

Don't be fooled, they won't give up

The state office of the U.S. Farm Service Agency, after suffering a bloody nose last year with a proposal to close more than half its county offices, has come back with a plan to close 11 in some of the state's smallest counties.

In northwest Kansas, only the office in Gove, the state's smallest county seat with a population of 103, would close. It would merge with the Logan County office in Oakley. Farmers could choose to do business with the government at any office, with many expected to gravitate to nearby Hoxie, in Sheridan County.

The agency's Agriculture Department twin, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, announced that it will close offices in the same 11 counties.

Under the first plan, offices in Oberlin, St. Francis and Sharon Springs in the northwest would have closed, but for the present, all those are safe.

So, with our offices to remain open, we should go on about our business and ignore this little government reorganization?

Only if we want to be next.

Eleven offices is just a foot in the door. Given their way, eventually the bureaucrats will return for another bite. And another.

Today, Farm Service and Conservation offices typically are small, three or four workers in a county, all "co-located" in the same building.

If you want to see the future, though, look to the largest agency in the Agriculture Department, the Forest Service. Once run by district rangers stationed out in the woods, in small towns and mining camps, the service averaged three to four employees per district well into the 1950s.

In the last 25 years, though, the service closed most of its rural offices, concentrating employees at ranger stations with 20-25 employees.

Few, if any, lost their jobs, mind you. Employee numbers stayed fairly constant. But the layers of bureaucracy thickened as workers began to specialize in one area or another, grazing, timber, recreation, law enforcement. Little money was saved on payroll, but expenses for vehicles and travel soared.

The management model is a lot like the one adopted a couple of years ago by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, which closed many of its county offices in favor of new regional offices serving several counties.

The result, as usual, was little or no savings, but a big disconnect between clients and those supposed to serve them.

These consolidations aren't about saving money. They're not about good management or specialization. They're about gathering the troops in one place and creating a warm nest for them.

They represent the state and federal governments abandoning towns that get too small, too dull for officials to want to work in.

In rural America, we shouldn't tolerate that, not from the Department of Agriculture, the state or any other government agency designed to serve us.

If the agency is going to have the same employees and the same expenses, why not spend some money in towns like Gove?

In Rural America, we need to fight this kind of thinking, whenever it appears.

— Steve Haynes

Thumbs Up to . . .

✓ **Little Miles Harrington**, quite a win for a little guy! Keep watching those cars. (e-mail)

✓ **Fonda Lawrence**, on your 32 years of service to the state. Enjoy retirement. (called in)

✓ **Sgt. Claire Ball**, nice way to honor your mother and friends. (e-mail)

✓ **All volunteers**, who took orders and delivered daffodils. (called in)

✓ **The young motorcycle rider** in Norton, who participates in the patriotic guard. (brought in)

Share your thoughts with a letter

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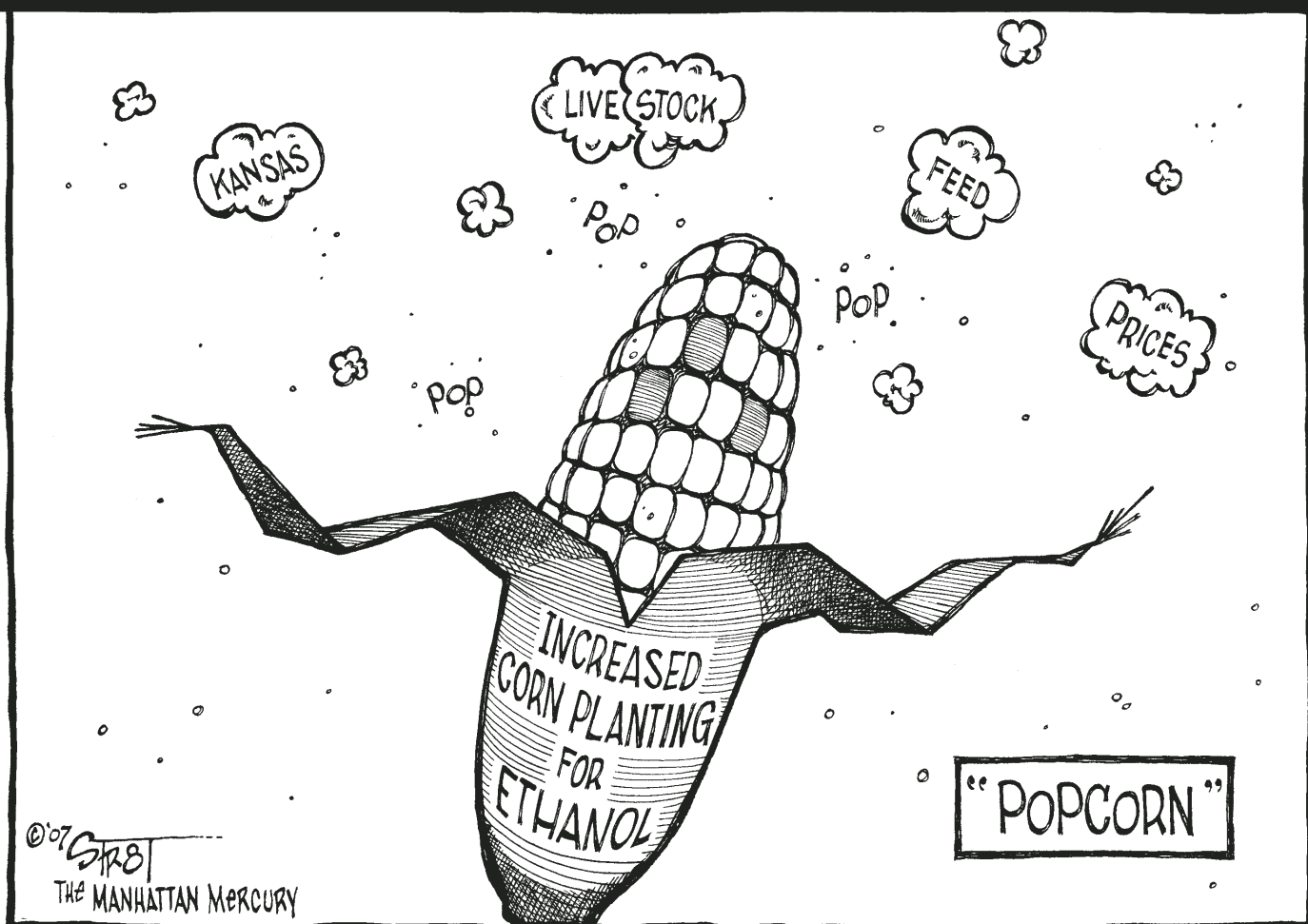
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Remember their first day of school?

Can you believe that in about two months' time we will be holding high school commencements? Wow!, seems like we just started the school year! It will be a very special time for the grads and their families. Graduation, for most parents, is as emotional as watching their child enter kindergarten. Those are the two biggest events in the lives of the youngsters. Fortunately, when you have a superior educational garden, such as we have here, what is planted in those school rooms and taught by highly qualified teachers, results in the top of the crop. And you can't do any better than that! The Class of 2007 will soon, rightfully, take its place among the school's best.

-td-

The plane was en route from Spokane to San Francisco. Unexpectedly, the plane was diverted to Sacramento. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft the plane would re-board in 50 minutes. Everybody got off the plane except a lady who was blind and was accompanied by her Seeing-Eye dog. The pilot approached her and said, "We are in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?"

The blind lady replied, "No thanks, but maybe my dog would like to stretch his legs."

Now, what do you think the reaction was when all those passengers standing in the gate area, looked up and saw the pilot, in sunglasses, walk off the plane behind a Seeing-Eye dog?

It would have been priceless.

-td-

When the television show, "Deal, or No Deal" started, it caught my fancy and I soon became hooked. But now, I am beginning to "un-hook" myself because it

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



seems the focus moved somewhat from the money to the silly doings of the contestants and their supporters. To me the suspense made the show, but when the spotlight moved off-stage to include a contestant's family in a bigger role, it took away much of what I watched the show for. A little interaction is fine, but it's really getting ridiculous. Downright silly.

Another thing the show draws out is the greed of the people involved. You would think when the banker calls in a figure and it gets up to \$50,000-\$100,000, a contestant would take the money and run! I would. Just this week, a young lady, urged on by her family, ended up with \$200 — that's right \$200, and at one point the banker was willing to give her \$73,000.

I'm not a gambler. Closest I come is occasionally buying a scratch off lottery ticket when I put gas in my pickup. I've scratched off some small, very small amounts — hardly enough to lure me into shelling out big bucks. I remember so well when I lived in another community in northwest Kansas and while standing in line to pay for my gas, a gentleman in front of me was holding up the line with his transaction — \$120 on scratch offs and Kansas Cash and Powerball. \$120, and from the chatter in the convenience store, this guy regularly spends that kind of money for this purpose. I wondered as I left the place if he breaks even or if he's

in the hole. If you're a contestant on "Deal, or No Deal," play smart. If you're lottery addicted, buy smart.

-td-

I often wonder what catches the eye of *The Telegram* readers. It's not unusual to receive a note from a subscriber telling us what he or she looks at first. We are a small paper so it goes without saying that all pages are read pretty much equally. Some favor the country correspondence, others read the death notices first, or the births. Social club reports have a good readership, as does sports. The Opinion Page has a lot of following. Governing body meetings have their fans. Many say, without hesitation, that they seek out the ads looking for bargains.

The Friday "Thumbs Up" column is mentioned frequently. And much to my surprise, comments are made about the filler ads in the paper — those little free things we place in support of the community. You've seen them, your notes tell us you do. They might say,

"Shop NORTON"

"Tell your friends NORTON'S the place to be"

"NORTON has it"

"Enjoy the NORTON difference"

Etc.

We try our best. And we are aware there is room for improvement. And that's our goal for 2007. Of course we need you to call our tip lines when you hear of something. Those lines are (785) 877-3361 and (785) 877-6908.

And as we often say in those little filler ads, "Thanks for reading *The Telegram*." And we mean that sincerely!

-td-

Have a good evening. And add a visit to the church of your choice this weekend..

We're just thankful it wasn't a shovel

There are moments in my life I thought I would never forget: 9-11, my wedding, the birth of my children. Recently, however, I found out that the hubby has a very different memory of the birth of the first born. He thinks she was born with a paint brush in her hand. That could explain some things I guess.

One year into home ownership and the child has not slowed down at all. Oh, to be young. Of course, the colors the previous owner had chosen were an abomination. But there were some things I thought she could have left alone. The basement, for instance, except for the bathroom.

I believe it should be a law: Never, ever, ever paint a basement bathroom with no windows brown with black trim. Expanding on this principle you might want to think twice before painting any bathroom brown, even if it has a window. I can't even describe (and the paper could not publish) how disturbing your thoughts are as you contemplate brown walls surrounding a commode.

Even the ceiling was brown. This basement probably only has seven and a half foot ceilings. And the bathroom is a step up because the sewer lines are high in the area. So you can easily touch the ceiling. The hubby has to duck when he is in the room. I put three coats of Kilz on the room last fall and did not use a ladder. I thought at least the room would be brighter and

Back Home Nancy Hagman



hand. I'm starting to get it.

She painted the countertops with leftovers from her bedroom. Then she sponged some other colors on it for interest. She didn't like that so she covered it up with the original base color. Then she had to put on three or four coats of polyurethane.

I said someday I'll come down and paint the laundry room cabinets for you. "Mom, it won't be soon enough," was the reply. Sure enough, by the time I got down there the cabinets were a lovely creamy white. The counter tops are really pretty also.

She is now going to repaint the walls — the only room in the house that was close to being a light bright color to start with. But there was a refrigerator in the room and when we moved it the wall behind it did not look so good. There was no matching paint so what else could she do? I don't know. REST, maybe?

So, here's the problem — the basement family room, which was fine, now looks awful with all the clean, soft color everywhere else. I think she has put the paint brush down for now, though.

We went down over the weekend and started on the yard. I am so tired. Her father is so tired. She did a lot of digging and I found myself giving thanks. What if she had been born with a shovel in her hand? (I guess she would have been an only child.)

look cleaner until Kate got around to doing something else with the room.

Being Kate, that was sooner rather than later. She painted the room a soft green (at least she used the leftovers from the living room so there was no expense.) It is much better. I suppose that the basement bedroom also really needed repainted. It was the same brown and black with some deep forest green. Brown peg boards on the walls and a border of hunting and fishing gear. She got her sister to help and now the room is blue. I don't like blue much for home décor, but it is really beautiful.

Okay kid — take a break.

A couple of days after the bedroom repaint, she called me and informed me that you could paint laminate counter tops and she was going to paint the ones in her basement laundry room. I can't remember what they looked like, but it hardly seemed necessary to me. About this time the hubby came forth with the news that she was born with a paint brush in her