

### Money and help pour slowly into Haiti

Money and help pour with agonizing slowness into crumbled Haiti. Imagine, if you will, a disaster even more immense than Hurricane Katrina smashing the Gulf Coast, swamping New Orleans, washing away 200 years of history.

Remember how long it took to restore order, stop looting, provide food and water, begin organized rescue efforts, bring in the Army, then re-establish civilian control.

Now, put this disaster in the middle of the world's poorest, most overcrowded, least-well-governed nation. Destroy the port, ruin roads and bridges, topple buildings into the streets, jam the only airport with relief and military flights. Wipe out the forces of law and order, the government, the international presence meant to keep things going.

And there you'd have Haiti today.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas. Its government barely functions. (A United Nations peacekeeping force, run by a Canadian mountie, stood between the nation and lawlessness, little else.)

Some blame the United States. Some say we've done too little for Haiti. Some say we did too much. It matters little now; the millions of survivors fighting for food and water likely do not care.

To their credit, President Obama and world leaders moved quickly to move unprecedented aid to Haiti in the day's following the quake Jan. 10. This is as it should be. The civilized world can and should give from its abundance when something like this happens.

Mr. Obama ordered six to eight U.S. ships carrying aid and work crews, at least 10,000 Army and Marine Corps troops to restore order and keep the peace, and huge amounts of food, water and medical supplies into motion.

Relief agencies, everything from church groups to the American and International Red Cross organizations, sprang into action. Nations around the world sent what they could, from a few rescue workers to military units.

The bloodied infrastructure of Haiti is hardly up to handling the influx of help. The one airport is jammed. Reports say it can take six to eight hours to unload a single plane. There are no ramps and stairs, no crews.

One International Red Cross/Red Crescent team landed in the nearby Dominican Republic and proceeded to attempt a border crossing by road. They estimated a 12-hour trip. (Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the island of Hispaniola.)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Haitian President Rene Preval at the airport near Port-au-Prince and promised more help. Her husband Bill, heading a U.S. relief effort along with former President George W. Bush, was due any time.

The world response is impressive. It is an example of the best in humanity.

For many, it will be too little, too late, for the nature of disaster forecloses a truly prompt response. Nonetheless, it is our duty, the rest of the world, to do what we can. And we will.

Help is on the way. Little else can be done now, but pray for the survivors and move the mountains of rubble in the way.

— Steve Haynes



### Sawdust everywhere

You're all invited over for soup. As long as you don't mind a little sawdust in it.

Sawdust, dirty '30s dirt and sheet rock dust is everywhere. Jim has been working on the front room of our house for more than a week. He has finished re-wiring and insulating. I can't say "re"-insulating because there never was any insulation. Only the dust that had blown in the cracks over the last 115 years. The sheet rock is mostly up; duct work is run; and the frame for the tray ceiling is in.

This is not what is typically called the front room. I just called it that because it's on the front of the house. It's function will be that of a library. Complete with floor to ceiling bookcases and a reading nook. For two people who love books as much as we do, this is a dream come true.

For years, guests have had to follow

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



the sign to "Go to the north door." Well, the sign came down last week and even though you will be entering a "hard hat" zone, you can come into the house through that door. The bad news is now I'm going to have to do a better job of keeping my kitchen counters straightened up because that is the first thing you see when you walk in the door.

-ob-

Jim does a lot of work on his computer. He writes tracts, prepares his sermons

and writes the occasional letter. Because he prints so much, he refills the printer cartridges with an ink kit he gets from the office supply store.

Saturday night he tried to refill the cartridge and had a terrible spill. Something I did not know until Sunday morning. When I saw his hands they looked like he had just been "booked." You know, mug shots and finger prints. Anyway, there is nothing to do but "wear it off."

Jim preaches during chapel services at the state prison every Sunday afternoon. He talks with his hands and was really "into" his sermon when one of the men came up the aisle with a wet paper towel in his hand. He wanted to help the preacher with his messy hands. It didn't do any good, but we all had a good laugh because if anybody knows about being fingerprinted it's those men.

### Agriculture's priorities

#### Insight John Schlageck

Heading into the New Year and new decade several key issues remain at the top of the priority list for Kansas farmers and ranchers. Health care, climate and environment, animal agriculture, balancing the federal budget and ag sales tax exemptions remain among the most important.

Health care is on everyone's minds today. Most Kansans and their fellow Americans are either adamantly for or against proposed health care changes. This has ignited a national debate with a passion and fervor rarely seen on legislative issues.

The health care issue is very personal for every American. It carries two over-reaching factors important to ag producers and rural America — reducing health care costs and improving rural access.

To help ease the burden on producers and rural America, tax credits could help the self-employed purchase health insurance. This would also allow farm and ranch employers affordable insurance for their employees. Mandating that individuals purchase health insurance will only work for rural America if costs are brought under control and if tax credits are generous enough to make insurance affordable.

Turning to the climate and environment, most farmers and ranchers oppose cap and trade climate legislation because it would raise their production costs. The potential costs of such legislation are far greater than any benefit to producers.

Congress must focus on renewable energy that is far better for the environment and this nation's domestic energy security. It should not tie the hands of U.S. producers whose productivity pro-

vides the world's food.

In the livestock arena, producers have already waded through several years of lean prices for their animals. These producers cannot withstand the mounting pressure to restrict the use of antibiotics because some believe the use of such drugs result in disease-resistant strains.

Anti-animal agriculture activists continue to attack livestock producers at the state level after being defeated by organized groups in Ohio. The Humane Society of the United States will propose ballot indicatives in Missouri this year.

Like so many segments of our society, Kansas farmers and ranchers believe it's time for government to live within its means. Simply put, don't spend money you don't have.

Ag producers who belong to Farm Bureau in Kansas recently called for a reduction in the federal deficit each year — reaching a fully balanced budget by 2019. Government services and entitlements must be reduced.

Farmers and ranchers would also like to see meaningful relief from the estate tax, with no conditions or qualifications. They want to see an overall exemption. They also support full stepped-up basis at the time of death in order to reduce the capital gains tax burden on farm and ranch heirs.

Expanded world trade remains a key for prosperity in farm country. Movement on pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and Peru would be a step in the right direction

Trade with Cuba could be another bright spot. There is growing interest, led in part by Kansas Congressman Jerry Moran, to ease travel restrictions and promote broader trade in commodities and other goods to Cuba.

The state budget and tax policy will be the main focus during the 2010 Kansas legislative session. Lawmakers will look for any way possible to balance the budget including tax and fee increases. This could impact agriculture in the following ways:

Ag sales tax exemptions — most ag tax exemptions apply to ingredient/component parts or farm machinery essential to production. Elimination would significantly hurt ag producers, and place Kansas at a competitive disadvantage to producers in neighboring states.

Dedicated program fees — are collected by certain participants of an industry to fund regulatory programs specific to those that pay the fee (license, inspection, registration, etc.). Often these programs have a statewide benefit far beyond those paying the fee. In tough economic times, the legislature often "sweeps" these fees to fund other areas of state government. This tax increase would not be affordable.

Property tax — increases in property tax disproportionately affect landowners who are particularly concerned with the steady creep of increased Local Option Budget Authority to fund schools.

Buckle up — 2010 will be a bumpy ride.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects



To...the nice lady at Dollar General who helped me finish my shopping and helped me get to my car when I became ill. (Called in)

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