

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Closing rural offices not the best answer

What is the State of Kansas thinking about, closing offices and slashing the outstate workforce of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Service?

Nothing's been done yet in northwest Kansas, and department officials aren't saying what offices might close. Twenty-three have been closed or will be in cuts already made around the state.

You can bet that the offices to close will be those in the smallest counties, where the economy is already poor and the population already declining. Now the state will pound another nail into the coffin lid for rural Kansas.

People who need help will be forced to drive to a larger town or wait for a bureaucrat to drive out to see them. Some applications will be done over the phone, officials say.

Department officials claim they don't have the money, given current state budget cuts, to maintain offices in all 105 counties. The offices have been there since the state took over welfare services from counties in 1973.

Services in the cities won't suffer, and the state claims clients in rural areas won't be disadvantaged. It's not talking about what the move will do to dozens of small counties, where the economy already is in bad shape.

The state needs to re-examine its priorities. Instead of an ever-growing bureaucracy in Topeka, it needs to cut jobs in the central offices and put more people out into rural areas. Not fewer.

It's a matter of economic development, if nothing else. Most state jobs are concentrated around Topeka, where government is spread out across the town. The state adds new office buildings almost yearly and is wasting millions on parking garages, underground tunnels and other development to cater to the concentration of employees.

Instead, it should be exporting state jobs to the hinterlands. Many functions, such as computer operations, could as easily be carried out here as in the capital.

There's nothing wrong with Topeka's economy, and the state would still have plenty of jobs there. It is the capital city, after all.

But why not make cuts to Topeka and put some of those jobs out here where we really need them? Where the taxpayers are?

It's not in the state's best interest, after all, to see small towns wither away while the cities grow and grow. With increasing urbanization comes increasing problems. Meantime, the rural tax base continues to decline. The state is maintaining roads and schools out here, but there may soon be no one to use them.

Especially if the state pulls in all its jobs.

This is not the time for the state to pull out of rural Kansas. It's not fair to welfare clients, and it's not fair to small towns across the state losing their offices.

Topeka is big enough, and we're not. — *Steve Haynes*

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 1217 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 225-2715

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676

State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7399

Kansas Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

ARMY 8/2002 THE STATE



FOREIGN POLICY TWISTER

There are companies trying to collect false debts

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

My father passed away two months ago. I recently received a "notice" from a company saying it was attempting to collect on a delinquent account for a credit card belonging to my father. This confused me, because my father had no credit cards. I fear that this is a scam perpetrated on family members of the deceased, and these groups hope people will just pay the "bill" and not question it. Attorney General Stovall, what can be done about this?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

You are correct - this is a fraudulent set-up. This scam has been around for years and resurfaces periodically.

The groups that organize these scams send fake collection notices to deceased individuals hoping the next-of-kin will pay the bill without questioning it. Oftentimes the return addresses used are merely post office box numbers that are part of an elaborate mail forwarding system designed to dis-



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

guise the identity of the sender.

It is very unfortunate that there are those who will attempt to take advantage of families during their time of grief.

Consumers can help protect their loved ones from a situation such as this by keeping good records of their finances. When a "collection notice" is received by the next-of-kin, it can be compared with the records of the one who is deceased. Most of the time these notices do not have telephone numbers on them, which can serve as an alert as well since a legitimate collection company would want to be contacted.

Should you receive a fraudulent collection notice, be sure to save the envelope the notice comes in. Send the envelope and the entire contents of the letter to either my office or the postal inspector. Be sure to verify that the collection notice is fraudulent and not a legitimate bill. You have the right to request validation of the debt from the company attempting to collect.

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints.

For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist and your call will be returned promptly.

Powell deserves praise on Iraq — so do Hawks

Europeans, U.S. newspapers and Democrats are anointing Secretary of State Colin Powell as the clear winner of the Bush administration's inner struggle over Iraq policy. He is — but only tactically.

Strategically, the winners are the administration's hawks, including Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Vice President Cheney, who urged that eliminating the Iraqi threat be the top priority of the Bush administration.

Of course, the jury is still out on whether President Bush's Iraq policy will be a success or a failure. Diplomacy and inspections are unlikely to disarm Saddam Hussein, and war could be catastrophic.

But at the moment Bush has much of the world on his side regarding the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction as the world's leading problem.

That's a triumph for Bush, and his many adversaries ought to be impressed with his ability to absorb drastically conflicting advice from strong-minded aides and fashion a policy that works.

The idea — widespread among foreigners, Democrats and the media — that Bush is some kind of idiot frat boy (or "boy king," as New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd often jibes) ought to be thrown in the trash.

A reassessment is justified by Bush's victories in last week's elections as well as the unanimous U.N. vote demanding Iraqi disarmament.

After the Security Council vote, both The Washington Post and The New York Times carried glowing accounts of how Powell had both convinced Bush to take his case against Iraq to the United Nations and had successfully negotiated the final resolution.

The implication was that Powell had finally triumphed over the administration's "unilateralist" hawks, led by Cheney, Wolfowitz and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who have often expressed distrust with the United Nations and international inspections and have advocated "regime change" as the only solution to the Iraq menace.

This attitude also was reflected in Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle's (D-S.D.) state-



morton kondracke

• commentary

ment "commending" Bush and Powell for "rejecting the unilateralist approach originally espoused by some in his administration."

Daschle didn't do so, but other Democrats have claimed that, had it not been for their insistence last summer, Bush might have ignored both Congress and the United Nations in pursuing his Iraq policy.

In the overseas press, Malaysia's English-language New Straits Times gave the balanced view that the U.N. resolution giving Iraq a "last chance to disarm" was "a triumph for Anglo-American diplomacy" and also "a triumph for the international community, which has been against any unilateral American military action against Iraq."

But here and abroad, the question not getting asked is: Who put disarming and/or ousting Hussein at the top of the world's agenda in the first place? The answer: the hawks, especially Wolfowitz.

In the early days of the Bush administration, Powell advocated a strategy of "smart sanctions" against Iraq — that is, attempting to cut off imports of military equipment while allowing in food and medicine.

Essentially, the State Department view was that the Clinton administration policy of sanctions, containment and occasional punitive air strikes could work if the sanctions regimen were altered to counter Iraq's international propaganda campaign that it was killing Iraqi children.

Preoccupied by China and domestic issues, the Bush administration basically paid little high-level attention to Iraq until after Sept. 11, 2001. Then Wolfowitz argued for attacking both Iraq and Afghanistan.

He lost that battle, but only temporarily, as Bush decided — and sensibly — to fight one war at a time, Afghanistan first. But once it was clear the

Afghan war was won, a battle royal unfolded in the Bush administration over Iraq, with the State Department arguing for containment and deterrence and the hawks — with Cheney and Wolfowitz in the lead — urging preparation for war.

The hawks won on Jan. 29 with Bush's State of the Union speech, declaring that nations comprising the "axis of evil" — chiefly, Iraq — would not be permitted to develop nuclear weapons.

Ever since then, Iraq has been the prime focus of U.S. foreign policy — a position it never would have occupied but for the hawks.

In the spring, Arab nations insisted that the Arab-Israeli dispute had to take precedence over Iraq. Powell succeeded in making it so, temporarily, but Bush eventually decided — as the hawks maintained — that there was no solving that crisis as long as Yasser Arafat remained the leader of the Palestinians.

According to administration officials, there was never a question whether Bush would seek Congressional authorization for the use of force against Iraq. There, however, was a question of whether to go through the United Nations and accept a renewed inspections regime.

Bush's decision to do so was a victory for Powell. But the successful framing of the issue — as a challenge to the United Nations to prove its relevance in the modern world — was Cheney's idea.

Serious questions remain about whether Hussein can evade or delay inspections past the winter war season and hope that the world community loses its resolve to make him disarm.

Bush does not seem inclined to let this happen. The Pentagon is preparing for war and Powell, too, is talking tough. The big test is yet to come, but at this moment, Bush deserves credit for being a forceful world leader.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

berry's world



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 Hixson, Managing Editor

Pat Schiefen, Copy Editor

Sports Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Eric Yonkey, Bill Wagoner, Advertising Sales

Skilar Boland, Adv. Production **Sheila Smith**, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl **Ron VanLoenen** **Judy McKnight**

Betty Morris **Mary Jo Tapparo** **Lana Westfahl**

Teneile Lovelace **John Lapka**



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.)

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