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Pitching For America

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It was Father's Day, 1964, when the Phillies' Jim Bunning, a father of seven, took the mound against the Mets.

Ninety pitches later, Bunning had struck out 10 and allowed not one batter to reach first base. Twenty-seven up, 27 down. The first perfect game in 86 years in the National League, and the finest hour of the Hall of Famer's baseball career.

Beginning last week, Jim Bunning took the Senate floor for five straight days to object to Harry Reid's call for unanimous consent to waive through a $10 billion spending bill. First, the Kentucky senator demanded, show me how we're going to pay for it.

His own leadership abandoned Bunning. Susan Collins of Maine assured the Senate and country that Republicans did not back their colleague: "Senator Bunning's views do not represent a majority of the caucus. It's important that the American people understand that there is bipartisan support for extending these vital programs."

Vital programs?

Had Bunning blocked rescue flights to Port au Prince or Santiago, or ammunition for the Marines in Marja?

No. Bunning had held up for a couple of days a vote on a $10 billion bill to extend unemployment benefits, make payments to doctors under Medicare and extend satellite TV to rural America. Reportedly, some 2,000 Transportation Department workers were furloughed for a few days.

"If we cannot pay for a bill that all 100 senators support," Bunning said, "how can we tell the American people with a straight face that we will ever pay for anything?"

Good question.

Indeed, the behavior of senators suggests that neither party appreciates the depth of the crisis we are in or the pain that will be required to get us out. Last week, Bunning did more than any senator in many moons to raise the consciousness of the country to the magnitude of the deficit-debt crisis.

His taking to the barricades may have inconvenienced some, but Bunning forced us all, briefly, to stare into the chasm.

Consider. Congress this year will spend $1.6 trillion more than it collects in revenue, with the largest outlays in that FY 2010 budget for defense at $719 billion and Social Security at $721 billion.

Thus, if the U.S. Government on Oct. 1, 2008, had shut down the Pentagon and furloughed every soldier and civilian here and around the world, and announced that it would not send out a Social Security check for a full year to any of the 50 million retired and elderly, we would still be $160 billion short of balancing the budget. If you zeroed out federal benefits to veterans for a full year, that, added in, would bring us close.

Such is the magnitude of the fiscal crisis facing the country.

To balance the budget this year would require a 43 percent across-the-board cut in every category of federal spending -- defense, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Homeland Security, highways, etc. -- or, if one used taxes alone, a 72-percent increase in federal tax revenues.

Budget cuts of that magnitude are impossible. They would cause a revolution. And any attempt at tax hikes of that magnitude would drain off all available consumer capital and hurl the economy into another Depression.

For the foreseeable future, then, this nation is going deeper into debt

And when Harry Reid and colleagues wave through yet another $10 billion for unemployment checks and making sure farm folks get yard dishes to see reruns of "The Sopranos," the United States must go to Beijing, Tokyo or Riyadh and borrow the money.

That is the hole we are in.

And when one stares at some of those budget numbers, the priorities of the Obama administration seem almost surreal.

In George W. Bush's last full year in office, we spent $29 billion for "international affairs." The lion's share of that was foreign aid. In FY 2011, the year for which Congress has begun to budget, spending for international affairs and foreign aid is to jump to $54 billion and continue to surge through the Obama years.

What is the rationale for the United States, the world's greatest debtor nation, putting itself deeper in debt to China to send foreign aid to nations that will never repay us and that vote habitually with China and against us in the United Nations?

This city does not seem to grasp that the days of wine and roses are over. We are not in the 1950s or 1960s anymore. Then, we could throw open our markets to imports from the world. Then, we could dish out foreign aid and fight wars in Vietnam with 500,000 men, while maintaining 50,000 troops in Korea and 300,000 in Europe.

America is headed for a time when, like the British Empire, she is going to have to make painful choices, or have them forced upon us.

He may have been booed all last week, but Jim Bunning pitched one of the best games of his career.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World, "The Death of the West,", "The Great Betrayal," *"A Republic, Not an Empire"* and *"Where the Right Went Wrong."*

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