

Other Viewpoints

Boeing backers right about Airbus

Wichita has to think globally about aerospace these days, and it does. For example, it enthusiastically welcomed the recent expansion of Airbus North America Engineering to another building in Old Town with the expectation of 80 to 100 more jobs in Wichita. As Sedgwick County Commissioner Tim Norton said at last week's ribbon-cutting event, "It's harder to say you're the Air Capital without the presence of Airbus — one of the premier companies in the world."

But local loyalty to Airbus has its limits, especially in the long-running fight over which company should build the U.S. Air Force's new air-refueling tankers.

The arguments in favor of a 767-based Boeing tanker include the members of a skilled American work force whose tanker building has been tested over decades and who, frankly, need the work as much as the Air Force needs to replace its fleet.

It may be a distortion to call the Airbus aircraft the "French tanker," as Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Goddard, does with such relish. A \$35 billion tanker contract with the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Co., which owns Airbus, would involve some American jobs. But a Boeing contract promises more, including in Wichita.

And many Americans would question how the Pentagon could even consider giving such a crucial military contract to a foreign company, especially in a time of war.

As if that argument weren't enough to tip the tanker competition in Boeing's favor, last week's World Trade Organization ruling on Airbus ought to do the trick.

In a case dating from 2004, the organization concluded that Airbus jets had benefited from billions of dollars of illegal subsidies from four European governments over 40 years, leaving Boeing and the American aerospace industry at a disadvantage and fueling a decline in Boeing's global market share.

"This is about fairness, not protectionism, and right now the competition is not fair. The evidence is in," Tiahrt said in a statement. "It is now the responsibility of the Obama administration to level the playing field for American workers and stop pandering to the interest of European governments."

At the very least, it will make it harder for the Pentagon not to consider the nearly \$5 billion in subsidies Airbus received for the A330, which is the airframe for its tanker.

"Especially at a time when jobs are desperately needed, the Pentagon can no longer ignore this unfair advantage that hurts American workers," Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Hays, said in a statement.

Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., speaking at a bipartisan press conference, said: "When one competitor faces an obvious advantage, it should be reflected in the competitive process, because disregarding it creates an unfair playing field."

And Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., said: "This should be the last nail in the coffin for Airbus' efforts on the tanker contract."

As the WTO ruling confirms, awarding the tanker contract to Airbus would reward EADS and its government funders for the illegal subsidies. Kansans in Congress need to keep up their pressure on the Pentagon to ensure that doesn't happen.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 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, Kan., 67701.

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, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Some birds have strange feathers

This about Cynthia's bird feeders. They're not mine, though I do watch the show now and then. But she says I write about wild animals and she does the pets.

This feeding stuff started a couple of years ago. She bought two feeders and hung them in the back yard. Then a couple more. Then the squirrels got into the ones on the tree, so we're down to the pair on the iron double shepherd's crook. No rodent can climb those.

Oh, we've always had humming-bird feeders in Colorado, but that's a given. Hummers are cute and cuddly and everyone loves them. It takes more interest and a bird book to get into the bigger birds.

Last year, she started feeding the big birds in Colorado from another double shepherd's crook out front. We noticed that it takes a couple of days for the bird supply to build up. Maybe it takes time for the word to spread, but spread it does.

And so this week, after she filled the feeders, she complained that the birds were awfully slow finding them. At home, where the feeders offer nearly 365-day-a-year service centers, she has to refill them every couple of days. In the mountains this year, they'd gone a couple of days with hardly a noticeable decline in the seed level.

Then the next day, she noticed that one of the feeders, the left one, was down more than an inch while the other was still nearly full.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

We couldn't quite figure this out, and besides, we had company, and it was time to go to the theater.

When we got home that night, we got an idea what was happening.

Standing in the front yard, right in front of the feeder, licking one of the tiny openings, was a full-grown mule deer doe. Now that's some bird.

Bambi's sister didn't want to move, either, but when we parked and opened the doors, she ambled off, watching over her shoulder to see if we would stay.

She hasn't been back as far as we know, but the bird count has started to build. Lots of wrens and sparrows, but none of the big black-birds that crowd the feeders at home. Cynthia got pretty excited the other day when we saw a red-headed house finch. Some plain brown birds that may be female finches, but none of the flashy yellow ones.

Then today, there was a mountain bluebird. It said it must be the bluebird of happiness, but

it didn't land at the feeders.

This evening, I spotted a robin on the ground below the feeder. I thought that unusual, because robins seem to prefer bugs and worms to grain. You never see them at feeders.

Then a fledgling, with white-spotted wing feathers and a red-orange breast, hopped out from under the spruce tree behind the feeder, and momma popped a worm in its mouth.

So that's what's up!

I have to admit, while I'd never have bought bird feeders, I can spend as much time watching the continual show out front as Cynthia does. Between the humming birds on the porch and their big cousins out front, there's always something going on. Tonight, a couple of male ruby-throats are staging a dogfight.

And now I notice, she's got another shepherd's crook stashed out by the kitchen window, where we have breakfast, waiting for feeders. So I guess we'll have even more birds.

As long as she doesn't start feeding bears or lions, I guess I can handle it. The cats think it's OK, too, but that's not my department.

Oh ... gotta go. A pair of bluebirds just landed out front. Maybe I can get a picture....

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

'Blueprint' narrows curriculum even more

English and mathematics were the only classes valued under the oppressive No Child Left Behind assessments. In elementary schools across the country, all other subjects were marginalized as teachers drilled, drilled, drilled for the annual assessments in these two.

In the new "Blueprint for Reform," the Obama administration's proposed revision of No Child, the government addresses this narrow curriculum by directing states to add science and history to the college- and career-ready assessments.

In one of the greatest ironies in educational logic, this very act of broadening the tested fields will result in narrowing our children's schooling even further.

Kansas children received a full and rich curriculum before the U.S. Department of Education began imposing assessments. Kansas students in most high schools could pursue not just the language arts and mathematics, but also: speech and theater, instrumental and vocal music, vocational technologies, physical education and health, business related courses, foreign languages, a variety of arts, and much more.

But when federally-prescribed penalties were imposed for student failure on the language arts and mathematics assessments, schools responded by "double blocking" many marginal students. Students who were at risk of failing the tests were assigned additional courses in math and language arts to try to get them over the "proficient" threshold. "Double-blocking" reduced the number of students in non-tested courses. But most schools could maintain a balanced academic diet — a curriculum that still excited and met the needs of most students.

But now "Blueprint" pushes to broaden the



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

tested curriculum to four disciplines, adding in social studies and science. "Blueprint" plays the same "blame game" as No Child, penalizing schools with low-scoring students with fire-the-principal or fire-half-the-teachers. Schools will have no alternative but to "double-block" even more students to attempt to raise science and social studies' scores. The result is to eliminate even more courses outside of the tested curriculum.

Say goodbye to arts, music, vocational, and many other untested courses.

We don't have to wait for "Blueprint" to be approved and implemented. In many Kansas schools this fall, there will already be less art, less music — a narrower curriculum.

Kansas school administrators facing several hundred thousand dollars in funding shortfalls, are making difficult decisions now. With most money tied up in salaries, balancing the budget means dismissing teachers and staff. Because of the testing, language arts and math teachers have job security. But already, some Kansas teachers who teach art and other unassessed classes have lost their jobs.

The real losers are the Kansas students who are losing the full course options. Two out of three students who drop out, do so because they are bored. And nothing is more boring than drillwork for assessments.

The current Kansas Board of Education is highly unlikely to adopt any national core cur-

riculum that expands into science and social studies. Yet, the cost to Kansas could be very high if future federal money is strictly tied to adopting "Blueprint" and national assessments.

But while the State Board appears ready to hold the line, the teachers and students of Kansas have received absolutely no damage control from our Kansas Representatives and Senators in Washington.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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