

Opinion



Free Press
Viewpoint

Debate at our college was rare this season

We have to feel a bit special at this point in time in the campaign season.

When the debate featuring the gubernatorial hopefuls was held at Colby Community College last Sunday evening, all — all four — of the wannabes were on stage to tackle questions from the audience.

And apparently that was rare in the 2002 drive for Cedar Crest. Unless we have been badly misinformed, we are told that our stage was shared for the first time by Tim Shallenburger, Kathleen Sebelius, Dennis Hawver and Ted Pettibone — Republican, Democrat, Libertarian and Reform parties, respectively.

Sadly, the League of Women Voters didn't allow enough time for meaningful responses to the questions. Sound bites don't get it. But, conversely, we were delighted to have been chosen by the League for one of the political showdowns.

You might have caught the story on page 1 in last evening's Free Press, where Hawver crashed the debate at Lake Quivira on Tuesday between Sebelius and Shallenburger. He complained that he wasn't invited.

The debate sponsors said they wanted only the two major party candidates.

What kind of thinking is that?

We have always felt someone seeking the highest office in the state should be heard, regardless of how minor his party might be. But apparently freedom of speech is not quite coveted by the state's political process.

People attending the Colby debate came away — well, a number of them did, anyway — feeling both Hawver and Pettibone had some worthwhile things to say. And if that was the feeling here we feel badly that those attending the debate in Lake Quivira were denied access to their slant on the state of this state. "Thumbs Up" for Colby.

"Thumbs Down" for Lake Quivira. — *Tom (TD) Dreiling, Publisher*

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansan.com.

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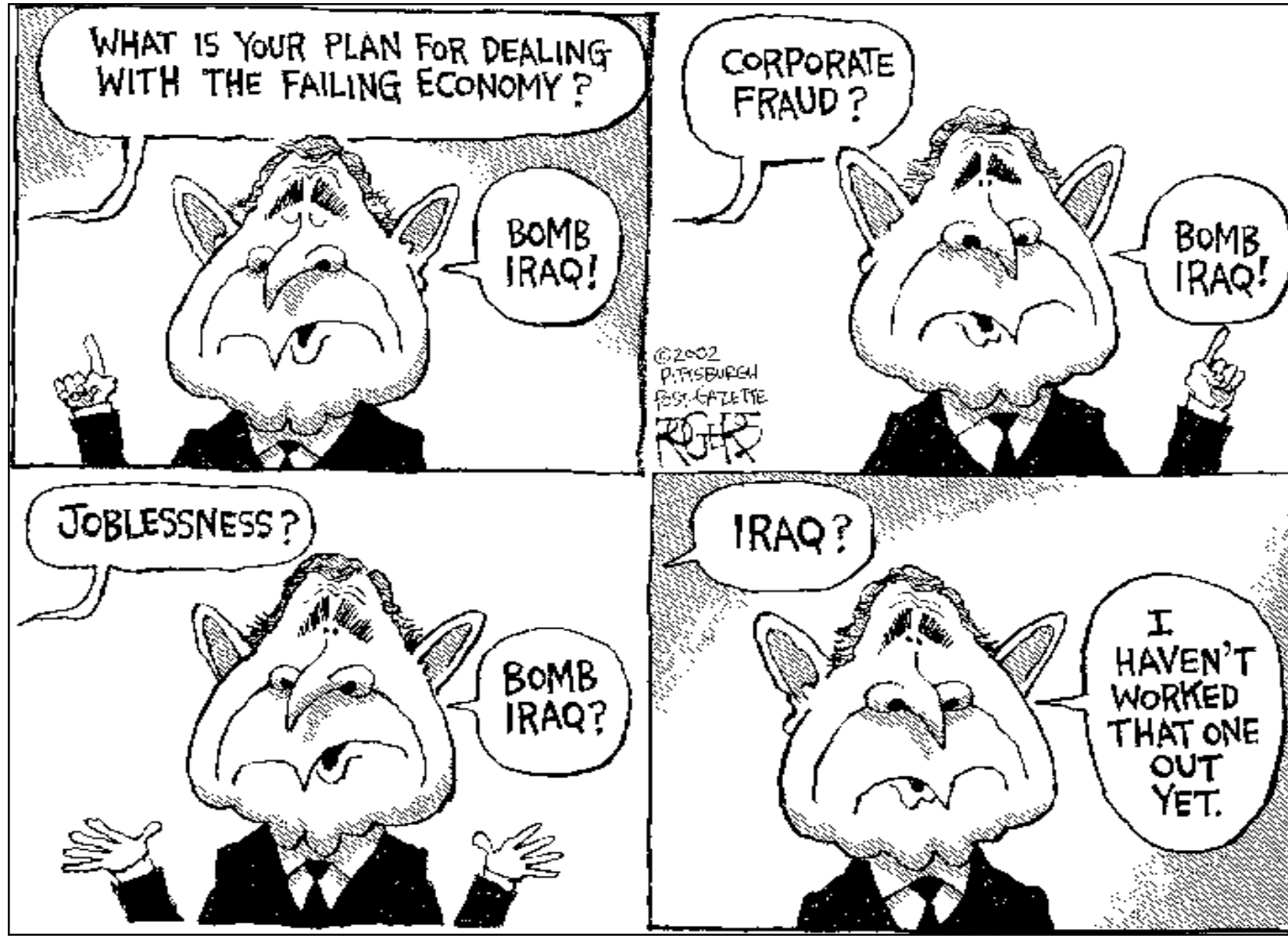
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Letters focus on hospital issue

Boyles, board complimented

The following letter is in response to a letter sent to Roger Petrik, President, Rural Health Development of Cambridge, Neb. by the officers of the newly formed Area Citizens for Health Care, a copy of which appeared in the Oct. 8 issue of the Free Press. That letter was highly critical of Michael Boyles, CEO of Citizens Medical Center, Inc. This letter takes an opposing view.

To Roger Petrik,
This is in reference to a letter you received from the Area Citizens for Health Care. Although I think the number they claim to represent is greatly inflated, their views certainly do not represent ours, nor do we think it reflects more than a minority of the 6,000 people in our community.

We think Michael Boyles and the hospital board are doing a good job running Citizens Medical Center under the most trying of times. They are upholding Federal law and standing up for their employees and patients. All places of work should be so fortunate. We think Michael Boyles should be commended, not terminated.

We do hope our community can get this problem worked out. We have enough people for two clinics, and we all need our hospital. However, it won't happen with anyone thinking they're above the law and refusing to admit to and correct mistakes, which is where we seem to be at right now.

Thank you for letting us express our opinion.

**Marilyn and Ron Walz
Colby
(Letter #147)**

Statement not totally accurate

To the Free Press:

It has come to our attention that a statement we made in a letter to Mr. Roger Petrik, President of Rural Health Development of Cambridge, Neb., was not totally accurate. The letter in question was printed in the Colby Free Press on Oct. 8.

We stated that the hospital clinic surgeon was not being allowed to practice in Colorado, when in fact this was a probationary term. His license status is "Active With Conditions."

We apologize for any misunderstanding this may have caused.
Sincerely,

**Area Citizens for Health Care
John Kern, President
Henry Vette, Vice-President
Dennis Horney, Treasurer
Carol Voisin, Secretary
Colby
(Letter #148)**

Ignorance shines through

To the Free Press:

I find the letter written by Area Citizens for Health

Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

Care and published in the Colby Free Press on Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2002, to be defamatory, divisive and in many instances devoid of fact! I am constantly amazed at the level of ignorance demonstrated by some in our community. While anyone can support whomever they want to (that's what makes this country great!), a letter of personal "character assassination" does nothing toward resolving any of the health care issues we face in our community.

From whom is the group getting their information? Where is their proof? Do they have first hand information to back up their statements or is it simply a regurgitation of someone else's misinformation? What "hospital clinic surgeon" is being referred to as "employed by Mr. Boyles"? Who is feeding the "disinformation" to these people?

I suspect that many of our citizens are well aware of where some of this diatribe originated, and it is sad that some have chosen to encourage and "enable" that level of egregious behavior with little thought for what are the real facts.

An example of what I am talking about... lab services are still very much a part of Citizens Medical Center (CMC). They have not been discontinued, as the letter states, and they certainly have not been shipped "out of town" as is the custom of some. So let's be factual about who has impacted the "revenue stream" at CMC!

Nor does it seem to occur to this group what the real impact is on those professionals who work day in and day out at CMC to provide quality health care to ALL in spite of the conduct of some who try and tear down all the good by writing letters with such inaccurate information and distorted facts. Perhaps they should examine why this community has lost so many prior administrators and so many doctors over the past 28 years. There is one common denominator, and it is not Michael Boyles.

I think it is good for citizens to work toward common solutions to problems. Engaging in such defamatory and insulting comments and such fact distortion as is indicated by this group's letter does NOTHING toward achieving a positive result.

Sad, but they don't seem to get it!

**Paula McDaniel
Rexford
(Letter #149)**

Now for the truth

To the Free Press:

Michael Boyles is not the cause of Dr. Hildyard's problems. Employees at Citizens Medical Center, Inc. (CMCI) have had to deal with this problem for 28

years. It's taken a strong board to deal with a situation that should have been dealt with years ago. People are stating they know the problem when they have never talked with Michael, the hospital board, or a hospital employee about the indignities that they are put through.

Let me correct some of the inaccuracies for this misinformed "Area Citizens for Health Care" group. Nuclear medicine is not dissolved in this community. CMCI does nuclear medicine a couple of Saturdays a month at the hospital. The decision to dissolve Home Health was made before Michael Boyles came here, because it was losing money. Most communities have dissolved their home health departments for that same reason. The lab situation you talk about is mute. Dr. Hildyard decided not to sign the contract for lab services with the hospital. The hospital still has a lab and Dr. Hildyard's clinic still has lab support. The Meals on Wheels program in most communities is coordinated through a community senior center. The hospital had taken this project on itself. Meals were delivered by volunteers from the local community, including CMCI employees volunteering their own time. In recent months it was becoming extremely hard to find volunteer help. For this reason, the hospital decided to discontinue the service. If the Area Citizens for Health Care need a project, I think I just found one for them.

What employees have the Area Citizens for Health Care actually spoken with to know that Michael Boyles has driven employees away? Jerry Campbell told you like it is. Dr. Jacobsen told you like it is. Dr. Hildyard has created an unfair environment in this community. His antics are well known throughout the Tri-State area.

Recruiting new doctors is very difficult because of his reputation. Excellent nurses work at the hospital, but many more will not work here because of his abusive nature.

And please don't be fooled by the "Area Citizens for Health Care." They do not speak for the majority, not even a large minority of people. The petition they throw around so freely was left at the clinic's front counter and everyone who entered was asked to sign it. I would be fairly accurate if I said that less than half of them actually read what they were signing. CMCI has a very intelligent board. I don't believe for one minute that these community members would do anything to jeopardize this community's hospital.

They have given the good doctor an easy out of this situation that he has chosen not to accept. He can be a good doctor, but he does not support this community all by himself. Although his supporters would like you to think he does.

Last, but not least. I would like to state my total support for the CMCI board and administration. They have been put in a bad situation, not of their own choosing, and are following the law. Please do not let the idle threats and posturing of a few sway your judgments.

**Rod Williams
Colby
(Letter #150)**

Bush's dangerous dance

Jim Hightower

• Another Viewpoint

For a guy who claims to be a "rancher," George W. sure is stepping in a lot of cow patties. Take his undeclared, unlimited, undefined war against all of the world's "evildoers."

George claims the moral high ground in his crusade against the "Axis of Evil," but as he strides around the globe he's stepping into some mighty gooey and stinky alliances with repressive, dictatorial, and demonstrably evil regimes in such places as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, and Uzbekistan. As even the New York Times has noted: "Washington will be mopping up for years from the inevitable foreign policy disasters that come of befriend autocrats who maintain a stranglehold on their own people."

Bush is not merely befriend thuggish dictators, he's arming them! He has quietly lifted restrictions banning U.S. arms and other military resources from

being sold or given to these unsavory and unstable regimes. In the past year the Bushites have dumped some \$3.5 billion-worth of military hardware and support into explosive regions and into the hands of evildoers who'll use the weaponry to prop up their own dictatorships. This includes equipment for Yemen's special forces, Cobra attack helicopters for Pakistan's military dictator, Hellfire missiles for Kuwait's repressive monarchy, and surveillance

equipment for Kyrgyzstan, as well as arms shipments to governments fighting their own people in Azerbaijan, Colombia, Ethiopia, and the Philippines.

Thirty-two of the regimes getting U.S. firepower have been denounced by Bush's own State Department for having "poor" or worse human rights records, and these arms will only make life more miserable for the people there. Bush also got Congress to allocate half a billion dollars for secret sales of arms, so we won't know how many weapons are being shipped where... and why?

To help stop arming autocracies and fight this, contact Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities at 212-243-3416.

Radio talk-show host and author Jim Hightower is a former agricultural commissioner of Texas. For more information, call 866-271-4900.