

Opinions

Cartoonitorial

Your Right To Say It

JIM HEFFNER

Columnist



Post time

They're off and running! Don't you just hate this time of year? Shake a bush just about anywhere and a politician will drop out. It's scary.

I get especially tired of national and state elections. It seems to me that the television ads and news coverage are endless. They ought to pass a law that says TV ads can run for ten minutes a day and no more. I know that's wishing for utopia but all things are possible.

I do find that people in general are looking at politicians in a different light this year. Conservatives have been saying for years that news coverage is biased when a clear-cut liberal is in the race. Now others are noticing.

My keeper has never been interested in politics, though she does keep abreast of current events, but the other morning, Katy Couric, of the NBC morning show was interviewing someone in Homestead, Florida. I think it might have been the city manager. The first five questions out of her mouth concerned whether Floridians were satisfied with how the president had reacted to the disaster created by hurricane Andrew.

Ann perked up right away, much to my surprise. "Listen to her!" she isn't even interested in the welfare of those unfortunate people. All she wants to do is stir something up against Bush." This from a woman who idolizes Katy Couric.

After she told me the same thing had been going on for days, I got interested and made it a point to watch Couric all week. She continued with the same type questions to anybody in Florida who would listen. Finally, Thursday morning, Katy interviewed two officials, again in Homestead, and one of them gave her the answers she'd been seeking all week. Yes, Floridians were unhappy with the President's actions regarding Andrew's devastation, and yes he thought the two trips by Bush to South Florida were politically motivated.

Remarkably, the same gentleman tripped himself by saying that Clinton's visit to the area had nothing to do with politics. He came as a "concerned citizen."

Then there was the Emmy awards show. A show that was described by CNN as a three-hour political advertisement for the Democratic Party.

Jay Leno commented that he had trouble deciding whether he was watching the Emmys or the Democratic convention.

Someone counted 28 shots at Dan Quayle, with Candace Bergen leading the pack.

You will remember that the Vice-president had a few things to say about the morality of depicting an illegitimate birth on the Murphy Brown show a few months ago. Bergen and Diane English were enraged with the Quayle comment and took every opportunity to bash him.

I'm no Dan Quayle fan, but I must give credit where credit is due. He stood up the next day and called them liars, saying winning an Emmy is not a license to lie. I liked that response.

Bergen and English, along with most in Hollywood who involve themselves in political campaigns, are being referred to these days as the "Cultural Elite." But that just applies to Democrats. You never hear Charlton Heston and Tom Selleck described as part of the "Cultural Elite."

I have heard that the first Murphy Brown show of the new TV season will be a response to the Quayle remarks. Television loses me when it gets away from entertaining or informing and ventures into the social arena.

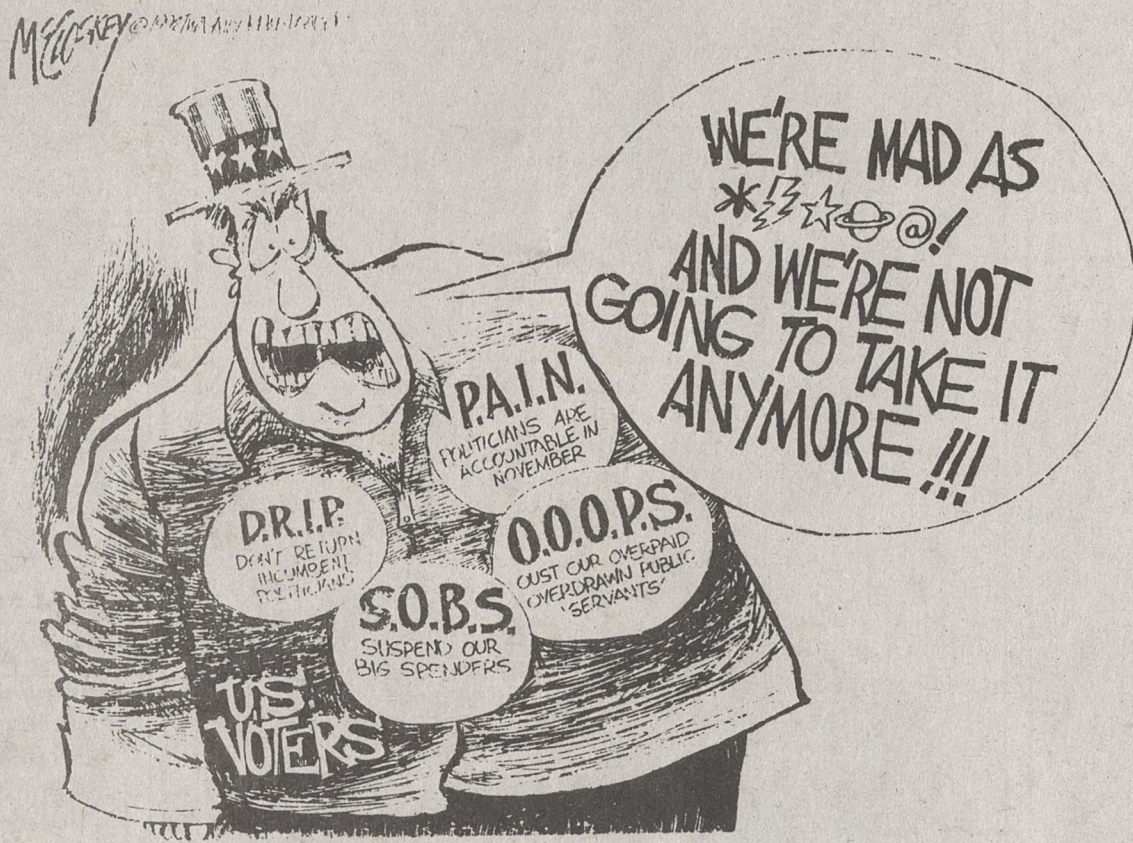
Remember "Designing Women" after Clarence Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court? They did a segment on sexual harassment and tried their utmost to crucify Thomas and the Judicial Committee that confirmed him.

That was Linda Bloodworth-Thomason's political contribution. She owns the show and is a bleeding heart in the classical sense. She is also from Arkansas and produced a Bill Clinton-is-the-greatest-man-in-the-world film for the Democratic National Convention. I thought I would throw up.

I wonder what makes those celebrity types think they're any smarter than anyone else? By and large they are the most immoral group of people in the country. Smart? Most of them act like they flunked first grade several times.

Sometimes I just wish they'd all go away and leave us alone, but I suppose that isn't likely to happen. After all, it is that time of year. The time when all the loonies are loose and running wide open.

I wish I was filthy rich, I'd buy an island somewhere and hibernate every fourth year.



Guest Column - By Thomas C. Goolsby

Repeal prison cap

Prison is no longer a deterrent to criminals in North Carolina. The Prison Cap and the Consent Decree entered into with our state's criminals has forced the Department of Corrections to release many prisoners when they have served only a fraction of their time.

Crime in North Carolina is increasing at an alarming rate. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges are sending more criminals to prison than ever before, but the Prison Cap and Consent Decree are frustrating their hard work. The General Assembly, with the support and advice of the current Attorney General, did a great disservice to our state by unnecessarily capping our prison population and by entering into a consent decree that is costing North Carolina millions of dollars.

The alleged impending "federal takeover" due to prison overcrowding is sighted by N.C. Attorney General Thornburg as the main reason for our state's adoption of the Consent Decree. However, the Attorney General's office has never offered any evidence showing an effort by the U.S. Justice Department to takeover our prison system. When other states were fighting and winning cases with similar allegations of prison overcrowding, North Carolina simply gave the criminals what they wanted. The federal court records show that the Attorney General's office made a valiant effort at first, but quickly gave up the fight. They agreed to the inmates' demands of reduced prison numbers, nicer living conditions, better toilet facilities and tastier food. The inmates agreed not to riot and tear everything up. The cost of the multi-million dollar settlement was and is still being paid for by the North Carolina taxpayers. Recently, when a candidate for the Attorney General's office questioned Thornburg's actions, Thornburg's response was that the candidate was simply "blowing hot air."

The result of Thornburg's policies and the actions by the General Assembly are that criminals now spend only about one month in jail for every year of their prison sentences. There is nothing complicated about why this occurs. Under the Prison Cap and the Consent Decree, the state has been forced to limit North Carolina's prison population. Once the limit on the number of inmates allowed into the prison system is reached, the Parole Commission starts releasing prisoners until the prison system is below the limit. Currently, only 20,000 inmates can be held in our state's prisons, no matter how many criminals are sentenced to prison for their crimes.

The result is that no one can tell you how long a criminal will actually stay in jail in North Carolina. The primary determinate as to how much time an inmate will stay in prison is simply how many other criminals are waiting on the inmate's prison cell. This is part of the reason that a criminal ends up serving only one month for every year of his sentence. No matter how good a job law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges do, they cannot stop the ef-

fects of the Consent Decree and Prison Cap.

These criminals who are released early are not going back to the streets of North Carolina as rehabilitated, law-abiding citizens. According to statistics from the Department of Corrections, the recidivism rate for inmates has gone up 40 percent, since the Prison Cap was imposed and the Consent Decree was implemented. This means that the convicted criminals who are released early have gone right back to their lives of crime. At the same time, the amount of time served in prison, relative to the sentence imposed in the courtroom, has declined by 50 percent while there has been a 45 percent increase in reported crime. The result is that the innocent people of North Carolina continue to suffer while criminals go free.

Those like Attorney General Thornburg, who are arguing for the continuation of the Prison Cap and the Consent Decree, say that we must keep it in place because our prisons are full and we have entered into a federal settlement with our prisons' inmates. However, the facts do not support these contentions.

In January of this year, U.S. Attorney General Barr stated that he wanted to help the states operate at the same capacity level as the federal prisons. The federal prisons currently operate at 165 percent capacity and do so without violating the Constitution's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. If North Carolina took the help that Barr is offering, it is possible that we could take an additional 13,000 criminals off our cities' streets. We could also save almost half a billion dollars in new construction costs.

Repealing the Prison Cap is the first step. Next, we must tackle the federal consent decree entered into between North Carolina and the prisons' inmates. Once the Cap is lifted, parts of the decree will be violated. However, paragraph 14 of the decree allows North Carolina to seek modifications due to "unforeseen emergencies." Our state's unexpected and ever increasing crime and recidivism rates cry out as "unforeseen emergencies."

The repeal of the Prison Cap and modification of the Consent Decree are necessary requirements for attacking our current crisis in crime. Only by locking up criminals and keeping them off our streets can we make our cities and towns safe places to live. The problems faced by the innocent citizens of North Carolina must be realistically addressed. Their cries for help are not simply "hot air." Society must have the ability to sanction those who choose to break its laws. Currently, in North Carolina, we do not have such an ability and our high crime rate should surprise no one.

Thomas C. Goolsby
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Thanks, KM

To the Editor:

Ten years ago, my family and I moved to Kings Mountain. First Presbyterian Church on East King Street had called me to be minister. Now, we move to Clarksburg, West Virginia, in order for me to accept the call extended by First Presbyterian Church there.

We leave Kings Mountain with a rich treasure of friendships and memories. My wife, Linda, has taught in the Kings Mountain District Schools, our children have been educated here: Andrew and Bethan graduated from high school, James and Annalouise began in kindergarten. Like so many families, the children were involved in many activities and adventures, which allowed us to get to know many families in Kings Mountain. We all are glad that Kings Mountain has been our home.

We Fausts leave with a profound sense of gratitude for having had the privilege of serving in the name of Christ Jesus, this wonderful First Presbyterian congregation. We leave with a deep thankfulness for having been able to participate "city-wide" in genuine Christian witness and mission. We leave with deep and vital thanksgiving in having been part of a town that genuinely cares about the "neighbors," the "sisters and brothers," and the "sojourners." I speak of the generous and responsible mission that Kings Mountain carries out through its KM Ministerial Association Crisis Ministry, through the wider strength of the KM United Way, and through the many important volunteer organizations that serve to make Kings Mountain one of the premier cities in North Carolina.

I believe most firmly that as Christian individuals and their Christian churches in a city offer united and cooperative mission; as people enact that which scripture tells us is the mark of being a Christian; "the love that Christians have for one another"; then a most significant word, a lasting real word is given irrevocably to the whole community.

Thank you for allowing me to share in such a mission with so many of you. Thank you for calling my family and me, "friend."

Eric M. Faust

Praise for band

To the editor:

I would like to praise the Kings Mountain High School Marching Band.

They started out in August, before school started, and was practicing on the field at an early 9 a.m. until 11 a.m., and went back at 6 p.m. and stayed until late 8:30 p.m. learning to march and play their music for our entertainment at the upcoming football games, for both stadium and half-time enjoyment.

It got very hot and tiring for them at times, but as dedicated as these students are to their band, they till pushed on.

These 146 young men and women need some sort of recognition, as do Chris Cole and Gil Doggett. The band program at the high school is well organized and will be a treat at the upcoming games.

I am very proud of the efforts of these individuals, and anyone with a child in this band should be proud also. So, look forward to a great sounding, and huge band this year.

Denise Huckabee

TOP 10 COUNTRY SONGS OF ALL TIME

- "He Stopped Loving Her Today" -George Jones
- "When I Call Your Name" -Vince Gill
- "The Dance" -Garth Brooks
- "Crazy" -Patsy Cline
- "I Fall To Pieces" -Patsy Cline
- "El Paso" -Marty Robbins
- "Your Cheatin' Heart" -Hank Williams
- "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" -Hank Williams
- "Sixteen Tons" -Tennessee Ernie Ford
- "Lovesick Blues" -Hank Williams

Source - Country American Magazine, September 1992

Again we hear the 'Voices of America'

President Harry Truman called it "our four-yearly spasm." That's right. It's presidential election time again. And as part of the ritual, we tune in night after night to see and hear the latest from candidates George Bush and Bill Clinton. Electronic media keep us connected to the candidates by giving us up-to-the-minute reports on where they stand on the issues, as well as the most intricate details of their lives.

It wasn't always so easy for Americans to get a feel for their presidential candidates. Before radio and television brought candidates into our homes, Americans formed their opinions in a more rudimentary fashion — often based on slogans or catch phrases. A candidate's entire campaign could rise or fall on a catchy saying emblazoned on a banner or button, or chanted by citizens who wanted to

make their views known in a readily understandable form.

According to political columnist William Safire, "good slogans have rhyme, rhythm, or alliteration to make them memorable; great slogans may have none of these, but touch a chord of memory, release pent-up hatreds, or stir men's better natures." In his "Political Dictionary," Safire made note of many themes that recur in slogans, including ones that are promissory (\$20 a Day and Roast Beef); warnings (Coolidge or Chaos); a call for change (Had Enough?); and challenging (Fifty-Four Forty or Fight).

While perhaps not the most memorable slogan, one of the earliest recorded campaign slogans appeared in the 1828 presidential campaign of Andrew Jackson. "The gallant & successful defender of New Orleans" re-

ferred to Jackson's heroism in the War of 1812, and it painted a reassuring picture of strength and courage for voters.

Slogans that touch on our greatest fears can be particularly powerful tools during an election. In 1916, the slogan "He kept us out of war" helped propel Woodrow Wilson to a second presidential term. While Americans anxious to avoid war took stock in Wilson's slogan, that faith did not keep us isolated from the conflict in Europe. Five months after the election, America entered World War I.

And Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 campaign slogan underscored America's economic insecurity by reminding voters that he was not at the helm when the Great Depression started in 1929 — "In Hoover we trusted, now we are busted."

What makes slogans so popular?

According to Thomas A. Bailey, one of the foremost experts on campaign slogans and author of the book "Voices of America," slogans are "about the only medium through which large numbers of ordinary citizens can express their views personally and repeatedly for or against given candidates or propositions."

Others are not so charitable about the popularity of these often catchy phrases. "Voices of America" quotes several wits on the subject. One anonymous observer of slogans — and human nature — declared that slogans are "the good old American substitute for the facts." Wendell Willkie, the Republican challenger to FDR in the 1940 presidential campaign, remarked that "a good catchword can obscure analysis for fifty years."