

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Piracy defeats navies of the world?

What is wrong with this picture: Pirates, really just children in leaky boats, carrying rifles and grenade launchers, rule the high seas. They seize ships and demand multi-million-dollar ransoms, which shipping companies and insurance firms are only too willing to pay. Pirates lurk off the Horn of Africa, among the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines, even in a lake between Mexico and Texas. When threatened, they murder their victims, then surrender. They know somewhere, they'll get a fair trial and maybe even wind up living in the free world. The world's most powerful navies – from the U.S., China, England, Germany, Holland, France, all the great and small powers of the civilized nations – seem powerless to stop the pirates. When pirates are caught at sea, they claim to be fishermen. Instead of blowing them out of the water, the world's navies just let them go. Their arms are seized and they get a slap on the wrist.

Their masters have more boats and more children to send out to sea, anyway. What do they care? They're making money. Shipping companies resist arming their vessels. They claim it's bad for business, and besides, just having armed guards might not deter the pirates. Never mind that these kids attack tall steel ships from wooden boats and have to climb the sides to take over a freighter or tanker. Government officials claim they can't track pirate vessels in an area so vast as the Indian Ocean, though that seems disingenuous in an era when spy satellites can see virtually anything that moves on the face of the globe and computers can be used to interpret images. The situation is remarkably like the one that faced the American Navy and Marine Corps in their earliest years, when President Thomas Jefferson sent them to subdue the Barbary Pirates who preyed on Mediterranean shipping off North Africa. The Marines went ashore to assault pirate bases, as we may have to ask them to do in Somalia today.

In that era, more than 200 years ago, the pirates seemingly had all the advantages. Today, surely the world's great and most civilized nations can find some way to discourage and defeat vicious pirates. It must be done. Our forces should be able to back up international law with military might. They should treat the pirates – and their warlord masters ashore – as the terrorists they are, showing no mercy and giving no quarter. If arrests and trials will help, by all means arrest those willing to surrender. The rest, treat them with the same mercy they show their victims. The civilized world cannot afford to be held hostage by pirates, whether off Africa, in southeast Asia or in Texas. Freedom of safe transit on the high seas is too important to all nations to be abandoned. Unless the world reacts, there will be more killings, more kidnappings and more bloodshed. The time to make a stand it today, not after it's too late to save the next victims.

– Steve Haynes

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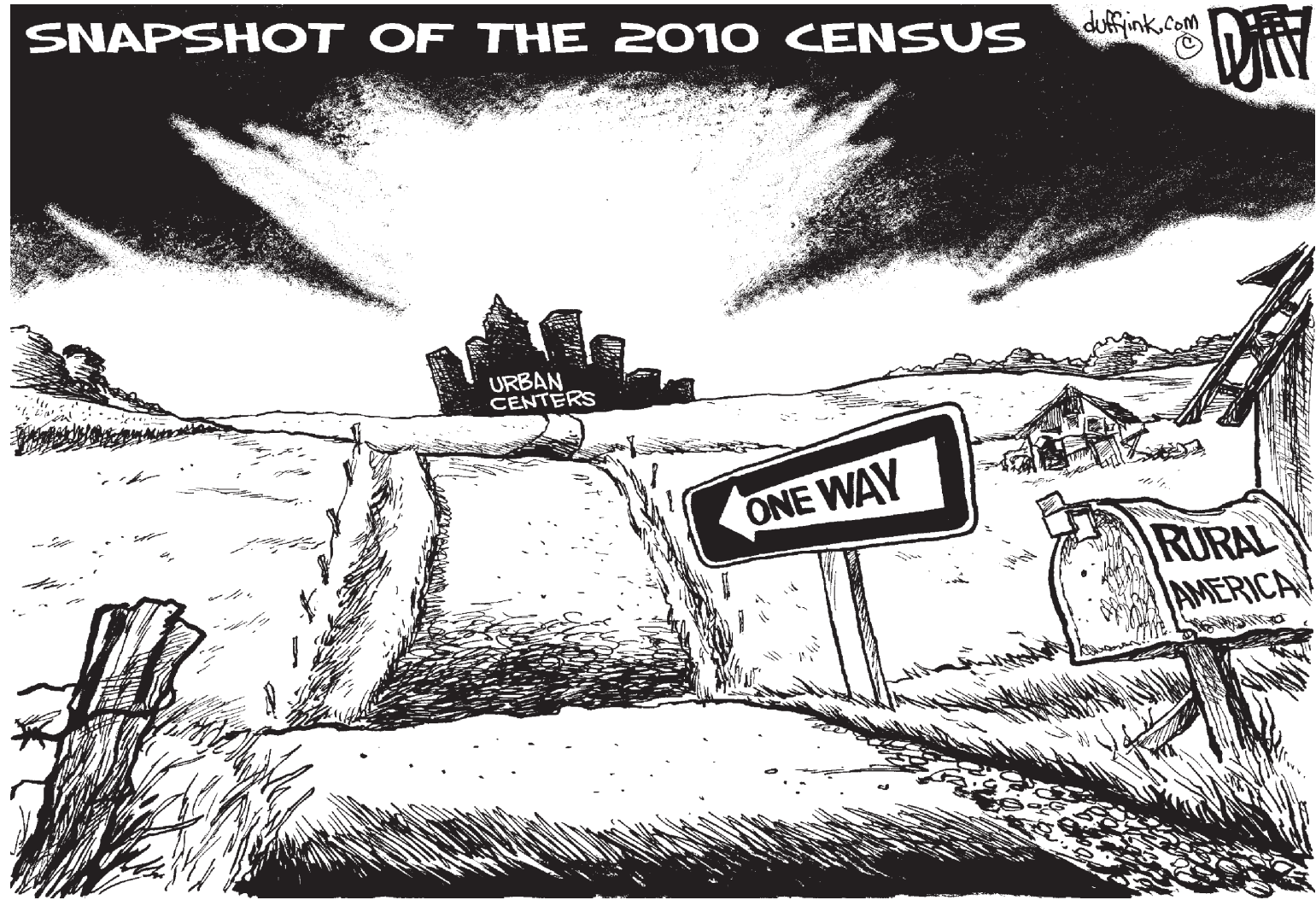
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### Cruise enlivened by tear gas

Several years ago Jim and I went with my sister Ann and her husband Jim Rogers on a Caribbean cruise. It was one of the most memorable cruises I was ever on – probably due to the fact that it was the first cruise we went on. It was during that trip that we had the experience of being tear gassed. More on that later. We stopped at several islands. My favorite was Granada. The people there had a great love for Americans because we once rescued them from invading communists. The people sang a lot of calypso songs about President Reagan, considering him their hero.

We were supposed to visit Martinique but they were reportedly having labor riots so we were taken to Guadalupe instead.

We had been doing a considerable amount of walking on the islands and I hadn't thought to take along good walking shoes. As a result, my sandals were causing discomfort. Ann suggested I might buy some anklets to wear with them to ease the pain, so when we landed at Guadalupe we headed for a store where I might be able to buy a pair of anklets.

As we walked Ann and I were looking in store windows, Jim was trailing behind looking at pretty French girls in scanty outfits and Jim Rogers, who had been complaining about his knees the entire trip, was lagging behind all of us with a painful expression on his face.

We finally found a store with clothes and I noticed a display of underwear and anklets at the back. Ann and I went to check it out and the two Jims stayed out front, staring at a large group that had been gathering in the inter-



Marj Brown

#### • Marj's Snippets

The longer we stayed, the larger and louder the crowd of people became.

I finally found a salesman but he spoke only French and obviously disliked American tourists. So, the purchase was difficult, complicated by sizing different from ours.

Suddenly I heard a loud explosion from the street. People started running everywhere and some ran into the store, Jim Brown and Jim Rogers included. At that moment the phone behind the counter rang. The salesman answered it and talked for a moment in French, then pressed a button beside the phone to lower a door at the front like a garage door. We were closed in.

I could smell a pungent odor that made my eyes water. Jim said the police had tear-gassed the crowd and some had drifted into the store before the door was closed. My mind was racing and I was wondering if we were in a war and might be taken hostage or something. I had never gone through anything like this before and what made it worse was that the little French salesman kept sneering at me.

Finally the phone rang again and after another conversation the salesman pressed the

button and the door opened.

I threw some money at the salesman, grabbed the anklets and we all headed back to our ship. The strangest thing was that Jim Rogers was the first to get there. I didn't even know he could run that fast.

We soon recovered from our harrowing experience and, since we were to stay at the island for the rest of the day, began to make more plans. The men knew someone who had been to Guadalupe before and seemed to know his way around. He asked if we would like to go to a nice private beach, assuring us we would be safe. We agreed, he ordered a taxi and we were taken to a nice white sandy beach.

We spread out our towels and enjoyed just relaxing after our traumatic morning ordeal. At least we relaxed for a while – until I noticed an old man standing way out in the water wearing long white wrinkled underwear. I pointed him out to Jim and said "I wonder why that man is wearing long underwear in this hot weather."

That was when we discovered we were on a nude beach and that the man wasn't wearing underwear – in fact he wasn't wearing anything at all.

That brought a sudden end to our experiences in Guadalupe.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

### Plans underway to pay back feds

During the first week after "Turnaround" things slow down. After working 60-some bills and personally carrying three bills to the floor last week, it was a time to catch up. The Senate has sent about 83 bills to the House, most of which will have hearings in the House committees. Our next hard deadline is April 2.

**Commerce and Economic Development:** This week we began work on the Kansas Unemployment Insurance Program SB77. This bill will create the employment security interest assessment fund to pay principal and interest owed to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The federal-state unemployment program, created by the Social Security Act of 1935, is a federal-state partnership based on federal law but administered under state law.

Almost all wage and salary workers are covered by the program. Railroad workers are covered by a separate program. Those with recent service in the Armed Forces and civilian federal employees are covered by a federal program, with the state paying benefits as an agent of the federal government.

In tax year 2008 Kansas had a \$666.9 million balance. In 2009, Kansas paid out about \$766.8 million in regular program benefits, leaving a trust fund balance on Jan. 9, 2010, of \$65.2 million. Last January, the Department of Labor believed it would exhaust the fund in February, which in fact happened. Kansas started borrowing from the U.S. Treasury in February.

As of the end of February this year, 36 states have borrowed over \$43.6 billion from the U.S. Treasury and Kansas has received \$111.8 million in advances from the Federal Unemployment Account.

The federal government normally charges



Rick Billinger

#### • This week in Topeka

interest on the loans. However, Congress waived interest for 2010. Interest began accruing on Jan. 1. Kansas will receive a bill from the Treasury by Sept. 15, and payment of the interest will be due by Sept. 20. The state has no mechanism in place to make this payment, which cannot be paid from the state's unemployment fund. We will be establishing a method to repay these loans.

**Education Committee:** At the start of the legislative session Governor Brownback assigned to the House the task of defining the term "Suitable Education." Debate over what actually constitutes a suitable education has fueled lawsuits over the years.

On March 3 Speaker Michael O'Neal appeared in support of HCR5010, a proposed constitutional amendment to clarify Art.6, Sec. 6 of the Kansas Constitution. Following two separate Kansas Supreme Court decisions, we are hopelessly in conflict on the proper interpretation of this section of the Constitution, which requires that the Legislature "make suitable provision for finance of the education interests of the State." HCR5010 would restore the education finance article to its original purpose, a requirement for a system of finance that provides for the equitable distribution of funding to the state's various and diverse school districts in amounts determined by the

interplay of the legislative and appropriations process. A continuous cycle of school finance litigation is counterproductive and has fostered an education system more focused on chasing funds than on achieving outcomes. If approved by two-thirds of the House and the Senate, Kansas voters must approve or disapprove amending of the Kansas constitution to include this new language.

The 2010 Census data just released show 50 Kansas counties have double-digit population losses. This is not good news for rural Kansas. The House will be working SB198 which would create rural opportunity zones for these counties and provide an income tax exemption for certain out-of-state taxpayers who relocate to these counties. The bill would also authorize those counties to participate in a state matching program to repay student loans of up to \$15,000 as another incentive. I would like the state to look at expanding this program even further with the idea of keeping more young adults and students in these areas. It would be an even better program if we could find a way to bring students who have graduated and taken employment out of state and students graduating from college and tech colleges back to these declining counties.

It is an honor to represent the people of the 121st District. If you have any input on any issues which will come before the legislature this year please contact me at rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or call me at (785) 899-4700.

Rick Billinger is the state representative from the 121st District. He currently serves on the Commerce and Economic Development, Education Funding, Insurance and Local Government committees.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

