

from our viewpoint...

## Plan would end farm payments

A blockbuster proposal by two retired farm-state senators and an emerging Washington think tank urges Congress to eliminate direct payments to farmers and let them depend more on the market.

The plan, put forth by former Sens. Bob Dole of Kansas and Tom Daschle of South Dakota, would cap federal payments at a quarter million dollars a year, closing loopholes that allow some wealthy "farmers," including basketball players and other celebrities, to collect millions while others go broke.

Dole is a former Republican leader and Daschle a former Democratic leader in the Senate, and their experience in farm-bill battles is considerable. Their advice bears listening to.

No one is ever "happy" with the farm bill. It's something everyone lives with.

Farmers would be happier, no doubt, just to be able to make a living without constant interference, "help" and advice from the government. The evidence suggests they would be better off financially, too, but getting from here to there has always been the problem.

End federal price supports tomorrow, and you might break half the farmers — and half the banks — in rural America. The system is addicted to federal money, has been for years.

There was a time, when Pat Roberts was chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, it looked as though the "Freedom to Farm" approach would loose farmers from their subsidy habit. We all know how that ended.

If federal programs really supported family farms or kept anyone on the land, we might want to defend them. The stark truth, told by declining population figures and farm numbers, is that these programs may keep the average operation afloat a few years longer than without them. The trend toward fewer, bigger farms is unchanged.

Since the advent of mechanical harvesting equipment and scientific seed propagation, the hard truth is it's taken fewer farmers every year of the last century to grow more food.

The government has tried to pay people to stay on the land while paying land-grant colleges to make farming more efficient. The efficient farmer is winning, and surviving, while others leave the business in great numbers.

We see no end to that. The question is how to make farming more profitable and make life good for the best producers who remain. And for young men and women who will step up to take their place as the great mass of today's graying farmers retire.

There is no magic formula for farm success. It takes hard work, brains and a special kind of toughness. A lot of people around here have those qualities.

Farmers who grow unregulated, unsubsidized crops tend to make more money and be happier with their lot than those tied to a federal tether. Making more people free to farm ought to be a goal of the farm bill. So should ending subsidies to those who don't need them, and the real goal should be to ensure that — except in times of disaster — most farmers don't.

The Dole-Daschle plan is the first in recent years to look at that end. It claims to have nearly \$5 billion a year in budget savings while making farmers better off. It's worth a look, as is any plan to ease farming back to fiscal reality. — *Steve Haynes*



## I got to enjoy spring three times

I love spring, and this year I got to enjoy it three times.

Spring comes early to Kansas. We start seeing buds and blooms in March, and by April and May, the crocus, irises, roses, forsythia, lilacs and wildflowers have shown their glorious colors.

This year, we had a bit of a disappointment when a late frost nipped the fruit tree blossoms and pretty much did in our lilacs in northwest Kansas. I really missed the lilacs.

Steve and I go walking at night a lot, and we always stop to sniff the lilacs along the curbs. You can smell a really large bush about a block away if the wind is right. This year, however, our lilacs took a beating.

We did enjoy the irises and early yellow roses. The ornamental pear tree in the back yard lost some of its blossoms to the freeze, but came out with lots of flowers — at least until the rains hit. Then we had an avalanche of white petals all over the back deck, our cars and the lawn under the tree. It looked like it had hailed until the white petals turned brown and got tracked



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

into the house on feet and paws.

Still, spring in Kansas was wonderful.

Then we went to Colorado to a graduation in late May.

Salida isn't exactly the highest point in Colorado but it's high enough that in late May, it's springtime with lilacs, irises and roses. We took an hour to walk around town and sniff anything that was close enough to the sidewalk that we wouldn't be charged with trespassing if we stopped and breathed in the scent.

It was another glorious spring day. Our second spring, just two weeks after the first.

Then in early June, we took a trip to the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Guess what? Spring comes really late up there.

In Rapid City, we saw all our favorite flowers again and, while we didn't have much time, we took a few minutes to sniff here and there.

Spring is such a lovely time of year. I've always been sad it only came once.

I was wrong. If you work it right, you can get spring again and again. It just takes a little moving around.

Now that summer is here, I'm turning my attention from blossoms to vegetables. My asparagus is about gone but the sugar peas are delicious. I've been eating them right off the vine.

I've given lettuce to everyone I know. And some I didn't know. We planted too much. We always plant too much.

In the spring, there's all this garden with nothing in it, so we go nuts with lettuce seed. Now the tomatoes and peppers need the space and I hate to waste any produce, but I've got enough lettuce to feed the whole county — with some left over.

It's gotta go.

I may love spring but I've had my share. It's time for both me and the lettuce to move on.

## Pandemania on the left

There's a little bit of the "gimmie" mentality in all of us, and it's that unattractive part of our psyche that demagogic politicians take aim at when trying to win our support.

The Democratic left wing (is there any other wing of that party nowadays?) is out in full hue and cry, hoping to evoke in the masses a deep yearning for whatever goodies the government can shell out. They think we all have our hands out and they strive to pledge to fill them with new and better government giveaways.

It's an interesting spectacle to watch as the various Democratic presidential wannabes try to move further left than any of their rivals in an effort to out-promise each other. Recently when Obama pitched his socialized medicine program, Hillary slipped around his left side with her Marxist solutions for every imaginable problem known to humankind (oops, I almost said the M word — mankind).

As the battle rages we can expect to see the candidates break new ground as they travel farther and father left into territory even no Marxist has ever before trod. By the time the primaries roll around they'll make Joe Stalin look like a right-wing conservative — and Santa Claus look like Ebenezer Scrooge.

It's something-for-everyone time on the Democrat campaign trail, and no longer being content with the old party lines about "saving" Social Security from the robber baron Republicans who allegedly want to strip Grandma of her monthly Social Security check and throw her to the wolves, they are hot on the trail to locate new and better ways to buy the voters' votes with their own tax dollars.

Having already whetted the voters' appetites with every kind of giveaway program they could dream up, they now find themselves forced to outdo each other in the grandiosity of their proposals. And there are lots of opportunities to devise new and exciting handouts



**michael reagan**

• making sense

available in that vast period between cradle and grave through which we all pass.

This pandemania epidemic is the result of the growing perception among a large segment of younger Americans that they are somehow entitled to all sorts of privileges, including the largesse of the federal treasury. And the Democrats are only too eager to oblige their cupid-ity.

Take little miss Lindsay Lohan as the extreme archetype of the Me generation. Like hordes of Hollywood brats she has shown herself to be utterly convinced that the laws and restrictions and customs to which most adult Americans are subject do not apply to her. Like Jerry Seinfeld, she is the master of her own domain, which appears to include everything and everybody in the whole wide world.

She and Paris Hilton, among other celebrated alcohol- and drug-sodden doxies, are of course extreme examples. But they are members of a generation which believes it is entitled to whatever their little hearts desire, including exemption from serving their country in wartime, government paid college tuition and a form of without-consequence

sexual license which would shame even the worst libertines of ancient Rome.

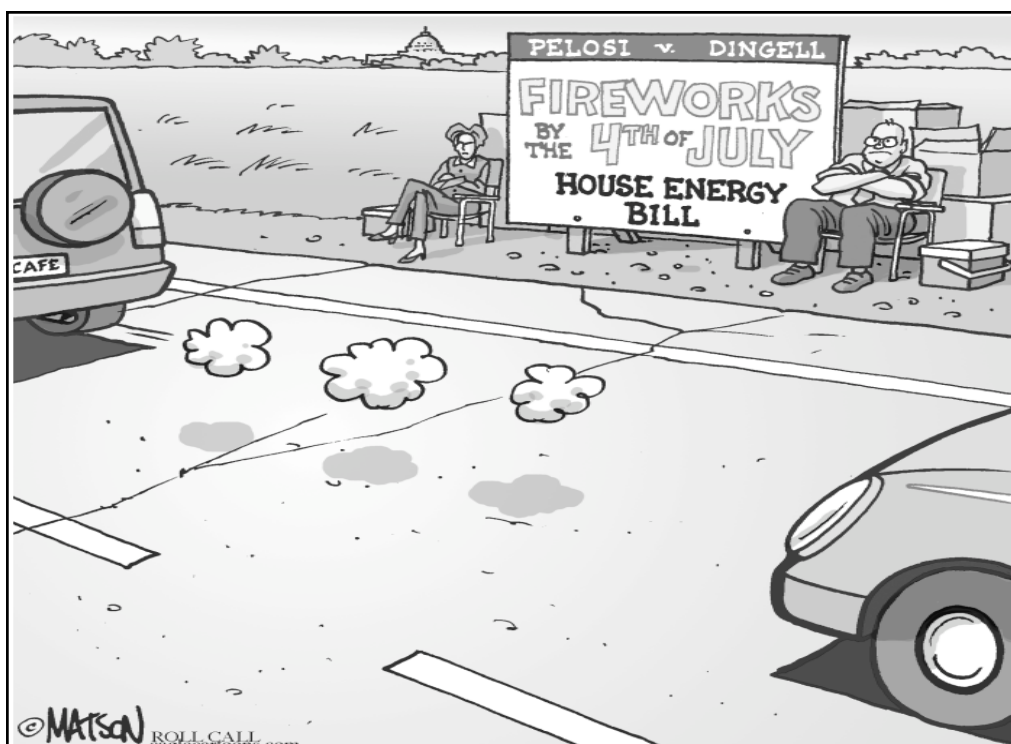
Enter stage left one Hillary Clinton, this era's most accomplished snake oil salesperson. To her the whole world is a village and she wants to be the mayor, ever anxious to see to it that the citizens of her global town are supplied with everything they could possibly desire, including round-the-clock child care — children being the responsibility of the mob, not their parents.

On the heels of Sen. Obama's pandering on the subject of health care, earlier this week for all intents and purposes Hillary endorsed socialism. She doesn't call it that, of course. But if it waddles like Karl Marx and it quacks like Karl Marx, it is Karl Marx.

And as Al Jolson used to say, "We ain't seen nothin' yet." By the time the primaries roll around there won't be a single freebee left that hasn't been pledged by the Democratic candidates for their party's presidential nomination.

After that the winner will spend the rest of the presidential campaign saying he or she didn't really mean all that stuff they spoke about to win the hearts and minds and votes of the party's dominant — and crazed — left wing which nominates candidates. (Just ask Joe Lieberman.)

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. E-mail comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com.



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