

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Faceless producer is faithful farmer

American farmers and ranchers are making a big mistake when they allow themselves to be called "producers."  
Once upon a time, perhaps, someone thought it sounded more professional to be a "producer" rather than a simple "farmer." Maybe the world thinks of farmers as hicks and clods, not sophisticated people with university degrees.

But just as lipstick seldom improves the looks of the pig, a fancy name does not do much for the image of a job.

The truth of the matter is, producer just sounds industrial. And in this country, one industry is pretty much the same as the next.

No one much cares about the fate of the faceless producer. No one gives a damn, really.

Now a farmer, he — or she — is someone who works the land, loves his animals and gives his all for his crops.

A rancher is a guy — or a gal — astride a quarter horse, squinting into the sun and watching his herd. She's the one who goes out at 2 a.m. to help a heifer deliver her first calf in 10-degree weather.

Farmers and ranchers are people who work long hours and often have little to show in return except the satisfaction of being close to the land and to nature. They're people we can relate to.

And there's the key: farmers and ranchers are people. Producers are statistics.

Bureaucrats love to talk about producers when they spout their governmentese. You never hear a federal employee talk or write about farmers. To them, everyone's a producer. Same for the Extension experts.

Maybe they figure that as government employees benefit from fancy titles and programs with initials longer than your arm, so will the farmer, the rancher or that ubiquitous creature of the plains, the farmer-stockman.

But a fancy title won't win anyone a dime more for a bushel of wheat — or another vote in Congress. At a time when the farm vote is less than 2 percent, and the entire ag vote not much more than that, farmers and ranchers need all the support they can get.

We know today's farmer is a professional, handling a six- or seven-figure budget and making decisions that call for real expertise. We know it takes that kind of person to feed the world.

So call yourselves whatever you want, but remember when you need support, it's the human touch that will win people's hearts and minds. Not a fancy title.

— Steve Haynes



### Spring is in the air

The signs of spring are everywhere. I filled the bird feeders on Thursday, and by Friday night they were half empty.

Twenty robins had a convention in my yard last week. Four of them were perched around an old aluminum roasting pan I keep by the alley. I call it my cat watering dish. Actually, it's available for any thirsty animal that wanders down the road.

The cats use it, of course. The dog hits it for a few slurps after her walk — hey, it tastes delicious, just like cats. And on Sunday, the birds were using it for a bath.

I've had those feeders up for months without much action. I had about decided that the birds didn't like the mix, didn't like my yard, didn't like me. Over the last week, however, I came to realize that they just hadn't arrived until now.

I saw an apple tree that had started to blossom. It may be in for a nasty surprise, but I hope not.

Out in the yard, the crocuses are blooming and the daffodils and tulips are coming up. The



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

The radishes are more because I want to put something in the ground than as a crop. I always eat at least three or four, give some away and let most go to seed. Steve doesn't do radishes. And while he doesn't like peas, he enjoys the snow peas I plant.

With spring in the air, can summer be far behind?

Nope. In fact, I saw the first sure sign of summer on a trip between Oberlin and Colby last week.

I ran into not one, but two road construction stops: flagmen, guys with shovels, big machines, the whole works. The only thing missing was the time. It only took about five minutes of waiting to get through both of them.

When the Department of Transportation is stopping traffic, can summer be far behind?

*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*

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### Transparency more vital than economy

To the Editor:

The following letter went to state Rep. Jim Morrison of Colby and state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell:

I believe that the bill (SB164 to shift public notices to the Internet) sponsored by Sen. (John) Vratil (R, Leawood) is not in the best interests of the citizens of Kansas. At a time when government transparency is arguably more important than any other in our history, this bill would make government activity much less transparent than it is now.

While I understand the need for government to save money, I seriously question Mr. Vratil's altruism in sponsoring this bill. I do not believe that saving money is the main motive of the sponsor(s) and supporters of this bill. Regardless of the motives, the result, if it passes, will be that the citizens of Kansas will be much less able to become informed and aware of the activities of elected bodies of government, both state and local.

Although I am not an attorney, I seriously doubt if this bill could pass a constitutional test in a court of law. If it passes, it is sure to cost Kansas a great deal of money to try such a case in court; such a lawsuit is almost certain to result from the passage of this bill. The cost of such a lawsuit would surely trump the stated motive of Sen. Vratil of saving money for government entities. As a voting citizen, I would be on the front row of those supporting the filing of such a lawsuit at the first opportunity after the passage of any such piece of legislation.

Since you are on the Senate's Local Government Committee, I urge you to speak firmly and clearly against this bill and vote to see that it never reaches the floor of the Senate for debate or possible passage. It is a seriously misguided piece of work. If it reaches the floor, I urge you to speak vigorously in opposition to its passage. A related bill, SB245, sponsored by the League of Kansas Municipalities also diminishes the people's right to know and should be defeated, too.

Mr. Morrison, in the event such misguided



### Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

pieces of legislation pass in the Senate and move to the House for consideration, I urge you to stand with Sen. Ostmeyer in opposition to their passage into law.

— Rodney C. Eisenbise, Colby

### Fix health-care crisis

To the Editor:

I support President Obama's promise to return fiscal responsibility to our federal budget. I also agree that our nation's biggest long-term fiscal challenge is health care financing.

We don't have an entitlement crisis in our country today; we have a health care crisis. The entitlement debate is a distraction and makes it harder to achieve what should be our top priority — reforming health care to improve quality and reduce costs. That reform is also critical to preserve and strengthen Medicare for future generations.

The real crisis threatening our nation's economic stability is the skyrocketing cost of health care.

Recently, on C-Span our Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius was telling President Obama that she did not want the national leadership role in Health and Human Services because she has a satisfactory role in helping Kansas. We know that she has been trying to get more money for Medicaid in Kansas. Now, with the stimulus package helping states, she will have it.

Since Howard Dean does not plan to continue being the national Democratic chairman, I think he should be called upon to take over Health and Human Services. He is a doctor and it would be very helpful in this endeavor.

Medicare should take the place of the many insurance companies (many of them advertising on television) to cut the cost of medical care for U.S. citizens.

Pharmacy supplies would cost much less and pharmaceutical companies would welcome it — not having to dilly-dally with so many insurance companies. Insurance companies employ many people, and in the long run their services cost much more than Medicare.

Social Security is the most fiscally responsible part of the entire federal budget. Health care is the problem and needs a capable person, and I suggest Howard Dean be in charge of Health and Human Services.

— Edna Hatcher, Colby

### Story was misleading

To the Editor

I'm sorry, but I am offended by the recent article in the *Free Press* about me and my accident.

The caller for the story should listen more carefully when taking notes for a story and not insert words that weren't said. I was being cautious and careful as the article insinuated I was not.

Accidents can still happen! I did not say why I did I do that? I know full well why I did it. I have emptied rain water from the trailer for many years and hope to do so again.

Also, Lynette's name was misspelled.

— Rita Beckman, Menlo

PS: I would like to encourage anyone living alone to invest in a Life Line. I'm so glad my daughters gifted me with one years ago.

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

