

Other Viewpoints



Food programs should boost health

The Landon Lecture at Kansas State University last week, which brought six former secretaries of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the campus, reached some high notes and hit some low points as the distinguished guests talked about agriculture and food programs in this country.

Among all that was a suggestion from Mike Espy, who led the department for two years under President Bill Clinton, that many would shrug off, but which may warrant more discussion.

Espy said it would be reasonable to experiment with removing some of snack foods from the list of things that can be purchased through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.

The program, Espy said, should be altered so recipients wouldn't be able to buy foods unacceptably high in calories, laden with salt, loaded with trans fats or packed with high-fructose corn syrup. Leaving aside the argument that sugar is sugar – whether it be corn syrup or sugar refined from sugar beets or sugar cane – Espy makes a point that may not be politically correct but is worthy of consideration.

The former agriculture secretaries also touched on child obesity during a free-wheeling discussion, and no one doubts this country has a problem with obesity, among children and adults.

Isn't it reasonable to help people make good choices for themselves and their children that many won't make for themselves?

Yes, it smacks of a "Big Brother" scenario. But in this case, isn't "Big Brother" actually the one paying for the food? And shouldn't "Big Brother" be interested in ensuring the food purchased through his program really is nutritious, rather than potentially harmful to the recipients' health?

Young people living in a home that qualifies for the program eat what their parents purchase and take home. If the parents are loading up on food high in calories but low in nutritional value, that's what the children are going to eat, too. Then, when the children eat elsewhere, it's likely they're going to opt for the same type of food even though foods that present a healthier option are available.

Dan Glickman, a Kansan who served in the U.S. House of Representative and later as the head of the Agriculture Department, agreed there should be consideration of removing foods that contribute to elevated health costs from government programs that deliver food to Americans.

It makes little sense to declare war on obesity through the national school lunch initiative, as the current administration has done, and show no concern about consumers purchasing high-calorie, low-nutrition foods through food stamps.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

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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.

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Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
sfriedlander@nwkansas.com

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kb Ballard@nwkansas.com

Sharon Funk - Advertising Representative
sfunk@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
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BYSTANDER-IN-CHIEF

Pack rat's memories take solid form

It was hard to watch the flooding in Colorado, that beautiful country now under water or muddy from earlier floods. I can't begin to imagine what it must be like to watch floodwaters get closer and closer to your home, years of memories threatened.

I am a pack rat. I can't think of where I would begin to load those precious things to escape the rising water. My problem is I keep things I know I will never use again, but can't bear to part with. Do I really need all those coffee cups from places I have worked or lived? Probably not, but you never know. Could be a natural disaster and I would be set to serve folks in need of coffee and a kind word.

My husband just shakes his head. He is one of those folks who never has a problem divesting himself of things. I call them memories; he just calls them heavy things as he moves the boxes once again. I must say, he really is a good sport about it. Most of the time he just grunts and wonders aloud, "Why?"

I think it all started with my aunt. She was the one who took me to my first antique show. It was in St. Augustine, Fla., and was filled with wonders the like of which I had never seen before. The show, held in the hall at the Ripley Museum, had tables that seemed to stretch forever. My aunt was having a blast, and her enthusiasm was contagious. Before long, I was lost in a world of china, crystal, books and so much more.

She bought me a cranberry vase, small and dimpled with a fluted edge on top that turned inside the bowl. I thought it was a thing of



Sharon Friedlander

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wonder and beauty. I held it up to the light and watched the light play on the dimples. I was hooked.

I was blessed to have my aunt in my life for many years growing up. She taught me to appreciate the nicer things and to take care of them so they would last. And, yes, I still have the vase.

When a holiday would come up, she would set the table with one of the china patterns she had. She had a lot of different sets, and it was fun to set the table with those beautiful dishes. But it wasn't just on holidays that the good china would make its way to the table. It could just be Tuesday.

My mom was like my husband. She had nice things, but they didn't hold a lot of value for her. She would just shake her head when my aunt and I would start pulling out china and crystal to set the table. She enjoyed the meal prep, but not the setting of the table. My mom was a terrific cook, and we all enjoyed her meals. Desserts were a thing of wonder to be enjoyed with a good cup of coffee.

I even enjoyed the clean up after the meal as long as my aunt and I were the ones doing

it. She would teach me about the dishes and the silverware. I was her acolyte, and she was my muse.

When I left home, I would get care packages from my aunt. I couldn't wait to open these boxes wrapped in the white paper of the jewelry store my aunt worked for. The paper was tight as could be. It took scissors to get into the package, but it was always worth the effort. Sometimes it would be dessert dishes or small fruit bowls. They were unique, to say the least. Many of these gifts were antiques, and some were quite delicate.

When my aunt would visit, I couldn't wait to use these beautiful pieces to serve her. Sometimes it was just canned peaches, but they always tasted better in one of the fragile bowls. My aunt would chuckle as if we shared a secret. We did. Now, when I use one of these pieces, I can sometimes hear my aunt chuckle.

So I will continue to keep my memories close to my heart and will always remember her chuckles and the love that went with them.

I miss her, but I do feel close to her as I touch those bowls or plates. I give thanks heavenward for the patience she showed me and the laughs she shared with me. I hope each of you has that connection with someone you love. If a flood took it all, it could never take those memories.

Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at sfriedlander@nwkansas.com.

Limits proposed to rights of bloggers

As reported in a recent headlined story of the *Los Angeles Times*, "Bill to protect journalists clears Senate panel," the Senate Judiciary Committee, in a 13-5 vote, proposed to forward Dianne Feinstein's bill to limit First Amendment rights of bloggers.

Although hailed as a protection for "real" journalists, it allows the government to define such and establish criteria for those reporting on the government and other news events. Such has infuriated the younger generation who get most, if not all, of their news from websites and believe that anyone has the right to report any news that they witness. It also offends Constitutionalists who believe it to be a serious violation of the First Amendment.

Feinstein ostensibly targets bloggers who reveal national security information, which today is expanded to virtually anything negative of the government, but her example is "a 17-year old with his own website." To get an emotional reaction, she links the 17-year old in possession of a "five dollar" website with Edward Snowden's extraction of classified information, a most unrealistic scenario. Besides many believe Snowden's whistle-blowing revelations justifiable because the federal government had gone far beyond acceptable limits when it recorded everyone's e-mail, Facebook and phone messages, which it still does.

At issue is whether the media shield laws, which most states have, apply to bloggers as well as journalists. This allows reporters, who report information the government does not want disclosed, to be shielded from having to reveal their sources to the government. The Feinstein amendment to the federal Media Shield Law (itself constitutionally question-

Other Opinions

• **Harold Pease**
Liberty Under Fire

able) would limit the law's protection only to "real reporters," not alternative media types like bloggers.

Housed in the Feinstein bill were phrases "covered journalist" and "legitimate newsgathering activities," obviously only "professional mainstream journalists" – criteria that could exempt even this column. Therein lies the problem. Who is a "legitimate" reporter and who will decide? And if this law were in place who would dare criticize the government? In a free country the government cannot be in charge of its own criticism.

To be an "approved journalist," the Feinstein Amendment requires such to meet one of the following criteria: one must work as a "salaried employee ... for any continuous three-month period within the two years prior to the relevant date" or have "substantially contributed ... a significant number of articles ... within two years prior to the relevant date" or worked as a "student journalist at an institution of higher education." The effect is to control the media by controlling those who are the media.

Throughout world history tyrannical governments have attempted to control two things to preserve their power: information and

weapons. Kings always fear negative information about their governance and work to eliminate such when possible; then weapon control is less needed. But when they fail to stop the dissemination of negative information, weapon control – in our case gun control – becomes critically important to them. We are no different. It is no accident that the Bill of Rights identifies and removes these possibilities from the federal government altogether. Amendment I, "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press" and, Amendment II, "... the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed."

Sorry Senator Feinstein, you cannot define the press, nor can you make law with respect to it, most certainly none that limits free press as is the effect of your bill. Many feel that the Internet and blogs are the only real free press for exactly the reason that you wish to limit it – anyone can put anything they wish on it. Libel and slander laws still function to keep disclosures honest should they hurt the innocent.

The defense of John Peter Zenger against libel charges in 1735 is often seen as the cornerstone of press freedom. He was found innocent when he railed against the corrupt colonial governor because it was the truth. Your legislation appears merely to be a veiled attempt to damage or end the free press.

Dr. Harold Pease has dedicated his career to studying the writings of the Founding Fathers and applying them. He teaches history and political science at Taft College. To read more of his articles, go to www.LibertyUnderFire.org.

Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**

