

commentary

from other pens...

Regional school idea doesn't hit the mark

A super plan for super school districts?
Or just another way for the Salina School District to torpedo its pesky neighbors?

Silence was deafening when Salina Superintendent Gary Norris and three cohorts released their plan last week to merge 303 Kansas school districts into just 40 regional units.

Then the shouting started. Most of the noise came from leaders of small and medium-sized districts that would be gobbled up by their larger neighbors in the massive consolidation.

And while the authors estimated that the plan would save the state \$240 million to \$480 million a year in reduced administrative and building costs, most people were skeptical.

As they should be.

Remember, this plan comes from basically the same group of districts that has been trying to undermine the state's school finance system for years. Led by Mr. Norris, this alliance is suing the state in a trumped up "civil rights" suit, trying to get money from smaller neighboring districts.

Now, they've figured out how to get rid of these little districts altogether.

Leaders of smaller districts across the state wailed that local schools would lose their independence and their flavor.

With the school board and superintendent many miles away, "There's no way that you are going to have the same communication channels and meet the same needs that you do now," said Terry Stratman, superintendent in Lincoln.

"The farther away you get your base of decision making, the better chance of students getting lost in the shuffle," said Larry Combs, chief of Minneapolis schools.

The Salina district has long been nettled by its smaller neighbors, particularly Southeast of Saline, Ell-Saline in Brookville and the Bennington School District to the north. All draw students from Salina, and all get more per student than Salina or other "large" districts. That's one basis of the lawsuit.

Under the Norris plan, though, Salina would become the center of a large district taking in all three neighbors, abolishing their boards and eliminating their administration.

And, possibly, busing their students to fill Salina schools. Having closed many of the neighborhood schools in his own district, Mr. Norris probably would enjoy the task of closing his foes'.

Perhaps the best response to the plan came from Robert Korbelik, president of the Southeast of Saline school board, who examined the fiscal truths in the merger plan.

While his district spends just 5.48 percent of its budget on administration, for instance, Mr. Korbelik points out that Salina spends 7.02 percent. Its salary schedule is the highest of 14 districts which would be combined, making any savings on a uniform pay scale doubtful.

In truth, if it's run like the Salina schools, the new plan might cost the state more, not less, he argues. The only winners would be the few administrators who would rule the megadistricts. And they probably wouldn't be around for long.

Out here, our schools would lose their independence and the character, and our towns might lose their schools entirely.


Gary Norris might call that progress, but we don't. Welcome to the brave new world. — *Steve Haynes*

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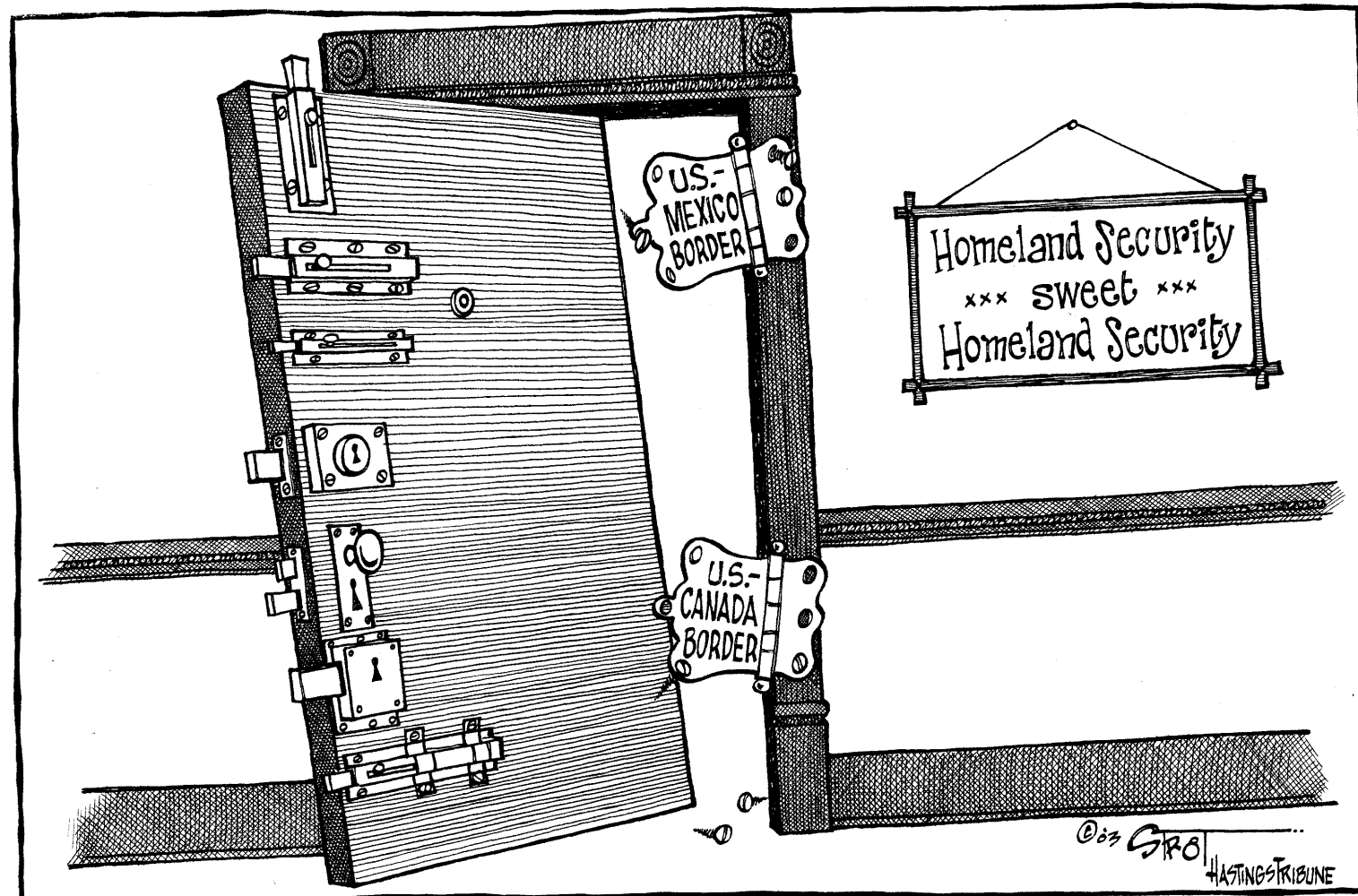
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I like jokes, but I have trouble telling them

I don't know about you, but I like jokes. I have difficulty repeating a joke, but I enjoy them anyway.

Some people have a special knack of remembering them, but I don't. People are always sending me jokes on e-mail, and I particularly like the ones spouted by innocent children.

Kind of a "kids say the darndest things syndrome" I guess.

Here's one (not from a child) that I like: "An English vicar was retiring after 25 years in the parish. As he came to clear out his bedroom he found a small bowl with 5 eggs and £1,000 inside. Baffled he called his wife and said: 'Darling, what is this little basket under the bed with five eggs and £1,000 it?'"



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• commentary

"Oh," she said 'I must confess that every time you preach a bad sermon I put an egg in the basket.'

"Secretly the vicar was pleased: Not bad. Five bad sermons in 25 years, he thought.

"And what about the £1,000?"

"Well every time I get a dozen, I sell them!"

—Unknown.

Guess we've all known a preacher or two

Have the last days already begun?



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

of Uncertainty," published in 1977, "People of the World War II generation, my generation, will always think of their conflict as the great modern watershed of change. . . . We should be allowed our vanity, our personal rendezvous with history. But we should know that, in social terms, a far more decisive change came with World War I. It was then that political and social systems, centuries in the building, came apart — sometimes in a matter of weeks. And others were permanently transformed. It was in World War I that the age-old certainties were lost."

Both of these men, and many others, have commented on how the world changed with the outbreak of World War I. People's lives and attitudes were changed dramatically in 1914, and things have not gotten better from that standpoint since.

More and more, parents and teachers comment about rebellious and disobedient youths; employers complain about the difficulty of finding honest and hard-working employees, and employees cannot depend on the integrity and loyalty of those they work for.

The Enron and WorldCom scandals showed that corruption exists on a scale many people never imagined. With the Watergate scandal in 1974 and the Iran/Contra scandal in 1986, the integrity of the presidency has been called into question.

Daily, there are reports on the news of parents treating their children in such a horrible manner it is shocking. Grown children often treat their elderly parents in an equally shocking manner. And crimes on some city streets become more and more brutal each year. Love has grown cold.

Wars have been fought in many areas of the world daily since 1914; the scene, the people and the reasons change, but war continues day after day. People are now talking about stocking up on water, plastic and duct tape in case of a biological or chemical attack.

Besides constant warfare, there is this threat of war (rumors of wars) that have many people

like that, haven't we?

I wonder if the preacher in the joke had a sense of humor. And I wonder if his sermons improved at all. I wonder if his marriage did.

Laughter is good for us. Why don't we laugh more and worry less? Sometimes I think we are too worldly and jaded. We're too intelligent. Life isn't a mystery anymore, and we're too busy to puzzle with it anyway.

I think I'm going to work at getting more fun, more laughter into my life.

No, that's not right. I'm not going to "work" at it. I'm just going to relax and let those things creep in and surround me when I'm not looking. I think they'll be more appreciated that way!

Why don't you try it too?

in constant fear. And surely no one can be truly comfortable and content in this climate. What does the future hold?

Matthew 24:13, 14 says, "But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

There will be an end to these world conditions, but not an end to life, for some will be saved. Why will they be saved? Where will they go?

Psalms 37:29 says, "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."

The righteous, those who obey God, are the ones who will be saved, and they will live forever on earth. Why on earth? Genesis 2:15-17 says, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'"

God did not refer to death as an unavoidable circumstance, but told Adam how he could avoid it. Since Adam and his wife Eve disobeyed God, they died. They passed on their sinful nature to all of mankind. In the future, God can still fulfill his purpose to have people live on the earth forever and take care of it.

What does this mean for us? While world events are, at times, scary and are getting worse all the time, the future can be a happy one if we obey God.

Matthew 24:14 mentioned a gospel of the kingdom. It is God's kingdom that will bring about peaceful conditions on the earth and provide salvation for obedient mankind.

Psalms 37:10, 11 says, "Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look well at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity."

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