

Free Press Viewpoint

What to believe

888

By Steve Haynes

Energy has become the watchword of our political discussion, though there's little real understanding of what counts and - and what doesn't - in the energy debate.

Since most of us - political operatives included - know little about the economics and impacts of energy decisions, we tend to believe what we want to believe.

So the debate becomes a matter of faith, every bit as much as those over abortion or a balanced budget.

Today, the argument is over whether to renew our push for oil in offshore fields and in the Alaskan wilderness. No one has any figures on whether there's enough oil to make any impact on American consumption, but everyone has an opinion.

It's the same with proposals to build coal-fired power plants: Proponents argue that we need the power, that these plants would be cleaner than any yet built in the state. Opponents, most of whom only assume global warming is a threat, fear the added "carbon footprint."

How many on either side understand the carbon-dioxide equation?

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, hot to get to Washington one way or another, has staked much of her political capital on opposing coal plants and pushing wind power.

No one thinks wind power is bad, except those who don't want some of our most scenic landscape cluttered up with giant windmills, but is it really the answer to our needs?

Unless someone can figure out how to store massive amounts of electricity, it can't be, but the emotional arguments in favor of wind are unstoppable.

Are Big Oil companies ripping off the American public to pile up unconscionable profits?

The answer depends more on whether you see Big Oil as greedy corporations out to rape the land or as a few million retirees whose union (or state) pension plans happen to own a lot of oil stock, doesn't it?

True, corporate executives bring down huge salaries, especially when times are good, but stockholders seem to benefit the most. And who are they? Just average Americans with a pension or 401K plan. That's all.

Oddly enough, the same unions whose pensions benefit from high oil prices often back Democrats who decry the greed of Big Oil. Members don't make the connection, apparently, between oil profits and healthy pensions.

Then there are those who told us oil prices were never coming down. Demand will drive them ever higher, these doomsayers cried.

The plunge in the last week gave that the lie. Now "experts" say oil might drop back to \$70 a barrel, with fuel prices following.

Is it all a plot to make us appreciate \$3-a-gallon gas?

Could be. If you believe in conspiracy theory.

۲ It all comes back to belief. Belief that times are bad tends to make them so. Belief that what's happening at this instant will go on forever blinds us to the change around the bend.

Sometimes, especially in politics, when there's hay to be made, the underlying facts don't have much to do with it. Belief is enough.

And some days, belief is all we have. Few of us are equipped to investigate and understand economics or global markets. The one truth is that markets, left to their own devices, will solve their own problems. Politicians seldom solve anything.

But if you believe that, it's hard to believe most of the rest, isn't



Forgive and forget

The sermon Sunday at my church was meant just for me. I'm sure others in attendance got some good out of it, but it was meant just for me (or so I think).

My pastor told about the three types of faith; crisis faith, convenience faith, and seeking faith.

While I try and avoid having crisis faith that faith you kick in when there is a crisis in your life. "God, I'll do such and such, if you'll just... (fill in the blank)," we've all said at one time or another.

I also try to avoid convenience faith, the faith that's used at the right time or right place in our life.

Pastor said convenience faith often surfaces at this time of year when someone is running for office and wants the exposure so people think good of us and go to the polls.

Well, I'm not running for office, but I am guilty as the next of attending church when it was the right time or place in my life. I admit it, there's time I've not attended church because I didn't feel in tip-top shape, a time I certainly should have gone to church to seek healing. And I admit there's been times when I didn't attend church because I had company. How silly. I should have been a witness to my company and gone whether they accompanied me or not.



As far as the third type, a seeking faith, that's the one I try to live in and remain in. It's a difficult task, to say the least.

A seeking faith is one that our priority is seeking out Jesus Christ as our source to salvation.

A seeking faith is knowing the Bible well enough to turn the television away from a channel such as my husband did before leaving for church Sunday when the commentator of a program slipped in the theory of evolu-

"Billions of years ago when our ancestors climbed down out of the trees," the commentator said.

How ever so subtle these untruths invade our homes and lives, that is if we let them.

The Bible I read clearly says God created man (Genesis 1: 26-27).

Man did not climb down out of a tree or

slither across the ground later to find out he had legs and stand upright. Not did God create Adam and Adam in the text above, He created Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 20).

A seeking faith is also a forgiving faith. It is a faith that no matter what has happened to us we have the choice to forgive those who have wronged us. Even if the person is ourself.

I have to be willing to forgive myself for not attending church on those times, which I could have attended and not beat myself up over it. I have to be willing to forgive myself for not asking company to attend church with me, and even on their decline gone anyway.

But equally as important, I have to be willing to forgive those who have wronged me. A recent family encounter of being wronged left me choosing to forgive a couple of people.

Sure, I could have let the wrong make me bitter by not forgiving them, but that would have only added baggage to the issue. Forgiving is a decision to give up a grudge and taking time to explain things as they are, not as we want them to be. Forgiveness is making the choice to forgive.

As my pastor said, and as I agree, the beneficiary to forgiveness is more often the forgiver than the forgiven.

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



What a relief!

They're letting us keep

MARGULIES @2008 JimMarg@aol.com

it? — Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press

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@nw kansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.

155 W. Fifth Colby, Kan. 67701

(785) 462-3963 (USPS 120-920)

Colby Free Press

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.

> John Van Nostrand - Publisher ivannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor pdecker @ nwkansas.com

Jan Ackerman - General Assignment ackerman @ gmail.com

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director crystalr @ nwkansas.com

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Sales j.stewart @ nwkansas.com

Steven Matthews - Graphic Design smatthews @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping, Ad Building applegate @ nwkansas.co

> Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator support @ nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Becky Foster, Jim Jackson, Kris McCool, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Cheryl Holub, and Amanda Campbell

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 within 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

Fueling the debate

By Tom Betz

Gas prices have eased a bit this week, dipping to \$3.62 in Goodland and even lower in eastern Kansas, where they are down to the \$3.50 level, but the price remains higher than many feel it should.

A central debate in the past few weeks has been a lifting of the ban on offshore oil drilling by President George W. Bush, who called on the Democrats in Congress to lift their ban on the basis this would encourage more oil exploration and help lower the gas prices by reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

Ironically, it was Bush's father who signed an executive order in 1990 to ban coastal oil exploration, and President Bill Clinton extended the ban until 2012.

Much of the discussion has been about allowing oil exploration in the Artic National Wildlife Reserve in Alaska and expanding exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.

Both presidential candidates, Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, have taken positions on the question.

If the price at the pump continues to fall, as some analysts predict, the pressure may lessen, but it will remain an economic issue throughout the campaign.

where the Public Policy Institute of California's latest survey showed a change of heart, with 51 percent in favor of more drilling. This was the first time since the question was first asked five years ago that a majority of Californians have favored drilling, while 45 percent oppose drilling.

The Republicans are pushing the issue as a way to embarrass House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is from California. They'd like to claim that her refusal to allow a vote on the offshore drilling question makes the Democrats responsible for the higher gas prices.

The truth is, as in most debates, both sides have their points.

Researchers believe great untapped oil reserves can be found off the outer continental shelf, both along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, plus the western Gulf of Mexico. This would be billions of barrels, enough to reduce the amount of foreign oil to some degree. The problem is the amount of time and money it will take to develop these areas.

Environmentalists, who are being described as extremists, believe the oil companies have not explored all the offshore areas where drilling is allowed. The National Resources De-An example of how public sentiment chang- fense Council says even if the ban were lifted

es as prices go up can be found in California today, it would be at least 10 years before any new oil would reach the American public.

> The main question is whether it is worth the risk to explore in the offshore areas. The survey in California appears to show the American public can be persuaded by economics to change its position and favor taking the risk.

> People who live in Alaska remember the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989, and the people of Santa Barbara, Calif., remember the black sludge that covered 35 miles of coastline in 1969 from an oil drilling rig blowout.

> Drilling proponents say the technology and safety measures since these disasters has reduced the risk, and that offshore drilling is the safest way to increase America's independence

> The offshore question seems a long way away from our state, but the recent debates over coal-fired power plants and the determination of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to push for more wind power makes the issues relevant.

In a debate, a judge or panel of judges have to decide who wins. In the energy debate, it will be up to the voters in November.

- Tom Betz, The Goodland Star-News edi-

tor

About those letters . . .

The Free Press encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley

