Letters, continued

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It is difficult how links between organized terrorist groups and Iraq could be fabricated by the U.S. when the British forces in Iraq have found evidence of that linkage, when the Iraqis have been operating a terrorist training facility in Iraq, and when the Iraqi government, or what is left of it, calls upon terrorists to come to its aid. Remember, Saddam has been making cash payments to the families of Palestinian terrorist homicide bombers.

You also wrote that shrinking public funds have been misallocated to the military. In fact, even with the additional funds that have been allocated to the Defense Budget by President Bush, the Defense Budget continues to consume the smallest percentage, of the nation's Gross Domestic Product, that it has at any time since the 1930's. The United States spent almost 3 times more on Defense, as a percentage of the GDP, at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 (and John F. Kennedy was President), than it spends today. Moreover, the Federal Budget, even in the Bush Administration, continues to grow even faster than the rate of inflation. Federal public funds aren't shrinking, and Defense keeps getting allocated less and less of them.

Your editorial repeats the mantra that the tax cuts adopted by the Congress last year provided tax relief for the "wealthy". Certainly the $500 per person tax rebates all taxpayers got last year provided some tax relief to everyone! Under the rest of that tax bill which Congress passed, the persons benefitting the most are those making less than $30,000 per year. They get a 33% reduction in tax. Those making more than $200,000 per year get only a 11% reduction. Under the current tax measure proposed by the Administration, taxpayers earning less than $35,000 per year will pay no federal income tax at all! The major consequence of these two tax bills will be to shift the tax burden even further onto the "wealthy". We all should remember that the top 5% of all wage earners already pay over 50% of all federal income tax dollars collected. Even President Kennedy, in 1961, said that the way to revive the economy and increase Federal revenues was to reduce taxes.

It is equally erroneous to assert that those dissenting from public policies could be found to be security risks and summarily jailed. Nothing in the homeland security measure that was passed allows the Federal government to do any such thing. The persons incarcerated without bail and hearings are enemy combatants captured overseas, and are not American citizens. American citizens are fully protected by the Constitution, and nothing in federal legislation has, or can, affect their rights.

You have written that the Administration wants war with Iraq for power. That assertion disregards a statement Secretary of State Colin Powell made in England not long ago. Paraphrasing, he stated "For over a century America has sent its sons and daughters abroad in harm's way to secure the freedom of people in other nations. And all we have asked in return is a small plot of land in which to bury our dead."

Your assertion is equally erroneous that the Administration has destroyed "working, effective coalitions that date back as long as 40 years." What coalitions? NATO? The French have not been a political member of NATO since Charles DeGaulle. Germany has supported us only when its government found it to be in Germany's best interest (it did not support us in Vietnam, for example). Russia was the cornerstone of the "evil empire" until the Soviet Union collapsed. Russia is headed by a former KGB spy master, and has never been part of any coalition with the U.S. NATO did agree to defend Turkey when Turkey supported the U.S. action against Iraq.

The statement you made about the Administration destroying a budget surplus built up for Social Security and Medicare trust funds also is in error. There never has been an actual Federal budget surplus. There was a projected surplus of $5.6 trillion over 10 years. When Federal revenues declined following the economic turndown that began in President Clinton's administration, the projected surplus declined. A surplus is by definition an excessive collection of taxes! It is supposed to decline. The tax rebates of 2002 were so small, those "tax cuts" (the only ones so far) had negligible impact on the "surplus." Medicare and Social Security have been, and are being, fully funded.

There are no Medicare and Social Security "trust funds". Since the 1960's, Social Security and Medicare fund collections have been commingled with general Federal tax collections. During President Clinton's administration, congressional Republicans proposed re-segregating Social Security and Medicare tax collections, excluding them from calculations of budget surpluses. Congressional Democrats rejected the proposal.

Reasonable persons may disagree with the decision to attack Iraq. Those who oppose the war because innocent civilians may die need to responsibly consider the fate of those Iraqi civilians at the hands of Saddam's torture masters. Iraq is a state where people are fed feet first into a plastic shredder, are hung in public squares to bleed to death after their tongues are cut out, and are buried alive in hot asphalt. Iraq has killed thousands of its own citizens, including women and children, with nerve gas. Saddam has allowed Iraq's children to go hungry and diseased, while he diverts oil revenues to build more and more grandiose palaces, and to work on producing a nuclear weapon. We cannot negotiate a solution to all this with a madman like Saddam.

Americans who allow all this to go on for no other reason than because of their pathological hatred of President Bush are not necessarily unpatriotic, or treasonous, but they are at least Bad Americans.

David B. Smith
Vernonia

School Board, continued

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cumbered, i.e., needed to fulfill district obligations. She explained that the figures may not be complete, but they are as accurate as possible. According to Plews, this is one more step toward determining the actual ending fund balance, an essential part of budgeting for next year.

The district's cash flow has been eased, with staff agreement, by eliminating a lump sum previously issued in June and, instead, prorating that amount throughout the summer months. Funderburg told the board that he thought the district could make it through the remainder of the school year without reducing contingency funds or borrowing.

P.I.E. Awards

Awards were given to Karen Roberts for volunteering her time and skills to repair the high school curtains, to Dick and Kathleen Gwin for the donation of $500 to assist with the cost of softball uniforms and the purchase of hats and shirts for the football team, and to Roger Campbell for hauling textbooks from the book depository to the district.

School Calendar

The board was presented with a calendar, unanimously recommended by staff, that includes a student release time of 1:22 p.m. on Fridays, with the remainder of the normal staff day used for in-service staff development. Funderburg told the board that the staff will be formed into professional learning teams that will be able to research best teaching practices across curriculum and age groups. Regular, scheduled in-service will allow consistent follow-up and, according to Funderburg, teachers will be able to begin using the data available from state testing to increase learning opportunities for students.

Director Leslie O'Leary, and several audience members, were uncertain that teachers would use the time as it is intended. Harrison explained that, unlike in-service days as they are now, regular Friday in-service would be part of the scheduled work week. Funderburg said that a close watch will be kept to ensure that the time is used for in-service training. O'Leary was also concern about parents having to provide for child care earlier in the day on Friday. The board unanimously approved the calendar as recommended.