

Growing Mexican gang violence our fault?

Everyone decries the growing drug-gang violence in Mexico, especially when it starts affecting U.S. interests.

American media made a big deal out of the murder, apparently by drug gangs, of an American woman who worked at the U.S. consulate in Juarez and the husbands of two State Department employees after a child's birthday party.

Shoot-outs between Mexican troops and the gangs garner attention, but in the U.S. we shake our heads, then cry out for better security at the border. No one bothers to ask why the violence is rampant in nearby Mexico, as it has been for years in far-away Columbia.

But if you want to know who's to blame, it's us. American drug laws, founded on the fallacy that the failed and discredited policy of prohibition will somehow work a century later, have nearly ruined the peace, democracy and civil stability of Columbia. Now they threaten our neighbor to the south, Mexico.

Why? It's simple. What people want is what people want. Making it illegal does not change that, but it changes the economics of the business. Criminal gangs will latch on to supplying anything the government makes illegal, because if people want it bad enough, they'll pay any price for it.

That's what made the Mafia and other immigrant gangs of the early 20th century so rich and powerful: prohibition of alcohol gave them a perfect opening to supply demand for a substance that many people saw as relatively harmless.

As a nation, we recognized this mistake and moved on. We abandoned the idea of prohibition, except for our own kids. We figure it didn't work for us, but it would work on children.

About the same time in our history, society began to recoil from the supposed threat of marijuana and other drugs, largely unregulated until the prohibition era. Even after repeal, the U.S. kept its drug laws despite a lack of proof that most of the substances weren't any more harmful than some legal items, including tobacco and alcohol.

Scare tactics by early drug-enforcement types, aimed at building up the drug-police bureaucracy as much as anything, and lurid movies from Hollywood fed public hysteria. Because drugs and drug users were still viewed as weird, it was easy to outlaw them.

Fast forward to the 1960s, when a questioning generation defied their parents' advice and started trying the old drugs and some brand new ones. Since then, the antidrug laws have grown apace, along with the number of Americans in prison.

The result? Nations nearly destroyed. Drug use in this country ever increasing.

The growing popularity of cocaine through the 1980s has made once-quiet Columbia a hotbed of radical violence, where assassination of judges and legislators became commonplace. Government officials were kidnapped, offices bombed. Our response: give the police and Army more weapons to pursue the fight.

Now, we have exported our home-grown methamphetamine and marijuana business to Mexico, with disastrous results. We made it much harder to make meth or grow marijuana here, so the Mexican gangs — long a minor cog in the cocaine distribution trade — saw an opportunity to make big money.

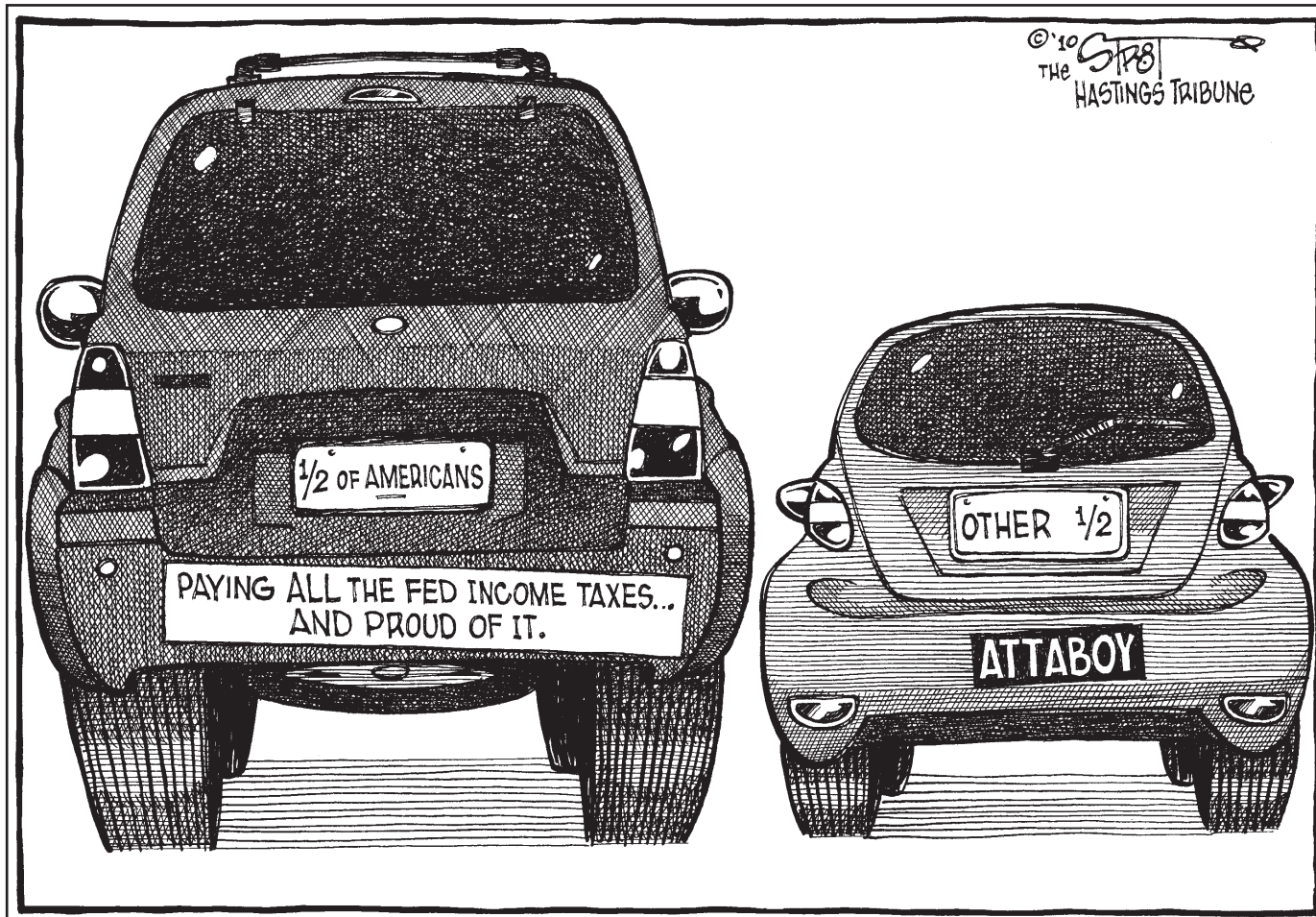
We backed the Mexican government in trying to suppress these gangs, but law enforcement alone just cannot end the drug "problem." That can only come from curbing demand, and only treatment programs can do that.

Interestingly, the Mexican Army has proved more effective against the gangs than some. Still, honest judges, police officers and public officials have to live in constant fear of murder, or worse. Whole families sometimes are wiped out.

Why? Because we still haven't learned that prohibition does not work. Because we still haven't learned to treat the problem rather than the product. Because we still believe in simple — if failed — solutions.

We spend billions each year to perpetuate the "War on Drugs," while each year the problem gets worse. The only ones who benefit are the drug-police bureaucracy and the gangs.

Whole nations lose their lifestyle in this game. When will we learn?
—Steve Haynes



Breeding preparedness

Calving season has begun to wind down for some, for others it has just begun and yet for others it is still to come. Regardless, spring has come, and it is never too early to begin thinking about preparing your herd for the coming breeding season.

Selecting replacement heifers for your herd can be critical in how your herd performs in the coming years, not to mention how much sleep you will get during the next calving season. Ideally, heifers will be bred at an average weight of 600-650 pounds.

This weight will vary according to breed, but this will be the case with the average Angus or Angus cross heifer. Another criteria used to aid in culling your heifer prospects is the pelvic area. This is a measurement of size of the birth canal, usually taken at around 1 year of age. Those with abnormally shaped pelvic openings or abnormally small openings should be culled as needed.

Once you have your heifers selected, preparing them with the proper vaccinations and deworming is a must for optimal protection and performance. Prior to 1 year of age, a vaccination for brucella abortus is recommended. This is commonly referred to as the calfhood vaccination and helps prevent abortion caused by brucella abortus.

Vet tips
Dr. Aaron White



Vaccination for BVD, IBR, PI3, BRSV, Campylobacter (Vibrio) and Leptospira is also highly recommended. This set of viruses and bacteria are known causes of abortion and infertility in heifers, cows and bulls. They commonly come packaged together in one vaccination. The modified live version of this vaccination gives the best response, and therefore the best protection. Heifers must have two rounds of this vaccine prior to breeding, with the last round being given preferably one month prior to breeding. During vaccinations, deworming with a broad spectrum dewormer is also recommended for optimal breeding efficiency. Developing heifers can be challenging, but if backgrounding is done strategically the outcome will be a rewarding enterprise.

Preparing cows for the coming breeding season is mainly focused on nutrition, deworming, and immunization. Cows, for optimal breeding performance, should enter the breeding season in

a body condition 5-6 out of 9. Many factors influence this condition including weather, age, feed quality and feed availability. Feeding to maintain body condition through the winter, while intensive labor has its cost, has been shown to be less costly than a prolonged calving season or open cows as a result of poor body condition at breeding.

Cows also need to be vaccinated annually. Some producers choose to do this during pre-breeding and others at pregnancy check time when a scours vaccination is also given. In either case, a MLV vaccine composed of BVDV, IBR, BRSV, PI3 and VL5 will give the best protection.

If the cows have had the same vaccine the year previous, only one booster is needed, ideally given approximately one month prior to breeding. During vaccination time, deworming with a broad spectrum dewormer is also recommended for optimal breeding efficiency. Keeping your cows in optimum condition and protected from disease and parasites will enable your herd to remain efficient in this challenging economic environment.

In our next column, we will discuss how to properly prepare your bulls for breeding season. As always, call us at 785-877-2411.



To....Norton Community High School band and choir members who went to the music festival in Colby. (Called in)

To....the hospice volunteers. (Called in)

To....Joan Bolt and her helpers for the family fitness night at Eisenhower. (Called in)

To....Wade Ambrosier for getting all the people who stopped by my house for help out of their mud predicament. (Called in)

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Changes in the Supreme Court

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens has announced his retirement. At nearly 90 years of age he has decided to step down from a post he has held since his appointment by President Gerald Ford, nearly 35 years ago. Although appointed by a Republican, he has been in the liberal corner throughout much of his high court career.

The appointment of a Supreme Court Justice is a lasting legacy for a president, or so it would seem. Many times the nominee does not follow the political direction of the president who nominated him or her. When directed to interpret Constitutional law, the newly appointed justice may find their sensitivities coursing in the opposite direction. The high court's job is to define the words of our Constitution and Bill of Rights, based not on the political climate, but rather on the forefathers' intentions.

Oddly enough there are no firm requirements for this position. One might expect a law degree and experience as a judge to be prerequisites, but not so. Currently all those serving do hold law degrees and have served on the U.S. Court of Appeals. Historical data indicates

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



there was a presumption Supreme Court Justices would have served as a judge on a lower court however more than 40 have not. Although most justices have been born in the United States, six have been born outside of this country.

Currently the court consists of nine justices including the chief justice, a number which has varied over the years as directed by the Senate. These are lifetime appointments. In recent years, the appointments have become much more political as the country becomes more polarized on issues such as abortion and war. Any nominee must be approved by the Senate and although the process need not be prolonged, in recent years it has been and mainly because of political agendas. Perhaps those who oppose appointments, democrat or republican, should view

the appointment of a Supreme Court Justice as one of the perks of being elected president. President Obama's most recent and only nomination to the high court, Sonia Sotomayor, was appointed to other courts first by George H.W. Bush and secondly by Bill Clinton. Her reputation as a 'moderate' certainly helped her confirmation and should be an indication of potential names put forward by President Obama.

There are several key people being considered and more than likely President Obama will waste little time in making the nomination. How quickly the process will move forward will depend unfortunately on the political climate at the moment. Some congressional members and special interest groups have already indicated they will block anyone who does not support their views regardless of constitutionality or the court's interpretations. If the U.S. founders and the Constitution win this round, a nominee dedicated to the interpretation of the law void of special interests and political power, will become the next U.S. Supreme Court Justice constituting a win for democracy.

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