

Opinion

Amid state budget cuts, welfare gets more

By REP. GEORGE HASAY

Despite the summer recess, business is anything but finished at the state Capitol. When the Legislature returns this fall, there are many issues that are going to force some unwilling members of the General Assembly to sit down, roll up their sleeves, and face the tough decisions that they didn't want to face prior to the summer break and the fall election.

To begin with, the budget — although passed and signed into law before the deadline — is anything but complete. Passing a budget by deadline for the sake of timeliness is not the most prudent way to do business. A better plan may have been formulated had the process truly been open and democratic and had negotiations started earlier.

However, to belabor this point is almost moot. But to whine about something that is a waste of my tax dollars and your tax dollars is worth every bit of my energy and effort.

With that said, the recently passed \$14.2 billion budget plan increased basic education funding a mere pittance, which is still not enough for school district spending. Prisons locked out far better with a whopping \$40 million for corrections. It also reduces appropriations for the 14 state-owned universities (Bloomsburg University and Penn State University). Similarly, state agencies saw their operating budgets cut by five percent. Despite cuts in higher education and other priority areas, welfare spending was raised by almost three percent.

The time for a change of an outdated "no-where" welfare system is more important now than ever before. It is unfortunate and sad that elected legislators are unwilling and have been unwilling to take the political courage and lead the welfare reform changes. I believe that the majority of "the people" are ready to move forward and make progressive, positive changes to an antiquated welfare system and I wholeheartedly believe that the majority of welfare recipients would become productive, contributing members of our society. However, these folks are smart Americans, if the government is going to pay them to stay home, then that's as good as a lifetime retirement. This welfare program for our young, our youth,

must change. The number grows and grows each year.

The legislature could have produced this change with work incentive measures for public assistance recipients, by an extensive, three-year pilot work training program, and governmental assistance to help pay for the health insurance of recipients who acquire an entry-level job.

Feeding money to an insatiable and ineffective system is a blatant slap in the face to Pennsylvania's working taxpayers. This budget appropriates an additional \$40 million to a correctional system to build four new prisons. I introduced legislation that would let certain non-violent state prisoners participate in pick up litter projects. It was a two-bill package targeted at individuals in motivational boot camp and pre-release and minimum-risk programs.

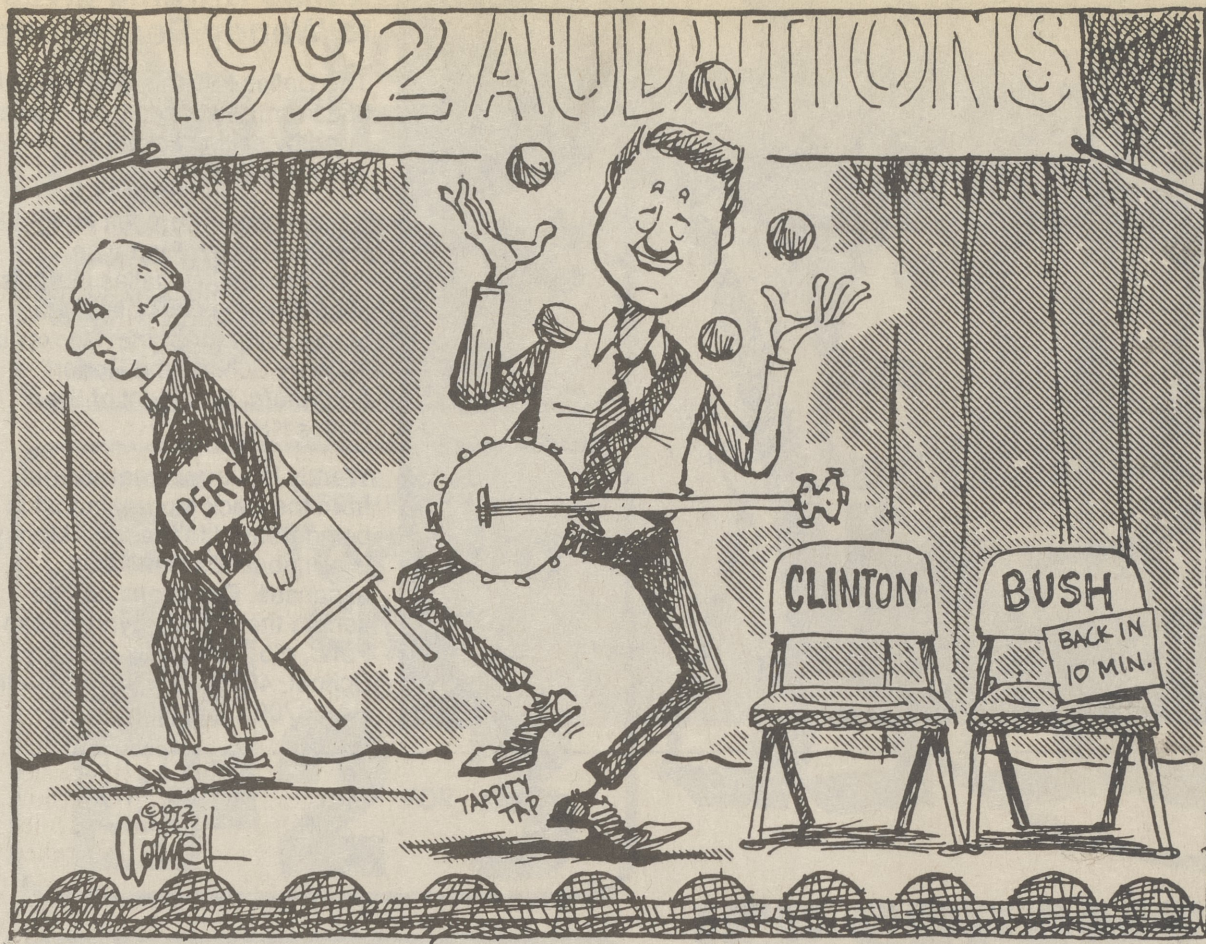
These initiatives would have cleaned up our roadsides and given us a minimal return on our investment on prison costs, plus a litter pick-up program. And again having Pennsylvania's taxpayer getting a dividend back from their hard-earned tax dollar.

Property tax reform must be addressed immediately. Local

school districts' costs and spending have caused home owners to rethink about owning a home. Senior citizens are forced out of their homes because of high property millage increases. Some retired seniors have even torn down sheds, outbuildings and even barns to cut their school district property taxes down. School boards have raised millage to a point of "forget building a new home", property taxes will kill you financially. We need to change the tax from homes to income percentage.

This is a major problem for our people and must be addressed at once and without delay. It's sad and inexcusable that the leadership in the House has done nothing to relieve the homeowners of this tax nightmare.

However, they will have to change their tune when they come back this fall because the simple fact of the matter is that this budget needs repairing. There are so many issues, including welfare reform, property tax reform, funding for PACE and special education, that need to be resolved. These issues, regardless of party affiliation, must be solved by a Legislature which must place its priorities in what is best for the people and businesses of Pennsylvania.



J.W.J.

There's nothing new under the sun

By J.W. JOHNSON

The question I'm most often asked is: why are you a writer? The short answer to that question is: I can't conceive of being anything else.

The long answer begins with some questions of the questioner.

—Do you know why you are where you are?

—Do you know—within the limits of your life experiences—who you are as a human being?

—Are you capable of intellectual honesty?

—Do you know what we had for dinner two nights ago?

—Would you know there will be X number of men and X number of women in any given room you might be in today?

—Do you know that Jack Ruby—the man who committed the first televised murder—died of cancer.

—Do you know who Jack Ruby was?

—Do you care?

—Do you know who your state representative is?

—Do you know what a state representative is?

—Do you know what kind of learner you are: visual, auditory or kinesthetic?

—Do you know that 25 percent

of the world's population lives in China, or that 66 percent of the world's lawyers practice in the United States?

—Do you care?

—Do you know who Thomas Mann was? Thomas Aquinas? Victor Hugo, Samuel Johnson, Ezra Pound, Ayn Rand, John Locke, Oliver Cromwell, Marie Curie, Cho En Lai, Jean Paul Sartre, Thomas Paine, Evelyn Cameron, Bathsheba, George Eliot. How many of you can tell me about the Chrysanthemum Throne. Where the Crystal Palace is located? Or who really lives at 10 Downing Street?

All of these questions and millions more go into the process of being—as opposed to thinking about being—a writer. And let there be no doubt that Thomas Edison was correct when he said: "Genius is 99 percent perspiration and one percent inspiration."

But what kind of writer?

A journalist or other presenters of information is a person who provides the first rough draft of history; a columnist, or other presenters of ideas and opinions, takes the first rough draft of history and dresses it in historical, political and/or personal clothing.

Through his or her work, all other writers celebrate the sunshine of a new day, knowing there

is, in fact, nothing new under the sun. There are, in fact, only six stories to tell: Life, death, love, hate, accident and plan.

And while each new generation believes that it invented the wheel, culture and white bread...the truth is, all new writers of each new generation simply are rearranging, in light of new times, experiences and understandings, the same words for new audiences; the same ideas for new minds to caress, wrestle with and challenge.

And you, in fact, should question. G.K. Chesterton said it best: "A person should question the strongest beliefs of his age, because they are invariably too strong."

And you should question...not so much for the sake of challenging authority, but to, in fact, understand the questions themselves. And you should do so, knowing that you will reach false conclusions, while celebrating new understandings.

Why am I a writer?

More questions:

How many of you know the taste of pure, mountain spring water?—the stench of a rotting carcass—the feel of 60 grade sandpaper, or the sight of an empty sky...no, wait...there is a star up there...if I just look long enough.

Why would I be anything else?

Library news

Book circulation reaches new highs

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The 46th annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction is now history. Connie Scott, general chairman, did an excellent job of co-ordinating the auction and rounding up the chairmen of the various departments. Sybil Pelton, Mary George and Jean Grimes along with the Women of Dallas Kiwanis, once again took control of the Odds and Ends booth and made the most profit they have ever made. The Book Tent was chaired by Benny Matchett and Priscilla Liput and manned by many volunteers along with the Dallas school teachers. The profit from the book tent was good and many books left the grounds with happy customers.

The Dallas Rotary took charge of the Refreshment Stand once again along with the Women of Dallas Rotary and many volunteers. The food was excellent and the variety was well received. The Dallas Woman's Club homemade fudge was on the scene again and made a big hit as was the homemade on the spot, Welch cookies by Rotary Women. The Newberry homemade pie booth was very popular as was the Hillside Ice Cream; Bobby Rice's lemonade stand and funnel cakes and the balloon booth. There were several vendors on the grounds who had a variety of items for sale. The antiques, chaired by Ernie Ashbridge, was the most popular area for lookers and buyers.

Charles Wasserott was in charge of the New Goods and the items were exceptional and well-received by the auction bidders. The auctioneers, in charge of Kerry Freeman and Craig Aicher, did a fantastic job as did the block people getting the merchandise ready for auction in 1993. Once again, the Back Mountain Memorial Library has benefited from the library auction in monetary ways and also with the well-wishers and hard working volunteers who make it so successful. Thanks to everyone!

The Summer Reading program and the summer story hours are

bringing droves of adults and children into the library and making our circulation figures surpass the high marks already set. Five hundred books in one day circulation is a great number of books and in July so far, we have three 500 days and one 600 day. Because of the summer programs and the children bringing in their parents with them to borrow books; July has always been our busiest circulation month of the year. Our

books are here to be borrowed.

A new Book Club book at the library "Wildest Dreams" by Jennifer Blake is a spellbinding novel of two passionate women who dare to live their wildest dreams with danger.

A new mystery, "Pennies on a Dead Woman's Eyes" by Marcia Muller is the investigation of a 36-year-old slaying of a San Francisco debutante, whose murderer is released from prison.

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