

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Time will make social change

Sometimes we just want things to happen too fast. As the Kansas Legislature and those in other states across the country try to come to grips with how to integrate immigrants into society, they are looking at making English our official language.

Bad idea, lawmakers. Laws don't force people to change; social pressure does.

Just give it time, and what you want will be accomplished. Across this country, schools were taught in German, French, Italian, Chinese and a hundred other languages. City council meetings and church services were conducted in the language that the people could understand — Bohemian, Spanish, Irish, Yiddish, German, you name it.

Each new wave of immigrants brought with them their language, religion and customs. They set up communities where they socialized mostly with each other and were comfortable.

But their children weren't comfortable. They wanted to move over the hill, across the river, into the next neighborhood. They needed to learn new things, new ways of doing things and frequently a new language.

So they did. They learned English, though many kept their native tongues because they still wanted and needed to communicate with parents, grandparents and friends back home.

Then their children came along. Mostly, they heard English at home. That's what Mom and Dad spoke, so that's what they spoke. They saw Grandma and Grandpa now and then and picked up a few words of old tongue, but without much practice, they didn't keep it.

Occasionally, a great upheaval would quicken the process. In Kansas, the Eudora City Council held its meetings in German until the beginning of World War I. It was probably difficult to change, but it was politically expedient to switch to English. Social pressure came to bear.

Today, we see these early waves of immigration through rose-colored glasses. We all want to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day, but 100 years ago, you might have found it hard to get a job if you were Irish — or Polish or Chinese.

Today's immigrants — Mexican, Asian, African — band together and speak Spanish or another tongue. But their children and their children's children will go over the hill, across the river and into the next neighborhood.

They will learn English and speak it to their children and integrate into the social structure, not because the government tells them to, but because of social pressure. If you don't speak English, you don't get the good jobs, you can't do business with people in other communities and the world.

But it takes time and no one, especially the Legislature, wants to allow enough time for natural social change to occur.

What's the rush? It'll all work out. — *Cynthia Haynes, Nor'West Newspapers*



### Democracy at work

I thought I'd seen just about everything when it comes to county commission meetings. That was until Monday in Sheridan County.

In my nearly 15 years as a reporter, I've never experienced take-your-wife-to-work at a commission meeting. Yep, both David Zimmerman and Ron Schamberger totted their wives along to the meeting. Well, not exactly, Schamberger's arrived at 8:23 a.m., 20 minutes after the meeting started.

My first thought was maybe I should ask my husband whether one of these days I can tag along and help clean the sewer plant or drive the road grader. But hey, I'm the one always complaining not enough people attend public meetings, so I'll keep quiet. I have to admit it was kind of nice seeing the two women at the meeting so they could see how things work. The meeting only lasted about an hour and a half. Commissioner Keith Kennedy was absent and Road and Bridge Director Bob Schwarz called in sick. Add to that, the commissioners decided 30 minutes was too much time for each agenda item, with the exception of County Attorney Mike Haas and Schwarz, the usual three to four hour weekly meetings will be shortened.

What a creative way to give one's self a raise. On paper, the commissioners this year didn't increase their salary from the \$10,400 last year. But they are cutting back the time they



**Jan Katz Ackerman**

#### • From Where I stand

spend at the commission table, which means more pay per hour. Last time I figured it Kennedy was making \$118 and Zimmerman and Schamberger were making \$84 an hour, but I'll let you do the math.

But like I said a few weeks ago, Doren and Irene Follis of Hoxie have attended county commission meetings since late last year. They were there Monday. The Follises are watching democracy unfold right in front of their eyes. And that's what we are supposed to do.

We are supposed to elect our public officials and trust that they are doing the best job they can for us, but voting isn't the end of the road. It is the start.

Just because a person is sworn into office does not mean he or she should be left to their own devices. The public is not only to elect its officials; the public is to monitor them as well. That's part of the media's job, being the watch-

dog of democracy. Democracy didn't get to where it is today without toil and strain, and one of the keys to keeping democracy at its best is to monitor how its working.

More than month away, the April 3 election will start a new class of public officials who hopefully know right off the bat they are opening themselves up to criticism. Criticism from those who put them in office and from those who monitor them while they are there. But monitoring democracy is a double edged sword. A few weeks back our pastor had a sermon which hit pretty close to home. He was talking about how God chooses each and every one of us for a specific purpose in life, and he was comparing life of the early day apostles to life of those of us who are serving God today. The pastor's message also applies to those of us in the working media, in that the early day apostles probably felt like the world was trying to "shoot the messenger." I can relate to that.

All jokes aside, I do applaud the commissioners' wives for being at Monday's meeting, not because they are married to commissioners, but because they are taxpayers and need to see how their tax dollars are spent. Hopefully more residents will take such an active role in democracy.

*Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press*

### Your turn

### Still time for corrective action

**Larry Booth Colby**

Letter to the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts

This is a letter written in considerable frustration and amazement.

I am frustrated with the behavior of the Board of Healing Arts regarding the case of Dr. Victor H. Hildyard and the revocation of his license, to practice medicine in his long-standing and substantial practice in Thomas County, or anywhere in the state of Kansas. I am convinced that you and other members of the Board have acted irresponsibly in this case, and a large percentage of our population feels the same

My amazement is in the report I have from associates in Colby who have talked to members

of your board who voted on this issue who never read even the hearing report of Presiding Officer Gaschler regarding charges brought against Dr. Hildyard.

I am further amazed that the board summarily dismissed the findings and report of their own hearing officer in order to bring charges against Dr. Hildyard. This nine-day hearing, held partly in Colby, partly in Topeka, exonerated Dr. Hildyard with only minor stipulations about some language Dr. Hildyard reportedly used with hospital nurses... language, I might say, that other witness-physicians admitted to having also used in their practices.

The charges brought against Dr. Hildyard did not involve bad patient outcomes. They were brought by the hospital management scouring

several years of records to find anything they could bring against him. I doubt if anyone on the board, or anyone else, could pass that kind of scrutiny without something being uncovered that could be used against them.

I am a licensed Long Term Care Administrator. I have observed the work and have known members of the state board that regulates my profession, and I have never witnessed with them anything approaching the blindness and apparently influenced actions of our Board, in his case.

There is still time for responsible corrective action, and I write this letter in the hope that it will be done. But it is my opinion also that an investigation at the highest level is called for.

#### About those letters . . .

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