

Energy debate sadly lacking in facts

Energy has become the watchword of our political discussion, though there's little real understanding of what counts — and what doesn't — in the energy debate.

Since most of us — political operatives included — know little about the economics and impacts of energy decisions, we tend to believe what we want to believe.

So the debate becomes a matter of faith, every bit as much as those over abortion or a balanced budget.

Today, the argument is over whether to renew our push for oil in offshore fields and in the Alaskan wilderness. No one has any figures on whether there's enough oil to make any impact on American consumption, but everyone has an opinion.

It's the same with proposals to build coal-fired power plants. Proponents argue that we need the power, that these plants would be cleaner than any yet built in the state. Opponents, most of whom only assume global warming is a threat, fear the added "carbon footprint."

How many on either side understand the carbon-dioxide equation?

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, hot to get to Washington one way or another, has staked much of her political capital on opposing coal plants and pushing wind power.

No one thinks wind power is bad, except those who don't want some of our most scenic landscape cluttered up with giant windmills, but is it really the answer to our needs?

Unless someone can figure out how to store massive amounts of electricity, it can't be, but the emotional arguments in favor of wind are unstoppable.

Are Big Oil companies ripping off the American public to pile up unconscionable profits?

The answer depends more on whether you see Big Oil as greedy corporations out to rape the land or as a few million retirees whose union (or state) pension plans happen to own a lot of oil stock, doesn't it?

True, corporate executives bring down huge salaries, especially when times are good, but stockholders seem to benefit the most. And who are they? Just average Americans with a pension or 401K plan. That's all.

Oddly enough, the same unions whose pensions benefit from high oil prices often back Democrats who decry the greed of Big Oil. Members don't make the connection, apparently, between oil profits and healthy pensions.

Then there are those who told us oil prices were never coming down.

Demand will drive them ever higher, these doomsayers cried.

The plunge in the last week gave that the lie. Now "experts" say oil might drop back to \$70 a barrel, with fuel prices following.

Is it all a plot to make us appreciate \$3-a-gallon gas?

Could be. If you believe in conspiracy theory.

It all comes back to belief. Belief that times are bad tends to make them so. Belief that what's happening at this instant will go on forever blinds us to the change around the bend.

Sometimes, especially in politics, when there's hay to be made, the underlying facts don't have much to do with it. Belief is enough.

And some days, belief is all we have. Few of us are equipped to investigate and understand economics or global markets. The one truth is that markets, left to their own devices, will solve their own problems. Politicians seldom solve anything.

But if you believe that, it's hard to believe most of the rest, isn't it?

— Steve Haynes

Your political connection

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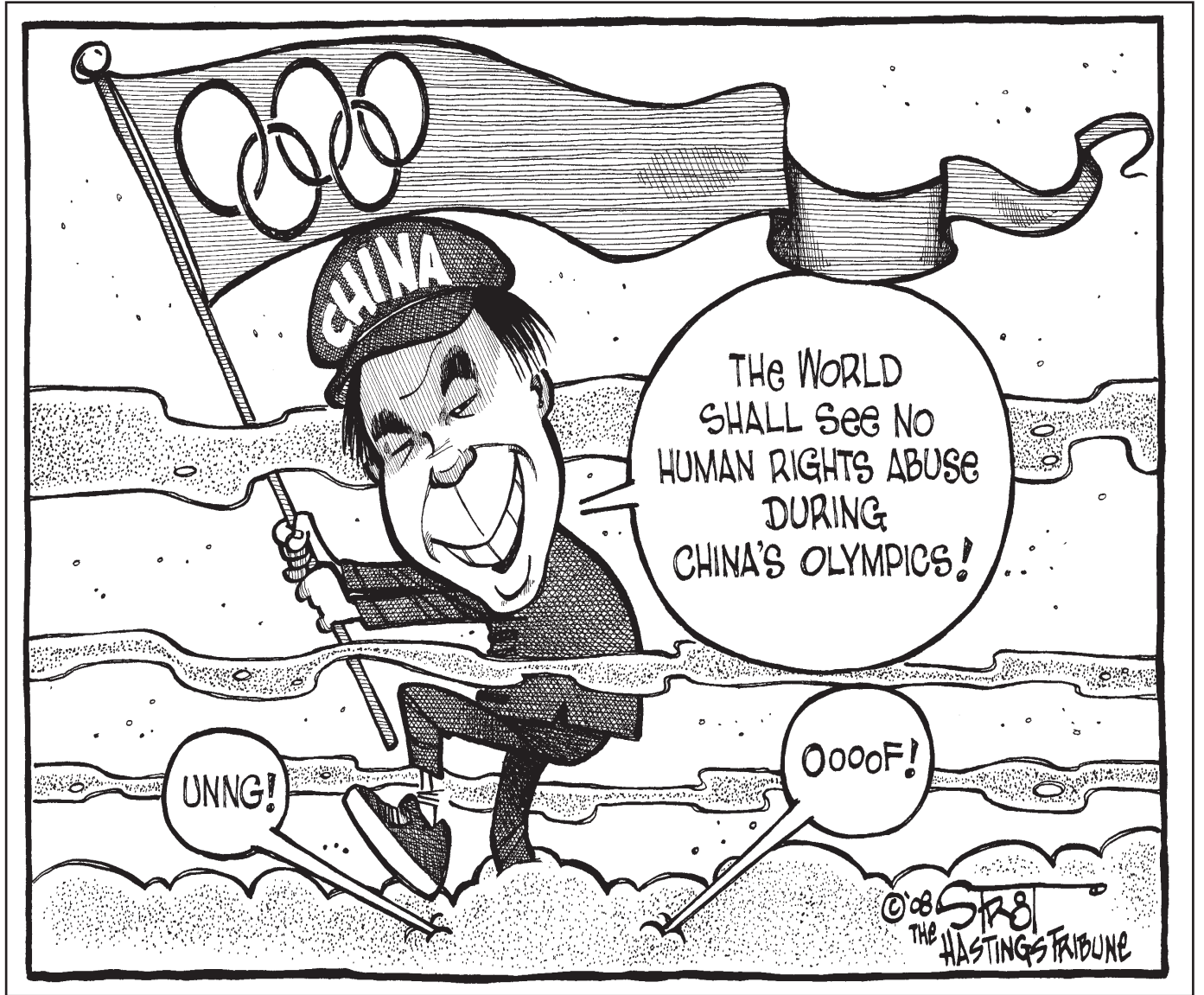
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My retirement 'test' now underway

Where did our granddaughter, Taylor's, three-week visit go?

It seems like she just arrived a few days ago. We didn't accomplish half the things I hoped to during her visit. But, you know what? We had a great time. And lots of it. Most days we didn't even have a plan. We just let the day unfold in front of us. We had some good talks, and believe me, Taylor can hold up her end of a conversation. Someday, I may tell her mother some of the stuff we talked about.

We headed south with her, and all her belongings, last Thursday. Where did it all come from? I didn't remember unloading all of that. But, there it was: shoes, accessory cases, clothes, jewelry cases, shoes, stuffed animals, a body pillow, toiletries and more shoes. We scarcely had room for her in the van. Taylor does not know the meaning of traveling light. At least, she was prepared for any occasion.

-ob-

It turned into a mini-reunion when our daughter, Jennifer, and her two girls, Alexandria and Aniston, from San Antonio, joined us in Dallas at Adam and Kara's for the weekend. Halley already lives there, so we had a houseful. Another daughter, Becky, couldn't make it and she sure missed a good time. Adam and Kara

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



day. Sunday dinner was a delicious chicken pot pie Kara made along with, you guessed it, corn-on-the-cob.

There are still a few ears in the crisper drawer, that have been delegated for lunch before we leave today. Maybe, just maybe, I will get my fill of roasting ears.

-ob-

Kara and Adam have special friends, Eric and Stephanie, who stopped by our first night in town and stayed for dinner. Their little boy, Parker, is a charmer and just a few months older than our two-year-old granddaughter, Ani. We posed them together for some mighty cute pictures and have already made plans for their future. I see nothing wrong with an arranged marriage.

-ob-

Even when we're away from home for a few days, Jim has to keep an eye on the weather there. So, through him, I learned it has been raining in our part of the country. Lord knows we needed it. It's raining in Dallas, too — and they didn't need it.

Still, it will make for a cool day to drive home. Without Taylor there, the old house will seem mighty empty.

Now, we'll really see how I handle retirement.

have a pool in their backyard, so to us, it was like a spa vacation spot. Except for the cooking.

We had made arrangements with friends that have a huge truck garden to pick up 12 dozen ears of corn on our way to Texas. We had fresh corn-on-the-cob along with veggie and pork kabobs for dinner the first day.

On the second day, we made an assembly line of corn shuckers, corn boilers, ice bathers, kernel cutters, plastic baggers and freezer stackers. That's what is meant by "many hands make light work." In no time, we had all that corn put up and each family got to take some home with them.

I told Adam, our son-in-law, that I would make him a cherry pie. I even brought along the hand-picked cherries. Corn-on-the-cob, plus hamburgers and cherry pie was on the menu the second

Here's my version of 'straight talk'

McCain's my man. Has been for a long time. I have concerns about his health but not about his age! Age is just a number. Many people of 70 have more to offer than those decades younger. And the older I get the more I like old people!

However it makes the issue of a running mate very important for McCain. And if he blows it, well I may have to vote for Obama.

Or maybe I'll just vote for him if I get one more idiotic e-mail about his patriotism, religion, race etc. STOPSENDING THEM!!!!

The most recent criticized how he repainted his campaign airplane. The message began, "I checked this on Snopes; it is true!" Yes it's true, Obama repainted his plane. It used to have an American Flag on it. Now it has some sort of red, white and blue logo "symbol of himself!"

There was a link in this e-mail to Snopes. So I checked it out. Snopes explains that many presidential candidates lease planes. Obama has an American Airlines plane. It had the American Airlines logo on it — a flag! After the primaries. Obama had the plane refurbished. His slogan, "Change we can believe in" is now on the side of the plane. The tail section sports the "symbol of himself."

Snopes had a picture of John McCain's plane. Interesting! It is trimmed out in

Back Home Nancy Hagman



western Kansas.

However, I will not vote for Obama if I hear one more commentator say they feel Obama will not win because white people (no matter what they say publicly) will not vote for a (half) black man. Yeah, I'm white. In college I worked with a rather large group of black kids at one point. This was in the Athletic Dorm so there were also a lot of black athletes around also.

One of my coworkers used to tease me. "you're so WHITE!" We all laughed! Now as I look back at it, was it funny? I was in the minority, were those kids prejudiced against me? Did they hate me? Were they just waiting for the opportunity to take me down?

Maybe! I'm a white person, I'm blessed. I never had to worry very much about these issues. But because I'm white does it follow that I can't just decide I like the white guy? I have to vote for a (half) black man to prove I'm not prejudiced. That's about as silly as expecting people to put flags on their lapels, their planes!

Find something real to base your votes on! Like how we can get Kathleen out of the state house as quickly as possible! One theory that has been floated is even if she isn't the running mate, she might get a cabinet position. Lots to consider isn't there? I have a feeling it is going to be a long time till November!

yellow and blue. Says "Straight Talk Express." A door to the plane was opened. On the inside of that door there appears to be an American flag. But you wouldn't see it unless the door was open!

I like John McCain, but this offends my sense of fairness. If Barack Obama has to have a flag on his plane or be pronounced "despicable," how about holding McCain to the same standard? No one questions his patriotism. I don't. I plan to vote for him. And I don't care how he paints his plane! You shouldn't either! It doesn't mean a thing.

There is another scenario where I might consider voting for Obama. I mentioned running mates before. If Obama picks Kathleen Sebelius for his running mate, I'm putting a sign in my yard and donating money.

Think about it. She'd be gone from Kansas! Hurray! Let's build some coal fired plants! Economic development for

McCain? Obama? Let us know your choice. No ID necessary. E-mail, phone, regular mail.

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