

Proxmire Gives Fiscal Warnings

By Dina Walker and Derrick Stokes

If the government doesn't cut the national debt, a recession could hit the United States later this year or next, said United States Senator William Proxmire (D. Wis.).

Speaking at Penn State Harrisburg Feb. 11 as part of the Provost's Lecture Series, Proxmire urged the audience to "increase savings, cut debt. Live within our means."

According to Proxmire the average American saves less than three percent of his income, and incurs nine dollars of debt for every one dollar earned.

Proxmire, the chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee and a member of both the Appropriations Committee and the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, also urged the government and business to spend less and increase taxes even though it would bring on a recession.

"We have to recognize that recessions are something that we're going to have to go through," Proxmire said. "We can survive recessions without a depression."

Proxmire pointed out that the nation's business debt is presently over \$3 trillion, and the overall national debt is \$2.35 trillion.

Proxmire suggested a severe cut in military spending to lessen the economic burden. "The only effective way to control military spending is to create an effective arms control agreement with the Soviets," he said.

Proxmire cited the Strategic Defense Initiative as a particularly wasteful area of defense spending. He said that according to Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Star Wars would cost almost \$1 trillion to develop and employ, and \$100 to \$200 billion per year to maintain and operate it.

The business debt, he said, can be controlled by simply being more careful with research and development.

He cautioned, however, against cutting popular spending programs from the government's budget.

"We have to help people who can't help themselves," he said.

Proxmire is best known for his Golden Fleece Awards, which he has been presenting since 1975, to the government agency which has funded "the most fiscally irresponsible project of the month," he said.

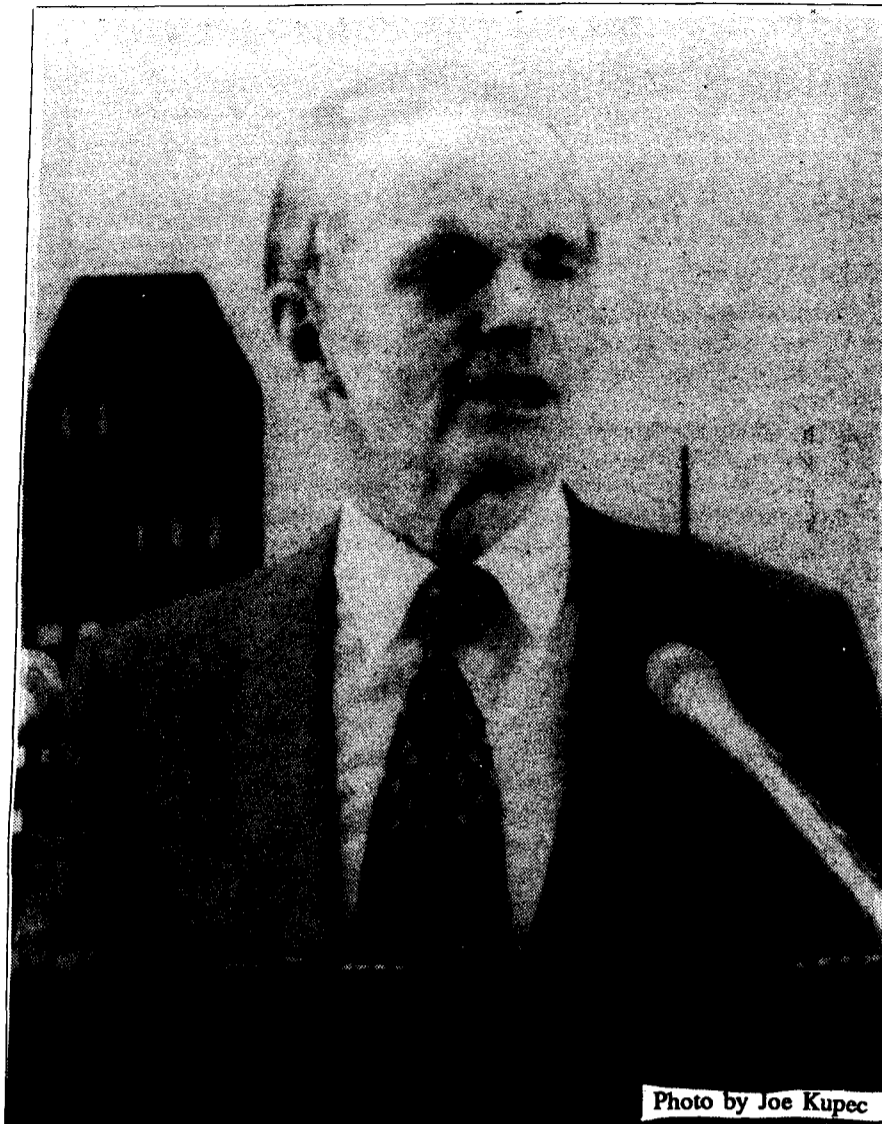


Photo by Joe Kupec

Sen. William Proxmire was on campus as a part of the Provost's 1987-88 Lecture Series, speaking on "Changes In American Spending Policy."

Campus Reacts to Proxmire Talk

by Joe Kupec

Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin held an informal session for students, faculty, and staff in the Gallery Lounge at Penn State Harrisburg.

Speaking on subjects ranging from Contra Aid and CIA involvement with Panamanian leader Noregia to Strategic Defense Initiative and the International Nuclear Freeze Treaty, Proxmire impressed his audience by his knowledge of specific issues.

Professor William Aungst, Mechanical Engineering Technology Department, had never met Senator Proxmire and enjoyed listening to him speak. "I have been a fan of his for years," he said.

Recalling a high school trip to Washington, D.C., Aungst remembers seeing Senator Proxmire for the first time. Their class had gone to watch the senate in session.

"We went into the senate chambers and found only one man speaking. Proxmire was sitting at his chair with his feet on his desk listening to him. They were the only two senators in the chambers."

Dr. Jefferson Hartzler, Math Department Chairman, agreed with Proxmire's stand against Contra Aid and is impressed with the Golden Fleece Award which Proxmire uses to point out

waste by government agencies.

Proxmire began awarding the Golden Fleece Awards in 1975 calling attention to wasteful spending in government agencies.

About 98 percent of the programs that receive the award have their funding reduced or cut completely.

Hartzler pointed out that the informal session was intended for discussion.

"I was pleased that the incentive was made to have Senator Proxmire speak to the campus community," he said.

Kevin H. Markell, Management major, said he thought hearing Proxmire was a great opportunity for students to understand political impact on their lives.

"It was a shame that there was not enough student participation."

Markell, who served in the Air Force and is presently in the Air National Guard, is not pleased that Proxmire places emphasis on the General Accounting Office.

"Their reports are biased," he said. "I had the chance to read a GAO report on military salary that gave the impression that an officer with 15 years in could make \$70 thousand a year. The GAO took into account base housing and medical benefits equating those

benefits with the civil servant pay scale," Markell said.

Markell, who has met major military figures like General Westmoreland and the Secretary of the Army, feels that the main difference between Proxmire and the military leaders of similar importance is the senator's concern for how the tax dollar is spent.

James A. Coleman, Criminal Justice major, noted that the senator played the professional politician when handling many of the subjects brought up in the discussion.

He agrees with Proxmire's statements that there is too much waste in the military budget, but pointed out that Proxmire tries to use various sources of information outside of the GAO.

"I think he uses a number of people at his disposal to arrive at a decision. While I was in the army I worked with the GAO for about a year. They are the experts that the senate relies on for information," Coleman said.

Above all Proxmire came across as being truly interested in the people.

"He doesn't just deal with statistics and numbers, he is interested in the people," Coleman added.

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