

## Problems that don't go away

The story comes around every year, and every year we – the people, Congress, the White House – shake our heads and tut – and ignore it.

Social Security is going broke. In as little as 21 years, by sometime in 2033, the fund's \$2.7 trillion surplus will be gone, benefits will exceed tax income and, by law, will be cut.

If it gets that far, there could be riots in the street out front of nursing homes. But surely, we can fix a problem, given two decades to do it. Can't we?

Think so? Remember, the Postal Service is going broke this year, and Congress and the president have done nothing – nothing – to fix the problem.

We've known about the Social Security issue for the last 20 or 30 years. Actuaries and accountants could look at the size of the Baby Boomer generation piling up that surplus and see that the coming, smaller generations coming up could not pay enough to support them.

But did Congress or any president do anything? Of course not. Few problems are solved in Washington until the last possible moment.

But Social Security is already out of balance. Since 2010, payments have exceeded income. The huge reserve masks that fact, but it won't go away. Until the system is broke.

Administrators says it would cost something like \$3.2 trillion to start fixing the problem right now. Every year, the cost will rise and the cure will become more painful. But there's no hope Congress will move on the issue in an election year, or any coming year, for that matter.

The attitude is summed up by Sen. Bernie Sanders, a liberal independent from Vermont who heads the Senate Social Security caucus, as quoted by the Associated Press:

"Compared to other crises – the collapse of the middle class, real wages falling ... 50 million people having no health insurance – how would I rate Social Security? Nowhere near as serious as these and many other problems."

In other words, "ignore it; maybe it'll go away."

But it won't. Instead the problem will grow each year until it's too late. Just watch.

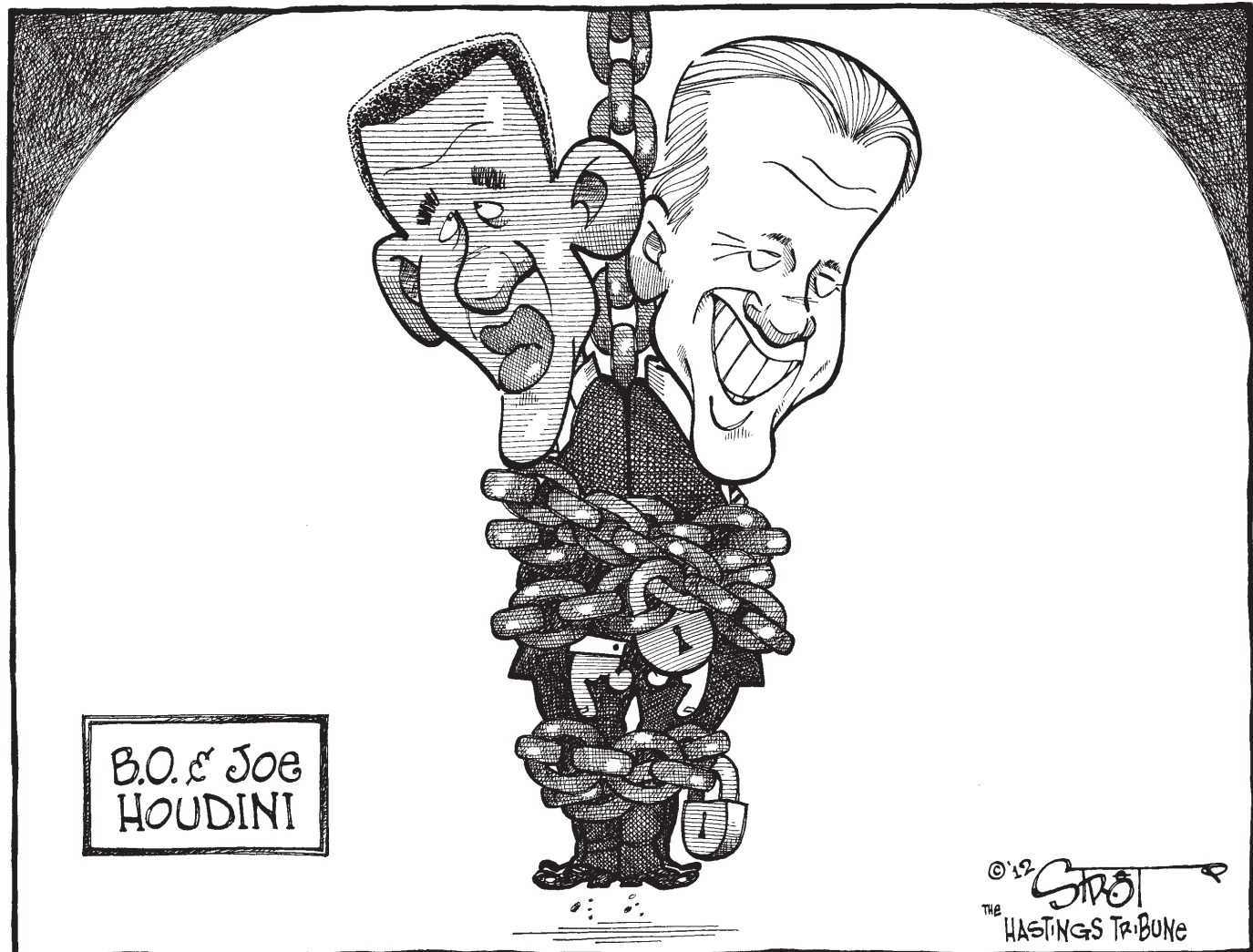
All this should scare the bejebbers out of anyone who believes the federal government can and should solve all our problems. While growing bigger and more bloated every year, the government also becomes more dysfunctional each year as well.

The fact is, the government can't solve our problems. It certainly can't manage the economy. Mostly, it can mess things up. Yet Americans continue to have faith that if we only do more of the same, or get better people in charge, things will change.

But that seldom works, just as ignoring a problem like Social Security never works.

– Steve Haynes

### On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



## Weary of winter's upcoming weather

What's up with this weather? Don't get me wrong. I'm not complaining, but it's a little scary. If it's this cool in August what will December, January and February be like? If winter is as severe as the summer was, we could be in for a long haul.

Right now, though, I'll take it. I've had the house opened wide up for at least a week. At night we sleep with the balcony door open. My poor husband thinks he's freezing and has actually added a blanket to his side of the bed.

My flower beds look sort of sad. The heat took its toll and everything is droopy – even after watering. The garden is all but gone. The tomato plants died. A friend said it was spider mites. I need to salvage what few tomatoes are left, but it sure isn't the bumper crop I thought I would have. Considering all the water I poured on them, I'm not getting my money's worth.

–ob–

School has started again and mothers all across the midwest heaved a collective sigh of relief. Not because they have their days to themselves again, but because they can establish a routine again. It seems like during the summer kids get their days and nights mixed up. If they're not farm kids with

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



morning chores to do they tend to stay up too late at night, then sleep too late in the morning.

I shouldn't limit this to farm kids. City kids can have chores, too. In fact all kids should have some chores. You can call them what you want: jobs or responsibilities, but everyone needs something to do. It actually makes them feel like they have some importance in the family. Oh, they will whine, procrastinate and do it sloppily, but deep down it gives kids a sense of accomplishment. And, if they know their folks are depending on them they begin to develop a sense of self-worth. Kids are capable of lots more than their folks give them credit for – it just needs to be drawn out of them.

–ob–

Jim and I share the office. He has his computer and desk – I have mine. With Jim's big, gnarly fingers he has a

hard time typing so he bought himself something called "Dragon." He speaks into a headpiece microphone and it types exactly what he says. Great except I can't always tell when he's writing a letter or talking to me.

Just now he said something and I answered him only to learn he was dictating a letter. He needs to give me a warning.

–ob

Doesn't seem possible, but we are trying to organize a team for our fall Mexico mission trip. A solid core of seven have committed and we could build a small house with that number. However, it is our goal to build a larger house and we really need a team of 15.

I will just unabashedly ask, "If you ever wanted to do something like this – now is your opportunity." Call me at home or write me at the above e-mail address. This will be our fifth trip to Acuna, a sister city across the border from Del Rio, Texas. It's the safest border town in Mexico and we love it. Never once, have we ever felt a moment's fear.

So, come on. Join us. Step out of your comfort zone, just a little. It's the hardest work you'll ever love.

## Consuming conventional or organically grown food

Do organically produced foods have higher nutritional value?

Let's take a look. At a 19-country international conference, research studies compared the nutritional value of organic crops versus conventional crops.

Colorado State University (CSU) researchers compared vitamin content of organically and conventionally grown vegetables (carrots and broccoli). They found no statistically significant differences.

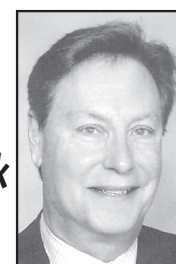
Other research from CSU focused on growing potatoes using four different farming techniques under the same growing conditions: an intensive high-chemical system; a moderate conventional system; customary organic farming (hog manure and crop rotation on land used for organic production for 10 years); and virgin organic production, using cow manure on land cleared from brush. Nine minerals and seven vitamins were analyzed and no clear differences were discovered.

Another U.S. study found more soluble iron in conventionally grown spinach. The proportion of the soluble iron available to the consumer's system was somewhat higher for both spinach and peppers grown with compost and manure.

In other studies abroad, a Norwegian study found conventionally grown carrots contained more beta-carotene,

### Insight

John Schlageck



more magnesium and more manganese. The ecologically grown carrots had more aluminum. When carrots of the same variety were compared, the only difference was a higher level of carotenoids in the conventionally grown carrots.

A German study discovered lower levels of nitrate in carrots, beets and potatoes grown with manure but the differences were minute under good storage conditions. Stressful storage conditions enhanced the difference.

Consumers can conclude from such findings that people who do not buy organically grown fruits and vegetables, usually at higher prices, can find equally good products with equal nutrition at supermarkets and roadside stands. It also means people who wish to eat organically grown fruits and vegetables should do so.

Bottom line – differing farming systems produce virtually no difference in the nutritional value of the crops. The variety, or strain, of the carrots and potatoes grown appears to have a bigger impact on their nutrient value

than organic production methods.

It's no secret, plant breeders have long advocated that fruits, vegetables and grains require three main nutrients – nitrogen, phosphate potash and trace minerals in varying amounts according to the plant species. If a plant is sorely lacking in one of these nutrients, it will not grow. If it has access to these nutrients, it will grow into the crop its heredity determines and will pass along the nutrients its heredity intends.

Translation – for a healthy diet eat plenty of fruit and vegetables each day, regardless of how they were grown. Doing so will probably mean a person eats more fiber which is healthy. It also means less room for fatty foods that are one of the major contributions to poor health.

Eating five fruits and vegetables per day reduces our risk for heart disease and cancer. Researchers tell us this health-enhancing effect is derived from the high levels of antioxidant chemicals in the fruits and vegetables. Studies are confirming this cleansing effect from specific chemicals from specific crops including broccoli and blueberries.

So much of this research on conventional versus organically grown food has demonstrated little nutritional differences. In our society, consumers have a choice. It is an individual decision.

The choice is yours.

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