

Editorial

PIK program bolstered market, saved producers

Nobody was too surprised Saturday when Secretary of Agriculture John Block announced the Reagan administration will not renew the payment-in-kind program for corn and grain sorghum.

The administration is undecided on whether to continue the program for cotton and rice, according to wire service reports. PIK already has been renewed for 1984 wheat.

PIK has been a valuable program for the nation's farmers, especially in a year when much of the nation was hit by a severe drought. But the program has served its purpose and it is time for it to come to an end.

It's unfortunate that many view PIK only as a handout to farmers. It was an attempt to bolster a sagging farm economy so that many farmers would not be forced out of business, and that's something that affects everyone.

The country has grown much more grain that it possibly can use or export and as a result, surpluses have grown and grain prices have been driven down.

In order to make up for those lower prices, farmers planted more acreage and developed methods of producing higher yields, so the stockpiles grew even more and prices got lower. It was a vicious circle that threatened to destroy many farm operations.

PIK was developed as a way to stop this circle and bring farm prices up to a reasonable level. Farmers were guaranteed a payment in return for withholding part of their land from production.

But unlike other acreage-reduction programs, payment came in the form of grain. So, PIK served a dual purpose by reducing the 1983 crop output and cutting down on the amount of grain already stockpiled.

And the program worked. Corn and sorghum reserves are returning to a normal level, according to government reports. As a result, farm prices have risen, giving farmers renewed hope.

At a speech in North Platte Saturday, Block estimated U.S. net farm income at \$29 billion for 1983, a \$7 billion increase over last year. That figure could go even higher next year, he said.

But too much success can be a bad thing. If grain reserves are reaching normal levels this year, another year of PIK could create a shortage and that would drive grain prices too high, causing high food prices and fueling inflation rates.

That clearly would be contrary to what PIK has tried to achieve and would not be beneficial to farmers or any other sector of the economy.

ARMY DRESS CODE

* SUBJECT: EARRINGS



OK



NOT OK



Low crime rate a source of optimism

We live in an age where the possibility of total world destruction is generally understood. It is an age in which the economy is bad and faith in humanity is dwindling more each year.

Yet, the people of Lincoln, Neb., U.S.A., do have something to be optimistic about.

A prime example of one of the city's major benefits can be found by leafing through a local newspaper.



Bill Allen

Saturday, for instance, the following items were reported in the Lincoln Journal:

- A man, who already had charges pending against him in Lancaster County for armed robbery, was charged with making a bomb threat.

- A man was discovered unconscious in a pool of blood.

- An 18-year-old was arrested in connection with the alleged sexual assault of a 15-year-old handicapped girl in southwest Lincoln.

- A 21-year-old Lincoln man was arrested after holding a woman at gunpoint in his apartment for three hours Thursday night and early Friday morning, threatening to rape her.

Many of you are probably saying this is just more evidence that crime is running rampant and the average citizen just isn't safe anymore.

You're probably wondering about the benefit of living in Lincoln that I mentioned earlier.

About two months ago a nationwide study found that among other cities Lincoln's size, Lincoln had the lowest crime rate in the nation. So even with all the crime and corruption we read about every day we still live in one of the most crime-free environments in the United States.

That's something to be optimistic about. It's hard for people that have never been exposed to high crime rates to really comprehend the state of constant awareness that citizens of other more crime-infested cities must live in.

Men and women, often take for granted the feelings of safety they have while walking in Lincoln — with no realistic fear of being mugged, beat up, or even killed.

Instead many find it easier to go around pointing out the negative aspects of the city, or state, or country.

Businessmen will complain about taxes without appreciating the fact that they can stay in business without paying some gang protection money just to keep from being bombed or burned out.

Students will sneer at worthwhile groups like the Campus Watch Program without realizing on many larger campuses around the country, the crime rate is so high that such a group wouldn't even stand a chance of being effective.

I, for one, am glad that I live in a community where I can concentrate on things that are important to me — instead of fear.

More school hours not equal to more learning

OK, shuffle the kids out to the school bus, hustle them upstairs to do their homework, shut the door and let's talk about school. Let's talk about more school.

During the summer, while the classrooms were empty, the papers were full of education. Many of us, the adults, spent our summer vacation diagnosing schools. We identified the most communicable disease as mediocrity.



Ellen Goodman

Now it appears that the favorite national prescription is more classroom time. If kids need more education, we may be giving them a bigger dose of school.

In the spring, the National Commission on Excellence recommended that we increase the school year from an average of 180 days up to 200 or 220 days, and increase the school day from five or six to seven hours. This fall, two school districts in North Carolina added 20 days to their year, and many high-school students in Florida added a seventh period to their day to fulfill new graduation requirements.

In California, the longer days and hours voted by the state Legislature were only tabled for lack of

funding. In New York, the Board of Regents has proposed adding time and education officials in Illinois and Ohio are likely to follow suit.

By winter this particular cure may be the best-seller in over-the-counter education business. It simply appeals to a varied and mass market of adults who range from punitive to positive.

There are, for example, the Sonyniks among us, who think we should do as the Japanese do. If Japanese children attend school for 240 days and have 25 percent more instruction time than American children, then ours should too. They blame our economic problems on the education of children rather than the management of business and government.

Then there are others of us who simply want kids kept off the streets or out of the adult world for longer periods. Longer school hours are always popular in rough economic times. It took a Depression to popularize the idea of universal high school. The age of compulsory schooling was raised deliberately in the 1930s to remove teen-agers from the job market. Lengthening school days today would effectively remove a mass of part-time teenage workers from the job market.

In the same economic climate, more and more two-parent working families, and single-parent families, worry about supervision of their school-age children. Breathes there a working parent so secure that he or she has never thought: "It's 4 o'clock, do you know where your children are?"

One of the dirty little secrets about the attraction

of private schools is that they keep the children later. For each hour added to school, you may subtract one hour of parental anxiety.

I am not suggesting that these are evil motives. There's nothing malevolent about wanting to keep children supervised, off the streets, away from the TV sets, to keep their days structured. Idle hands, etc. For many reasons, a longer school day and year would be a boon. But most of these are, it should be admitted, social reasons, not educational reasons.

Americans have always looked to schools to solve social problems, problems of immigration, industrialism, racism. It's understandable that many of us support this new cure to relieve the latest symptoms of a changing economy and a changing family life.

But if we are also talking about excellence, talking about learning, there is no guarantee that more school begets more education. Back in the 1940s only 40 of every 100 young people graduated from high school; by 1980, 75 of us finished high school and we remain discontented with the results.

The problems of teaching and learning are still the basics, whether the days are five hours long or seven, whether the year is 180 days long or 220.

After hearing the educator Horace Mann speak in 1839, Emerson wrote in his journal, "We are shut in schools . . . for 10 or 15 years and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing."

Let the kids back in and read that one to them.

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