

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Coal could burn clean path to future

The fate of two 700-megawatt coal-burning power plants near Holcomb remains in limbo.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius vetoed three previous efforts to build the plants. Kansas Legislators gave final approval to House Bill 2014 recently, which would allow construction of the giant power plants, but the 79-44 vote was short of the two-thirds, or 84 votes, necessary in the 125-member House to override an expected fourth veto by the governor.

Most everyone realizes coal is this nation's most abundant source of energy, but it also is a dirty fuel. President Obama has focused on the need to lessen the need on foreign oil and for the United States to become energy independent in 10 years.

He has called for research to come up with a means to have "clean coal" power plants and to increase the use of wind and solar power.

It's puzzling why nothing was said about nuclear power in Obama's latest comments about the energy situation, as nuclear power is clean and could play a tremendous role in lessening this nation's need for foreign oil.

It would seem Kansas is in a favorable and unique position to be a national leader in the coal-fired power issue. Why not have the Holcomb plants set a standard and example for the rest of the country? Why couldn't engineers and environmental experts design the Holcomb plants to meet the most stringent environment requirements? ...

It would seem far better for our governor to be talking about how to develop and host a clean coal-fired power plant, as well as developing and taking advantage of our other sources of power, than to be so fixed in her opposition to the Holcomb plant. Why not use the Holcomb initiative as a stepping stone for development of a coal plant to serve the 21st century?

Let's have Kansas be a leader, not a follower.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

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

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 20520 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (7785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Marj Brown, Vera Sloan - Society Editors
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

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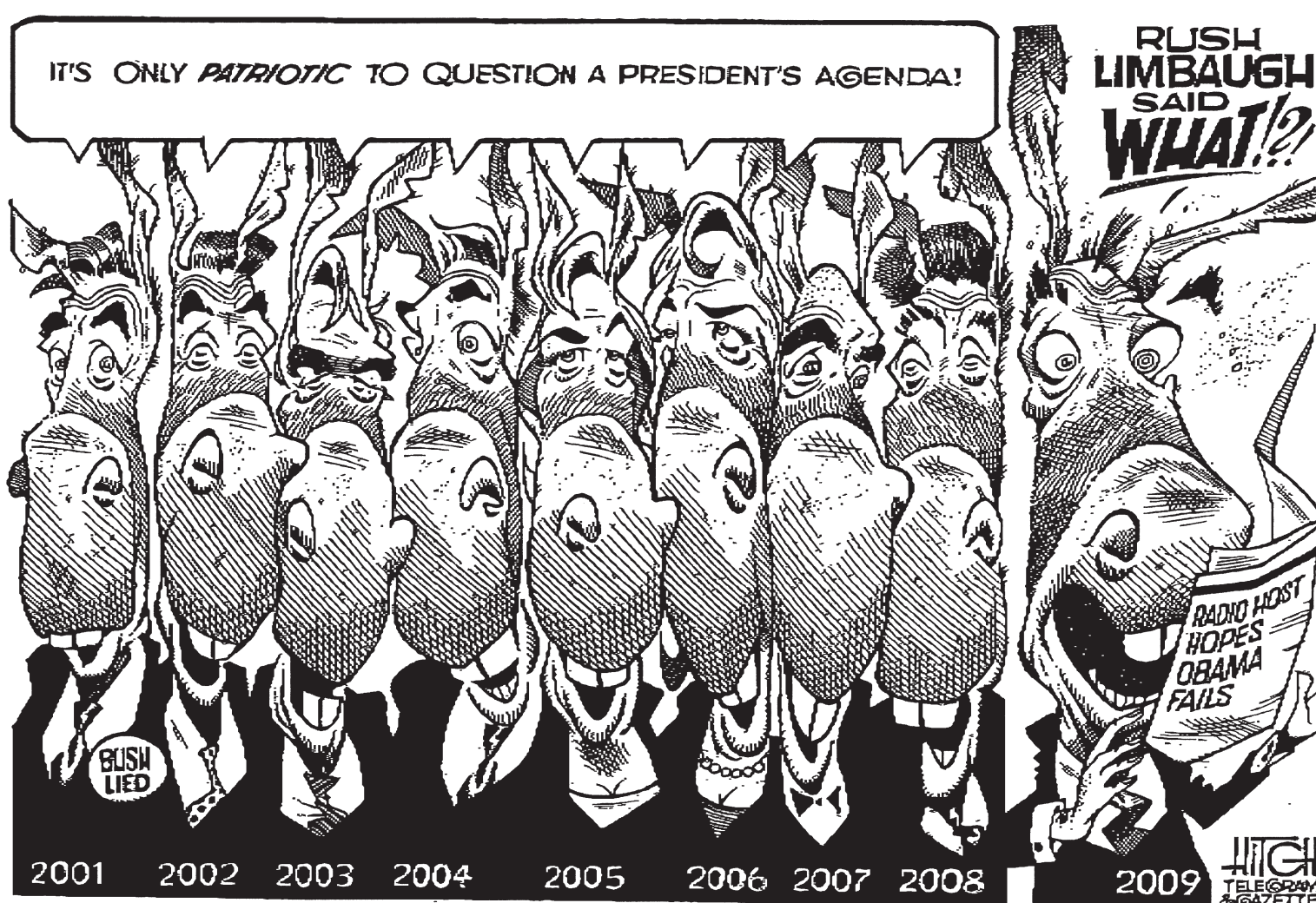
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Does money really equal success?

We need a new definition of what it means to be successful in this country. Today, our definition of success is dominated by the idea that the more wealth you accumulate, the more successful you become.

This is a shortsighted way to define success. Not only does this hollow definition turn human beings into single-minded machines focused on the relentless pursuit of profit, but it creates the illusion that it's not only acceptable, but admirable, to step over people while pursuing the almighty dollar. Success should be much deeper and more meaningful than this desensitizing definition.

First and foremost, success should be defined by what a person has done to make the world better. It would certainly be more rational to judge a person's success in life by contributions to other human beings as opposed to their willingness to enrich themselves. Acceptance of this definition could improve the moral shortcomings in today's American culture.

It would almost certainly make people, especially people running multinational corporations and other businesses, think twice about engaging in actions that increase their bottom line but destroy the environment and oppress workers. No one wants to be thought of as a failure. Maybe highly paid corporate executives would be uncomfortable knowing that the majority of the American people think of them as failures.

When it comes down to it, money is seen as status. If the idea that money and status are linked was rejected by society, than the greedier elements of corporate America would lose



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

their attraction to those who previously copied their examples.

It should be clear to people that any society that puts profits over people is destined to drift into materialistic greed and unbridled nihilism. This unhealthy behavior ends up hurting those at the bottom of the economic ladder the most.

Instead of recognizing the need to help the people being left behind by the American economy, many of our nation's influential citizens have decided to demonize and dehumanize them in a way that undercuts these people's already tenuous standing. Single mothers, working people and illegal immigrants have been accused of being law breakers, protectionists, drug addicts or welfare scroungers who make their living off of money earned by hard-working Americans.

Although labor unions have been in decline for several years and their wages have remained stagnant, any time workers go on strike to demand better wages, they are chastised for getting in the way of what the free-market fundamentalists lovingly call the "animal spirits" of business. It's ironic that the same people who rhapsodize about the wonders of Ameri-

can democracy willingly support a business environment where workers have no say over the way they are treated on the job.

Single mothers and illegal immigrants have been accused of leeching off of the taxpayers. Their accusers seem blind to the fact that many single mothers are victims of irresponsible single fathers leaving them and the kids to fend for themselves. Many illegal immigrants were small farmers from Mexico who were driven into poverty due to their inability to compete with highly subsidized agricultural products from the United States. These products flooded Mexico's market after the North American Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada and the U.S. was implemented Jan. 1, 1994.

While it can be argued that it's the Mexican government's job to spend money on education, job training and technology to ensure that poor rural farmers have new ways to make a living, it is hard to defend an agreement that subsidizes efficient farmers in the most powerful country in the world while poor farmers in Mexico are left to the mercy of a market that is rigged against them.

There is a real need for a paradigm shift in America. The idea that we are our brother and sister's keeper needs to be seen as more important than engaging in a morally blind, never ending pursuit for more status and power.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Rural health needs get strong support

To the Editor:

Arriving in Washington just days after the inauguration, the accelerated pace at congressional offices and across the city was palpable. With economic stimulus negotiations in full swing, and health care reform on the lips of every legislator who spoke to those in attendance, the National Rural Health Association's Policy Conference was unlike any other.

For Kansans, two constants remained: Sen. Pat Roberts and Rep. Jerry Moran. Both were honored by the association this year for their leadership and commitment to rural health care. Representing physicians and pharmacists, hospitals and nursing homes, health care researchers and educators — all those committed to maintaining high-quality health care in rural areas across this nation — the group works on Capitol Hill year-round. As a result, the staff recognizes which legislators take the time to truly understand health care issues and actively work on behalf of rural constituents.

In my experience, both are well-deserving recipients. Take the economic stimulus package, for example. Before even meeting with our small Kansas contingent, Sen. Roberts had already identified Critical Access Hospitals as ineligible for Health Information Technology funding included in the package and worked to correct that inequity. Whether you support the stimulus package or not, there are more than 80 Kansas hospitals potentially affected and we appreciate his concern for rural providers.

At the same time, Congressman Moran met with some University of Kansas medical stu-



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

dents committed to practice in rural areas and seeking support for opportunities to complete their training across the state. He took the time to listen to their concerns and recommendations, recognizing that access to health care isn't just about insurance but begins with training and retaining primary care physicians.

I'm pleased Sen. Roberts and Rep. Moran are once again leaders in the congressional rural health caucus and coalition, groups important in consolidating support for key issues. Most importantly, they recognize health care as critical to the quality of life and economic health of our state. They do so in a nonpartisan way, working in the interests of the people they serve; a trait all can appreciate and respect.

After 20 years working with rural hospitals and physician clinics, I've witnessed first-hand the successes achieved when dedicated oeoike benefit from the efforts of committed politicians. Please join the association in thanking Sen. Roberts and Rep. Moran for their efforts to improve the health of rural Kansans.

Jodi A. Schmidt, Kansas member National Rural Health Association

Red Cross helps all

To the Editor:

A good way to meet people when you move to a new town is by volunteering. When I first moved to Colby, my "available time" was limited, and I narrowed down my choices of good-works programs by what they offered the community.

The Red Cross to me is a blanket organization which helps a multitude of people in different ways. Since March is officially Red Cross Month, I am reminded of why I donate my services.

Whether it is running blood drives, or supplying shelter, clothing, food and basic necessities to a family who's farm was struck by lightning, to offering well-run disaster relief missions in areas struck by natural or man-made devastation, or opening shelters for stranded motorists when the Interstate is closed, the Red Cross offers its services to all people in need regardless of race, religious beliefs or socioeconomic status.

I am proud to be affiliated as a volunteer for the Red Cross. There is tremendous satisfaction in working alongside like-minded folks who want to give back to their community and help people in need.

Anna Stithem Colby



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

