

Opinion



Another Viewpoint

Don't hang your hat on any regulations

Oh, swell. Now George W. is assigning a political commissar to every agency in the federal government. In a new directive, Czar Bush says that each agency must henceforth create a regulatory policy office to be headed by a political appointee chosen by... him.

This nanny is to make sure that agency scientists and regulators comply with Mr. Bush's "priorities." Of course, his preferred regulatory priority is not to have any regulations at all—at least none that his corporate cronies find in any way objectionable.

Could it be that this is just a reconstructed spoils system to deliver regulatory favors to Mr. Bush's corporate backers? Oh, no, no, no, says the Bushite in charge of the new nanny brigade: "This is a classic good-government measure." I spewed my drink right out of my nose when I heard that one! These guys are to "good government" what a coyote is to good sheep management.

We're talking about our health, safety, clean air, and other essentials. Over the years, Congress has empowered various agencies to protect us from drug companies, chemical explosions, polluters, and other corporate abusers.

But now, by executive fiat, Bush and Company have installed political overseers to protect these corporations from having to comply with our protections.

Last fall, millions of Americans — a majority of us — voted to reinstate the rule of law, to rein in a runaway, autocratic executive. But, like some tinhorn potentate who simply rewrites rules to suit his own needs, Bush not only thinks he's above the law — he thinks he is the law.

Of course, his corporate backers are thrilled. As one said, "Because of the executive order, regulations will be less onerous and more reasonable." Hey, "more reasonable" for whom? Besides, Bonzo, regulations are supposed to be onerous! If they're meek, the corporate giants will just ignore them — and, of course, that's exactly what the president has in mind.

— *Jim Hightower is a best-selling author. The preceding editorial was distributed by MinutemanMedia.org.*

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@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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

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 every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and 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 \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Memories long, grudges even longer

I was left scratching my head when I found out the movie "300" earned \$70 million in its first weekend.

The movie, based on the graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller, the man who wrote "Sin City," is loosely based on the ancient battle of Thermopylae.

Thermopylae (meaning "hot gates," or "the gates of hell") was a battle where 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians, lead by Spartan King Leonidas, made a desperate last stand against nearly 2,000,000 Persians.

The Persian king, Xerxes, was looking to expand his holdings into Europe, and the pass at Thermopylae was the only path for his army to take.

Simply put, Xerxes and his forces suffered heavy losses, and this battle ended his quest to expand his already large kingdom.

I have no problem with movies based on real happenings, but I do when they knowingly start changing historical aspects just so it looks better on film.

There is poetic license, but I wouldn't consider that it.

Most people probably won't take enough interest in the subject to go find out the truth for themselves.

One director who took the time to get things right was Oliver Stone with his epic "Alexander," about the life of Alexander the Great, the



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

Macedonian king who conquered most of the known world 2,300 years ago.

Stone's theatrical cut debuted in theaters in 2004, and didn't do very well domestically. Abroad, the film was welcomed with open arms because people have a better understanding of Alexander and his impact on history.

Three DVD versions have been released, with the latest and last being "Alexander, The Final Cut." Nearly four hours long, the movie includes almost all the footage left on the cutting room floor, and gives viewers a more complete understanding of his life and its affect upon history.

Stone's final vision of Alexander does, of course, take some poetic license but it is also as historically accurate as possible.

I know most people don't go to a movie for historical accuracy. That is what the History Channel is for.

But intelligent film-making does take research, understanding and of course artistic and

creative ability.

"300" looks nothing short of stunning and was filmed completely in front of blue and green screens. All of the backgrounds were created using computer animation.

As a piece of artistic expression, I have heard it is nothing short of breath-taking.

At least with ancient history, there is plenty of room for improvisation. All we have to go on are the remains of ruins and translated accounts that are open to interpretation.

But, interestingly enough, both movies span a time in history roughly 300 years apart.

King Xerxes' father, Darius, was the first king to bear that name. Three hundred years later, another king of that line, King Darius III, another Persian king, was defeated at the Battle of Gaugamela by Alexander the Great.

Alexander and his forces took Babylon, and later pursued Darius east into the Hindu Kush, where they found Darius dying. After that, they pushed into India.

Why would anyone care today?

Because those battles helped shape the region we now know as the Middle East and all that have come since. Memories are long, and in some cases, grudges even longer.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcoc@nwkansas.com.

Your turn

Candidate wants well-informed voters

By Arlen Leiker of Colby, candidate for Colby Community College Board of Trustees

For those of you that don't know I am a candidate for the Colby College board of trustees in our upcoming April 3 election. What I would like to do is to elevate the discussion and put a different perspective on things. If we look at things differently I feel that as a community we will make the best decisions for the future.

I am 100 percent for the activities/wellness complex. I also feel this may be the most important vote that you will cast for many years. It's my belief that we have to stop our negative growth trend in Colby.

Population change in Colby through the 1990s was a negative 103 people or stated a negative 1.9 percent growth. Colby estimated population growth from 2000 to July 2005 was a loss of 420 people or stated a negative 7.7 percent growth. From 1990 to July of 2005 we lost 9.6 percent of our residents. It is my belief with good leadership from the Colby College administration and board that this facility will generate good quality growth. As the old saying goes "We don't need less people paying more taxes, we need more people paying taxes."

Growth is such an important factor for a community. I would like to take you through a couple examples. Say we are trying to recruit a new doctor to town. He looks at Colby on the net. He sees the information above. I don't think he's going to say that's the place to go because each year my possible patient base to draw from is going get smaller and smaller.

Lets take existing stores. The corporation that owns the store sees that sales are not keeping pace with other stores. So the executive says lets see what happening in Colby. He goes on the Internet from a location 1,200 miles from Colby and sees the information that I see on the net. That store makes a watch list. If there is no improvement in sales or Colby's growth does not improve, a decision will be made to flip the light switch and lock

the door.

I work for United Parcel Service. What I do for UPS is that I am a feeder driver, which involves bringing the parcels into Colby which will be taken out by the delivery drivers to customers in the 6 northwest counties of Kansas. We had more freight coming into Northwest Kansas in 1996 than we do today. Out of Colby in the early 90s we ran 13 and 14 delivery drivers each day. Now we are around 10. On a whole most UPS centers have grown substantially in the last 15 years. I like to remind readers of the article in the *Free Press* about the possibility of the postal service moving some of its sorting to different locations. These are all good jobs. And without growth it's going to be tough to hang onto them.

I point these facts out not to alarm you but for you to understand that to just call me pro growth is maybe an understatement. I want you to know that I am extremely pro growth. It is my belief Colby College needs to be one of our growth engines in our community.

As a candidate for Colby College board I have been contacted and approached about Mr. Flanagin's letter in the *Free Press*. My reply was not what was expected to most of them including two of the current board members. I was glad that somebody finally wrote a letter opposing the proposed project. I know there are people out there opposing the complex as well as there are proponents for the complex. Only as well informed voters will we make the correct decisions. Even though we don't agree I would like to thank Mr. Flanagin for writing his letter.

On the subject of interest Mr. Flanagin's pendulum swings to the left. That's fine as long as you compare everything the same way. There is some merit to including the total interest in the price of a project, house, car or anything else that you may finance.

I'm going let the pendulum swing to the right. Let's say we make the right moves and we get things where we have some growth. And the val-

ues of homes are increasing with the rate of inflation. Let us say inflation stays low at or around 2.5 percent. The homeowner now is paying a \$165 a year in taxes for the proposed project. But his home is increasing in value 2.5 percent per year. The \$120,000 home, which you pay the extra \$165 in taxes on, is worth \$123,000. If you get a value increase of 2.5 percent once every 18 years because of the new complex you'll more than break even. Mr. Flanagin I too am also concerned about cost overruns. But I am at a loss to come up with any individuals with more experience than Mike Woofert and Glen Strait in building cost in this area.

Beyond that we can monitor other projects that have similarities and avoid the pitfalls that they manage to find. I know of one project that is approximately half the size of this one. We are almost exactly a year behind this project. Their bond issue passed last April. Beyond that point we can look at the past and learn from it. We can see if there are minutes of the board meetings back when the Student Union was built.

They may shed light on why bids came in 40 percent over the cost estimate.

One thing I would like to point out is that between 1960 and 1969 in which the Student Union was built my information says that there was 456 homes built in Colby. The decade after the Union was built (1970 to 1979) there were 578 homes built. Compared to 16 Single-family new house construction-building permits from 2000 to 2005. Looking at it from this way I'm thankful the board in the late 60s found a way to build the Student Union.

What I would like to do is encourage all candidates for local government positions to pass on their visions and comments on.

With a well-informed electorate we will all prosper.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

