

Budget deficit subject of forum

BY BRYAN HEDRICK

Is government spending out of control? Can the national debt be reduced to a reasonable figure? Are future generations doomed to bear the consequences of our spiraling debt?

These questions and others were addressed Friday, April 15, during a public forum held in the Wayne Community College Lecture Hall.

The forum was sponsored by the Concord Coalition--a bipartisan, nonprofit, organization founded by Senators Paul Tsongas and Warren Rudman in hopes of coping with current economic dilemmas.

As a solution to our current economic problems, the Concord Coalition suggests tangible cuts in spending in conjunction with increases in savings and investments.

Professors Carson Bays and Jack Karns as well as Congressman Martin Lancaster all spoke at the forum.

Bays, chairman of the Economics Department at East Carolina University (ECU), initially focused on the difference between the national debt and the budget deficit.

Bays said that a deficit is incurred when the Government spends more than it collects in tax revenues, while the national debt is the debt assumed by the government to finance this additional spending.

Bays stressed that an important number to focus on is the ratio between the interest paid on national debt and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Karns, a business law professor at ECU explained how the Internal Revenue Code is counterproductive to shrewd business.

"Dealing with the code can be a daunting task for small business owners," said Karns, "and compliance creates cost, because CPAs and lawyers are required to understand the complexities of the code."

Finally, Lancaster emphasized that severe tax hikes could backfire. By going too far in taxation the government can inhibit buying and selling and thereby decrease tax revenues.



Professors Carson Bays and Jack Karns listen to Martin Lancaster at the Concord Coalition's forum, "America on the Precipice." PHOTO: BRYAN HEDRICK

Furthermore Lancaster was leery of cuts in discretionary spending being able to decrease the deficit.

"The government could cut all non-military discretionary spending and still not balance the budget," said Lancaster.

In Lancaster's opinion one viable solution would be to begin "means testing" Social Security and Medicare entitlements.

Lancaster feels that accounting for such factors would lead to a more equitable distribution of these entitlements as well as help trim federal spending.

Overall, while there was some disagreement among the speakers, all 3 agreed that grass roots efforts such as the Concord Coalition are an ideal way to stimulate reform.

Dr. Joe Ponzi, a Goldsboro pediatrician, served as moderator of the event.

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AIDS seminar focuses on family

By NANCYE ANDERSON

On April 20, 1994, WCC presented its 10th quarterly AIDS Seminar to a standing room only audience.

Directed by Dr. Edmond Hogan, Chair of Human Services, the seminar was divided into 3 segments: medical updates on the contraction and transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus; a Wayne County family living with AIDS; an open forum consisting of questions from the audience.

Dr. James Atkins, local Oncologist, gave a review of the medical treatment of the virus which has not advanced as fast as doctors and the public would like.

He then informed the audience that the practice of "safe-sex" would not guarantee the health and safety of the participants.

Atkins stated, "If condoms are your "save-all" then you will have a real shock down the road."

According to Atkins, by the year 2000, 1 out of 3 people will be infected with the HIV/AIDS virus and 2 out of 12 people using "safe-sex" will contract the disease.

The 2nd segment was presented by the Duncan family: husband, John, in the latter stage of AIDS; wife, Diane, HIV positive; son, John David, born before infection, HIV negative.

John's voice broke as he told the audience that he had considered suicide to protect his family from the prejudice and rejection his AIDS diagnosis would cause them.

He said, "I cry. I hurt. I can't stand knowing that I have hurt my wife like this."

He went on to describe the physical disabilities he was living with and again thanked his wife for standing by him.

Responding to her husband's comments, Diane said, "I am here because if I can get just one of you to stop, think, get tested, change your life, then maybe

something positive will come out of our having this disease."

John David spoke of the loneliness and isolation that he experienced after his parents told him of their illness.

He said, "My friends freaked-out when they heard. I have had to face this with only my faith to rely on."

After the Duncan's presentation, questions from the audience were presented to the panel by Dr. Hogan.

Responding to whether there was any indication of a drop in the HIV/AIDS rate seen for the near future,

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