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### **Free Press Viewpoint**

## Green beliefs fail to provide for news

At church in Denver this Sunday, an insert in the service book pushed something called the "Lenten Carbon Fast 2009," which just goes to prove how much of a religion the "green" movement has become.

Participants are encouraged every day of Lent to put coins in a box or jar that normally would be recycled, either as penance for environmental "sins" or to celebrate "good" behavior.

Some of this stuff is common sense: "Put a coin in your jar for every nonreusable bag you got while shopping or doing errands this week.'

And some of it is patently nonsense: "Put a coin in the jar for every time you used a paper towel instead of a reusable one in the last week.' Does anyone know the science of using a paper towel, which

is both disposable and biodegradable, versus washing cloth towels with detergent, water and electric power? No. But green has gone beyond science to belief, backed by a

fervor which would put any evangelist to shame. "Put a coin the jar for every fresh piece of paper you used

One of the more troublesome commands is No. 11: "Put a coin in your jar for every magazine and newspaper subscription still delivered on your porch or in your mail box."

That may sound reasonable, but it's not.

For one thing, there's no suitable replacement for reading on printed paper. It's proven to be almost 50 percent more efficient for the human eye than reading on a computer screen. Plus, most people just like it better.

For another, if everyone stops getting newspapers and magazines in the mail, we won't have many to read.

Sure, most have websites that replicate some or all of their content. But few of those make money, and those that do don't make enough to pay the cost of news gathering.

With the death last week of the 150-year-old Rocky Mountain News in Denver, it's no stretch to say this "belief" could spell the end of newspapers and magazines which have stood for 2 1/2 centuries as the bulwark of our democracy.

What will replace them? Unverifiable, untraceable blogs? Government and corporate websites that toe the company line? Nonspecific "content?"

Remember, most websites get their news from newspapers or from the Associated Press. Someone has to pay for this news, and for decades, that has been newspaper advertisers.

"Put a coin in your jar for every 10 minutes you were on the computer not at work, or doing homework."

So apparently, we're not supposed to be reading the news on the Internet, either. Maybe the greens just want us to be ignorant, but to heed and believe what they say.

Doubtless, the fuzzy-headed thinkers who put this stuff together failed to think about the consequences of their words. True believers seldom do.

We do not belittle the sound philosophy of conservation and sensible use of resources. Americans are a wasteful people, and we use nearly a quarter of the world's resources for our relatively small population. We can do better.

But before we throw out one of the foundations of our civilization in the name of carbon, shouldn't we at least have figured out how to replace it? - Steve Haynes

#### Colby Free Press

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701 (USPS 120-920)

(785) 462-3963 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, 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 days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby,

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 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 herein. Member Kansas 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.



PAUL HARVEY: 1918-2009

## The ants go high-tech

**Cynthia** 

Haynes

Season

Open

We had just returned from a weekend in Denver at 8:30 p.m. Sunday night, and I was not in the mood for guessing games.

"Where is the phone," Steve asked. "Well," I thought. "It's probably hiding in the mess on top of your desk. Just where it's been since a power surge killed the old line and you fixed it up by stringing wire across the kitchen."

But it wasn't.

As I looked, I saw my husband holding an empty wire where just a couple of days before our phone had been.

I looked around. The television was still sitting in the corner of the kitchen counter, junk was still piled a foot high on the table. No one had taken the china, pots and pans or silver.

Why would someone take the phone? Steve went to check the rest of the house. I went out to the car to get another load.

On the way back in, I found the phone. It was sitting right outside the back door.

Why was anyone's guess. My friend and part-time cleaning lady Barbara had been there while we were gone, I thought, so maybe she decided to clean the phone and had accidently left it outside.

This begged the problem of why she would have taken it out there to clean. However, there it was, so Steve picked it up, took it inside and

I continued to unload the car and put stuff from suitcases down the clothes chute or in the closet. Steve checked the mail and set up his laptop, which he had taken with him to Den-

A half hour or so later, Steve went to the phone to call someone. I was in another room when I heard him yip and start laughing.

"Our phone has ants," he yelled. Sure enough, when I came to look, he had the phone unplugged and was busy trying to kill a swarm of tiny ants with vinegar as they ran out of both the receiver and the base.

"I thought there was just some white powder or something all over it," he said. "But it's ant

Vinegar did not seem to be slowing our little six-footed visitors fast enough, so he went to the basement for the Raid. After taking the phone apart and spraying it, he checked his desk and started spraying the spider plants,

"Our plants have ants," he announced without a trace of the guilt he should have felt for that terrible pun.

He proceeded to spray them all.

Uh, Barbara, was there something you forgot to tell me about?

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

# Smoking bill 'inequitable'

During each year that I've served in the Kansas Legislature, I have seen bills that, in my opinion, continue to erode citizens' per-

sonal rights. A good example of that for 2009 is Senate Bill 25, the smoking ban. I have never supported smoking, and I do realize the debate for and against this issue can be emotional. Both

sides hope to convince the other. I still maintain that if second-hand smoke is as destructive and dangerous as nonsmokers have testified, then a ban should be the direction to go. And, if that is the case, where would the revenue to replace the tobacco tax come from? That is why tobacco taxes are raised in small increments, to protect the flow of tax dollars, which is then used to pay for health

care and children's programs. I didn't vote against SB 25 because I was in the pocket of Big Tobacco, but because I am in the pocket of my constituents, who sent me to Topeka. There was an exemption built into SB25 for our state-owned casinos. There is no way that I can support a state law imposes regulations on businesses that has an exception for state-owned businesses. I believe this issue needs to be decided by local communities.

Sen. Steve Abrams has generously allowed me to reprint his explanation of vote against



Senator

SB 25 as follows:

"Mr. President: Comments were made that indicated that those who oppose this bill don't care about the health of citizens, or are in the pocket of Big Tobacco. I would suggest there is another reason.

"Is it desirable to protect all of the state's citizens from those vices that have a negative impact on themselves or other citizens? Is smoking the only individual right that some people choose to engage in even when they know it's to their detriment and even knowing that it might have a negative impact on others around them? How about gambling, or drinking alcohol?

"So, the question becomes, does the force of government require every individual who enjoys a vice that is legal to then submit to having their rights subsumed within the concept of 'the state knows what is best.; Just as there

are already many laws regarding cigarettes, there are many laws concerned with the use of alcohol and regulating gambling. Should we continue to try and regulate them out of existence?

The State cannot, nor should it be in the business of infringing on the rights of its citizens, even when those rights are counterproductive to good health and well being of that same citizen."

I welcome your feedback on any issues of concern. I look forward to seeing my constituents as we enter the second week of district tours. On Saturday, our schedule is:

8-9 a.m. in St Francis at Main Street Cof-

9:45-10:45 a.m. in Atwood at Williams **Brothers Grocery** 11:30-1 p.m. in Oberlin at Decatur County

Court House, third floor 1:45-2:45 p.m. in Norton at Town and Coun-

try Kitchen

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is ralph. ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov.

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

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Bruce Tinsley

