

What some national leaders say about America's problems

By JoANNE J. FALLS
Agricultural Extension Agent

Newspapers and magazines are enlightening to read because they contain articles which educate us about vital issues that are facing our lives and our nation.

I found a wealth of information in an article written by David Johnson, a reporter in the Washington Bureau of The New York Times newspaper.

Johnson wrote the article for food-for-thought for President Ronald Reagan and the 100th congress just before it met for the second session on Jan. 25. Johnson's article consisted of interviews with some of our Great American Thinkers who were asked what advice they would give the President and Congress in laying out the nation's agenda for 1988 and beyond.

These are excerpts from what some of them said on various subjects. Concerning the illiterate underclass in America, Gertrude Himmelfarb, distinguished professor of history, City University of New York, said:

"Twenty years ago, the one education issue that loomed large was the so-called students rebellion in the universities. Today we have experienced something like a revolution less visible, less dramatic; but I think more important an intellectual revolution that has created almost a class isolated from the culture at large that is producing its own language, its own vocabulary, its own subjects, its own modes of study that has made the university an ivory

tower. In literature literary critics no longer address themselves to books in ways that are meaningful or illuminating to ordinary readers. ... The culture is left rootless. It no longer has professionals it can look to for guidance. It may that a counterrevolution is underway. Certainly the efforts of Education Secretary William Bennett to put education on the national agenda is evidence of that," Himmelfarb concludes.

Barbara Jordan, former Democratic representative from Texas and holder of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Chair in National Policy at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, said:

"Our brains have been so bombarded with how on top of the world we are that we have failed to probe underneath the surface to look at the cancer which is eating from within. I know that among the candidates seeking the office of president most of them say we can't have any new taxes. Well, you have to get money from people who have money. And the only way these

programs are going to be paid for is that the people who can afford to pay for them put the money up and hope that the return is going to be in their good interest. You can't nickel and dime. You are going to have to talk about billions."

Concerning domestic programs, Leroy Keith, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, said:

"Congress and the president need to concentrate more on domestic programs, especially access to education for all American citizens and financial assistance for access to higher education. We need to be working on cost containment on health services, and we need to have welfare reform very desperately. If we don't we are going to have a burgeoning underclass and that's going to be as much of a national security problem as the proliferation of nuclear weapons. I don't think this country can continue to grow and be economically viable with a large segment of its population being underserved and underskilled."



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