

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

Hold their feet to the fire

To The Free Press:

George Washington signed the bill establishing the Supreme Court (The Judiciary Act of 1789) on Sept. 24, 1789. That same day he presented to the Senate his appointees to fill the seats. It only took the Senate two days to confirm those appointees. WOW! It takes months and we never seem to fill all the positions needed to protect society today.

Look at what partisan politics, special interest groups, and personalities have done to the process. Granted, we have many more than the six positions on the first tribunal to fill. Our litigious society has made it necessary to establish a complicated structure that requires hundreds of lesser courts to handle all the appeals. The courts have become pro active in attempting to preempt the authority of the legislatures and in effect have written laws by mandate.

National, state, and local administrations have preempted the legislative process, and thus the people, in giving themselves more and more authority to act behind closed doors and keep their advisors and deliberations unknown. Open meeting laws have helped, but administrative decisions are not subject to open meetings.

The ultimate and final appeal is in the election booth. If we continue to elect incompetent, non productive, one issue candidates to fill our legislatures and elected boards we will continue to have more of the same back log in our courts and stalemates in the legislatures. When we make our selection on the single basis of no new taxes, evolution/creation, abortion, guns/no guns, immigration/illegals, etc. we will find ourselves facing the same problems next year and in the years to come.

Look at and study the issues before society and demand that your candidates declare themselves on the issues instead of side tracking those issues and merely pointing out the failures and incompetence of their opponents. Don't allow them to find only one or two highly emotional issues and find radical groups to campaign those issues for them. Call them to account when they attempt to ride in on the coat tails of legislative actions that proved popular, even when they had very little input in the drafting of those bills.

Ken Poland Gem (Letter #134)

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 Colby, Kan. 67701

freepress@nwkans.com
State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published daily, every Monday through Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

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Definitely wasn't a lost weekend

Wild. Crazy. Spontaneous.

Yes, it all describes my weekend. I am so glad that I am young and free. At times I hear people holler about being single and all the bad things that go with it, but what is sometimes forgotten is all the good that goes with it, mainly...freedom.

I am sure there are wonderful things about being married and having a family, and one day hopefully I will get to enjoy those things, but for now, I want to enjoy the excitement that goes with single life.

When you are married there is always another person to consult and think about before any major decision is made. A few years back I realized that I should be happy being where I am. No one to answer to but myself.

I am able to spend my money where I want and on the things that I want, go where I want to go, come home when I see fit, and never worry about cooking a balanced meal.

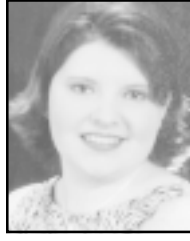
In fear of sounding selfish, hear me out on this one.

Friday evening, I had just come home from the office and was sitting on the couch pondering the weekend and wondering if there was anything really important that needed to be done (besides laundry). My dear friend came in and suggested that we go away for the weekend to "see some sights." All of us who have grown up in Northwest Kansas realize there isn't a great deal to see. He, being from another country, wants to see it all.

We looked over the map and searched for an interesting destination, outside of Colorado, since we have already taken several trips in that direction. As the Nebraska map was scanned, we soon realized that unless we were taking a trip to a lake, the Cornhusker State would not be our location of retreat.

As we started to branch out a bit, the South Dakota map was opened, and Mt. Rushmore popped right out of the page. Yep, you got it, by 7 p.m. on Friday night, the car was gassed up and ready to meet the presidents.

Although I guess there are many ways you can go, we decided Highway 83 all the way through Ne-



Michelle L. Hawkins

• Pursuit of a Richer Life

braska would be the easiest. This is all assuming that you won't fall asleep at the lack of scenery.

Might I suggest a small traveling tip for all interested in taking this trek, make sure if you see a gas station — fill up. I normally am one of those who doesn't fill up until the gas light has been on for at least ten miles.

As we were driving through North Platte, Neb., my car, Maggie, was sitting on half a tank. Surely no need to stop. My friend had been looking at the map and told me that it looked pretty barren and we really should fill up since it was after 10 p.m.

We filled up and boy am I glad we did, there is NOTHING for 126 miles until we reached Valentine, Neb. I say nothing, but really there were a few things, hills, road kill, an occasional wild dog, and I am sure I saw the original 30-point-buck (Paul Heskett - I swear I was sober when I saw it!) Actually the funniest thing we saw in that nearly two hour stretch of road was a limousine. Who would hire a limousine to drive them through nowhere?!!

Anyway, we got up early and drove the rest of the way to Mt. Rushmore. It was raining lightly when we got there. We toured around and spent about two hours there walking around. For photo buffs like ourselves, it is a magnificent sight! There is a walking tour with, I swear, about seven million steps that takes you closer around the monument. We took the walk/hike and by the end, it was pouring down rain.

We got in the car and headed down the road to the Crazy Horse Monument. Of course by this point, the rain had now turned to snow, but we were determined

to wait for the weather to clear enough to be able to see the monument.

For those who have never even heard of Crazy Horse, it is even better than Mt. Rushmore. It is only about 20 miles southwest of Mt. Rushmore, near the town of Custer, S.D. Still in progress, the entire mountain is being carved into a replica of Crazy Horse pointing out over the land. It is beautiful and absolutely amazing to see how huge it is. They say the heads of Mt. Rushmore could fit four wide just across his arm.

We had only been there a short time when the sun started to peek out of the clouds and give us full view of the mountain. The story is amazing and I don't have the space or time to tell it all, but the project was originally started in 1948, by the sculptor, Korczak Ziolkowski. He worked for 20 years on the project by himself with a jackhammer. Now that is what I call vision!

There have been a couple shows on the Discovery Channel about it, but for pictures and the rest of the amazing story, check out the website: www.crazyhorse.org. It is worth the surfing!

On the way back, we took a detour through Alliance, Neb. to see Car-Henge. It is an artist rendition of Stone-Henge, but only made out of old cars. Quite the unique site.

Well, a long trip short, we made it back to Colby, 41 hours and 1,000 miles later, by noon on Sunday. My dad had his 50th birthday and we spent the afternoon celebrating. (Happy Birthday Dad, I love you!)

I guess I have never really thought about it, but as I have been sharing about my adventure, I am hearing more and more people say that they have never been up there to visit. If you are one of those people — GO. It is so worth it, and I have found out...it can be done in a weekend.

Hawkins is Family Page and Religion Page editor, and also a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Colby Free Press. Her column appears on Tuesdays.

What's this globalization talk?

One of the good things about the stock market coming back down to Earth after a prolonged bubble is that it leads people to question other misconceptions about the economy. When stock prices were soaring we heard all kinds of nonsense about a "new economy," technological revolutions, and profit projections that were just too miraculous to be true.

The standard litany about the wonders of globalization could be the next myth that is ripe for debunking. For decades we have been told that increasing global trade and investment was great for everyone, with the exception of some inevitable "losers" who would hopefully retrain for new jobs (perhaps in the "new economy.")

Like the investment advisers who hawked Enron and WorldCom stocks as they were heading toward disaster, most of the "experts" on globalization have long been avoiding the real numbers.

For starters: The real median wage in 1973 was \$12.45 per hour (measured in 2000 dollars). In 2000 it was about \$12.90. Considering that the U.S. economy grew by 72 percent (per person) during that period, somebody got shafted.

Since the median is by definition the middle of the wage ladder, that somebody includes the majority of employees in the United States — not just the textile or steel workers who have been hit directly by foreign competition.

Anyone who is old enough to have lived through the 1950s, '60s, and '70s knows that it was not un-

Mark Weisbrot

• Another Viewpoint

common for a typical wage-earner to buy a house, support a family, and even put the kids through college with just one income. That doesn't happen any more, and these statistics are another way of expressing America's changed reality.

Interestingly, almost all of the research by economists shows that our opening up to foreign trade contributed to this massive redistribution of income. The only question is: How much? Even if we take the smaller estimates of how much redistribution was due to increased trade — not to mention U.S. firms moving production overseas — it is easy to show that about three-quarters of the U.S. labor force has suffered a net loss due to globalization.

This takes into account (as do the above numbers on the real median wage) all the cheap DVD and CD players, clothing, and other consumer goods that we now import from overseas. For the vast majority of Americans, the losses from globalization have outweighed the gains, in strictly economic terms.

This should not be surprising, since our political leaders have made it their mission for more than 30 years to rewrite the rules of global commerce (for example, in such agreements as the North American Free Trade Agreement or the World Trade Organization) in ways that give corporations more power and workers less.

What about the developing world? Unfortunately the official, undisputed numbers tell a very different story here, too, than the one we have heard from the cheerleaders on TV. The growth of income per person in the low and middle-income countries dropped sharply over the last 20 years.

If we compare the last two decades (1980-2000) to the previous 20 years (1960-1980), we find that these economies advanced by less than half their prior rate of growth.

As a result of this slower economic growth, most developing countries also saw reduced progress over the last 20 years in such areas as life expectancy, infant and child mortality, literacy, and education.

This long experiment in corporate-led globalization has been a failure, at home and abroad. As with the end of the "new economy," it is time to face up to the facts.

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Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

