to lower taxes? Would it take a two-thirds majority to change or adjust taxes (i.e. to lower taxes for the rich and raise them for the lower middle class)? Would it take a two-thirds majority to change regulatory taxes and fees - tobacco, alcohol, luxuries, etc.?

The proposed amendments seem to be enormously complex, legalistic, and downright dangerous to our democracy - they should be rejected by the American people.

If we must have such an amendment, I propose the following:

Article 27

Section I

Congress shall have the authority to appropriate and collect revenues sufficient to balance the budget in each fiscal year, except that in time of emergency adversely affecting the welfare of the people, Congress may approve expenditures exceeding revenues in any fiscal year.

Section II

Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

This simple article states the national purpose of a balanced budget, but puts the ball in Congress' court, which is exactly where it belongs. Congress' hands are not tied; but they are left with the tough decisions - that's where the founding fathers envisioned the fiscal responsibility to be, and that's the kind of leadership we have every right to expect from our Congress.

How about a discussion of this balanced budget matter someday soon?

