

from other pens...

What small towns will host candidates

Sen. John McCain's plans to have town hall meetings with Sen. Barack Obama has some merit. Some merit. We phrase it that way because we wonder what kind of towns they are talking about.

Shortly after Sen. McCain issued his invitation to Sen. Obama to travel together and stage 10 town hall meetings between now and the August Democratic Party convention in Denver, guess what town was the first to offer its facilities: New York City, courtesy Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

ABC-TV jumped in to be the network to carry the "town" hall meeting live.

Town and New York City don't quite go together, do they?

We would hope Sens. McCain and Obama, if they can agree on arrangements, would bring their town hall meetings to rural America. Northwest Kansas would be a good place to stage one of those.

Our dictionary defines town as "larger than a village but smaller than a city." That pretty much describes us, and it certainly doesn't describe the likes of New York.

It would be interesting to learn how they will choose the audiences for these meetings — if they materialize. And if they hit a snag on stage, who will be the referee?

The experts tell us that town hall meetings will definitely favor Sen. McCain. Maybe so. Perhaps they can alternate between town hall style and rally style, which would, of course, favor Sen. Obama.

Whatever they choose, we hope they stop in Small Town, America. We are voters, just like the millions in New York, and if the general election will be as tight as early predictions indicate, it just might be a place like ours that makes the difference.

OK, so our chances are none. But it doesn't hurt to toss our hat in the ring.

— Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

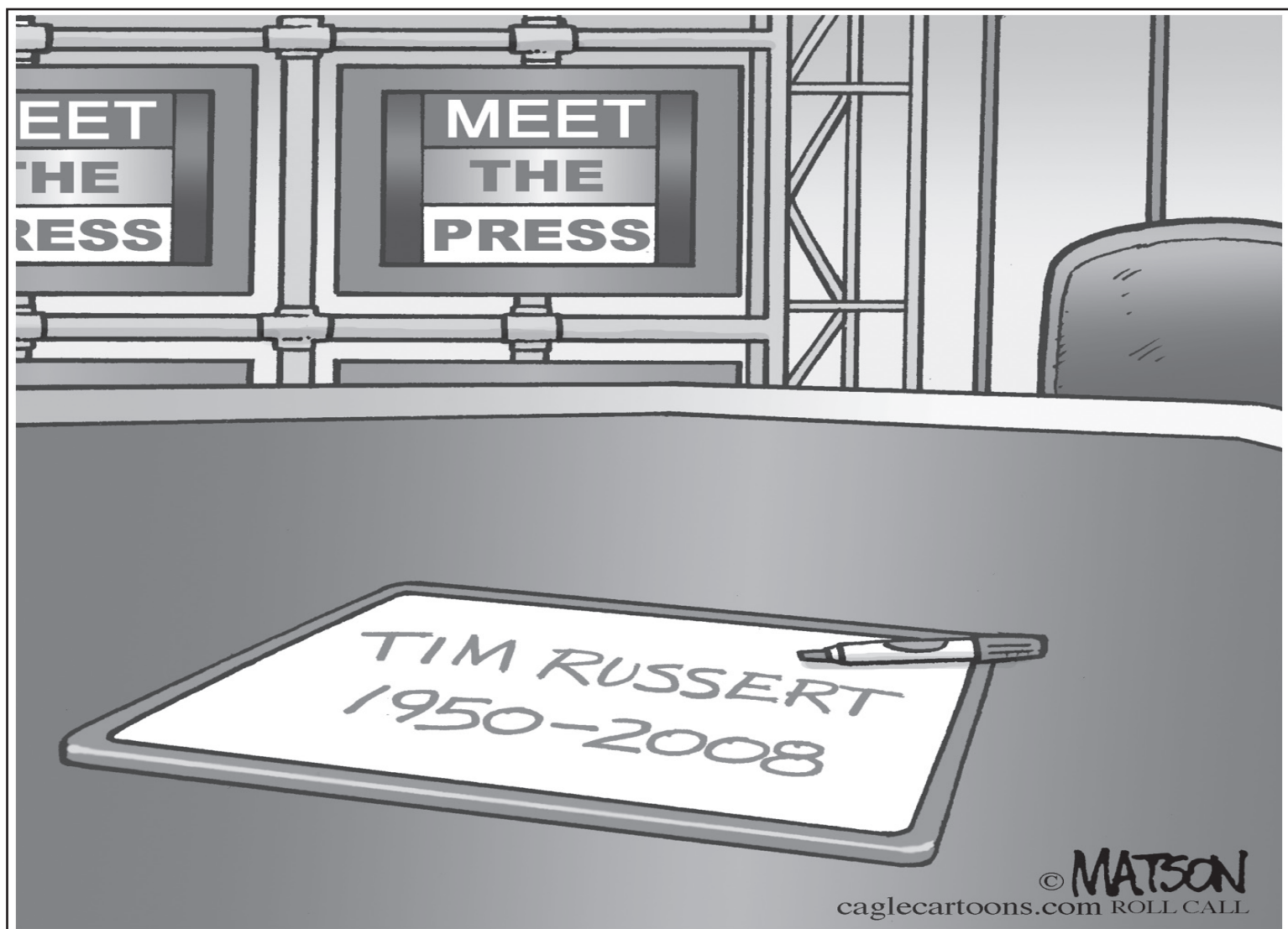
U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 web address — www.jerrymoran.house.gov

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 242W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorriso@ink.org

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 128-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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



Help promoter or protect existing business?

Should Oberlin back a promoter who wants to build a new motel or protect the business of those who own the town's one remaining motel?

It's a tough question. It's been more than 40 years since anyone built a motel here. Highway development pretty much stopped along two-lane roads after the development of the Interstate system, which concentrated traffic on those major routes.

Any town needs new development. Oberlin more than most, so it's tempting to jump right on the bandwagon. This is something we've wanted for a long time.

But no one offered the owners of the old Frontier Motel a tax break when they bought the property or fixed it up, and no one's offering to safeguard their business now or next year if a new competitor comes to town.

This is not a clear-cut case, like when a firm wants to build a manufacturing business in town. There is competition. These people have their savings invested in the old motel.

What should the city do? The developer, Dave Winfield of Kearney, Neb., is asking for a property tax abatement and a sales tax exemption to get the new motel built. That means he'd avoid paying all or part of the property tax on the increased valuation of the property, plus state sales taxes. The city wouldn't lose any revenue, but it



steve haynes

• along the sappa

wouldn't gain any for the life of the tax breaks, usually 10 years.

Then, according to reports from Thursday's council meeting, the developer is asking that the community provide the land, \$16,000 in paving, dirt work, water, sewer and electrical lines and then issue tax-exempt bonds, which would be sold on the open market.

All that — the land, paving and grading, and utility lines — could cost the city quite a bit. The bonds themselves would be repaid by the motel, with no obligation to the city. The benefit to the developer is that interest on the bonds would be tax-exempt, making them easier to sell.

One solution would be to decide what the city and the development group are willing to do to get the new motel, then offer the same deal to owners of any existing hotel. It seems only fair to cut them in on the public money if we're going to give any to an outsider.

But there's no guarantee the owners of existing hotels, either the Frontier or the downtown LandMark Inn, could or would want to

remodel. The LandMark is a historic building and its size is limited by location. Conceivably, it could expand by buying vacant buildings nearby. Whether that would pay for itself is another question.

It could cost a bundle to renovate the Frontier to bring it up to current standards, with larger rooms and new furnishings. Again, it's a question not just of desire, but of return. Would remodeling pay for itself? Or might it to be cheaper to start over.

The motel business here has been tough. Two operations have closed in the last few years, and one now is used to house construction workers. The town could use a new facility, competitive with the national chains, but at what price?

The questions the City Council has to answer are two, really:

Can Oberlin afford to back a new motel? Can it afford not to?

And, knowing a new motel might damage the business of investors in existing facilities, is it fair to back a new one?

If the answer is to offer help to everyone, how much can we afford?

As I said, it's not that easy of a decision. The offer is tempting. The cost, to the city and to the owners of the Frontier, could be significant.

What do you think?

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e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

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To the Democrats you are just a groupie

The big difference between Republicans and liberal Democrats is the way each party views people. Republicans see us as individuals and respect our God-given human dignity. To liberal Democrats, we're not individuals; we're members of a herd with all the dignity of a cow or pig dependent on its owner for daily rations of hay or slop.

Democrats see us as being white or as blacks or as straights or as gays, or as lesbians or as heterosexuals, or as rich or poor, or as Christians or as Jews or as Muslims, or as young or as old, as working or as retired, or as housewives or as career women.

They submerge us into pools that define us as members of groups instead of as what we are as God sees us, — as any father sees his children — each being different from one another, and each child being a separate and distinct individual with his or her own specific talents and abilities, and all deserving of his love.

Republicans see us all as Americans, all united in our desire to see this nation grow and prosper, and be safe and secure, and to provide opportunities to everyone no matter our group membership.

Democrats see us as members of groups, each with specific goals often at odds or competing with the goals of other groups. To them you have no existence except as being a small part of a bloc or several blocs. Instead of seeking to treat you as a person, they aim not to satisfy your individual needs and desires but only those of your group.

This Marxist view of human nature embraces group-think, despises individuality, and seeks to eliminate all vestiges of the dignity to which every human being created in the image and likeness of God is entitled. Only the hopes and aspirations of the groups matter, and they matter solely because they create dependency on the state — which seeks to supplant God as the source of all that is good and necessary for survival.

Grouping Americans allows the Democrats to gather the herd and drive it into their pen. Since each group needs a shepherd, the liberals are only too happy to name one to guide it. The anointed shepherd, of course, is one who can be relied upon to toe the Democrats' party line. And so the black group finds itself led and



michael reagan

• making sense

defined by a Jesse Jackson or an Al Sharpton. The fact that the members of the black American groups are given no say in determining who speaks for them or is their leader makes no difference. If you are black, you are not Jackie Robinson or Tiger Woods. You are a member of the black herd-group and Jesse Jackson is your shepherd. And Jesse Jackson, who gives new meaning to the term "shepherd's crook," is led around by the Democrats if he wants to continue as a shepherd.

If you are a member of the female group your spokespersons are the likes of Hillary Clinton, Barbra Streisand, Nancy Pelosi or whatever shrew is the head of NOW or NARAL or Emily's List. All are loyal Democrats. Republi-

cans need not apply for the job of shepherding the human ewes.

If you have Hispanic background, step in line and follow Gov. Bill Richardson into the Democratic sheep pen. And if you are a laborer or pipe fitter or an employee of federal, state or local government your shepherds are all loyal Democratic labor bosses.

This division of people into groups, and groups into political blocs, is necessary because the powers that be want to negotiate with groups rather than with individual Americans, and with group leaders they choose rather than with leaders chosen by the members of the groups. And when federal dollars are doled out, they pass through the sticky hands of the groups' leaders

And this is a party that allegedly celebrates diversity among individuals.

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

