

Opinions

JIM HEFFNER
 Columnist



There are several of us who write editorials for this newspaper from time to time.

Recently, I wrote an editorial about the new farm subsidy bill and a letter poured in from all over. The letter was from Stephan G. Gibson, Agricultural Extension Agent for Cleveland County, to the Editor, Gary Stewart.

Mr. Gibson points out that my statement that \$260 billion was spent during the decade of the 80's for farm subsidies was incorrect. He sent a government document that shows \$182.9 billion was the correct figure for nine years during that decade, and he is correct although I don't know what happened to the tenth year.

I have no excuse for making that error. I was using several documents as background material and one of them, a report by James Bovard, a policy analyst for the Cato Institute of Washington, D.C. does use \$260 billion. Mr. Bovard may be including administration costs or some other hidden costs I don't know about, but anyway, I apologize for making the error, if in fact it is an error.

Mr. Gibson also takes exception to a further statement I made that food prices would be lower without the subsidy program. He says that's speculation. Well, that information came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the same government agency he uses to back up his argument. A 1989 USDA report concluded: "Without government support consumer (food) prices would fall by about 12%."

"It is a well known fact," says Mr. Gibson, "that U.S. citizens spend much less of their total income on food as compared to people in other countries." Perhaps so, but I submit that food is significantly cheaper in Australia, according to James Bovard, who has authored a book on the subject of farm subsidies. Australia, as far as I know, doesn't use subsidies.

Mr. Gibson goes on to say that it is true that the average U.S. farmer has a million or more in assets, but that doesn't make him a millionaire. He points out that these assets include investments to maintain the farming operation. I would point out that most of Donald Trump's billions are tied up in investments, but that doesn't make him and less a billionaire.

Mr. Gibson closes by saying the material he sent us might be used to undo the damage the editorial did. Come on now, what damage?

The main thrust of the editorial was to show that farm subsidies, in our opinion, are improper and that the land that lies fallow should be used to raise crops. Another point I tried to make is that some of the land big farmers are being paid to idle might not even be suitable for farming.

I should say here that the principle focus of the piece was the huge farms in the Midwest and West. I don't believe we have any mega-farms in Cleveland County, although I could be wrong. I had no intention of pointing an accusing finger at local farmers. That should have been fairly obvious.

According to "Review," a publication of the federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (Dec. 1985), family farms comprise only about one-third of the nation's 2.2 million farms.

I'm sorry, Mr. Gibson, but you haven't convinced me that the farm program is good for the country. Here are a few reasons why:

-The April 1986 Editorial Research report, a publication of the Congressional Quarterly, states the government paid dairy farmers (in 1986) \$11.60 for every 100 pounds of milk not sold on the open market.

-The USDA, on March 28, 1986, accepted bids from 13,988 dairy farmers to have 952,000 of their milk cows slaughtered over and 18-month period. The government agreed to buy 400,000 pounds of the meat in an attempt to keep it off market.

-In 1988, the government required farmers to leave 27.5% of their wheat land unplanted. A total of 29,300,000 acres were left idle that year.

-In 1989, the USDA required cotton farmers to leave 25% of their land idle in order to qualify for subsidies.

In conclusion, I will stick by the editorial. I simply believe it is better for all concerned if farmers are allowed to use all their resources. It seems to me they'd make more money. The idea that consumer prices wouldn't come down just doesn't wash.

Here's a final thought to ponder. We all get up in arms when we hear how OPEC keeps oil prices so high by cutting production and withholding their products from the market.

Aren't we talking about a similar strategy?

Cartoonitorial



This, that, and the other

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - A couple of weeks ago we started a new feature called "You Want To Know." It runs each Thursday on the front page and our purpose in beginning it was to invite readers to ask questions about the school system, city government, or anything else that would be of interest to readers.

The column has been more popular than we ever imagined. We appreciate those who have written in questions and we'll try our best to get all of them answered, but we can see now that some questions may take some time. So, if your question doesn't appear in this week's paper, it doesn't mean we've trashed it. We probably just haven't gotten around to getting it answered.

However, we want to point out that we do not intend to get answers for people who are trying to use this service as a means of embarrassing anyone, or trying to stir up a controversy. And, we don't intend to get answers to questions if, in our opinion, the person requesting it could get it himself but does not want his identity known. We will not accept anonymous phone calls or letters. If we're going to spend our time to get questions answered, we're going to know who we're doing it for.

So, if you have a legitimate question and don't know how to go about getting an answer, feel free to write the Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, N.C. 28086. We'll try our best to help you.

ABOUT TRANSFERS - There are a lot of rumors going around that the school board has granted transfers for vice chairman Priscilla Mauney's children to remain at North School.

If the first phase of the redistricting map is adopted, Mrs. Mauney's residence will be in the East attendance zone. However, the school board has not adopted any new attendance zones yet and the board has not granted any transfers because of possible reassignment.

The two transfers granted at the most recent board meeting were out-of-district transfers, one involving a local high school student who is transferring to Shelby and the other a child who lives in York, S.C., and who is moving to Kings Mountain but wants to finish this year in York.

CLARIFICATION - School board member Ronnie Hawkins' proposal to leave students living on North Piedmont at North is for a small area of North Piedmont from the Linwood Road light to McAbee's Store. It is not for the entire length of Piedmont Avenue.

Hawkins' rationale for the request is that students living on North Piedmont between Linwood and McAbee's can step across the street and be on North School property. His request does not include students in the First and Second Street areas.

THOSE COOKIES WERE GOOD! - I was standing out near the mail box recently when the mail man came pulling up. He handed the mail out the window and said, "Tell your wife I really appreciated those

GARY STEWART
 Editor



cookies she made me at Christmas." So, when my wife got home from work that afternoon, I told her.

"What cookies?" she asked. "I didn't make cookies for the mail man."

It seems Karen Roper, one of my wife's friends at McGill Clinic, had made some cookies for us and had told our friend and neighbor, Kim Birkovich, to leave them in our mail box on her way home.

Thanks, Karen. It's the thought that counts!

A MOTHER'S PRAYER - Sometimes the best way to deal with emotion is to write it down. A Kings Mountain mother who worries about her son in Operation Desert Storm expressed these thoughts:

"My son:
 "While I sit here watching the news, I wipe tears away and look at your picture. I love you so much and I am so worried that now I can't send this letter.
 "On bended knee I pray to our Great Lord in Heaven to keep you safe. We love you so very much. I cannot imagine life without you.
 "Lord, please bring my son home to me, safe in body and mind. Amen."

HOW TO RECOGNIZE RECESSION - Dwight Frady, our cohort at the Belmont Banner, recently wrote about the recession.

A lot of folks are counting their pennies, he said, and he's figured out how we can tell if we're in a recession.

For instance, he said the economy is bad when:
 --The next rainbow you see is in black and white.
 --When you drop a dime and chase it for a block, see it roll down a storm drain, and you take the storm drain off and dive in.
 --When you start wearing more hand-me-down clothes. This is particularly bad for a young boy who has three older sisters who wear a lot of dresses.
 --When your ex-wife calls and tells you she has to have more money so she can dress up nice for her current boyfriend or sugar daddy.
 --When your husband, who's toting a suitcase, tells you he'll be "right back" from a trip to the convenience store to buy a pack of cigarettes.
 --When Monique, the phone confessions girl, whispers to you in one of those TV commercials that she's now dishing out her innermost secrets and desires at "half price."

Your Right To Say It

Letters to President

(ED. NOTE -Cindi Wood's sixth grade classes at KM Middle School have been following the situation in the Middle East since school began in August. After the outbreak of war last week, they wrote letters to President Bush expressing their feelings about the Persian Gulf War. Here are some of the letters).

Dear President Bush,
 I am a 6th grader at Kings Mountain Middle School. At first I thought you made the wrong decision, and I was very upset. But Wednesday, January 16, I saw another side of you. I was shocked how you really felt about all of this. I know you've tried to make peace. I must say, "job well done!"

Tamra Webber

Dear President Bush,
 I think you did the right thing when you took us into war. I don't think Saddam Hussein would have ever given up. Our class has been talking about the fact that you are probably under a lot of pressure. We are with you all the way and I feel like you will make the right decisions.

Bethany Jimison

Dear President Bush,
 I think you could have done better at trying to keep us out of war. You know, talking things out is always better than killing each other.

Johnny Surratt Jr.

Dear President Bush,
 I agree with your decision about the war. The only way we could get Hussein to leave was to give him a deadline. But he didn't leave so now we are having war. I feel bad about all of the men and women that may get killed. I really hope the war will be over soon. I think we will get Hussein with the air war.

Wendy Blanton

Dear President Bush,
 I want to tell you that I think you have had a lot of pressure on you these last days. I agree with you because there was no other way Hussein would have thought that we mean business. Maybe he will know now.

Misty Walker

Dear President Bush,
 I am glad that you decided to go to war. You had to do it. I think it was a good decision because Saddam was not going to leave. You made the best decision and I know you probably had a lot of thought and concern about the situation. I think it must have been hard on you. Thanks for making the best decision.

Robert Ormand

Dear President Bush,
 I am glad you decided to go to war with Iraq because if we did not, Saddam Hussein would keep on taking over small countries until he was the ruler of the world. I have been watching TV since about 7 p.m. when I first heard they had just started dropping bombs over Bagdad. I hope it is over real soon.

Rhea Herndon

Dear President Bush,
 I am glad you are a caring president. I support you all the way on your decision. I am thinking about you and all of the troops in Saudi Arabia. I know we can win this war. I just wish all of this would have never happened. Please know that I am behind the U.S. all the way to the very end.

Crystal Galloway

Dear President Bush,
 You made the right decision when you declared war. If you had not made that decision, he would have taken over another country five years later probably. I just want you to know that you have a "thumbs up" from me. I hope we win this war against them to make peace in the world. May God be with you.

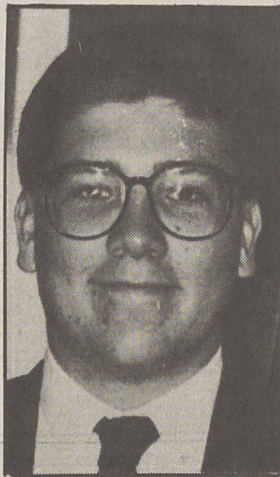
Demetrick Berry

Today's Bible Verse

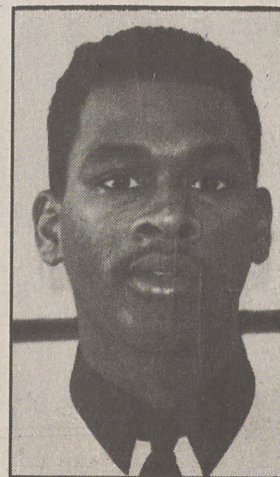
"He shall judge between the nations,
 And shall rebuke many people;
 They shall beat their swords
 into plowshares,
 And their spears into pruning hooks;
 Nation shall not life up sword against
 nation,
 Neither shall they learn war anymore."
 --Isaiah 2:4

Sidewalk Survey

How do you feel about War in the Gulf?



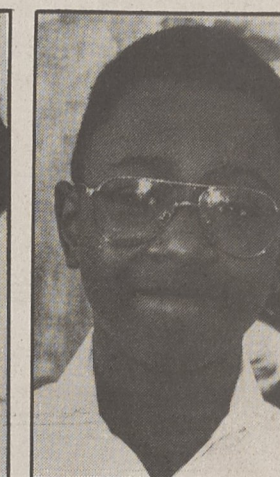
ROBBIE WILSON
 KMHS Student Council President
 I support President Bush 100 percent.



ROBBIE CANSLER
 (12TH GRADER)
 This is really scripture fulfilled itself. God may be letting this happen to get us together for His rapture.



TATIANA BERRY
 (8TH GRADER)
 I think it's a good idea to finally start it. Now they can get it over with and come home.



ROBERT CURRY JR.
 (7TH GRADER)
 I really don't have close relatives there but I'm sorry our soldiers are there. I wish Saddam would come to his senses.



STACIE WOMACK
 (9TH GRADER)
 I don't think it's called for because I don't think you should risk lives for war.



ETHEL BUMGARDNER
 KMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
 I support our troops 100 percent. My daughter-in-law's brother, Frankie Carter, is serving in Saudi Arabia.

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