

Opinion



**Free Press
Viewpoint**

Plant still needs plan

By Steve Haynes

Isn't it about time to stop playing politics with our future? Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is holding up construction of two relatively clean coal-fired power plants in western Kansas to support her political ambitions while 18 old, dirty plants spew pollution into the air in eastern Kansas.

A couple of power plants may not seem like much to eastern Kansas, where jobs are plentiful and growth is the norm. Out here, 200 jobs is major economic development.

No one says these plants should be allowed to degrade the air. Proponents say the plants are as clean as you can get, but if they need to be cleaned up some more, by all means, let's do it.

Since the state has no standards for carbon dioxide emissions, though, it's hard to meet them. That's what the governor and her minion, Secretary of Health and Environment Roderick Bremby, seem to expect.

Sunflower Electric Power Corp. of Hays, a "generation and transmission" co-operative owned by rural electric co-ops out west, hopes to build to the plants to supply it's farmer and municipal customers, and similar cooperatives in Colorado and the Texas panhandle.

The plants would be state of the art, much cleaner than any operating in Kansas. The administration has laid down a challenge here, saying the state essentially won't allow them to be built because they would produce a lot of carbon dioxide.

Even an experimental plan to grow algae to soak up the carbon hasn't bought the plants any credibility. Opponents claim the scheme won't work, though they all believe in the magic of wind power.

What we know is that the rural electrics do need the power, and rural customers across five states the plants would serve likely will pay a lot more for out-of-area power if they are not built.

A reasonable position on the plants would not fit well with the governor's higher political ambitions, though. She's running hard right now for vice president, no matter how modest she makes out to be.

People are starting to see her as a rising star, and that star is firmly hitched to Barack Obama's coattails. It's pretty obvious the reward for supporting Sen. Hillary Clinton could be no higher than a cabinet post, but with the Illinois senator, No. 2 does not seem unreasonable.

Out on the Plains, though, people will be paying higher electric rates to finance this ambition. It's a shame.

What Kansas needs is the jobs and power the plants would produce. What the governor needs is environmental credibility.

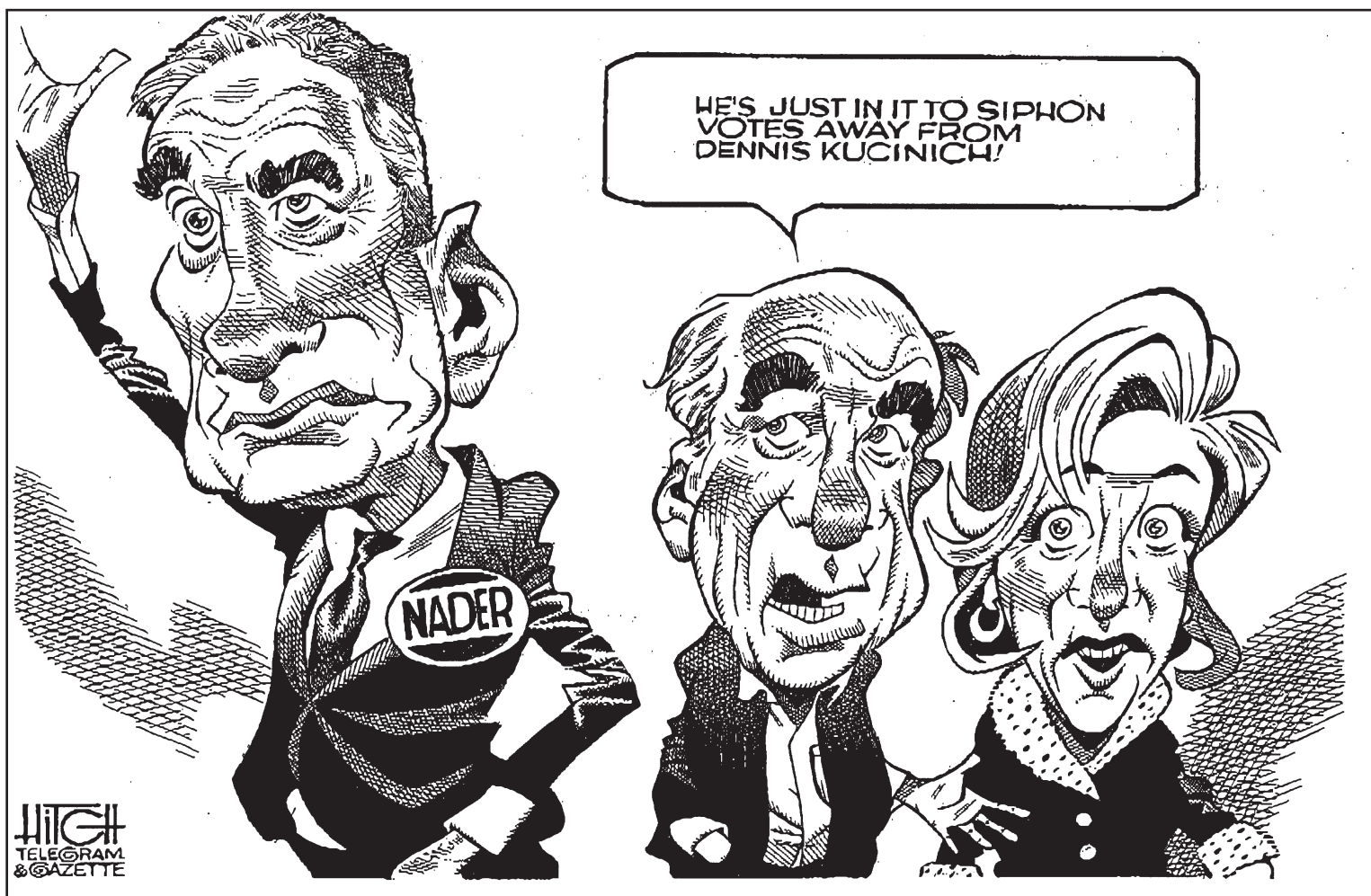
The issue is complex. The threat of global warming may be real, but there's really no alternative today to coal plants. Wind power is undependable at best, and solar needs years of research.

Developed eastern Kansas may not understand this, any better than the Front Range understands the needs of rural Colorado. It's unlikely the plants will produce any more pollution than the General Motors plant in Kansas City, or the cars it produces.

Some argue that the power will go mostly to other states, but so do the cars. The jobs belong here in either case, and we doubt Wyandotte County wants to give them up to save the earth.

A reasonable compromise would see the plants built with strict regulation, but it'll surprise us if that happens. Not until after the elections, anyway. — Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers

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. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.



I'm back

What I thought was the end of a 14 plus year career in journalism appears to have only been a hiatus.

In October, I left the Colby Free Press to assume responsibilities of administrative assistant at The Shepherd's Staff Christian Conference and Retreat Center in Rexford. I thought I was starting a new venture that would allow me to minister to individuals about the arisen Lord I worship.

However, I was wrong, I gained more than I shared.

A Christian all my life, I was called to the mission field when I was 14 years old. I avoided the call because I wanted the proverbial "American Dream" - a husband, children, a white picket fenced house and a car in the garage. Thankfully, God is forgiving and never gave up on me.

In 2004, when he placed a calling on my heart a second time, I jumped into his arms without reservation. It was then that I surrendered my life completely to Jesus and committed to spreading the word about him.

Like the apostle Peter, I had to get out of the boat (Matthew 14:22-35). I thought the first step was to work at Shepherd's Staff. Again, I was wrong. But over the past five months, conversations with two friends have deepened my love for Jesus and helped me re-examine my life and its mission.

It's true; becoming a fully committed Christian does not mean life will be easy. But God's grace and mercy allows us to know that life is one continual lesson and we get the chance to re-evaluate our priorities. What seems right at one point in our lives may not be right tomorrow, next week or next year. Life is about change.



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I Stand

My one friend explained my feeling that I was to leave media by calling it a season of fallow. She said the past five months have been the same as a farmer summer following a piece of land so it can avoid erosion and absorb nutrients. God used my time away from the media as a season of spiritual fallow; a time of letting my spirit become quiet enough to absorb spiritual nutrients.

Many of those nutrients came through conversations with a childhood friend from southwestern Kansas whose two sons were born with Batten's disease.

Batten's disease is a degenerative disease that deteriorates the body's major organs. My friend's oldest son has died from the disease and her youngest son slips away a tiny bit each day.

Conversations with my friend have included matters about life and death, including the fact her surviving son has taken an active part in planning his own funeral; so much as what music he wants played to selecting and calling friends and loved ones he wants as his pallbearers.

Our conversations have included the fact despite having spent the past three years to be primary caregiver to her son, it was he who encouraged her to accept a full-time legal secretary position now so she gets used to working

full-time again for those long days after he's gone to be with the Lord and his brother.

One of our conversations was about the fact my friend just wanted to "crawl in a hole and pull the dirt down in." A feeling I could relate to, particularly after a grueling 2007 which was laden with two major physical injuries and professional attacks. It was my reply to my friend that forced me to eat my words shortly after speaking them.

"I refuse to allow you to disgrace your sons' lives by giving up," I said.

Not that I have had or am enduring the death of a child, but I almost allowed myself to endure the death of a career I so much loved.

Devout Christians, the young man and his mother, as well as his step-father; have impacted my life so drastically that my season of fallow has allowed me to accept a position as a reporter again.

An often demanding job, it all boils down to using the skills God has given me to press on. Press on through good times, and not so good times, but believe that I'm using my God-given talents to do His will.

As I said last October, I want to spend the rest of my life fulfilling my confirmation verses: Matthew 28: 19 - 20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So, all this being said, I'm back. ***

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press and can be reached at ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

Your turn

Terminally ill deserve compassion

By Laura A. Green, director

Kansas Compassionate Care Coalition

Whether or not you believe marijuana can be a beneficial medicine to some people, the fact is that thousands of Kansans are currently, or have, used marijuana as medicine for a serious or terminal illness. A shocking number of these people have been arrested — even though their physician approved of their use of the drug and they have no other criminal history.

This session the Senate Health Care Strategies Committee held a hearing on The Medi-

cal Marijuana Defense Act, SB 556. This bill would have allowed for a medical necessity defense for patients who use marijuana as medicine with their physician's knowledge, supervision and recommendation for debilitating medical conditions — such as cancer and HIV/AIDS — and the treatment of these conditions which can cause nausea, pain, and wasting syndrome. Former Kansas Attorney General Bob Stephan testified in favor of the bill. It didn't make it out of committee, but it will be back next year.

Let's be clear about what this legislation would and would not have done. This law would only have allowed medical marijuana

patients the right to show to a judge or jury written documentation from their primary physician that their possession of marijuana was for a medical reason. It would not legalize, decriminalize, or authorize the use of marijuana in any way, shape or form.

General Stephan and many Kansans believe it is morally wrong to prosecute seriously ill people who have the support of their doctor in using marijuana for medical purposes. Please support medical marijuana legislation by calling your State Legislators. Our serious and terminally ill deserve compassion, not politics as usual, when it comes to this important issue.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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