

Times are hard across Kansas, yet some disagree

The nation remains in the grip of a three-year recession. Unemployment hovers near 10 percent, growth is stagnant, recovery slow. Economists talk about a possible "double dip."

In business, many have lost their jobs. Those lucky enough to have one probably haven't had a raise in three years. Many would like to have those jobs.

Times are hard, yes, but across Kansas, perhaps across the country, public employees are demanding – and getting – raises. Often, city councils and county commissions are raising taxes to get the money.

In the middle of the worst economy, many say, since the Great Depression, who has money to pay higher taxes? Well, everyone, if you listen to the public employees demanding raises, budget increases, guaranteed jobs.

How did these people become so entitled? And where do they think the money to pay them more will come from? The unemployed?

Public employees have it pretty good. They may not make as much as factory workers or others with strong unions, but then a lot of those jobs have gone overseas. Public jobs, for the most part, can't be exported.

Public employees, by and large, have better insurance and get more holidays than anyone else. We wonder how many of our readers in private business get a full 12 days off – other than bank employees whose workplaces must be closed by federal regulation on holidays.

How many of you out there have full Blue Cross coverage for your family? Have a state-funded pension plan that allows you to retire early and take another job, while collecting a full pension?

(Forget for now the fact that many state pension funds, which cover city, county and school workers also, are badly underfunded and in danger of collapse. That includes Kansas. It'll take another tax increase to fix that.)

Public employees have more job security, under civil service rules, than most in private business, especially small businesses that pay much of the tax load.

Public employees have it pretty good – but they're not satisfied with that, apparently. They want more. Whether anyone else can afford to pay is not their concern.

In Kansas, for instance, when schools faced layoffs, teachers and others banned together to force the state to raise taxes. Can't blame them. But who can afford to pay?

In a situation like this, an economic crisis of major proportion, that any government body would consider money for raises seems absurd, but the truth is, most are. Most will approve raises and push them through, raising taxes to pay the bill.

Voters ought to call for an accounting. We're not saying public salaries should be cut, but raises ought to be out of the question. Tax increases, especially the property tax, should not even be considered.

But until voters get mad, this will keep happening.

Voters seldom go to budget hearings where these things are discussed. They don't get mad until the tax bills come out at the end of the year, and by then, the decisions are made.

If you're happy with all that, fine. If not, maybe it's time to find out if your city council, your county, your school district plan to raise spending, employee compensation or taxes this year.

If enough people ask, things might change. But it has to start with voters and taxpayers.

Steve Haynes

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Organized labor supporters in minority

Labor Day, what does that mean in Anti-Union Kansas? Football, food, a day off work and family.

Our daughter from Oklahoma University brought us this weather alert: They have designated T Boone Pickens Stadium at Okie State a tornado shelter. Although it's unlikely they will need it, OSU fans now have somewhere to go in case they get a touchdown.

Judging by the opening weekend perhaps OU has more to be concerned about than OSU, but that's just my opinion. I'm not touching the KU situation with a ten foot pole! There but for the grace of Bill go K-State fans!

We almost had disaster regarding our tailgate. The ice procured at our local store said in big letters, "HUSKER ICE". Somehow that just seemed wrong. What happened to "NORTON ICE"???? I hope someone at the Telegram looks into this disturbing situation.

We were surprised there is even such a thing as Husker Ice. We had been told they no longer make ice in Nebraska. Lost the recipe or something like that!!!

But enough about football, the topic today is Labor Day.

The Wichita Eagle ran a story about the lack of support for labor unions in Kansas. It touched on the irony that here we are celebrating summer's end with a three day weekend courtesy of LABOR. Yet in Kansas and even the rest of the country organized labor supporters are

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



in the minority.

Indeed, brunch at our house on Labor Day, presented the perfect paradox of labor relations. One daughter is thrilled with her husband's union wages and at the same time annoyed with the union workers she supervises in her management position.

I could see the hubby's management brother nodding his head in agreement with her frustrations; even though his company is non-unionized.

The hubby's sister asked how much the union workers in Patricia's plant are making. When we last saw her she was packing up and moving to Pennsylvania!

Daughter Kate discovered a book, "Triangle" (about the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in the early 1900's). She has been urging everyone to read it. I tried but knew the story from a documentary or TV movie years ago and did not find the book as compelling as she did. I do however believe you would have devoid of a soul if you were to study the early labor movement and come to any conclusion other than this: in the beginning unions were

on the side of the angels.

I also believe unions today sometimes coddle lazy and incompetent people. But I believe in tenure for teachers! Funny how sometimes even our own feelings on an issue can be at odds with each other.

In their pure form Unions are a very good idea, as are a lot of things. But they have become mostly about money, as sadly many pure things do. Even football. Or especially football!!!

We have very simple labor relations in our house. Management (the hubby) tells himself what to do, then he does it.

He only has problems when he has to go to the Labor Pool (which at the moment is pretty shallow). Yep; just me in the labor pool. Maybe the labor pool will cooperate but there is always a chance it will complain and file a grievance. It can get pretty tricky going through arbitration etc. It's easier to go find someone willing to cross the picket line!

I don't necessarily enjoy being labor. Labor doesn't get any respect. I'd like to be management, but I'm more like research and development. I have lots of great ideas both management and labor completely ignore. I don't even understand why we have R&D. But as long as I get funding (in the form of new shoes) I bravely carry on.

It's pretty complicated. I guess that's why we have Labor Day. Every so often we need a day to chill out and we did! Too bad it had to be with Husker Ice!

Is President Obama a liberal, a muslim?

Ann Coulter, the conservative columnist, recently defended President Obama against the attacks of those who believe he is Muslim. One in five Americans still believes this, probably the same number as those who don't recognize Hawaii as a state.

"He is not Muslim," she emphatically states, "He is an atheist!" She goes on to state "All liberals are atheists." I wondered how she made the connection between political and religious so I did a little investigating.

Liberals are identified as embracing the following: (Dictionary.com) Free from prejudice or bigotry; tolerant; open-minded, characterized by generosity and willingness to give in large amounts and given freely or abundantly; generous.

The same source defines conservatives as adhering to these values: disposed to preserve existing conditions...and to

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



limit change, cautiously moderate or purposefully low, and traditional in style or manner.

The previous list is of a more personal nature and requires personal commitment and action whereas the latter requires less knowledge or energy. This, I'm sure, is where Ms. Coulter is able to partner faith and politics. For the liberals a key word is action; for conservatives the key word is stall.

One certainly would not argue with Ms. Coulter's right to state her opinion

and more importantly her fear. Fear is what surfaces when we don't understand. My criticism with Ms. Coulter is in making an assertion which cannot be proven and attempting to generate fear in others. Whether one is Christian, atheist, agnostic, Jewish or Muslim, faith is very personal and is reflected more in our treatment of others than in our form of worship.

Thomas Jefferson, who at 33 drafted the Declaration of Independence, once wrote in a private letter, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."...

Jefferson went on to draft a bill for religious freedom in the state of Virginia. In that act it was stated, "...our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions ..."

Thumbs up to everyone who participated in the Smokin' in the Barn -- and to those who contributed. What a super new idea to bring people to Norton!



A big thumbs up to the high school volleyball & football coaches for letting their teams out of practice to support the high school cross country teams at their home meet!! Also to the students that took the opportunity to show their support & cheer on these cross country athletes!! It was awesome to hear their peers yelling and cheering for them and very much appreciated by the cross country athletes & their parents!!! Way to go BLUEJAYS!!!

To the ladies that call themselves the Hormone Honeys, thank you for the random gift of money given to my family at the Norton County Fair so the grand kids could ride a few more rides. I certainly did not know you but your generosity was nice and my family thanks you.