

Opinion

BOB McRAE

Superintendent
Kings Mountain Schools



Reading the key to school success

In today's column I will complete my mid-year report on our board of education's goals for 1995-96 by looking at goals #3 and 4.

(3) - Implement the recommendations of the Reading Program Study Committee.

Under the leadership of Jane King and with the assistance of our faculties, we have moved forward to implement several of the recommendations of the Study Committee. The committee made seven recommendations regarding the improvement of reading instruction in the elementary schools. Several strategies accompanied each recommendation. There were 19 recommendations to improve reading at Kings Mountain Middle School.

Work is in process on each of the seven K-5 recommendations. Many of the strategies are either fully in place or partially complete. Among the most notable initiatives this year are an additional \$10 per child for reading materials, the training of additional personnel in ways to work with at-risk readers, the piloting of a transition classroom at North School to focus on at-risk readers, reduction of class sizes using state and local funds, the development of a K-3 reading assessment instrument and instruction manual, the development of specific strategies for parents to use in helping their children improve reading skills, the expansion of the school day by 20 minutes with the additional time being devoted to reading, and the implementation of a major staff development program, Frameworks, to promote successful instruction.

Among the most notable initiatives at the Middle School are the purchase of new books with an additional \$5 per child allotment, an increase in the number of computer labs available to assist students in improving reading skills, Frameworks training, expansion of the Accelerated Reader program, and extensive reading curriculum work.

We probably have been as attentive to this goal as any we have ever had as we view reading as the key to all other success in school. It is imperative that our children learn to read, and that is our first priority. I feel very good about our progress on this goal and appreciate the great work our schools are doing in this regard.

(4) - Continue to promote positive, effective communications to inform and involve our parents and community.

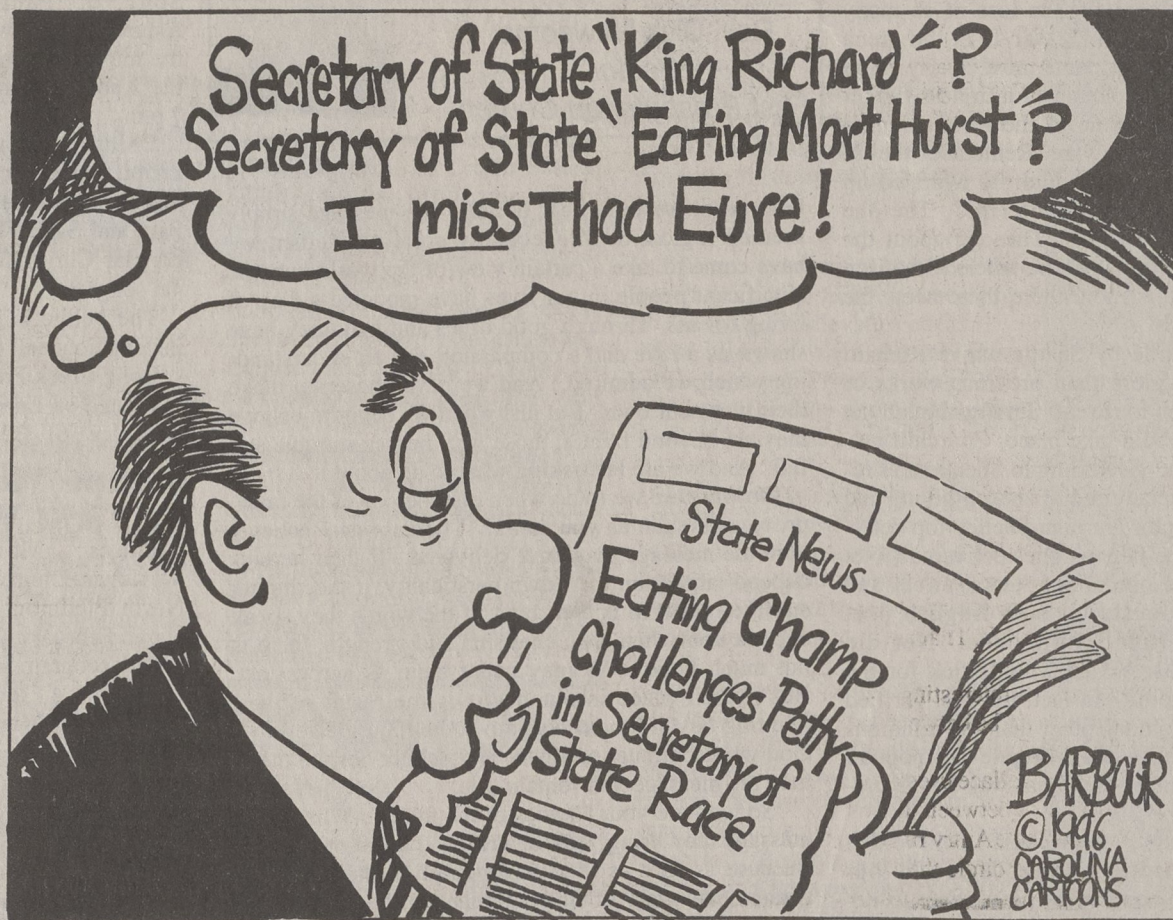
Our board wants very much to achieve this goal each year. Our schools do many things to help keep our school community informed. Just to name a few - special Parent Involvement Week activities, specific parent conference days in the calendar with adjusted schedules to meet the needs of working parents, recorded messages to parents from the middle and high schools by way of the Phonemaster system, strong parent-teacher organizations at K-8 schools and an active athletic boosters club at the high school, systemwide annual report/school calendar, Parents Advisory Council, numerous newspaper articles, newsletters from schools to home, regular opportunity for public input at board meetings, quarterly report cards and regular interim progress reports - this list goes on.

Recently the board added community relations responsibilities to the role of vocational education - now called workforce development - director. Sheila Sisk, who has been in the system for several years, is currently handling those responsibilities. She will be working to improve our publications, to efficiently manage our community schools program, and to promote school system news in the various media and with community groups.

I have never worked in a system where so much effort is given to providing information and receiving input. It is as much to our advantage to have strong communications with our parents and other community members as it is to the advantage of those people. The board has proven a willingness to consider the opinions of the community in making its decisions. Obviously, it cannot adopt the personal wishes of every patron when making a decision. It does, however, try to make decisions which first and foremost are for the benefit of our students but also are reflective of our community's expectations. I think you will see that trend continue.

The goal setting process which our board undertakes each spring is most beneficial to those of us who work in the Kings Mountain District Schools. The board goals give us direction in our daily efforts and especially help us set priorities at budget development time. I think we have made acceptable progress on each goal at this point in time. We will strive to continue that progress throughout the remainder of the year. Goal setting helps us pursue excellence which, as you know, is no accident!

Cartoonitorial



Our View

Hunt did good job in Raleigh

After 22 years in the North Carolina 48th District House of Representatives Lattimore's Dr. Jack Hunt is retiring from politics.

His shoes will be tough to fill.

Hunt is the third veteran legislator from Cleveland County to leave office in two years, following former Senator J. Ollie Harris of Kings Mountain, who served 20 years, and former Rep. Edith Lutz of Polkville who lost her bid for reelection after 18 years in the House.

"We were a very respected team in Raleigh and worked together well," said Harris, recalling the long service of Hunt, Helen Rhyne Marvin, Marshall Rauch, Lutz and Bob Falls for this district.

"It takes teamwork to get bills passed," said Harris. Without Hunt, Democratic party leaders must now scramble to find another candidate for the House before the filing deadline February 5 to face GOP opposition.

Shelby Realtor and Democrat Andy Dedmon, who ran unsuccessfully for the House in 1994, has already filed for one of the 48th District seats. Former Shelby City Councilwoman and Democrat Aileen Ford has also filed.

Hunt rose to a position of leadership in the General Assembly as speaker pro tem, twice elected by fellow legislators, and was the House rules chairman four terms and chairman for one term on the committee of military and veterans affairs.

He will be remembered for his strong leadership in the statewide teaching fellows scholarship program and a similar program for nursing students. In the mid 1980s he helped change the state's tax distribution rules to bring more revenue to small counties.

As a result Hunt says that Cleveland County for the last 10 years got about \$1.5 million a year which has

helped hold down property taxes.

"I guess you could say I was in the inner sanctum of that effort and we did it."

His most staunch supporter in the state capitol was his wife, Ruby Crowder Hunt. Politicians sat around her breakfast table in the early years of his tenure in the Hunt apartment in Raleigh to settle issues. He and Ruby will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in June.

A retired Lattimore dentist, Hunt operates The Roundup Store in Shelby and Forest City and raises beet cattle. His family includes five daughters, all married, and 11 grandchildren.

Folks traveling the Lattimore road by Jack Hunt's spacious country home can often see the grandchildren playing on the lawn.

"There comes a time in our lives that we have to set priorities," said Hunt who is retiring for personal reasons.

"I want to thank all the people in my district who supported me over the years. I do appreciate them and I love the people in this district," he said.

Hunt plans to keep his hand in politics but only at the local level around his company stove. He says he has no idea who will come out between now and the last filing day.

The family is active in First Baptist Church of Shelby. Hunt's activity in the state legislature has prevented him from activity in the Lions, Masons and Shriners. Now he can become more involved.

At 73 Hunt has set priorities, a noble gesture for anyone younger or older.

We commend him for the long service he has given to all his constituents and wish he and his family God speed.

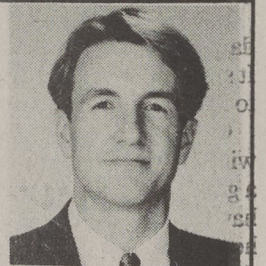
QUOTES AND QUOTED

"My insistence on balancing the federal budget stems from my belief as a mother that I am responsible for providing for a better future for my children and grandchildren. For over 25 years our government has failed to balance its budget. Therefore, I am proud of the New Majority's solid commitment to an honest seven-year balanced budget. Everyone may not agree with our actions, but they must agree that we have successfully focused the Congress on the issue of curbing out of control government spending. Armed with this new focus, we must now put our partisan differences behind us and work together, both Democrats and Republicans, to balance the federal budget. American families sit down at the kitchen table and balance their checkbooks...it is time our government does so as well. Working together we can accomplish this goal."

-U.S. Representative Sue Myrick

THOM GOOLSBY

Syndicated
Columnist



Over \$70 million spent on incentives

As a hard-working North Carolina citizen, you'll be angry to learn that the state has no way of knowing whether any jobs were created by a \$70 million taxpayer giveaway for so-called "job creation incentives."

Over an 18-month period, 53 companies received monetary inducements from Governor Jim Hunt's Industrial Recruitment Competitive Fund and an additional \$60 million from a variety of giveaway programs from other state agencies. This multi-million-dollar spendfest began in late 1993 and ended in mid-1995.

Politicians and their bands of merry henchmen bounded from one chamber of commerce to another in praise of themselves and their "business partners," claiming that the \$70 million was being given out in return for promises from the recipients to create 8,485 new jobs.

There is, however, one glaring problem. The genius who drafted the appropriations bills never bothered to institute any checks and balances in order to track whether the companies kept their promises to create new jobs. Instead, approximately \$8,250 of taxpayer money was handed out for each and every "promise" to create a job.

Muck-covered bureaucrats at the Department of Commerce are now trying to play catch-up after the Charlotte Observer inquired into the lack of any accountability for taxpayer dollars. In response, 53 letters were recently mailed to the companies who had received tens of millions of dollars in state incentive money. Dave Phillips, Secretary of Commerce, released a press statement saying, "We have a responsibility to track these jobs and we hope the companies that have received these grants understand that responsibility." Secretary Phillips' statement stands as a shining example of just what it means to be "a day late and a dollar (actually 70 million dollars) short."

The Department of Commerce has now started checking the reports filed with the Employment Security Commission where North Carolina companies reveal their job totals in quarterly statements. However, under state law these reports are confidential, meaning that taxpayers have no way of discovering if, and to what extent, their dollars have been wasted buying promises to create jobs.

Such confidentiality laws have forced officials at the Department of Commerce to beg the recipients of the multi-million dollar incentives to waive their rights to secrecy. The Department's Deputy Secretary, Bob Goodale, says that he "believes most companies will cooperate." Talk about closing the barn door after the horses have left!

Can you imagine running your own finances or attempting to manage a business in the same slipshod manner in which our tax dollars are handled? Over \$70 million of hard-earned taxpayer money has been given away to businesses in return for mere promises to create jobs; and no one can tell us how our money was spent! If not for press inquiries, we might never have been made aware of this problem. Further, unless the 53 companies who received the incentives waive their rights to secrecy, we may never know what happened with our money.

Since the Republicans gained control of the General Assembly, new guidelines went into effect stipulating that companies will only receive money as long as they create jobs. The changes are welcomed, however, serious questions remain concerning the tens of millions of taxpayer dollars that have already been handed out.

The giveaway of tax dollars by politicians has been aptly described as "spending money like drunken sailors on leave." As the saying goes, "A million here, and a million there - pretty soon you're talking about real money."

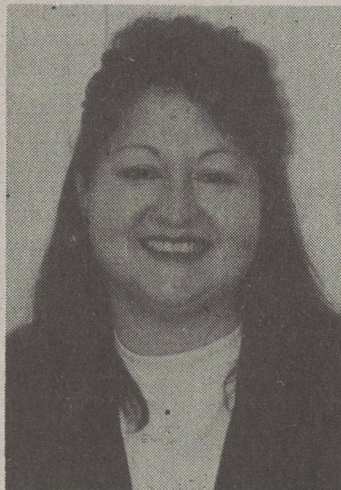
Who knows what a close examination of our state's \$10 billion budget would reveal?

(ED. NOTE - Opinions expressed in editorials, letters to the editor, columns, guest columns, cartoons, etc., are those of the writer and are not necessarily the views of the Kings Mountain Herald and other Republic Newspapers.)

Sidewalk Survey

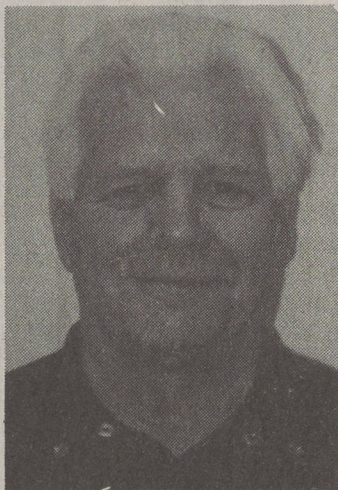
• By Elizabeth Stewart

What did you think of the President's State of the Union message?



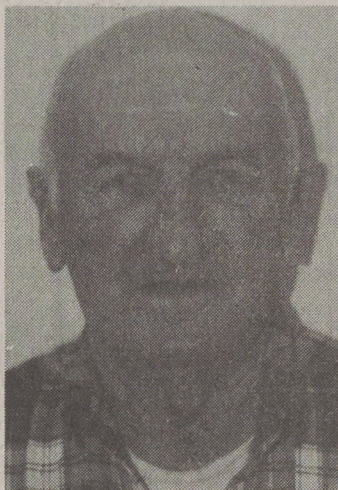
JUDY HOWELL

His statements were ambiguous and non-committal. I feel he has ridden the fence so long that he's afraid to make a definite stand on important issues like the economy and social reform.



ARTHUR ALLEN

President Clinton's speech was very good. He is avoiding the issues like the economy and Medicare but if he lives up to his expectations he might be okay.



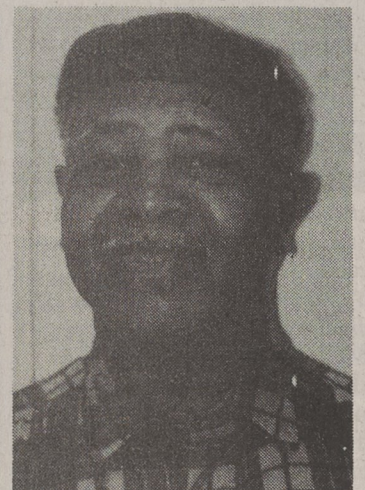
FRED OWENS

I don't think much of President Bill Clinton's leadership. His State of the Union speech was fine.



EUNICE SMITH

I thought the President's speech was very good and I enjoyed listening to his comments and support his leadership of the country.



JOE R. SMITH

Wonderful! If all of us would get together on one accord we could get something done in the United States of America.

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