

VIEWPOINTS

Life is one waiver after another

One of the things I heard many times from older folks was, "There is something going around."

I've got news for them. I caught it. Not only did I catch it, but in the process I learned a great lesson from it. Failing to follow the directions on cough syrup, such as Robitussin, will plug you up. While I was waiting for my prescriptions to be filled, I said to my friendly pharmacist, Sprite Barbee, "I am plugged up. What do you suggest?"

Without any hesitancy, he replied, "Suddafed or Benadryl should do it."

I said, "Sprite, I don't think we are communicating."

Then we began to communicate. This past Saturday was the first opportunity that I have had to help on the Habitat House. It is also the first time I can remember that I had to sign a waiver as a volunteer, which I didn't read, but was confident that it said, among other things, that I was responsible for my own actions. It was no big deal for me, because I have always had to sign waivers. When I enlisted for service during World War II, I had to sign a waiver; my blood pressure was too high. In fact, they turned me down the first time, only to say, "You go home, come back in 10 days, if it is okay we will take you."

I tried every home remedy known



A View from the Country
Raz Autry

to man to reduce my blood pressure to the acceptable level. When I reported back in 10 days, nothing was said about blood pressure. They slapped a paper in front of me and told me to sign it. I can only assume that it was a waiver, saying if I fell dead, the armed forces wouldn't be held accountable. In fact, I didn't get my blood pressure checked until I was discharged after the war.

My next waiver deal came when I wanted to play football at ECU, known in those days as ECTU. When I approached the coach, he gave me a look of approval. I was 6 feet, weighed 202. Big for a football player during those days. My bubble was burst when he asked where I played my high school football.

After informing him I had never played football in high school, he lost interest immediately saying, "No way, you will get killed on the football field."

I pleaded my case by saying they dropped football when we entered the war at my high school — didn't cut a bit of ice with him. It took me a

full year to convince him that he should give me a chance.

I am fully aware that I got that chance because he was tired of hearing me; besides, he needed another body for a tackling dummy. Naturally, I had to sign another waiver.

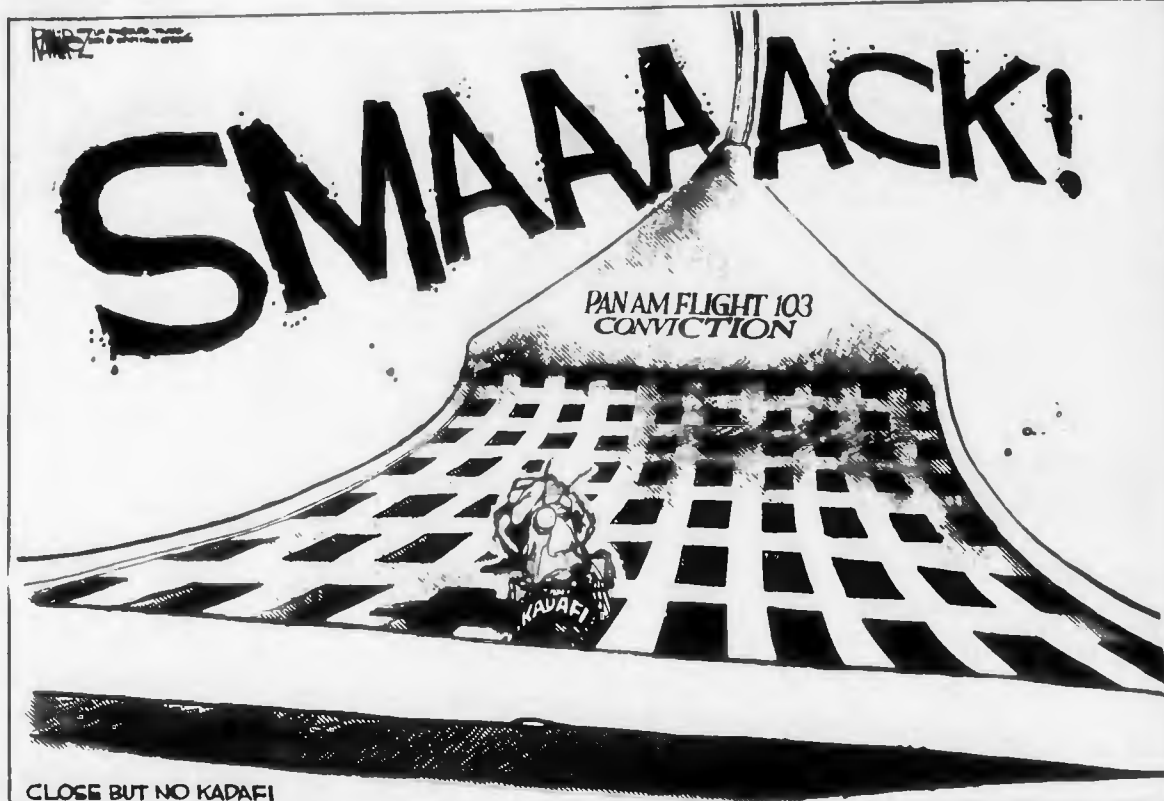
A good friend I met on that football team by the name of John Wyatt taught me how to put on the gear and to block and tackle. The coaches didn't have time to teach me. A human tackling dummy doesn't need a lot of teaching. All one has to do is hold the stuffed bag while 50 linemen hit you. The coach didn't know it but I was an old country boy who had fought all the battles of country life. Finally, he decided he couldn't kill me and I was worthy of a chance. At long last I came off the sixth team. Today that coach is one of my best friends.

Parting thought... A teacher took her first grade class to the playground. They were to participate in a field day. One of her students, a boy, won one of the races. He jumped up and down and yelled, "Me won, me won."

The teacher, feeling it was her duty to teach him to use correct English, said to him, "I won, I won."

The boy looked at her and replied, "Damn if that is so. You didn't even run."

Love those children.



CLOSE BUT NO KADAFI

Not necessarily to our way of thinking

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Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. The street address and phone number will not be published, but are required so we may verify authenticity. The name of the writer and, in some cases, the town the writer is from will be published at the end of the letter.

We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, as well as those that exceed 300 words. We will not publish letters that we consider to be in poor taste or slanderous. In some cases we may add an editor's note as a postscript when we believe a correction, explanation or amplification is warranted. We may also, at our discretion, limit the number of times an individual writer may submit a letter for publication.

Churches on the U.S. government payroll? Ye know not

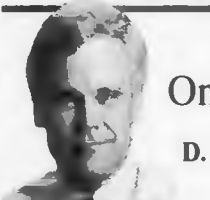
"Give it to the Salvation Army," Robert Bashford remembers his father telling him.

"That way it will end up in the right people's hands. You know where it's going. Right there in a soup bowl, something for somebody hungry to eat."

According to his son, Ryan Bashford didn't have much confidence in the ability of the government to get a very high percentage of his money to the people who really needed it.

A lot of other people who want to help other people and feel a duty to contribute don't have confidence in the government to do the job. Too many bureaucrats. Too much waste. Too many regulations. Not enough focus.

I bet there was another reason Ryan Bashford sent his money to the Salvation Army: The Army's mission went beyond helping people with their im-



One on One
D. G. Martin

mediate problems of food and shelter. To make a lasting difference, the Army always gave something that the government couldn't offer. It gave needy people a chance to make a lasting turnaround — a spiritual one.

All of us have seen the great power of churches and civic organizations to help when they go to work. I remember hearing Katie Dunlap talk about the efforts of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church in Charlotte with a small group of women single parents who were "trapped" in the welfare system.

Helping them prepare for the work place was a tough, complicated pro-

cess. It involved learning unfamiliar work skills and practices, finding self-discipline, and arranging for transportation and childcare. There were many successes, Katie Dunlap told me, but it took a lot of prayer together, and often some kind of real religious transformation.

Such positive results are often based on some kind of new personal commitment to change, one that is based on some kind of religious underpinning.

Our new president must think this way too. He is ready to commit government (taxpayer) resources to help people in need, if those resources are used by "faith based" organizations that can bring their "edge" to the task.

Now, there are all kinds of constitutional and other problems with the President's idea.

But assuming these problems could be overcome, I might be tempted to

give his plan a try. Here's why. It would expand the coalition of people willing to apply government resources to the solution of our country's endemic social problems. If using churches to work on our toughest problems persuades "compassionate conservatives" like our President to support funding for these efforts, why not go along with it?

There is a good reason to resist his tempting proposal. Churches and government are not naturally good partners.

When they keep a proper distance, the government and most religious groups are good for each other. The government safeguards religious freedoms. It protects the rights of all religious groups to organize and operate.

Religious groups help provide a strong moral background and belief system that give citizens the strong fundamental values on which good government is based. These values can give great strength those who serve as our political leaders in challenging times.

But can a church be a church when it works for the government?

I doubt it. Going into business with the government makes the church a government agent — or, even worse, a government dependent.

Here are some of the risks:

1. A government contract becomes a key element of the church's financing plan. The church loses its real independence, becoming increasingly dependent on the government for the resources to survive.

2. The church's service mission gets caught up in books of federal regulation.

3. The church loses sight of one of the fundamental purposes of service — to transform the lives of those who render the service.

4. The church finds itself forced to choose between its own religious principles and the Federal Government's program mandates.

When the church becomes dependent on the government to support its programs, something bad happens.

I have seen it in Europe where the officials of the state supported churches are often like government bureaucrats. They have lost the "edge" that our independent churches and religious leaders still have.

As much as I would like to see new resources applied help solve our country's problems, and as much as I think religious organizations have an "edge" in turning lives around, I am going to be mighty skeptical of any government program that puts churches and their programs on the government payroll.

Dorothy Spruill-Redford will discuss her book "Somerset Homecoming: Recovering a Lost Heritage" with me on North Carolina Bookwatch on UNC-TV at 5 p.m. Sunday, February 11. For more information, check UNC-TV's website (www.uncv.org) under the "Local Programs" category.

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