

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Amtrak to cut trains; it may be scare tactic

There is unrest across the plains as Amtrak is expected to post notice that it plans to discontinue all its long-distance trains this fall unless Congress kicks through money to keep them going.

It's a hard-ball scare tactic. The trains are unlikely to all be dropped, but there could be changes. A few might die.

Trains on the chopping block include the Southwest Chief, which cuts across Kansas from Kansas City to Dodge City on its way from Chicago to Los Angeles, and the California Zephyr which stops at McCook on its way to Denver and Oakland.

It's not the first crisis Amtrak has faced, but it may be one of the worst. The government-backed corporation was set up during the Nixon administration to get the railroads out of the passenger business. The idea that it would ever make money always was fiction.

What Nixon insiders expected, cynics said at the time, was that the operation would lose so much money Congress would give it a quick, decent burial. They knew then that the railroads were losing their shirts on passengers, even the good ones, like the Santa Fe and the Burlington.

But the cynics underestimated the public's love of trains. At every juncture, when the trains have been threatened, the public has demanded that Congress save them.

Opinions about what to do with Amtrak are as varied as the list of places its trains call at. Some people want to do away with the whole mess, others say keep the "corridor" routes, mostly on the coasts, that supposedly can make money. Let the states pay for trains if they want them, others say. Split Amtrak up and let private business run it.

Amtrak enemies crafted a plan a few years ago where the corporation would be given until next year to start making money or face liquidation. They knew what would happen, though up until Sept. 11, the railroad was on track for break-even operation. It had built up express, mail and passenger revenue to record levels.

Most of the talk about Amtrak is just bunk. Amtrak isn't going to make money on passenger trains any more than the railroads did. Only a few select routes even have the potential.

But no form of transportation in this country makes money. Certainly not the airlines, which couldn't exist without vast federal expenditures to keep the system going. Not trucking or bus lines, which cannot run without public highways. Barge lines run on federal waterways.

Only railroads build and maintain their own right of way and pay taxes on it. Among passenger carriers, only Amtrak is expected to pay its bills without federal tax help. It isn't going to happen.

Nor can you split the system up and just keep the corridors. The rest of the country isn't going to pay to have trains in New York and California. Killing off the long-distance trains eliminates the money they contribute to headquarters operation, making it even harder for the corridors to exist.

Here are the facts: We spend about \$30 billion a year to subsidize highways and trucks, about \$11 billion a year to subsidize airlines, not counting the recent bailout that kept most of them afloat after the terrorist attacks.

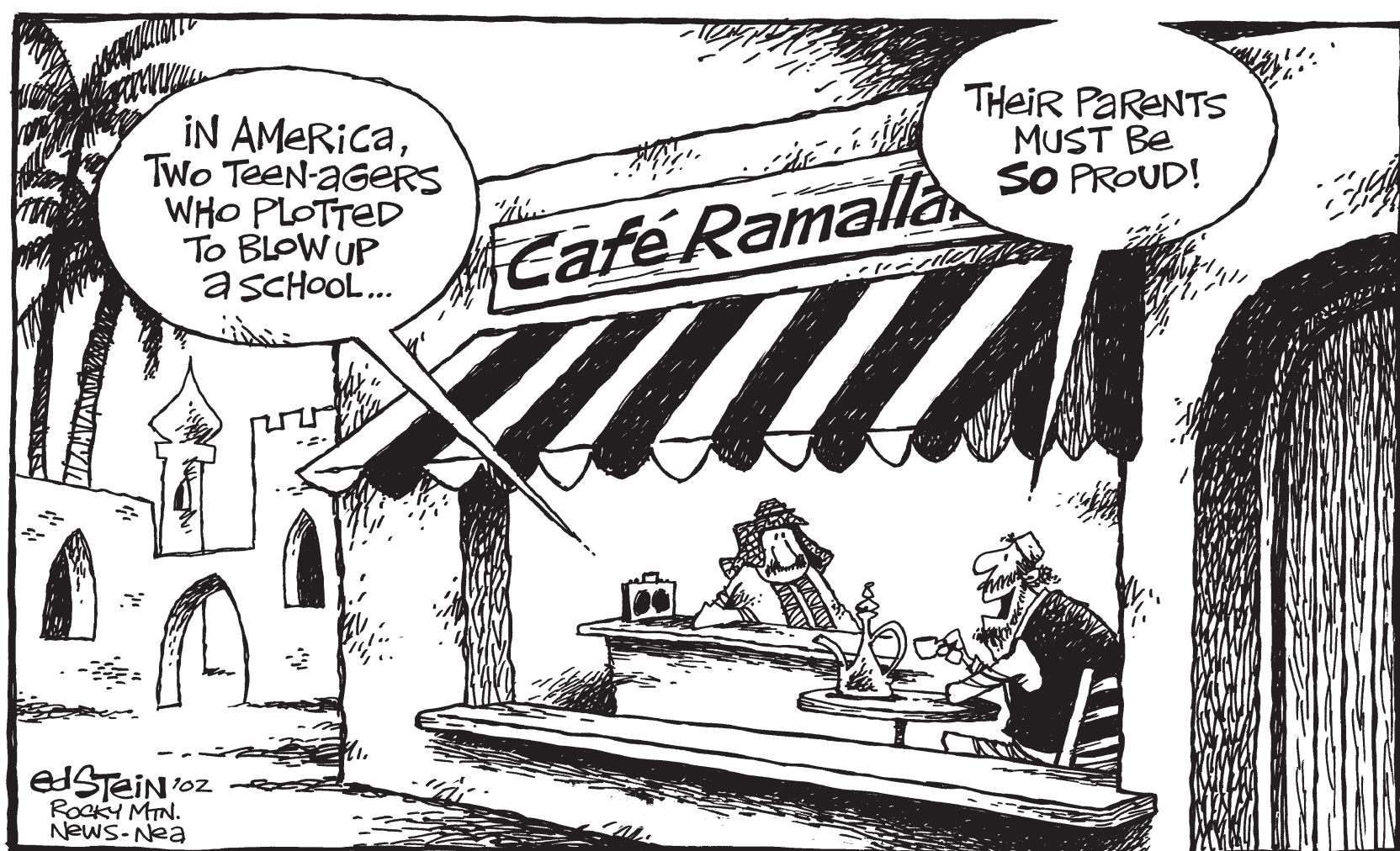
Amtrak gets \$1 billion, and half of that goes for labor protection and other payments the government will have to keep on making if Amtrak goes away. The saving will be about \$500 million if Amtrak is cut off.

And in transportation, as the railroad's vice chairman, Michael Dukakis, put it, that is "chump change."

If we're going to have a balanced national transportation system, we need trains. Compared to the cost of highways and airways, we can afford trains. And we expect Congress will see it that way, too.

Don't be fooled by the shutdown notices. If people want them, the trains will run. But if you want trains, best fax or e-mail your senators and congressman now.

Tell them Amtrak needs a stable funding source to allow it to grow and expand — and continue cutting losses. Time is short. — Steve Haynes



Missing cat is replaced with six surprise extras

We got a new cat last week. Or six.

Anyone want a kitten? I'll be giving them away here real soon.

It's all son's fault. It was his cat that got lost. I wrote a column and asked for people to keep an eye out for Pomeroy, the mission feline.

No one ever saw Pomeroy, but the barber down the street offered a half-grown tom cat living in his shed.

Son said he'd like a replacement cat, so we all went out to get the new cat on Easter Sunday. The tom was shy — real shy. We couldn't get within 10 feet of him and after chasing him around for about half an hour, we gave up.

In the process of playing ring-around-the-rosie with the wild cat, we tried coaxing calling, "kitty, kitty, kitty. The tom headed out the door and down the street.

However, this beautiful, little blonde model



cynthia haynes

• open season

sidled up and started rubbing against my leg. I picked her up. She purred. I handed her to Steve and grinned.

"How about this one," I cooed.

"Do I have any choice in the matter?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "but not much."

Son picked up the cat and announced that she was just great and if I took her, he'd take one of the kittens.

Oh, I forgot to mention that. She was obviously pregnant.

She's still pregnant, but we expect to have a batch

of kittens any day now.

In the meantime, the household cats have been in an uproar.

For the first few days, the new cat, which we named April and call Blondie, lived down the basement. That's where the food bowl and litter box are. She took up residence on the sofa. Every time she came upstairs, she got hissed at by Molly, the queen of the house.

Eventually, however, April started sneaking upstairs. This led to one big cat fight. Now April sleeps on any couch in the house and at the foot of our bed when she feels like it.

Molly, the queen of the house, found out one little thing about the newcomer. She's still got claws.

Both the claws and the kitten problem will be solved as soon as the babies are weaned. But for now, April has the upper paw around the house and Molly just sulks a lot.

Defining terrorism down



diana west

• commentary

It's time to take all the black and white and pour them together to make gray, lots of gray, to paint the current state of moral confusion in the so-called war on terror. Make that immoral confusion. What else to call the obfuscation and equivalence-speak about terrorism creeping into common usage among our media and government elites?

It's one thing for the 57 Muslim nations of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to stew over a definition of terrorism, as they did this week in Kuala Lumpur, and come up with zilch. You might wonder who the heck asked them anyway, but that's another story. We know what "terrorism" is: driving jets into buildings, detonating strollers on sidewalks, and massacring families at dinner tables. Simple, right? Not for the Islamic conferees. As that meeting of the minds adjourned, deferring to group mental-block, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad could only put it this way: "Muslims everywhere must condemn terrorism, once it is clearly defined." But don't hold your breath.

Meanwhile, what the Muslims did define or, rather, declare, was that terrorism has nothing whatsoever to do with Yasser Arafat's suicide-bombers and their heinous assault on civilians in Israel and civilization everywhere. Indeed, these do-it-yourself pogroms come under the heading of what the Muslim ministers collectively called "the blessed Intifada." Such propaganda defines terrorism not only down, but completely out for Yasser Arafat, his assorted suicide gangs, and their allies, from the al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade, the relatively new kids blowing themselves up on the block, to senior scourges such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Nothing new here — just another demonstration of the official Islamic mindset staged periodically since Sept. 11. What is new, however, are the shouts

and echoes of that mindset increasingly heard in the West. Nearly seven months after the attack on America, the shock and terror has subsided at home and The Terrorist is getting the benefit of the doubt. It's not that terrorism per se is gaining supporters, or being condoned exactly. But there's now a determination to see through to the "other" side of terror, past the unconscionable slaughter of innocents, to entertain the terrorist's point of view. This perspective requires crossing a line of decency it would be nice to think has heretofore separated Us from Them.

Thus, CNN's Connie Chung introduces a spokesman for Hamas by explaining in very her best anchor-manner ("Thank you so much for being with us, sir") that her terror-apologist of a guest is from "an organization seen by most as a terrorist group, even though he would probably prefer the term freedom fighter." Freedom fighter? Women-and-children killer is more like it.

MSNBC's Lester Holt preps a piece on Hezbollah — the terror group Americans first encountered back in 1983 when it blew up the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63, and the Marine barracks, killing 241 — with the tease: "So are they terrorists or freedom fighters? You be the judge." Turn back the clock and imagine a report on Hitler's SS: "So are they Nazi thugs or German patriots? You be the judge." It's easy to see that once upon a time there weren't two sides to every

story.

Maybe we should just let the Islamic ministers figure this one out — or, better, Peter Jennings. Reporting on Hezbollah, the ABC anchor attributed the terror tag on Hezbollah solely to "the Bush administration," subsequently providing Hezbollah with an unobstructed rebuttal — "We are not terrorists" — from the gang's leader himself. As reported by the Media Research Center, which provided an account of these on-air comments (<http://www.mediaresearch.org>), Mr. Jennings also described Hezbollah's attacks on the United States in Beirut — but without mentioning Hezbollah. "A man simply drove his truck to the front door" of the embassy, Mr. Jennings explained, "and blew himself up. ... Later that year, the Marine barracks here were destroyed in much the same way."

How about "a man from Hezbollah" drove his truck? Guess it's tough to face facts. Not that Mr. Jennings is alone. The Islamic ministers in Kuala Lumpur couldn't face facts either, looking at suicide bombers and declaring they have nothing to do with terrorism. This makes strategic sense in that they support the bombers. But what gives over here? Both George W. Bush and Colin Powell are now looking at Yasser Arafat, a man incurably contagious with terrorism, and declaring he has nothing to do with terrorism — or that if he does, he can "still" redeem himself. And we support the Israelis. The administration's motives may be different, but the deception is the same — only more damaging. Where moral myopia serves the Islamic ministers' cause, it imperils our own. You can't win a war against terrorism without facing up to what it is and — just as important — who the terrorists are.

Diana West is a columnist and editorial writer for The Washington Times. She can be contacted via dwest@washingtontimes.com.

Immunization of children is critical protection

To the Editor:

Vaccines are among the 20th Century's most successful and cost-effective public health tools for preventing disease and death. They not only prevent a vaccinated individual from developing a serious disease, but they also help protect the entire community by reducing the spread of infectious agents.

Immunization coverage among children in the United States is higher today than ever before. In Kansas, we are getting closer to attaining our goal of having 90 percent or more of infants receiving the most critical dose of most recommended vaccines by age 2. These very high immunization coverage levels translate into record or near-record low levels of vaccine-preventable diseases. For most of these, we have had reductions in death rate of 95 percent or more.

The Kansas Immunization Coalition urges parents and healthcare providers to use National Infant Immunization Week, April 14-20, as an opportunity to focus on the importance of ensuring that babies are protected against polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases. All infants should begin a series of immunizations beginning at birth. By 2 years, babies should have received vaccina-



from our readers

• to the editor

tions to protect them against 11 diseases: diphtheria, tetanus (lockjaw), pertussis (whooping cough), polio, measles, mumps, rubella (German Measles), hepatitis B, chicken pox, Hib meningitis, and pneumonia.

Many people in our country have not seen a case of diphtheria, polio or measles in several generations, and may not realize how much damage these diseases can cause. Unfortunately, some even believe these diseases are a thing of the past and that there is no reason to immunize their children. These diseases are now infrequent because of improved immunization services and the availability of improved vaccines.

When children aren't immunized, epidemics can occur. For example, a major cause of the measles epidemic of 1989-1991 resulted from the failure to vaccinate children on time at 12 to 15 months. The state of Kansas had 246 diagnosed cases of measles.

All parents and caregivers should make the decision to immunize their children based on the facts. Parents should review vaccine information statements available from their doctor or clinic which discuss the benefits and risks of vaccines. Asking questions about immunizations, including the benefits and risks to their own child is encouraged. Each health care visit is an opportunity to discuss immunization and to provide the needed vaccinations. Each visit that does not result in a needed vaccination is a missed opportunity for protection — not only for that child but also for the entire community.

If you have any questions about your child's immunizations, talk to your doctor. For information about the childhood immunization schedule, contact the Kansas State Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Prevention, Immunization Program at 785-296-5591.

Nancy Tausz, registered nurse, chair Kansas Immunization Action Coalition Johnson County Health Department nancy.tausz@jocoks.com

The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association
The Associated Press

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com



Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor/Editorial Page
Rachel Miscall, Managing Editor
Pat Schiefen, Copy Editor
Doug Stephens, Sports Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor Skilar Boland, Reporter
Eric Yonkey, Bill Wagoner, Advertising Sales
James Schiefen, Adv. Production Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl Ron VanLoenen Judy McKnight
Betty Morris Leslie Carroll Lana Westfahl

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services (nbetz@nwkansas.com)
Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

The Sherman County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company