

# Editorial

## Reagan plan would only dent ag debts

A little bitty splash in a big ol' puddle of trouble. President Reagan's agricultural relief plan, announced Tuesday by candidate Reagan, helps farmers, but not nearly enough.

The four-point plan will use \$630 million already appropriated by Congress in federal loan guarantees to help farmers in serious financial trouble. The plan will:

- Defer up to one-fourth of a farmer's loan payments to Farmer's Home Administration for five years. The current deferment limit is three years.
- Use the \$630 million to guarantee loans banks rewrite to help farmers pay off existing loans. Banks will have to write off 10 percent of the debt before the government will guarantee repayment of the remaining 90 percent.
- Hire local experts to help the FmHA plan ways for farmers to work out of debt.
- Encourage banks to process paperwork for the FmHA guaranteed loans, cutting down on government interference.

To the plan's credit, it will help some farmers get out of debt. It is also specific, something J.J. Exon and his cronies can't claim about a \$650 million alleged plan in front of Congress at this moment.

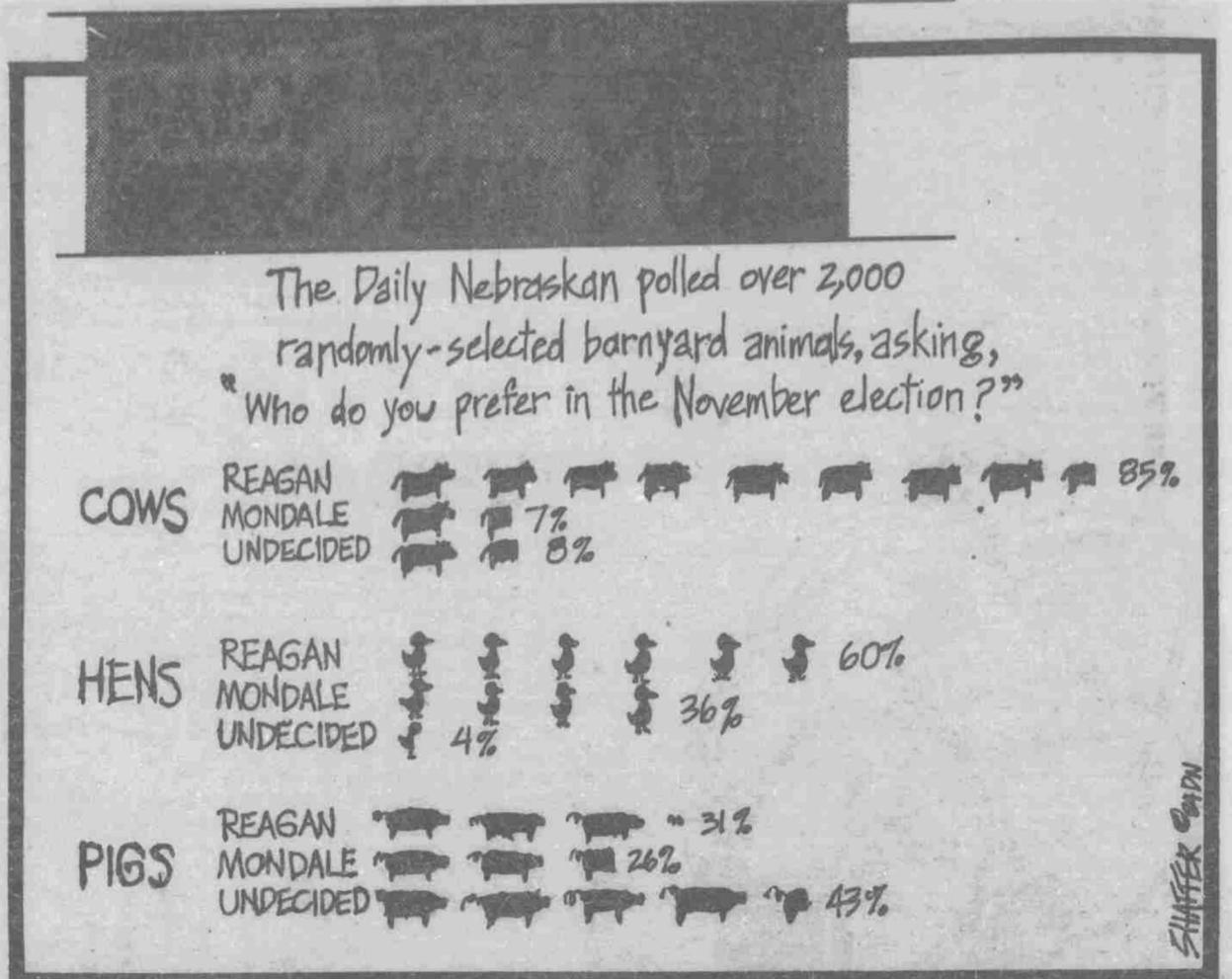
Neither Reagan's plan nor the phantom plan Exon supports address the huge debts farmers in this country face.

Paul Gessaman, a professor of agricultural economics at UNL, said U.S. farmers have \$215 billion in debts. Of that total, Gessaman figured that \$20 to \$40 billion are debts held by farmers considered to be in serious trouble.

From that it's easy to guess that neither \$630 nor \$650 million is going to make much of a dent.

Alan Dunlap, president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Milford, told the Lincoln Star that Nebraska alone could use half of the President's available monies.

Private lenders — the country's rural banks for the most part — also are going to take a dive under Reagan's program. They will have to swallow 10 percent of every farmer's debt before they can regain the rest of the payment from the FmHA. The government comes out the better



in this exchange while Reagan's baby, the private sector, takes it in the shorts.

America's farmers have existed on borrowed money far too long. Congress can't seem to agree on a way to help farmers more permanently. Unless someone can guarantee that farmers get fair prices for what they produce, our farm debts won't go away.

Too little? Most definitely. Too late? Well...

Reagan's move, obviously, is politically motivated. He is scheduled to campaign in rural Iowa for the next few days.

Ironically, many farmers will not consider the plan that important. Too many already have been forced out of business. Too many know that \$630 million is just not enough.

Reagan's political move will work for him in the non-agricultural sector. People wanting to be sympathetic with our country's food producers will interpret the President's program as major help for agriculture.

It will help, but the plan isn't major.

Jeff Browne  
Daily Nebraskan Staff Editor

## Americans' insensitivity to Indians runs deep

All right readers, we're going to have a little quiz. You know the routine: take out a clean sheet of paper and a No. 2 pencil. Now, one of you, give me your hand — how 'bout you with the coffee? That's fine, turn your palm up. Here's \$20 out of the goodness of my wallet. Go crazy. Wait a



James A. Fussell

minute, I changed my mind, give me my \$20 back. Question 1 — What am I? Ahh, that's right, I'm an Indian giver, aren't I?

Now, everyone sit on the floor. Put a stern look on your face. Cross your legs, fold your arms out in front of you and remain perfectly still. Question 2 — What are you doing? Right again, you're sitting Indian style — say, you've been practicing.

Question 3 — Complete this song: One little, two little blank blank blank. Three little Indians, sure. But that was an easy one wasn't it?

Question 4 — Who discovered America? A. Christopher Columbus; B. Magellan; C. Standard Oil of Indiana; D. Time-Life Books. Columbus, of course. You've read your history, by gum. The quiz is over. Add up your score and pass it to the front.

Congratulations, you just flunked the Indian sensitivity test. You and a million others. It's an easy thing to do — heck, I would've flunked it myself a couple of years ago.

This is as good a time as any to do away with your Indian stereotypes. Next Monday, Sept. 24, is Nebraska American Indian

Day — a day in recognition of American Indians and their contributions.

To my thinking, the best way to honor the American Indians is to honor them with respect. I recently asked Becky Beane, a teacher at First Plymouth Preschool and an Indian woman of Creek ancestry, what could be done to show more respect to native Americans. Her response? "Be sensitive." Simple enough isn't it? Why can't we be more sensitive?

The woman who leads the tours at the Omaha Children's Museum should be more sensitive. At one point in her tour, she said, "Let's all be Indians."

No, no, no. You can play a fireman, a football player or a policeman, but you can't play an Indian. You're born an Indian. The woman might as well have asked the children to pretend to be black Muslims. Ludicrous.

Also ludicrous was an article in the Lincoln Star last year around Halloween advising parents how to send their children out as made-up Indians. No thank you. C'mon folks, this is in bad taste. Would you dress your child in black robes and a beanie and send him out with Old Testament as an Orthodox Jew? Sensitivity is more than a word.

But our insensitivity runs deep. Many of us are insensitive to native Americans without even realizing it. For example, I'm not sure Minnegasco realizes that their cute little blue Indian trademark with a flame for a feather is insulting to many native Americans. Feathers are often religious articles for native Americans. Certainly nothing to be cute with on an advertisement logo.

But let's not single out Minnegasco; hurtful Indian stereotypes are everywhere.

Thanksgiving greeting cards and store displays sport insulting pictures of scantily clad native Americans. Boy Scout and YMCA programs present an unrealistic and out-dated view of the American Indian. If that's not enough, along come the tasteless cartoons about Injun Joe, innane westerns and unenlightened reruns of Brady Bunch mentality to serve up pseudo-Indians who mug for the camera and say "Uggh." My sentiments exactly. Uggh.

The time has come to bring the Indian out of the western and into the modern world with the rest of us. But that's now easy given our stereotypes. Many Lincoln elementary schools have an evaluation test question that asks children to give a term for an Indian home. They want the child to say tepee. How come I want him to say split-level?

Unfortunately, the stereotyping doesn't end there. Above many elementary school blackboards run alphabetical picture cards to help children learn their letters. A, of course, is for apple, B is for bear and so on. But I is for Indian. Why is the Indian the only human on these cards? Why isn't G for German, or J for Jew, or S for Spaniard? I'll tell you why. Because Indians traditionally are treated more as non-human symbols, rather than human beings.

Beane has a picture of her husband's grandfather in full headdress. The symbolism is strong: he was an Indian. But she will remind you that he was also a farmer and a minister. His job was not being an Indian.

Once, when Beane went to speak at a Lincoln elementary school, a child was crying when she heard an Indian was

coming. She wasn't so afraid, however, when she saw that the Indian was Becky Beane.

You see, Beane doesn't look like an Indian is supposed to look. She says she has Indian friends with red hair and green eyes. Anyway, she tells of the time in a beauty shop where the hairdresser learned that Beane's husband, Sid, is the director of the Indian Center. Incredulously, she looked at Beane and said, "You're married to an Indian? You've really got to be careful, don't you?"

Continued on Page 6

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