

from our viewpoint...

Permit denial endangers lines

The ripple effect of the denial of the permits for two new coal-fired power plants near Holcomb has begun, and people are finding the decision could cause a lot of other power projects to be delayed or derailed.

The two 700-megawatt plants are the tip of a power complex that would be built to interlace the western Kansas plains with the power grids in Colorado, Texas and Kansas. Those same transmission lines are the key to wind power plans being developed by more than 20 companies, including Sunflower Electric.

Experts in the electrical field believe more power is needed to keep pace with the growing demands of the country, and the plans of Hays-based Sunflower and Colorado's Tri-State Generation at Holcomb would fill some of that need. The same experts believe that alternative power from wind, solar and other sources can provide about 20 percent of the power needs, but more coal plants will be needed to carry the load.

The problem is, the interconnecting transmission lines to be built as part of the Holcomb plan are needed to carry the power from windy places in the middle of nowhere to cities where it can be used.

Over the past four of years the City of Goodland has learned how difficult it is in today's power grid to get delivery of power that could be purchased at a lower cost than what was being provided by Sunflower Electric. The situation was exacerbated by the fact Sunflower has the only line capable of transmitting the power the city sought to buy. Roadblocks made the delivery nearly impossible.

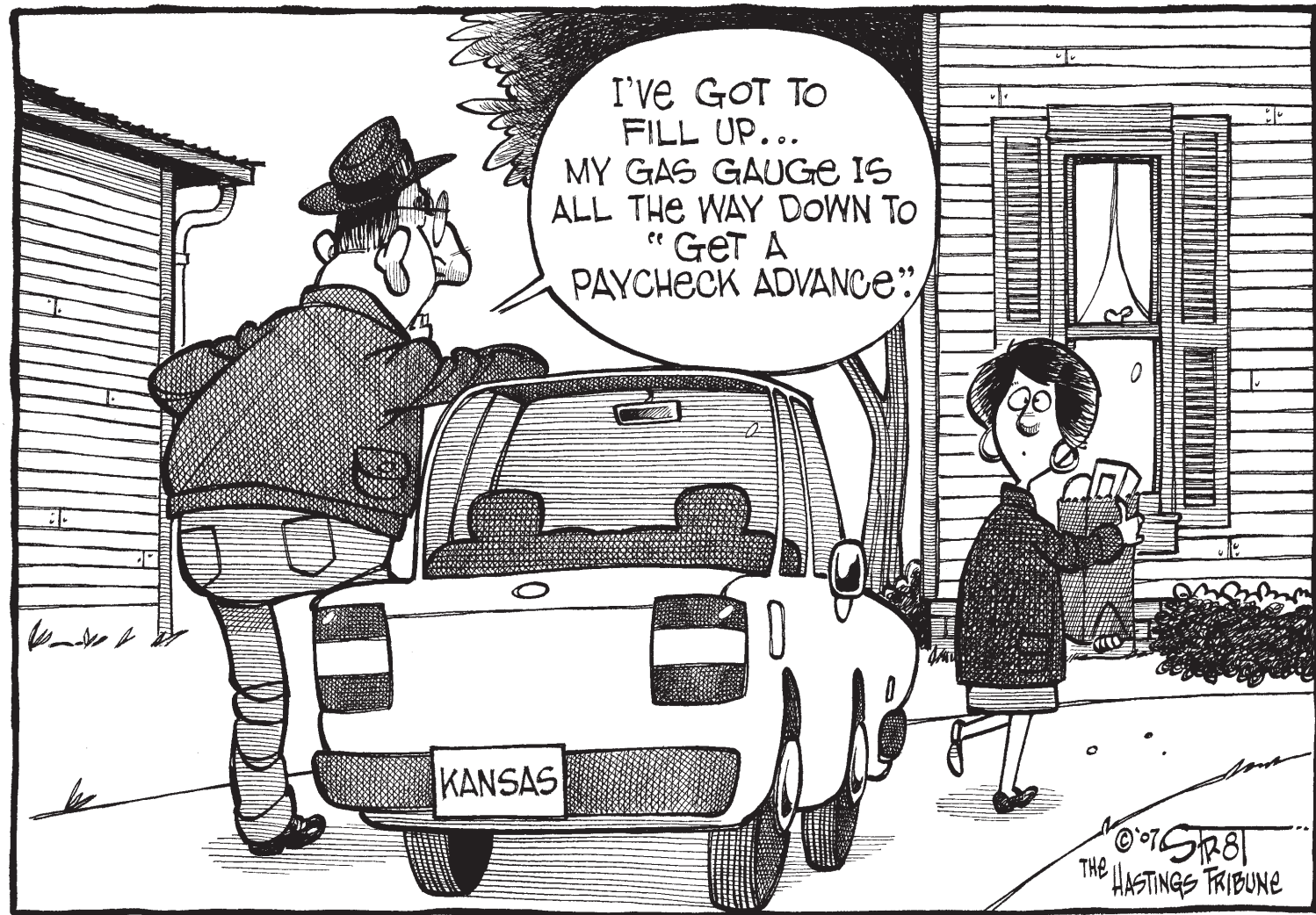
A series of large transmission lines would be part of the energy complex to be built around Holcomb, connecting power plants to the energy grids in Texas and Colorado. The ones to Colorado would run along western Kansas and tie the western and eastern power grids together, allowing wind farms to provide additional power to be sold on the grid. The coal-fired power plants would be the backbone of the system, and be in position to provide power if the wind should happen not to blow or the sun be hidden by clouds.

The environmental issues the state is using to delay the power plants should not be ignored or dismissed, but it would be in the interest of the state and those pushing for the power plants to find a way to get this project moving. Concerns about carbon dioxide notwithstanding, the country needs more power and we need the transmission lines to carry that power plus the power from planned wind farms.

Environmental groups are claiming victory with the reported demise of the Holcomb coal plants, but that victory will come with a huge price tag. Cleaning up the environment is important, and each new power plant permit is tougher than the last.

The plants planned for Holcomb would be the cleanest and greenest to be built in the state and region. The continued improvement of the ability to produce and deliver electrical power is more than an economic boost for western Kansas; it is important to the surrounding states for their economic stability and growth.

Electrical power — both coal-fired, solar and wind — can be a key to the future of rural America, and the development of sites such as the Goodland Energy Center should be encouraged with a combined effort of everyone to reduce the harmful emissions of these plants and the cars we drive — which produce more pollution than all the power plants combined. — Tom Betz



It takes 14 hours to fly to China

We left Los Angeles on a Sunday night, a couple dozen publisher couples, including a few retirees, a couple of college students, a few friends and hangers on, our "den mothers," Allen and Linda, and one old war correspondent.

It would be a long night, 14 hours on the 747 and then the formalities of entering a foreign country — even as guests of the government — and settling into our hotel.

It was no problem at all, I tell you, getting a good night's sleep on China time (just 12 hours off Eastern Daylight Time, and that would be important later) once we got checked into the Grand Hotel in Taipei.

The next day, we'd be busy, laying a wreath at the tomb of Taiwan's unknown soldier, known as the Shrine of the Martyrs, then meeting with the president at his palace.

Among our group were three former presidents of the National Newspaper Association, all of whom had led foreign missions during their terms, so I had some expertise to call on. Still, I wasn't quite ready to get up and talk to the president, or to present the wreath at the tomb.

Then again, our "den mothers" were on their 23rd trip to Taiwan. Allen Beermann today is executive director of the Nebraska Press Association, but for 24 years he was the elected secretary of state there. He began his Asian adventures by arranging trade missions for the governor and got so good at it he organized them for a couple of other states, including



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Kansas' Bill Graves.

Allen has graciously organized several of these trip for our publishers, and his contacts are invaluable. I am convinced there is not a city in the world where you could not go and find someone influential who would proclaim himself a friend of Allen Beermann.

And that person would gladly give you, another friend of Allen Beermann, the shirt off his back.

I can tell you not every group that visits Taiwan gets to meet the president, and we spent more than an hour visiting in his reception chamber. It helps to know Allen Beermann.

That morning, we had to get the World Series scores from Liz, who got a play-by-play on her cell phone. Amazing things, those new phones. Liz is a Red Sox fan, though, and the rest of us were rooting for our Rockies, the six from Denver, Cynthia and I and a couple of other westerners.

The next day we politely told Allen we'd skip the morning visit to an opera school and watch the game at the hotel. We had high hopes, a huge widescreen television in the suite and an 8 p.m. start in Boston meant 8 a.m. in Taipei.

No beer or peanuts, but that early in the

morning it was just as well. Of course, we had to listen to Liz gloating through the whole game. It was miserable, but at least we were watching the Series.

That afternoon, the buses came back for us — our guide was afraid we'd never find the rest of the group at the main train station, and after seeing the place, I thought he might have been right — and we were off for Tai-Chung, halfway down the island, by bullet train. There we had a tour, saw a saxophone factory — big business there — and ate a delightful dinner with the mayor, Jason Hu.

The next morning we watched the Series live on the television on our tour buses, but the game wasn't any better than the last two. We visited monuments, including the tomb of former President Chiang Kai-Shek (the tomb was closed, but the museum was open), then loaded up our bags for the flight to Ho Chi Minh City, the former southern capital of Saigon in Vietnam.

After a couple of quick days there — more on that later — we flew Vietnam Airlines to Hanoi. It was not a good experience, but the airline did deliver us for three days of relaxation, interspersed with a couple of official visits, in Hong Kong. Some bought real and "replica" Rolex; others got new suits. Everyone was in awe of the city.

But enough for this week. More later, if I can find the notes in my baggage.



PUBLISHER STEVE HAYNES watched as a guard placed a memorial wreath at the Shrine of the Martyrs, Taiwan's equivalent of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, for the National Newspaper Association. Like in America, the visitor's role is to hold the wreath briefly. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes



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