PS for 9/20/90

Beware of the Slime Duck Session

It's beginning to look at though the game plan of the liberals is to reject any sort of budget summit compromise, keep the spigot of spending turned on through the election by a continuing resolution, and then call a lame duck session after the November election. The Congressmen could then pass a tax increase **after** the election when the voters would be unable to punish them.

Cloakroom gossip that this scenario is in the works warns us that the stage is being set for what might be called a slime duck session. Indeed, this would be a slimy way to evade the wrath of the voters who are adamantly opposed to tax increases.

If the Middle East crisis requires a lame duck session, no one could cry foul. But the American people have a right to know what Congress is going to do about the budget deficit before they hire their congressman on election day for another two years.

Congressmen should stay at their desks until they figure out how to reduce the deficit. This may postpone their recess for campaigning, but that's not too much to ask of Congressmen who just voted themselves a 50 percent pay raise.

For the last several months, news coverage of the Middle East crisis has upstaged the budget deficit, but it is still just as important as it ever was (or will be after the November election). Will they or won't they come to an agreement to cut $50 billion from the projected $170 billion budget deficit before the axe falls from Gramm-Rudman and imposes a mandatory cut of more than $100 billion.

When Republican Party Chairman Lee Atwater was too ill to give his Republican no-tax-increase advice, OMB Director Richard Darman persuaded President Bush to abandon his read-my-lips pledge in the expectation that this supreme gesture would woo the Democrats into reciprocating with substantial spending cuts. As he left for the Helsinki summit with Gorbachev, Bush said, "The time for partisanship is past… Let's fix this budget mess once and for all."

However, the liberal Democrats have no sense of **noblesse oblige** – they responded to Bush's dramatic offer by accusing the President of political crimes ranging from reneging on his campaign promise to lying about the promise in the first place.

Most Americans don't realize it, but without any tax increase at all federal revenues are rising about $70 billion a year because of economic growth, higher employment, and a little inflation. When the politicians talk about spending "cuts," they don't mean real cuts at all; they only mean that spending won't increase as much as they want it to increase.

The American people deserve real cuts in federal spending, not just decreases in the increases that are already scheduled to take place. Republican Whip Newt Gingrich is the only one who has come up with a sensible and specific plan that respects the demand of the American people for real cuts in spending and taxes.

Gingrich's proposal is to cut capital gains taxes, allow small business to "expense" productive equipment, create new more flexible IRA Plus accounts and allow them to be used to buy a house for the first time, and give tax credits to lower- and middle-class families with small children. That is the agenda Congress should be working on.

The Democrats ought to call in Governor Douglas Wilder of Virginia for some other good ideas on how to deal with a budget crisis. Elected as a liberal Democrat, he has apparently figured out that the smart way to go is directly opposite from Michael Dukakis's management of Massachusetts.

Wilder has put a freeze on salaries of state employees, cut spending for public schools and private museums, put a moratorium on state construction for all but the most essential projects, abolished the Department of World Trade, and is considering eliminating the Council on the Status of Women. He even announced that he will not raise taxes.

Why can't Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell do likewise? Well, the trouble is that it is not in his self-interest to initiate or even agree to a spending-cut package. In his world view, as a dedicated liberal, he wants to increase not reduce government spending, he wants to continue handouts to the targeted constituencies who pack the ballot box for the Democrats on election day, and he wants to embarrass President Bush with liberal demagoguery.

The liberal Democratic majority in Congress is trying to dupe the American people into electing them by concealing their intention to raise taxes until after they have been reelected. We shouldn't let them get away with it.