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COLUMN FOR 5TH DISTRICT WEEKLIES, WRITTEN MARCH 26, 1966

BY REP. GERALD R. FORD

WASHINGTON--My friends of Michigan's fifth congressional district, this is the first in a series of chats I would like to have with you from time to time in your weekly newspaper, (Name of paper).

Washington often seems very far away from you, I'm sure. And it may be that by visiting with you in the columns of this paper I can bring you a little closer to the government and the government a little closer to you. Let's try it.

Last week Michigan aroused excitement in Washington, instead of the other way around. People here showed keen interest in the unidentified flying objects (UFO's) reported sighted in the Hillsdale and Ann Arbor areas.

At week's end, the Air Force explained away the UFO's as a product of college-student pranks, swamp gas, the rising crescent moon, and the planet Venus.

But the Air Force has been explaining away UFO's for years, and I don't believe the American people generally are satisfied with its statements.

For that reason, I have proposed that there be a congressional investigation of UFO's. Let's try to get to the bottom of this thing. I know some people are alarmed by it.

In recent days the corridor outside my Capitol office door has been a tangle of television cameras, cables, and the bodies of camera crewmen waiting for Secretary of State Dean Rusk and other officials to come out of closed-door hearings on the \$3.3 billion foreign aid bill. These officials were appearing before House Foreign Affairs Committee members just down the hall from me.

I took a turn in front of the cameras myself to tell the people of this nation that now is not the time to build a \$750,000 vice-presidential mansion. I pointed out that my opposition had nothing to do with the present Vice President personally. I just don't think we should be spending that kind of money on something that can wait. After all, we're pouring billions upon billions of dollars into the Vietnam war; and inflation is threatening the economy.

Well, all but six Republicans voted to hold up the "Vee Pee's teepee," as I call it, but the House approved the bill 197 to 184. The Senate also okayed it, so that's that.

In my role as House Minority Leader, I find there just aren't enough hours in the day. But I always try to find enough time for my family. I recently spoke before my son Jack's History class at T. C. Williams High School in Alexandria and went to the NCAA basketball tournament at the University of Maryland with all three of my boys. And you know something? I enjoyed it, maybe more than they did.

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COLUMN FOR 5TH DISTRICT WEEKLIES, WRITTEN APRIL 11, 1966

BY REP. GERALD R. FORD

WASHINGTON--This is a time when the tourists invade Washington and congressmen find there's just no place to hide.

The tourists have taken over the nation's capital, and that's as it should be. It belongs to the people.

As for congressmen now on Easter Recess, if they stay here, their visiting constituents descend upon them. If they stay at home, the wife puts them to work. All that's left for them is to get out of the country.

~~All kidding aside,~~ there is seriousness in this chat about Easter Recess, the tourists, and the plight of Congress.

For one thing, it's time Congress put the Capitol Guides on salary so that Americans wouldn't have to pay 25 cents a head for a guided tour of their Capitol Building. I'm sure many of them resent it. It makes the whole thing seem so commercial.

I am a member of a joint Senate-House commission which is making plans for an extension of the west front of the Capitol. I think this extension should include a small auditorium where a film on the history of the Capitol could be shown every 20 minutes or so. This wouldn't cut in on the guides' work. It would supplement it.

Getting back to the congressmen, most of them should be looking for ~~some~~ place to hide. They're conducting business as usual when it comes to non-defense federal spending instead of admitting we're caught up in wartime inflation.

There's talk of an income tax increase to halt inflation. I say that instead of taking more dollars away from you to try to hold prices down, the government ought to cut down on its own spending.

That makes more sense anyway. It takes time for an income tax increase to make itself felt in the economy. But if the federal government cuts back on spending, every dollar held back right now is a dollar that doesn't serve to swell the economic stream and threaten to wash away your savings.

Maybe during the recess the people will talk turkey to those congressmen who voted against Republican attempts to cut spending just before Congress closed up shop for two weeks. I hope so.

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BY REP. GERALD R. FORD

WASHINGTON--Our Michigan farmers, along with tillers of the soil throughout the country, long have yearned for the day when they could again have the freedom to run their own affairs.

There is no easy answer to the problems that result when the supply of farm products far exceeds demand and surpluses pile up, but there certainly is something wrong when the American farmer is left out during a time of seeming prosperity.

And there certainly is something wrong when the American farmer is shortchanged on prosperity despite the fact the farm program is costing \$5.2 billion a year in subsidies--\$2 billion paid to the farmer for what he doesn't grow and \$3.2 billion paid out in price supports.

Agriculture Secretary Orville L. Freeman recently gave Congress these figures. He said the farmer is "doing better today" but he still is not enjoying his full share of prosperity.

Not long after Freeman told this to a House appropriations subcommittee, Johnson-Humphrey Administration officials began driving down farm prices to halt inflation.

In other words, they were determined to make the farmer the whipping boy for inflation because the city folks were getting mad about the steadily rising price of groceries.

That really makes sense, doesn't it...for Freeman to come crying to Congress one day about the farmer getting shortchanged and then to set about pushing down farm prices in an attack on supermarket price tags.

Well, I can tell you that members of Congress who are deeply concerned about the farmer are getting up on their high horses about this business of making the farmer the whipping boy of inflation.

For one thing, we're pointing out that 61 per cent of the retail price of food items is added after these products leave the farm.

We also are letting everyone in this country know that the farmer is not getting rich as a result of Johnson-Humphrey Administration inflation.

Agriculture Department figures clearly show that average prices received by farmers were 13 per cent lower in February, 1966, than in February, 1951.

Yet it costs the consumer \$11.20 today for the same basket of goods and services that cost \$9.54 in 1951.

What sense does it make to blame the farmer?

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COLUMN FOR 5TH DISTRICT WEEKLIES, WRITTEN MAY 20, 1966

BY REP. GERALD R. FORD

WASHINGTON--My mail indicates that many people in the Fifth Congressional District are losing patience with the Vietnam War because the South Vietnamese have been fighting among themselves for weeks.

I cannot help but feel there is a moral question involved in the Vietnam War--one which must be answered. That question is: How much longer will Americans be willing to fight in Vietnam in the cause of freedom if the people whose freedom the United States is protecting fight among themselves?

We made a commitment to help a legitimate government in Saigon thwart Communist aggression.

The government we now have in Saigon is not a legitimate government. It is a military junta, and Premier Ky obviously intends to remain in power through use of force for at least a year. He has frankly said so.

Our commitment to the South Vietnamese was to help them turn back the Communist aggressor.

Instead, South Vietnamese troops have been so busy fighting each other that for the third week in this war American casualties are greater than those of the South Vietnamese. This is true despite the fact that the South Vietnamese have nearly three times as many troops on the ground as we have.

President Johnson must bear at least some of the responsibility for the mess that has developed in Vietnam's internal affairs at the same time that our men are performing so brilliantly in combat.

Events in Vietnam may make our sacrifices there meaningless. What began as the fulfilling of an international commitment may become a great American tragedy.

* * *

The way prices have been rising this year, it's as though the Johnson-Humphrey Administration has imposed a 4 per cent income tax increase without your knowing it.

Another way to look at it is that it now costs you \$11.25 to buy the same basket of goods and services you could get for \$10 during the 1957-59 period when President Eisenhower was in the White House.

That's the meaning of the increases in consumer prices that have been reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics since the beginning of this year. The government's own figures tell us that inflation is here. But the Administration keeps on spending money as though it was going out of style, and that's the major cause of inflation.

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WASHINGTON--This supposedly blase and sophisticated city really is a small town with a big heart.

Its heart went out recently to Michigan's "egg lady," Mrs. Della Lankfer of Muskegon, who dropped in on Washington to spread a gospel of love with a basketful of decorated eggs and a talk at the Congressional Club.

Della spoke before the wives of members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, cabinet members and ambassadors in an appearance arranged by Mrs. Betty Ford, wife of House Republican leader Gerald R. Ford of Grand Rapids.

The women marveled at the products of her art--duck, goose and turtle eggs decorated with such beguiling artifacts as feathers, tulle and artificial butterflies and attractively suspended from languidly twisted driftwood.

They marveled, too, at the missionary fervor that makes Della's personality a shining thing--the spirit with which she sells her art object eggs to raise funds for the new West Michigan Center for Handicapped Children.

Della Lankfer calls her crusade "Project Love." She began it in memory of a granddaughter who had worked with handicapped children and had planned to become a nurse specializing in their care. The granddaughter was killed in a traffic accident.

Della is a deeply religious person, but her religion is not heavy and moralistic. The wives of official Washington found her warm and amusing.

Mrs. Lankfer followed such previous and prominent speakers before the Congressional Club as Muriel Humphrey, wife of the Vice President, and opera star Rise Stevens.

Through Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Lankfer sent the First Family a basket of eggs decorated with pictures of the President, the First Lady, Luci Johnson and Pat Nugent, Lynda Johnson and George Hamilton. She received a thank-you note from Mrs. Johnson after her return to Muskegon.

Mrs. Ford sent Mrs. Lankfer, a former Grand Rapids resident, a personal contribution of \$25 for the West Michigan Center for Handicapped Children.

The Fords have a fascinating memento of Mrs. Lankfer's Washington visit--a decorated egg with a color photo inside of Ford sitting at his desk in the minority leader's office. The egg has an oval opening cut in it so that the viewer can peek inside, as through a picture frame.

Other prominent Washington figures who received Della's eggs with their pictures on them include Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield, Mont., Senate Republican Leader Everett M. Dirksen, Ill., and House Speaker John W. McCormack, D-Mass.

FOR RELEASE WEEK OF JUNE 5, 1966
IN 5TH DISTRICT WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

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