

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



Big retailer may have big solution

From The Topeka Capital-Journal

A strong indication that ethanol is becoming more accepted by the public is the fact that Wal-Mart is considering selling it from its 383 U.S. Wal-Mart and Sam's Club gas stations.

It's not official, yet, but The Associated Press reported that Wal-Mart officials had called a meeting of industry, government and academic experts on alternative fuels to gather information aimed at offering E-85 fuel.

The meeting is encouraging news, because increased use of ethanol would benefit all Americans. Using more ethanol would mean less reliance on foreign oil, thus making the United States less dependent on the good will of other oil producing nations. It would make the United States less subject to oil prices based on international politics.

Not that good will with other nations isn't important, but with less reliance on their oil, friendly relations could be built on firmer moral grounds.

More use of ethanol also would reduce emissions from vehicles that are believed to be a major factor in global warming. And increased ethanol use will mean a reduced demand for oil, from whatever source, causing oil prices to stabilize or even decline.

Of great importance to the midsection of the country is that it would increase the demand for corn, providing more income for farmers who already grow corn and encouraging others to use more of their land for that commodity.

And Kansas is becoming a major player in the conversion of corn into ethanol, creating a lot of jobs in agricultural areas.

With the credibility given to E-85 by sales by Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stations, surely other major suppliers would follow.

"It would be one more significant, very big step in this whole transition toward biofuels," said Rock Tolman, chief executive of the National Corn Growers Association, who was one of those attending.

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 jvanostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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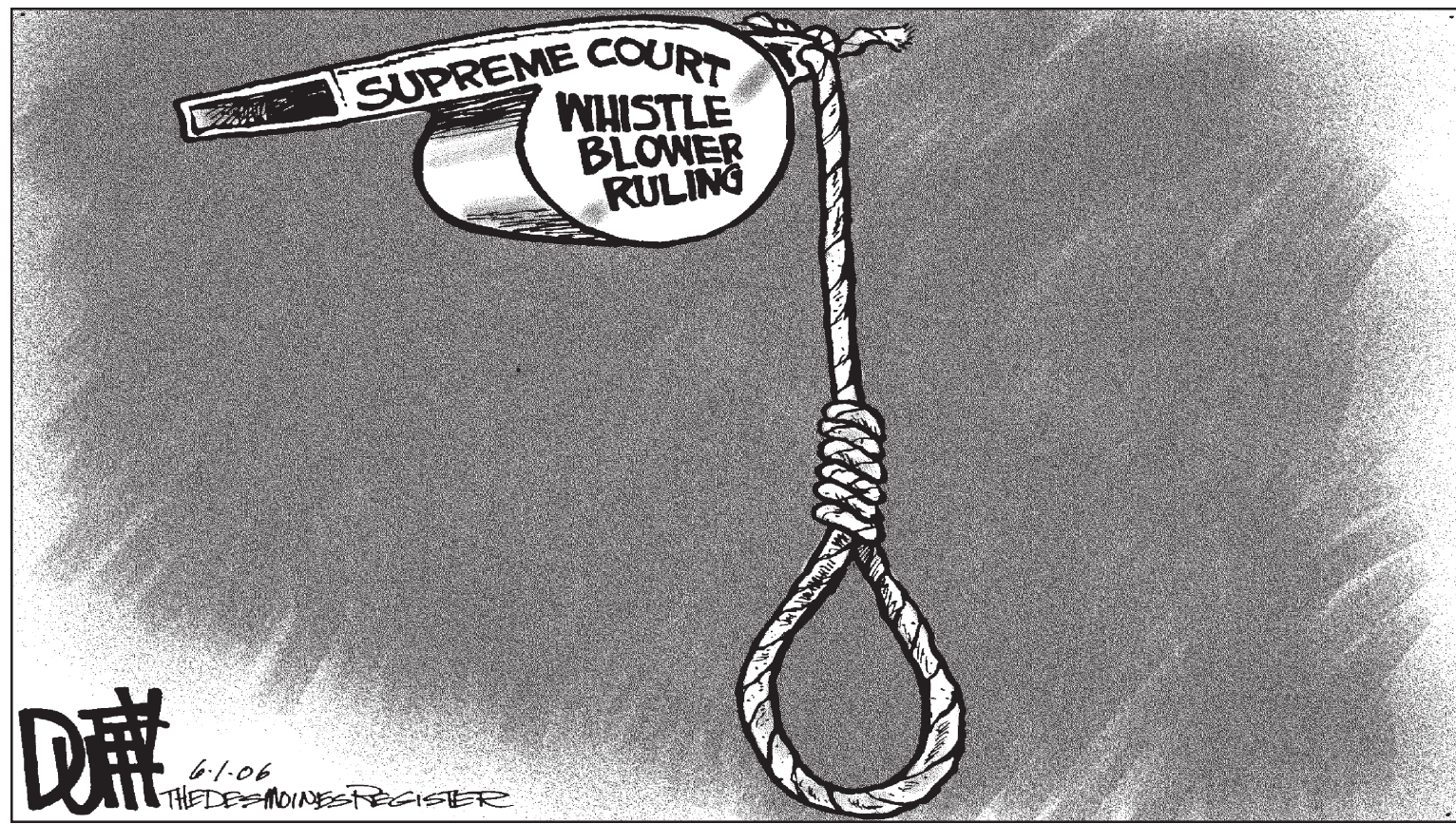
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Keep an eye on the new neighbors

June 6, 2006, better known at 6-6-06 in the world of doom and gloom, passed and nothing big happened.

Some people interpret 666 as a sign of the devil. But there were no Sept. 11-like attacks, a mysterious eclipse of the sun or other events that may have eluded the end of the world. I even mailed a letter Tuesday to Topeka with a zip code that starts with 666.

But there is something happening, right here in Kansas, that we all need to pay attention to. It may turn our section of Kansas upside down.

A couple of months ago, we ran an Associated Press story about representatives of Maharishi Manhesh Yogi purchasing land near Smith Center. Those people, commonly known as meditators, want to build the World Capital of Peace in Kansas. They liked how Smith Center is near the geographic center of the 48 contiguous states, so they will have the center of peace in the center of the country.

(Apparently meditators don't care about Alaska and Hawaii or they would have built in South Dakota — where the center of all 50 states is at.)

Plans are to spend about \$15 million on a retreat center, training center, housing and organic agriculture. That will complement Maharishi's followers who practice transcendental meditation, silently focusing on a mantra to achieve what they call a state of pure consciousness. They believe TM has the power to reduce stress and crime, help end poverty and create peace.

Meditators are not new. Those who remember the 1960s, will remember the Beatles tried to



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

catch on to their teachings, but eventually backed out.

Meditators already have an establishment in Fairfield, Iowa. I briefly toured that facility about four years ago. The meditators took over a small college campus that closed in the mid-1970s. Since then, people interested in the philosophy have come to campus to learn, liked it and stayed.

Meditator students meditate twice a day. Before the first meditation of the day, people are to use the bathroom first. Supposedly a clean mind must be connected to a clean body. Doors on their buildings face east.

Fairfield eventually elected a mayor who was a meditator and claims to be a practicing Catholic. (I don't think God likes company, in this case. If meditators are supposed to focus on themselves, where does God fit in?)

But that's just it.

Meditators want the masses to think they are not any different or a threat to anybody. But they still want power and influence as long as it is under their rules.

Meditators began circulating their own cur-

rency within the Fairfield campus and related businesses. The county Fairfield is in noticed the currency and quickly passed a law banning the use of the currency within its jurisdiction.

So the meditators took it to the next level.

In 2001, meditators created their own town - Vedic City. The city has its own government and businesses accept the new currency, in addition to traditional dollars and cents.

Being a meditator appears to be a very selfish venture and they don't appear to openly tell others what they really are.

I've only been on this world for 33 years, but I think it is long enough to know the meditators objectives can't fully be met.

The all-star musician USA for Africa "We are the World" song in 1985 was to help Africa's severe poverty. Irish rock star Bono, is still helping out Africa's poverty which is probably worse now. Imagine what the meditator's \$15 million would do for an African country.

We can't get rid of poverty, we can only minimize it.

World War II was to be the war that ended all wars.

But since then, we have had Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and countless other skirmishes between other countries.

I sometimes wonder if we need conflict and stress to realize the position we put ourselves in. Stress only encourages us to fix the problem, even ones meditators may bring to Kansas.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

The race is on



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

Our little neck of the woods was briefly in the limelight as two Republican gubernatorial candidates stopped by on their announcement tours. Of course, Colby is a population center and it is only two months until the primary.

I suspect Governor Sebelius will be out here as well, although she doesn't have as much to worry about in the primary elections. She expects no opposition within her party and she is probably right.

Both of the visiting Republicans hit on a problem that seemed to plague both Sebelius and her predecessor, Bill Graves, in that neither had much experience in dealing with the legislature.

Both Robin Jennison, a former Speaker of the Kansas House of Representatives, and Jim Barnett, a senator from Emporia, thought they could be more effective in leading because of their experience. By the way, their running mates are Senators Dennis Wilson from Johnson County and Susan Wagle from Wichita, respectively.

The way the legislature has been getting along these days, though, I'm not sure that kind of experience would be helpful either.

Both Jennison and Barnett put forth some serious ideas, but only in the most rudimentary form. Jennison's idea to sell the idea of Kansas tourism to those who are already passing through is not new, nor did he flesh it out very much.

One wonders about the tax ramifications. Could we imitate Texas and a few other states in

putting a sales tax on certain "luxury items" while lowering taxes on everyday things. In Texas' case, they don't have an income tax for that very reason.

One also wonders about the ramifications concerning jobs. Creating jobs is one thing, but it is not enough to create entry-level minimum wage jobs.

We must create the kind of jobs that support families if we are going to grow

Barnett seemed to have the whole package a little better wrapped up with a plan to increase revenues through incentives for business to grow, but when pressed, he was pretty general in his thinking as well.

Both seemed to be pretty conservative, but they weren't inclined to take too many potshots at the liberals or each other.

Overall, both meetings were what I expected in front of a pretty much partisan crowd. There weren't many Democrats there and that is too bad. I know I plan to go see the governor when

she comes if it is open to the public as these were.

Neither candidate really spelled out his plan. That will come later as the campaign progresses. Also, neither one wants to spend his entire warchest on the primary, nor does anyone want to fracture the party in the face of a determined and united group of Kansas Democrats.

There are others running as well and it is not yet June 12, so the entire pack may be as yet unseen and the possibility of a split in the party is very real. For one thing, the Republicans have been much more tolerant of diverse views than the Democrats, in spite of what Mark Parkinson may claim.

In fact, Parkinson, who is the former GOP chairman and now the Democratic candidate for Lt. Governor, signals more about the importance of winning among the Democrats than any problem within the Republicans.

He claims he is more comfortable with the Democrats, yet he has been appointed to an active leadership role within the Republican Party. That tells us that he is not an elder statesman supplanted by younger party members with different agendas.

He simply wants to be governor and sees his opportunity in the Democratic Party. He just doesn't have the guts to be honest.

It's going to be an interesting election, again.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelly@st-tel.net.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

