

Opinion



Viewpoint

Who needs American workers?

By Jim Hightower

Maybe you're one of the 2 million Americans who've recently had their jobs offshored to India, Pakistan, and elsewhere, or one of the millions more expected to have your jobs shipped abroad in the next few years.

If so, don't worry, Bucko, for a new growth industry has arisen that offers exciting job opportunities for you discarded Americans. You, too, could become an "American accent and culture trainer."

It seems that while such corporations as Citibank, Dell, GE, and Microsoft are eager to abandon the United States and move their telephone service jobs to low-wage workers abroad, these English-speaking foreign workers are... well, foreign, so their accents and cultural references can be jarring to U.S. customers placing orders or seeking help.

Thus, offshoring companies are hiring Americans to teach foreign replacement workers to sound and behave like Americans. Yes, this means you could end up teaching the Indian or Pakistani or Russian who was given your job how to sound like you!

Courses in American Culture 101 include U.S. history memorization, American slang, basic sports knowledge, and pop culture. Quick: What's the Lone Star State? Who are the Florida Marlins? Can you name one talent that Brittany Spears has? What's a burrito? The lesson plans for these courses include having to watch episodes of "Friends" and screening such films as "Bruce Almighty."

As for accents, there are voice exercises for Indians, for example, to help them lower their natural high-pitched and clipped pronunciation of English. And if the exercises are not enough, the corporate call centers use technology to filter the telephone voices of the foreign service reps, making them sound lower than they are.

Of course, it won't be long before the corporations train low-paid foreigners to teach American accents and culture to foreign workers — then there'll be no need for American workers at all.

Jim Hightower is the best-selling author of "Thieves In High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time To Take It Back."

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 jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

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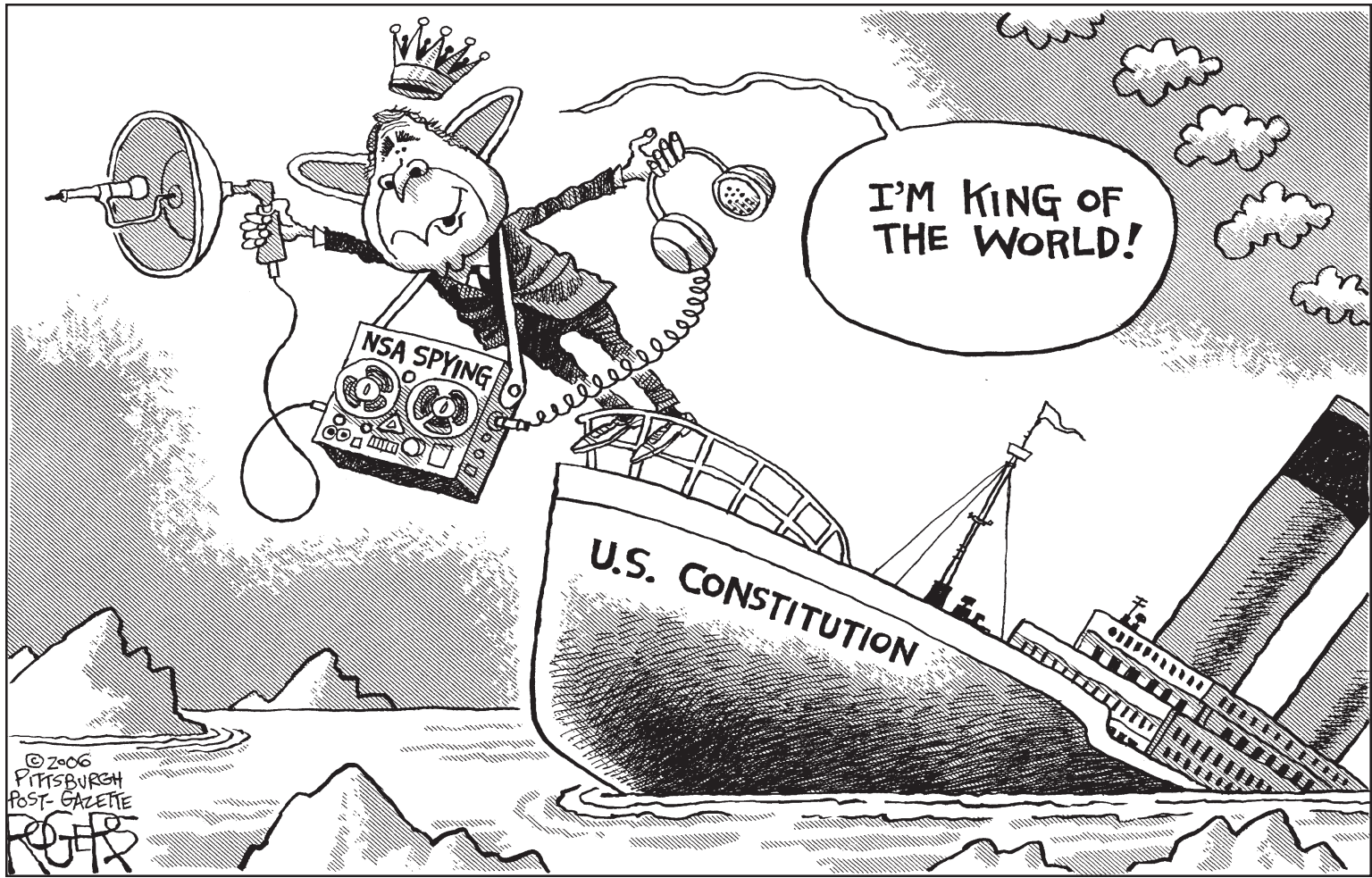
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No reason to save if you're making money

After I picked my jaw off the floor last week, I was able to write this.

Forbes Magazine released a report about what it costs to live in various places across the country. One of the towns on their list was Wichita. It based Wichita's report on cost of living on an annual salary of \$189,923.

For starters, I was shocked they used such a large salary. I'm sure just a handful of people in Wichita take home that much. Then again, this was Forbes magazine, which is only written for a handful of people.

The big shocker to me was the amount of money saved by those people. It was a paltry \$1,286, which equates to less than 1 percent of the paycheck.

On the list of expenses included the vacation home, private schooling and entertainment. The dining out budget alone was about \$8,000. Divide that throughout the year and you have \$21 a day. Compare that to savings, which is about \$3.50 a day.

According to Forbes, I am wrong thinking saving money makes you better financially living in Wichita. All you have to do is get the job with the six-figure salary.

Speaking of money, Colby Police Chief Randy



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

Jones told Colby Rotary members Tuesday, city crews last week cleaned up a portion of College Drive from the recycling center to the hospital. Among the finds included \$40 in cash and change plus checks.

I have mentioned this multiple times on the KXXX Golden Plains Sports Hour, but how high school sports are changing is disturbing. Last week Gardner-Edgerton High school held a press conference during the school day to announce its new football coach, Marvin Diener from Salina Central. Yes, during the school day.

There are so many implications.

Sure, football is probably a high school's biggest athletic program in terms of fans and money, but to give that kind of attention implies

the school's other programs are not as important. Will Gardner-Edgerton have another middle-of-the-school day conference to announce a new coach of another sport? Will a new chemistry teacher get the same attention? I doubt it.

What are school board meetings for if new coaches get their own meeting?

High school sports' purity and innocence level is fading away because of administrators and booster clubs' addiction to wanting bigger things with more publicity — but that does not mean the programs are going to be better.

Making high school sports bigger stems from LeBron James a few years ago. James was the Ohio high school basketball star who skipped college to play pro ball. Cable TV giant ESPN broadcast his last high school games.

Now high schools, like Gardner-Edgerton, wanted more publicity than was needed naming a new football coach.

As far as we know, Colby is still searching for a new football coach.

I expect those involved to find the right person and more importantly, treat the announcement appropriately.

Van Nostrand is publisher of the Free Press.

Whirl winds or dust devils?

Ken Poland

• Ken's World

When I was a youngster in the late '30s and early '40s, I and my siblings used to have to herd cattle along the road right of ways and in the open fields after harvest.

I remember days when the whirl winds seemed to be cropping up all over the place. The area was just getting out of the "dust bowl" era and it didn't take much to lift a cloud of dust. There was also an abundance of tumble weeds, Russian thistles, and tickle grass. As a child, I'm sure these little dust devils or whirl winds were much more impressive to me than they would be today. Depending on the mood or just how ferocious the activity appeared, we would either try to get in the path or out of the path. It was innocent play and helped relieve the boredom of the chore.

The right of ways and landscapes of today's political scene is rife with whirl winds and dust devils. It depends on who it seems to be whirling towards as to just how impressive those disturbances are. Partisan politics is running out of breath in the frenzy to get out of the path or to push someone into the path. Folks, that isn't innocent play!!

I recall that once in a while those little whirlwinds, when I was a kid, would have some pretty mean and stickery bits of weeds in them. It wasn't any fun to win the race or to lose the race and come out of it with a face full of stickers or grit in your eyes.

The grandeur and excitement of the social whirlwinds afforded by lobbyists, who seemed to be able to deliver wealth and votes, has left

quite a number of our bureaucrats and politicians plucking the stickers out of their faces and rubbing the grit out of their eyes. It isn't any secret that the majority party seems to win the race in getting into the whirl of all that excitement. When the Democrats were in the majority, they seemed to benefit the most from the power and largesse of the lobbyists. Now that the Republicans are in the majority, it would appear the balance has changed.

Today, both parties are in a mad scramble to disassociate themselves from the taint of illicit, illegal, and downright immoral connections. I see very little evidence that either party has any higher morals and ethics than the other. The base nature of man is opportunistic. Party affiliation is not a reliable indicator of righteousness. Individual integrity is not regulated by party affiliation.

We are hearing the bleating cry from the innocents and the fierce denials of the guilty. Reform is the popular agenda of some. Finger pointing and beating of their chests, to declare how righteous or innocent they are, is a ploy to divert the attention of partisan supporters.

How will we engender reform? Will passing new laws and regulations clean up the environment of our governing system? It certainly

wasn't illegal for all the Whirl Winds and Dust Devils that I remember. But, the environment had considerable influence on their occurrences and magnitude. Until adequate moisture and a change in tillage practices came along, there wasn't much reduction in those disturbances.

Writing new rules and regulations will do little more than placate and lull society into ambivalence concerning the whole political scene. Will more or new rules and regulations do any more good than the present ones? Not if they are enforced with the same tenacity that the old ones have been?

Can we expect the bureaucrats and politicians to be any better than the electorate? When the driving force that regulates morals and ethics in society is — get what you can as soon as you can and with the least effort you must put forth — should we expect our leaders to be any different? The statistics on every economic class of society, regardless of religious or spiritual affiliation, seem to indicate no significant difference in drug abuse, sexual deviation, child abuse, divorce rates, etc.

Perhaps, we need to look beyond the veneer of party affiliation or perceived religious identification. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." That's a popular quotation from the Bible and used by evangelical fundamental Christians. Well — . Should we start observing the fruits and see who's putting what in the basket? There seems to be some pretty attractive fruit going into the basket. Maybe, we should, also, observe who is taking what out of the basket.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

