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Speaker*

STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN L. HOOKS OF NAACP
ON PROPOSED FEDERAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1983

I am personally appalled by the budget message the President has sent to the Congress and released to the American people. In my judgement, the President's proposed Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 1983 represents a cold and calculated retreat from the moral responsibilities of the Government to insure the health, welfare and civil rights of all Americans.

Under the guise of a continuing effort to control inflation and return governmental operations to local control, the President again proposes inequitable and unjustified cuts in government spending on social programs while at the same time urging enormous and dubious increases in military spending. The casualties of such an approach are obvious: the poor, the minorities, the needy students, the senior citizens and the marginally middle-income.

What is equally disturbing about the President's approach to economic recovery is his strident rhetoric that his opponents should "put up or shut up," seemingly challenging his critics to present alternatives rather than lambast his plan. We answer that the NAACP has offered the President and the Congress sound fiscal advice

and presented our Alternative Plan during the last budget battle. Our Plan was then virtually ignored by the champions of "Reaganomics." We have no intention of shutting up as, once again, the President reveals yet another chapter of "voodoo economics."

The supporters of the President's budget proposals and economic plan,--if, indeed, that it is, are wrong in asserting that it's too early to evaluate Reaganomics. It is not too early, or too late, for people concerned with human dignity and national unity to speak out and create a groundswell of public opinion to deflate the latest Reagan economic total trial balloon.

The proposed 1983 Federal Budget is immoral because it is the poor, the barely middle-income and minorities who are hurting and called upon to do all the sacrificing. And they must bury their narrow differences and unite forces to deflate this budget plan. Those who feel this mutual pain can and must repudiate Reaganomics.

People must go to the polls in 1982 in massive numbers! In the short run, the people can stop this budget by lobbying Congress. This will mean for Congressional representatives the need to face up to the inevitable confession that it is not possible to cut taxes, sharply increase military expenditures, balance the budget and cure inflation unless you believe in voodoo.