

What will happen the next time a bailout is needed

Compounding its mistakes of the last few years, the Justice Department has allowed American Airlines to merge with US Airways into yet another giant company.

Perhaps it was inevitable, given the fact that Delta Air Lines had been allowed to swallow Northwest, followed by United gobbling up Continental. Now the U.S. has three mega-airlines, each one too big to be allowed to fail.

Business interests assure us these mergers are "in the public interest," creating stronger airlines more capable of serving the public.

Bull, we say. The public will wind up paying ever-higher ticket prices, and when one of these giants gets into trouble, who will be big enough to "save" it? Only Uncle Sammy, of course.

So the government, by allowing and encouraging these giant mergers, is setting us up for more expensive flights and for giant bailouts down the road — just like it has in so many industries, from autos to railroads to banking.

An enlightened antitrust policy would aim at preventing this kind of consolidation in any industry. It cannot be good for the economy or the health of businesses as a whole.

The airline industry has seen winners and losers since most of the old-line linear carriers failed to adapt to the "hub-and-spoke" world. Venerable names dropped out of the sky — Braniff, Trans World, Eastern Allegheny, Pan American, Western, the list seems endless.

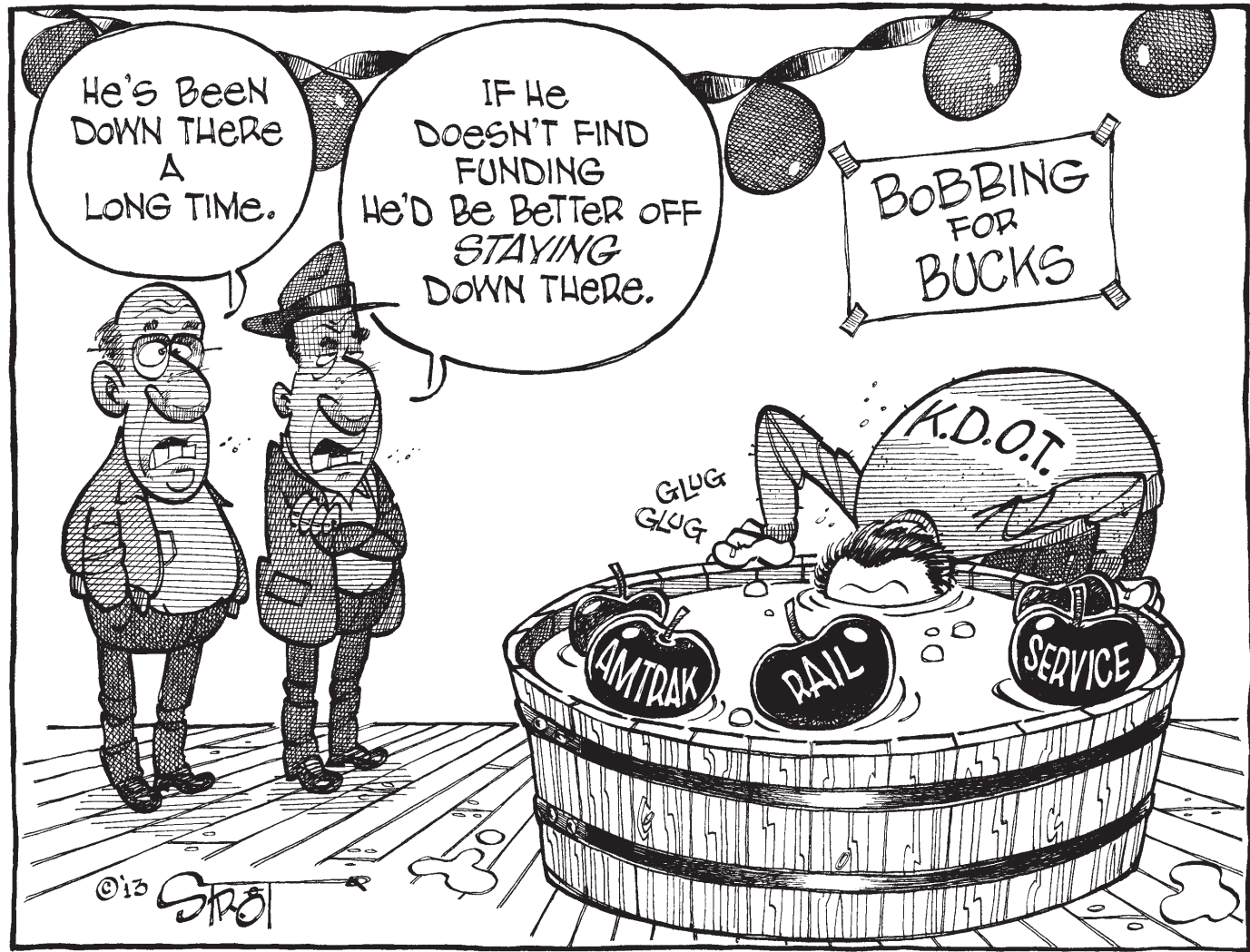
Low-cost carriers rose in their place, led by Southwest, a company which always seems to be profitable despite its smaller size. Texas Air took over the old Continental and made a success of it for a time. Now, little US West has come out on top, taking over first US Air, then bankrupt American.

But the government does not seem to get the dangers of bigness. The same Justice Department that once spent years breaking up the original AT&T has since allowed one of the resulting "Baby Bells," Southwestern, or SBC, to gobble up two of its siblings and its one-time parent to become the new, ever-larger AT&T. Airlines swell with routes and planes. Banks are encouraged to "save" struggling brethren.

But what happens the next time the airline industry gets tough? The next time banks get out on a limb? And don't tell us these consolidations don't affect competition, even with the relatively minor concessions the government finally got out of American, US Air and other merger partners.

What next? Why not go back to a policy that makes sense, that keeps business competitive, allows for winners and losers, exit and entry? And protects us from price gouging and mega-failures?

Where is Teddy Roosevelt when we really need him? — *Steve Haynes*



No right or wrong, just an opinion

There are not many times I have agreed with Dick Cheney, but this week I felt empathy for him when he said, "It's always been dealt with within the context of the family, and, frankly, that's our preference." He was alluding to his daughters' public spat about same sex marriage. The Cheneys' daughter, Mary, is married to her gay partner; the other daughter, Liz, is running for a Senate seat in Wyoming. Liz announced on Fox News she does not support same sex marriage.

Although most of us aren't public figures, no doubt most of us would like our family disagreements to be dealt with quietly and privately. For the Cheneys, this very public debate is personal and when played out publicly, uncomfortable.

I have to take exception with Mary Cheney when she announces on Facebook to her sister, "Liz — this isn't just an issue on which we disagree — you're just wrong — and on the wrong side of history." There is a private message

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



button she could have clicked and the message would have remained between the two sisters.

Ruth Benedict, the early 20th century anthropologist, once said, "The trouble with life isn't that there is no answer, it's that there are so many answers." Mary and Liz Cheney see different answers. From Mary Cheney's standpoint, Liz's opposition is wrong and I would venture to guess that works vice versa as well.

Each sister is well within her right to say her sibling is being unfair, not listening and not on the right side. Who of us as parents haven't heard those

words before? Perhaps only over who gets to ride in the front seat, but nevertheless a point taken.

The downside of Mary Cheney's remark is the red stop sign it puts on compromise. When we announce someone is wrong, we have created an air of combativeness not conducive to problem solving. In Liz's defense, her view on same sex marriage is her party's general rule. Liz and Mary Cheney are in the unique position of being daughters of a former vice-president; of being sisters with differing sexual orientations, and at least one with political aspirations. They had an opportunity to reveal an open conversation on an issue that is not just a personal issue, but a public one, as well.

On the other hand, maybe Liz Cheney should have told Chris Wallace, "I believe marriage and relationships are a private matter, and the female or male box on the marriage application should be removed." mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Challenging another's perspective or opinion

Social media is fun, but can get one in a lot of trouble. I would like my friends to know, if I challenge a post you make it is only an attempt for dialog.

It may be heredity; my Dad loved a good argument. I have told this before but one of his most frustrating traits would be to make me really mad; then defuse the situation by saying, "I agree with you, I was just seeing if you could defend your position!"

I've been de-sensitized. Rather than get hurt feelings, my fondest wish is people would defend their positions!

Sometimes people post things that are just wrong. If I post something wrong I want to know.

It is surprising how many people do not seem to realize you can delete posts. Or edit, add disclaimers, apologize and give the correct information.

Oh well! How does that Serenity Prayer go: accept what I cannot change, change what I can-----wisdom to know the difference?

Another thing: I only challenge people I respect! They say never get into a battle of wits with an unarmed man. If it seems I'm picking a fight it's because I figure the other person can defend himself. Sadly the list of people on my why bother list gets longer and longer!

Which brings us to Uggs. Uggs are a sort of boot. I seem to recall Patri-

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



cia and Craig arguing about them five years or so ago. His stance: Uggs are Ugly. Hers: they are warm and fashionable.

I can see both sides. They look really cute on the right person with the right clothes in the right situation. But it's confusing when they are worn with shorts???? And nothing says I've given up like Uggs and pajama pants! Or anything and pajama pants!

It's hard to hate on Uggs too much when you own a pair of Crocs, as I do. There are a lot of great things about Crocs. Still every time I wear them in public I do feel like I've given up!

Thinking Uggs were something we had mostly forgotten, it was a bit surprising to find an extensive expose' of them on Facebook.

The shocking revelation: Uggs are made of sheepskin. Not just wool but skin! Just so we are clear about what this means: they skin sheep to make Uggs!!!!!!

The news release came from (prepare for a surprise) PETA!

The person who posted this runs a fast food restaurant. It is not a vegetarian chain. So what exactly is her position? Surely she is not into animal rights?

I had not considered what Uggs were made from but it makes sense that it would be sheep skin. Cold weather is setting in. Sheepskin sounds cozy, comfortable, and warm. Sorry PETA, your little rant just sent me shopping for Uggs.

PETA also contends shearing sheep is cruel, as is docking their tails.

I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but are people really this dumb?

The sheep are not skinned alive. They were slaughtered (or murdered if you are into animal rights) for their meat. Using the skins for boots seems sensible. Why waste what God has given us? Or replace it with some sort of chemical substitute that causes all matter of harm to us and the environment?

I remembered the Serenity Prayer. I backed away from the keyboard.

It's been said journalists "Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

It's obvious I need a similar rule for Facebook. It may be the same one that applies to wearing pajama pants or crocs in public: "I give up!"

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Thumbs up to Jeremy Wetter. Because of his skills and dedication as Norton Theatre Manager, 1,092 people attended the Norton Theatre from Monday, November 25th through Sunday, December 1st. Thumbs up to the volunteers who made the record breaking week possible and to all the theatre patrons who support our local recreation. Our community is blessed indeed. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to Morgan Olliff for going out of her way to invite an elderly gentleman to join her at her table at Dairy Queen when he had no place to sit. You made his day. Not many teens would do that today. Brought in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.