

# Viewpoints

## School board shirking responsibility to taxpayers

Improved education was probably utmost on the minds of members of the Hoke County School Board when they sat down for two hours to review the budget for the coming fiscal year.

However, in their haste to complete the task, the elected officials may have forgotten their obligation to be the watchdogs of the public pocketbook.

As in past years, there is a bureaucratic attitude that pervades the proposed school budget, and the document reflects a perspective which is common among those who have grown used to spending someone else's money.

In its present form, the school funding proposal will also be difficult to cut. It is a wish list with expense items hidden in vague general categories.

To make matters worse for the taxpayer, board members have side-stepped the job of reducing the budget, and with an almost cavalier attitude, the elected school officials have turned that duty of cutting education spending over to members of the county commission.

An example of this hide-and-seek attitude surfaced last week in a public meeting during an exchange between county Commissioner James Albert Hunt and school board Chairman Bill Cameron.

Every year, similar exchanges seem to occur,

**Editorial**  
and members of both boards seem to be participants in a game of bluff poker being played with taxpayers' money.

This year the exchange went like this:  
Hunt: "How much fat can you cut out?"  
Cameron: "We're not willing to cut anything at this time."

Last year Hunt suggested with a laugh that the county would have to "sharpen its hatchet" when the school board presented its budget.

In this year's budget, the school board has requested a \$265,000 increase in local funding, along with \$186,000 more from the county's portion of federal revenue sharing.

That request comes on the heels of a \$110,000 hike last year, and boosts the 1984-85 federal, state and local budget by almost \$1.1 million over the previous year.

In the two hours the board members spent reviewing the figures with school administrators before it was presented to the county commission, few questions were asked, no "hatchets" were unsheathed and no "fat" was cut from the \$10.1 million budget.

According to the request, this year's local in-

crease will include \$79,500 for maintenance, \$99,000 for salaries and fringe benefits and \$86,000 for programs.

The funds earmarked for maintenance are part of the long range facilities committee's recommendation. The request was carefully studied by 21 taxpayers, and the school board could be assured that each budget item reflected taxpayers' interests.

But we wonder why board members did not ask administrators to justify giving every employee of the school system a 15% raise.

School teachers' salaries need to be raised, and 15% seems a good figure, but we question the need to raise administrators, principals and other non-classroom personnel by the same percentage.

We also wonder about other items included in the budget which are not explained or detailed like:

- A 33%, or \$7,000, increase in coaches supplements at Hoke High and a 72%, or \$2,975, hike for coaches at Upchurch Junior High.

- The official adoption of a pay scale which differs from and is higher than that of classroom teachers.

- A 33% pay increase for ROTC instructors.

- A \$26,400 travel allowance for principals and administrators.

- A 25.7% increase in the exceptional children's program.

- A 25.4%, or \$36,658, hike in the vocational educational program.

- A 139%, or \$16,699, increase in the cultural arts program.

Taxpayers are being asked to cover \$4,797 in football insurance and \$35,078 in coaches supplements, but one has to question why gate receipts from athletic events remain at the high school in student activity funds and are not placed in general revenues.

We are not questioning the validity or eventual need of any item in the school budget. We also understand that this county's local participation in the budget is one of the lowest in the state.

However, we think that board members may be forgetting that this county has the lowest per capita income in the state and one of the highest tax rates.

We also find fault with the Board of Education forcing school budget cuts on the county commission. It is the school board's job to present a fiscally sound budget which answers the needs of the schools.

We do not believe the budget presented to the commission last week is fiscally sound, nor do we believe the school board is doing the job they were elected to do.

## Japan winning war

By Lucien Coleman

After visiting Japan a few weeks ago, I'm not quite sure who won World War II. I know, of course, who claimed the military victory. But, economically, the other guys didn't do too badly.

Today, Japan is an affluent, progressive society. In Tokyo, you'll observe more snazzy new automobiles per acre than you'll see in most American cities. (They keep their better models, I think, and send the rest to us).

Driving into Tokyo from Marita International Airport, I discovered that I already knew a number of words in the Japanese language. Words like Canon, Nikon, Sony, Yamaha, Toyota and Mitsubishi. These familiar trade-names appeared everywhere, on billboards, on ultra-modern steel and polymer skyscrapers, in neon lights.

A visitor expecting to see a "Madame Butterfly" setting in modern Japan will be disappointed. The nation has become thoroughly westernized.

On the streets of Tokyo, one rarely sees a traditional kimono. The young prefer jeans. The ladies wear stylish street dresses. And the business man's standard uniform is a smart three-piece suit, usually in navy blue.

Many of the models in adver-

### Things That Matter

tisements have blond hair and blue eyes.

In the large cities, the pace of life is frenetic. Everybody runs. In commuter train stations, on the sidewalks, through the lobbies of buildings. Streets are congested with traffic. At intersections, where traffic is fierce, there are just two kinds of pedestrians -- the quick and the dead.

Travel within the country was quick and comfortable. Influenced by the old black and white movies of World War II vintage, I had anticipated slow-moving trains and prop-driven planes. But the trip from Tokyo to Fukuoka in a luxurious Boeing 747, staffed by well-trained ultra-polite cabin attendants, was the ultimate in pleasant air travel. And the famous Japanese "bullet trains," traveling at 120 miles per hour, were only slightly slower than going by air.

But affluence has its price. The competition for choice positions in corporate life is rigorous. A six day work week is commonplace. And it's not unusual for men to extend their working day until nine o'clock at night, a practice which takes its toll of family life. It just goes to show what a man will do when he has a yen for yen.

"Don't worry dear, they've got committees for everthing else. I'm sure they'll have one for you soon."



Madilyn

## Letters To The Editor

### Special Olympics were successful

To The Editor:

The 1984 Hoke County Special Olympics is over and, as in the past, it was a success. We have a strong Special Olympic program which can be attributed to the dedication of the professional staff involved and the commitment of many volunteers and organizations. Their support has helped to bring a new kind of joy to the mentally handicapped athletes who participate.

The growth and development of our Special Olympic program is a reflection of the concern and respect of the citizens of Hoke County. No participant goes unrecognized and no spectator leaves untouched.

We are very proud of what has been accomplished and offer our sincere thanks to all who have made it possible.

Sincerely,  
Ivey Thigpen  
Director  
Programs for  
Exceptional Children

### China's open door offers many options

To The Editor:

Now that the door to China has been propped open and the way is clear for trade and cultural exchanges with the United States, I've been speculating on how things will work out.

For example, take our fast food restaurants. They've just about used up all the corner lots in this country, so naturally will be looking for fresh new corner lots in China. Must be thousands of lots over there occupied by nothing but ancient pagodas that could be bulldozed down in 30 minutes.

I don't know how the Chinese will react; they may not be in as big a hurry to eat as some Americans, but nonetheless it's going to be interesting to see if they can eat a hotdog with chopsticks.

One of the first things China has indicated an interest in is U.S. help in building nuclear plants, although there may be some Chinese citizens who're wondering if we've gotten the hang of it yet.

Some American financiers consider China a great place for investments, but if they invest over there and the investments go sour and the U.S. government has to bail them out, will that bail-out take precedence over the other countries we're already bailing U.S. investors out of?

There's a great opportunity in China for American tire manufacturers. During Mr. Reagan's visit I watched television scenes of Chinese farmers hauling their crops in oxen-drawn carts and only one had rubber tires, the rest wooden wheels. If there ever was a marketing opportunity, that's it.

Now as for cultural exchanges, some Washington experts in such matters have suggested that we could improve relations by sending American rock bands over to perform for the Chinese but it wouldn't do any good. They'd all leave records over here to be played while they're gone.

J.A.

## Farmers need to promote their image

By John Sledge

N.C. Farm Bureau Federation  
Unfortunately, some urban consumers, separated from the farm by generations, have come to think of the supermarket as the origin of their food.

At the same time, many lawmakers with little or no knowledge of agriculture have the responsibility of making decisions which directly affect the lives of farmers.

The independent, self-sufficient

farmer, realizing the need for understanding and support of those not involved in his industry, has worked to build his public image and relate the "farm story" to consumers.

He has made great strides in building bridges of understanding between farm and city - in personal contacts at mall promotions, fairs and farm tours, through speakers' bureau appearances before urban groups and in the schools. He has taken the time to get acquainted

with members of his local news media and convince them that what was happening on the farm was NEWS - not just to farmers, but to everyone.

But one area has the farmer stumped. When farm prices go up, there always seems to be an excuse for retail food prices to rise - and this makes the headlines. Yet when farm prices decline, nobody cares - or even knows - except the farmer.

Whether farm prices are rising or falling doesn't really have that much effect on retail prices

because only 27 cents of the food dollar is put on at the farm level. The other 73 cents is added after the products leave the farm gate.

The farmer, with his ever-rising production costs, understands that the middlemen's costs are rising too. But, what disturbs him is that it's the farm price that's always used as the reason for retail price increases. He thinks somebody else along the food production line ought to take a turn being the "heavy."

# Tennis shoes set the fashion for season

Our bags were packed, and we were heading for the car, when my wife questioned my choice of shoes.

"Why are you wearing tennis shoes?" she asked.  
"Everyone in Atlanta wears tennis shoes. In fact, it is the tennis shoe capital of the world," I said.

"Are you writing that tennis shoe column again? It's been three months since we went to Atlanta. Why don't you write about something else?" my wife asked, peering over the top of the typewriter.

"I feel compelled. Besides, it's that time of year," I answered.  
The last time we went to Atlanta I had worn shoes which were acceptable apparel in the rest of the country, like North Carolina. It had been a mistake.

They knew at once we were out-of-towners. Merchants raised their prices when they saw us come in the door, and we got lousy service in restaurants.

"I'm not going to make that mistake again," I said as we motored down I-95.

My wife was doing a crossword puzzle and did not seem interested in my philosophy of how to get along in Atlanta.

### The Puppy Papers

"I suppose that if you went to Philadelphia, you'd wear some of those pointed-toe fence climbers," she said, looking up from a 10-letter word for an Irish club.

During the trip before, I had realized that something was awry on the second day when a grocery bag boy started making fun of our purchases.

"Oh gawde. You're not still eating quiche? How gauche. No one who's any one in Atlanta still eats quiche. We eat only American foods these days. I just knew you must be from out of town. Look at those shoes," the bag boy rambled on.

In the old days when I was growing up there, only athletes and purse snatchers wore tennis shoes in Atlanta.

Now everyone is wearing them. Some people even wear them to church. It's part of the new folk movement in religion.

"You'll see. We'll get better prices at the stores because of my tennis shoes, and as long as you don't order quiche in the restaurants, we'll be all right," I said, as we entered the city limits.

"What if they have changed the fashions?" she asked, tossing the newspaper and the unfinished crossword into the back seat of the car.

The thought had not entered my mind. I had only brought tennis shoes, and we had planned a formal evening on the town.

"I'm going to feel silly wearing my white Adidas with a tuxedo when everyone else has on their patten leather pumps," I said.

My wife pointed out that I did not own a tuxedo, and it would be foolish to speculate how silly I would feel wearing one with tennis shoes.

As we stalled in the Atlanta traffic, I looked around. Everyone was wearing tennis shoes. Even the lawyers had them on, and everyone knows how fussy they are.

"I guess you're covered," she said.

"Yes, it's a comfort to know that one will be well dressed in Atlanta."

"I still don't know why you waited so long to write about the trip," my wife said.

"I had to wait for the pitching to get better. Now that the Braves are winning, everyone in Raeford will be going to the games.

"They'll have to know what to wear," I said.

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