P.S. to the NEWS
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COMPELLING A BALANCED BUDGET

No longer are the political innovators those who devise ways and means of spending more money and extending their control over our lives and fortunes. No longer are the exciting political orators those who promise grandiose spending projects to treat all society's ills.

No, the most innovative proposals are those which promote tax reduction and tax limitation. The reactionaries who feel threatened and who are crying to hang on to their vested interests are the status-quo politicians and the bureaucrats who don't want to lose or diminish their sinecures.

Nothing shows which way the political winds are blowing so clearly as the amazing inaugural address of California Governor Edmund Brown, Jr. It places him ideologically somewhere between Proposition 13 and Ronald Reagan.

Brown called for a deep tax cut and a significant reduction in the number of state employees. He challenged one of the basic dogmas of the liberal establishment, "the assumption that more government spending automatically leads to better living," and he lashed out at those "false prophets" who "righteously spoke against inflation and excessive government spending but who in practice pursued the opposite course."

Brown came right out and said that "the ordinary citizen knows that government contributes to inflation and that runaway inflation is as destructive to our social well-being as an invading army."

Brown's sudden conversion to fiscal conservatism has dumbfounded the eastern liberal establishment. Some have overreacted in screams of pain as though they had been kicked in private parts, while others have lapsed into embarrassed silence as though a relative with an unmentionable disease had suddenly walked into the room.

Whereas Governor Brown, a Democrat, proposes a constitutional amendment to require the federal budget to be balanced, a shining light in the Republican Party,

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Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, has come up with a more realistic version of the same idea. Lugar proposes a constitutional amendment to prohibit an unbalanced budget except by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in both Houses of Congress.

In presenting this idea, Senator Lugar catalogues the many instances in our governmental system when a supermajority is required: to override a veto, to approve a treaty, to propose a constitutional amendment, to convict for impeachment, to expel a member, and to invoke cloture. He believes that the time has come to make clear that "the stewardship of the tax dollar is as important as a treaty or a veto override."

Senator Lugar's plan would preserve flexibility in time of crisis or semi-crisis. It would simply affirm the principle that a balanced, non-inflationary budget is such an important national goal that those who would deviate from it must carry a greater-than-usual burden of proof before the printing presses can roll and cheapen the value of our hard-earned dollars.

In the Federalist Papers, the Founding Fathers stressed the need to protect ourselves against "the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority." The U.S. Supreme Court and other courts have repeatedly upheld the right of various bodies to require a supermajority on particular issues.

In the 1971 case of Gordon v. Lance, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a requirement of the West Virginia Constitution for a 3/5 majority to incur bonded indebtedness. The Court stated, "There is nothing in the language of the Constitution, our history, or our cases that requires that a majority always prevail on every issue."

Time and experience have proved that constitutional, legislative, and parliamentary requirements for a supermajority are good rules which empower the majority at the same time that they respect the rights of the minority. It is time that we utilized them to protect the rights of working Americans against the inflation-causing unbalanced budgets which Democratic Congresses have forced upon us for 28 of the last 30 years.

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