

What price will we pay for the energy of today?

Clean power. What does that mean? Depends on the tenor of the times. Fifteen to 20 years ago, for instance, environmentalists were protesting anything to do with nuclear power. Development of nuclear plants stopped cold.

Nuke plants created the worst type of pollution, opponents said, radioactive wastes that we had no plans to deal with. State after state rejected plans to build storage sites for material that would be "hot" for centuries. None has been built yet, though nuclear wastes remain in storage, the containers rotting away.

Coal, the once and future king of energy, returned to the fore. Hundreds of steam plants were built. Giant cranes stripped away the soil of central Wyoming. Dozens of trains left the coal fields each day to feed hungry power plants.

Then someone decided that it was carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gasses" that we had to fear. Suddenly, coal was the enemy and nuclear plants were back in vogue. We'll figure out a way to hide those wastes, just you see.

In Europe, nuclear plants are already under development. In the U.S., the administration is pushing for a resumption of design and construction. Nothing has happened yet. No waste disposal site is being built.

Some coal plants, under pressure from environmentalists, will convert to natural gas, which burns cleaner, producing mostly water and less carbon dioxide in the exhaust. Wind, solar and geothermal plants will add to the mix, and coal will be dethroned.

Such is the way things are when we follow our emotions. The "best science" of the day has a way of morphing into yesterday's old news.

But can we really depend on nuclear plants to supply the power we need? Or wind? Or the sun?

No one really knows. The truth is, we need to consume less energy. Americans are just energy hogs, but no one wants to be without things our grandparents never dreamed of, air conditioning and big cars and huge houses.

But nuke plants do produce waste, and someone will have to provide a place to bury it. Even natural gas produces carbon dioxide. Any energy plant produces heat. Any transfer to energy from one place to another moves that heat, affecting weather and eventually, climate, at both ends.

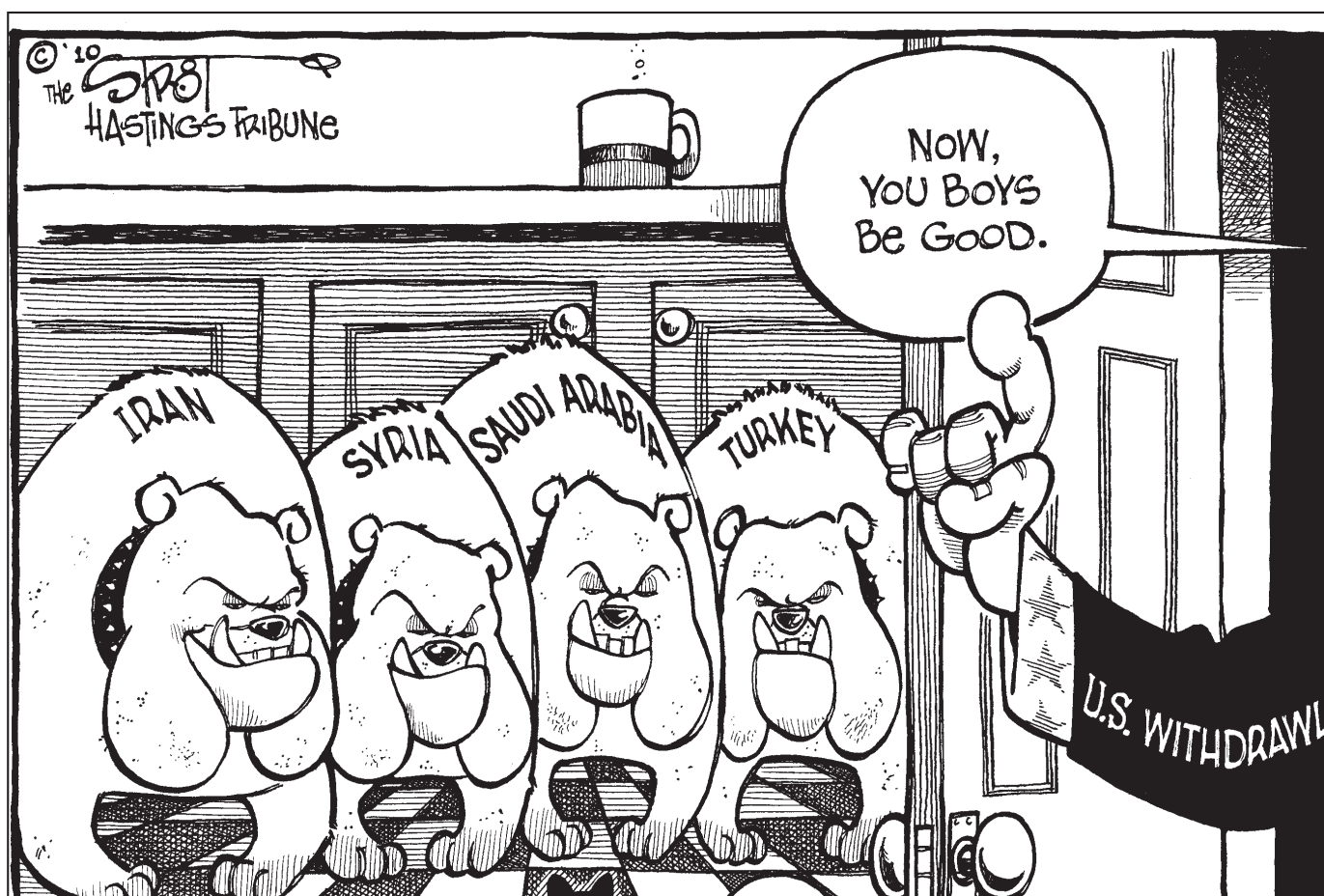
"Clean" coal plants are far better than older coal plants, but still dirty. That may be progress, but ... any kind of plant has its own impact. We know not what that may be today, and care less if the new plant is "cleaner." But someday, we will have to pay the price. It won't be cheap.

Someday, too, advancing technology will give us better ways to use nuclear fuel, wind, the sun, and yes, even coal. Maybe that will save us, or maybe just add to our doom.

And we'll still not have a place to take the nuclear wastes. Who wants it?

This energy problem has no easy answers.

Steve Haynes



The way it used to be, stories of the past

I'm not the only one complaining about outrageously high utility bills. Matters not if you are country folk or city slicker, the cost of cooling our homes this summer has been extreme. But, could you imagine not?

Conversations about this summer's heat invariably come around to, "...well, when I was a kid." Fifty years ago nobody, not even rich people, had air conditioning. A few may have had what we called "swamp coolers". And, that's about all they were good for was cooling a swamp. The humidity they produced made you feel like you were in the Amazon rain forest.

The point is we didn't miss what we never had. We rode in the car with the windows wide open, hair blowing in the wind; farmers drove tractors without cabs (most not even an umbrella); women cooked five-course meals on gas stoves inside the house and, we didn't seem to mind.

My mother's ritual was to shut the house up about 10 a.m. while it was still relatively cool from the evening air. With the high ceilings of those old farmhouses and the open stairway, the heat went upstairs like a chimney. Which just means our second floor bedrooms were like ovens at night. Perhaps that's why our kids slept outside so much in the summer.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



Mom kept an old metal bed frame with an even older mattress out in the yard. Every night we would pack out some old blankets and a pillow or two for a night under the stars. Mom would lay down with me and it was there I learned how to find the North Star and the big and little dippers. Even though I could never "see" them, she pointed out Orion's Belt and The Seven Sisters.

So, I'll probably keep on complaining about the high cost of electricity but, I'll be glad we have the means to pay it. And, every time I flip the switch I'll be thankful I have the luxury of power at my fingertips. Because, I know there are still millions of people in this world who are not as privileged.

There was a rodeo at my house Sunday morning and I missed it. It was my Sunday to work at the radio station so I was gone before sun up. Jim was scheduled

to preach at a little country church and had every intention of being there early. He was about to walk out the door when a neighbor called and said, "Your calves are out."

R-r-r-r-r-ch. Jim's plans came to a screeching halt. He found the gate he had neglected to latch. It, of course, had to be left open to allow re-entry. Quickly, he grabbed a bucket of the sweet feed the calves eat like candy and headed down the alley where they had been spotted. Soon, all four calves, April, May, Junior and Julio were following him home like the Pied Piper. But, that's where the parade ended.

Junior and Julio went back into their enclosure but, April and May took a detour. By the time Jim had the two little heifers headed in the right direction, Junior and Julio were trying to come out again. Eventually, with the help of a few neighbors, all four calves were in the same pen at the same time but, not without some running on Jim's part. He called on his cell phone, still panting and wheezing, to say he was finally on his way to church. The good news is he made it on time.

Kansas farmers at the top of production

Without question, producing food has been the single most important vocation in human history. Farming and ranching helped pave the way for modern civilization.

Today, as in the past, feeding the world is vital to our growth as a community, region, state and nation. Our ability to produce the safest, most wholesome food in the world has allowed us to progress as a civilization.

When we think of food production, our state and the farmers and ranchers who work our fertile soil rank with the best in production agriculture. The Sunflower State ranks at the top when it comes to crop and livestock production.

In 2009, Kansas farmers produced crops worth \$6.9 billion, says Bob White of Kansas Agricultural Statistics. Livestock production amounted to \$6.1 billion, for a total of \$13 billion.

Kansas farmers and ranchers produced this bountiful harvest on 65,500 farms last year. The average size was 705 acres, a little over one square mile.

Kansas led the country in milo produc-

Insight

John Schlageck

tion last year when our state produced 224.4 million bushels. We also produced the third most sorghum silage with a total of 440,000 tons.

Our state ranked second in wheat production with 369.6 million bushels. We led the country in wheat flour milled with a total of 125,833,000 hundredweight.

The Sunflower State ranks third in production of sunflowers. Kansas farmers produced 245 million pounds in last year. We placed fifth in all hay produced with 7.2 million tons and sixth in alfalfa hay with 3.7 million tons.

Kansas corn producers ranked seventh in 2009, harvesting 598 million bushels. In soybean production, Kansas now ranks ninth with 160.6 million bushels.

Our state's agriculture remains one of the most diversified in the nation. Our farmers and ranchers also grow dry edible

beans, oats, corn silage, rye, barley and summer potatoes. Specialty crops like pecans, fruits, vegetables and popcorn grow in our rich Kansas soil.

Kansas ranked third in the number of all cattle and calves with 6 million head at the beginning of the year. Our state also ranked third in cattle on feed for processing with a total of 2.4 million head. Kansas ranked third in red meat processing with 5.28 billion pounds. Hog inventories ranked 10th with 1.8 million head.

The Sunflower State tied for 11th in market sheep with 30,000 head and 19th in all sheep and lambs with 80,000 head at the beginning of the year. Kansas farmers and ranchers also raise goats, turkeys, chickens, buffalo, ostriches and a few other exotic creatures.

Yes, Kansas is blessed with some of the finest farmland and farmers and ranchers in the world. By using this land wisely, with the help of the latest technology and research, we will continue to feed the hungry mouths of the world.

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- ★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
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Thumbs up to the participants of the Prairie Dog Christmas. It's nice to get in the holiday spirit. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the city and school for the new beautiful tennis courts, it's been a long time coming. It should make for a great season. Mailed in.

Thumbs up to the Norton swimming pool staff. It is nice to know that our children can have fun in the water and be well looked after. Called in.

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