

from our viewpoint...

Facing the state's dreaded 'C' word

People use any word they can think of to avoid using the word consolidation, which has become the dreaded 'C' word especially coming out of Topeka.

Tonight the Shine On Sherman County Government Alliance Committee is inviting people to come have a chicken noodle dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the Goodland Elks Lodge to hear how the people of Greeley County made the giant leap to consolidate their city and county governments into one commission.

The idea of closer cooperation and even possibly combining various areas of city and county government has been batted about by Sherman County citizens, and became one of the major objectives of the Shine On Sherman County strategic planning effort. The Government Alliance Committee has been seeking information about other places that have successfully combined parts of city and county government to give to the Goodland city commissioners and Sherman County commissioners as a way to look at what could be done if this is truly the goal.

At each joint meeting of the city and county commissioners when this subject has been raised the members of both commissions have said they are interested in pursuing the options that could make such consolidation possible.

The commissioners have said the goal is to save money and to find ways to reduce employees. That statement tends to create walls and gets people's emotions into an attempt to save what they see as their piece of the puzzle and refuse to see if the new way is a better fit.

The hardest part of these discussions is getting past the personalities. In the few attempts that have been made over the past year nothing has proved successful.

An attempt was made to get the city and rural fire departments to sit down and look at ways they could work together and ultimately find a way to combine efforts. A step in this process was creation of a special task force made up of a city commissioner, a county commissioner, city and rural fire chiefs, an attorney and a representative from the alliance committee.

The task force met in June and talked about things the two departments were working on to improve their respective departments. At that meeting it was decided to meet again in September to review progress and what the next step might be. To date no second task force meeting has been held.

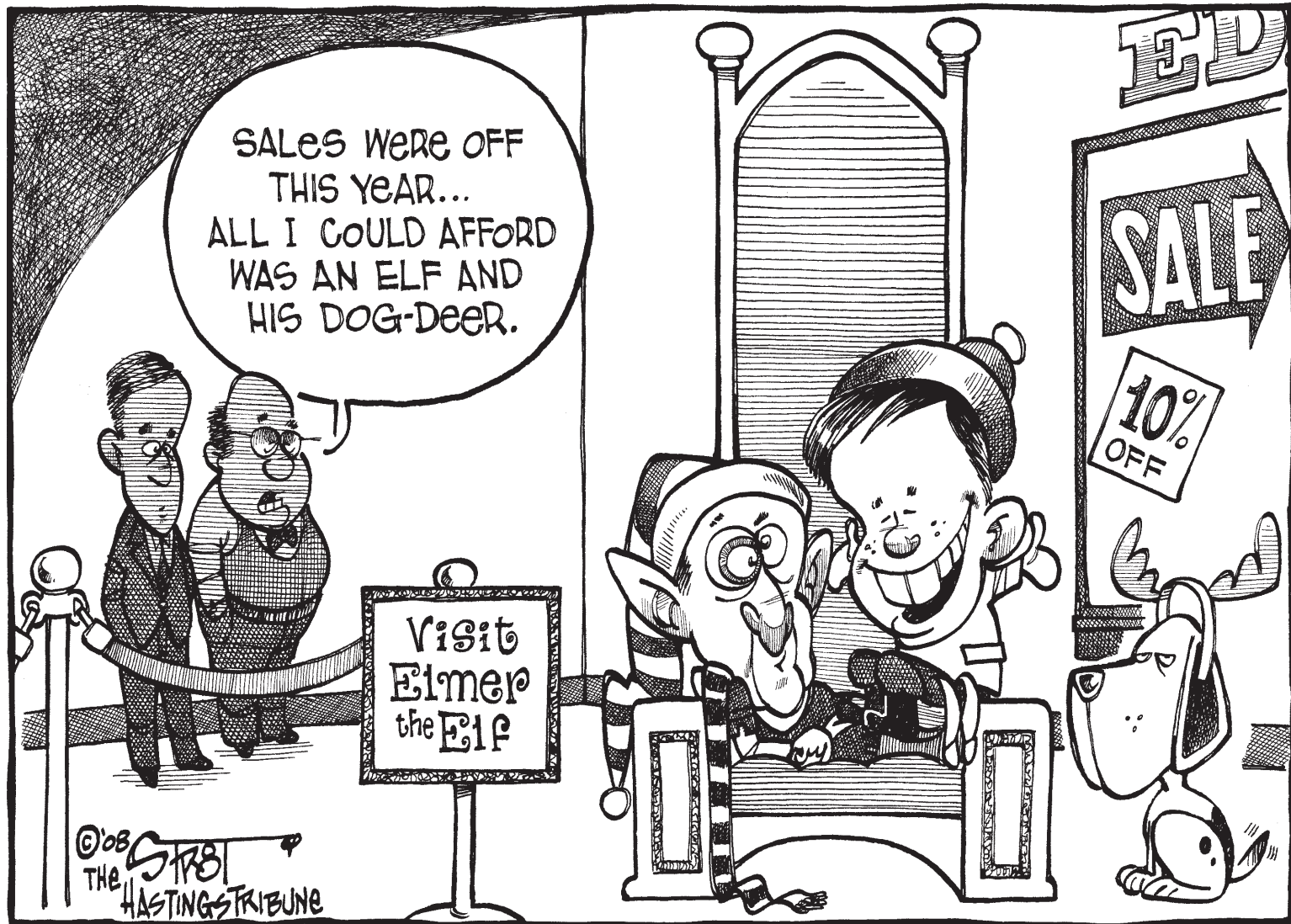
On their own the two fire departments have moved closer and held some joint training sessions. Both city and rural fire chiefs seem to feel they are getting along better, but feel each one has some internal work to do before any more discussion about combining the departments.

No one said the idea of consolidating things would be easy, but it was the feeling of the people in Greeley County that they needed to be proactive and take the step before someone from Topeka started throwing around the 'C' word to combine counties.

The people of Tribune and Greeley County will talk about the lengthy process they have been through and the roadblocks they had to overcome as they sought to create a combined commission to govern the whole county.

One thing they have said is they did not go into the process looking to specifically save money or cut any jobs, but to improve efficiencies. To date no one has lost a job in the process, but the people feel the process is working.

A true commitment to being more efficient and combine efforts between city and county government is the ultimate goal, and if the process works the savings will come. — Tom Betz



English — the forgotten language?

When I interviewed a candidate for Kanora do mayor a few years ago, he said one thing he could offer was to help the Spanish-speaking population because, as he said, "some people 'round here don't speak no good English."

He's right — a lot of people 'round here don't speak no good English. And what's really sad is most of them don't speak any good Spanish, or any other language, either.

It's understandable when someone learning English as a second language has trouble with grammar. After all, it's tough to learn a language different from the one you're already used to speaking. And when the native speakers don't speak well, really, can we expect the newcomer to learn well without a good example?

A lot of laziness and carelessness, coupled with lifestyles that put emphasis on the material and financial rather than old-fashioned values, have rendered our own language nearly obsolete.

People slur their words together, abbreviate inappropriately, have no idea what sentence structure is and use colloquial terms that change frequently and amount to nothing more than a street lingo code.

Who's to blame?

It's hard to say. Children learn to speak from their parents long before they attend school, so likely a lot of bad habits start there. But conversations with educators show that many in the business of educating children botch our language with the best of them.

And if you go to the local newspaper for



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

good grammar, well, often you'll be disappointed. I have started reading a few stories in newspapers where the grammar was so poor, I gave up. Every nerve in my body cringed to think an English-speaking person could have been paid to write that. Ya ain't never lernt any good English, have ya?

I'm reminded of an American Express commercial on television in which comedian Jerry Seinfeld spouts some British English expressions and says he has to "learn the lingo" when traveling.

British English really is a different language than American English — funny how the same language can undergo such diverse changes when the people speaking it are separated by thousands of miles of ocean.

But American English is starting to take on lives of its own. Regional tics, careless speech and colloquial expressions invade the language daily. And so few people learn to speak correctly that the real language is being obscured by what can best be described as "junk speech."

Add to that the rampant abbreviations in text messaging, and one day, English may cease to exist as a formal language. Several years ago, I was having an instant message conversation with

someone I had never met. He sent a message that read "LOL" in response to something I said.

Not knowing what that meant, I asked someone in the office, and the reply was "lots of love." That didn't fit the conversation at all, so I was just puzzled. Sometime later, I found out LOL means Laughing Out Loud. Oh, now it all makes sense, but it also doesn't matter anymore.

When God confused the language at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), the people spread out because they couldn't communicate. Now poor speech, street lingo and vulgarity is verbally separating people in the same country, state, city and even the same room by making communication more difficult and misunderstandings a given.

The movie "The Bucket List" has renewed the popularity of thinking of things you want to be sure to do before you die. If you're making a list, be sure to add "Learning my native language" to it.

There is no end to what you can do, learn and teach when you learn the lingo of proper grammar, so you can communicate clearly, no matter where the English-speaking person on the other end comes from.

In Genesis 11, verse 6, God himself said, "Look! They are one people and there is one language for them all, and this is what they start to do. Why, now there is nothing that they may have in mind to do that will be unattainable for them."

So learn your native language — it's the least you can do. — Sharon Corcoran

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The truth about government

The Democrats will be running the White House, the House and the Senate soon. Before they make drastic changes, they may want to consider some interesting quotations on government.

My favorites reveal a general wariness of government — a key principle upon which our republic was founded:

"A government that is big enough to give you all you want is big enough to take everything you have." — Barry Goldwater

"A patriot must always be ready to defend his country — against his government." — Edward Abbey

"The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse." — Edmund Burke

Well, Eddie, you got that right. We just handed our government a blank check worth billions to bail out our financial institutions. And before we let Barack Obama "make government cool again," we may want to consider this:

"The single most exciting thing you encounter in government is competence, because it's so rare." — Daniel Patrick Moynihan

"Government is inherently incompetent, and no matter what task it is assigned, it will do it in the most expensive and inefficient way possible." — Charley Reese

"Government is an association of men who do violence to the rest of us." — Leo Tolstoy

Sorry, Leo, but folks often forget how nasty government can be. Right now, folks are clamoring for our government to do something, anything, to fix our economic woes — forgetting, of course, that our government is a key contributor to those woes. Here is where government is really effective:

"The government is good at one thing: It knows how to break your legs, then hand you a crutch and say, 'See, if it weren't for the government you wouldn't be able to walk.'" — Harry Browne

"Government's view of the economy can be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." — Ronald Reagan



tom purcell

• commentary

"Government cannot make man richer, but it can make him poorer." — Ludwig von Mises

We citizens must be more skeptical about well-meaning politicians. We must look past their flowery words to understand what they really may be up to:

"The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule." — H.L. Mencken

"One of the greatest delusions in the world is the hope that the evils in this world are to be cured by legislation." — Thomas Reed

"A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul." — George Bernard Shaw

Excellent quote, Georgie. You described the 2008 elections more accurately than 99 percent of America's journalists — and you've been dead since 1950.

Look, it's long been time that America gets back to the basics. American citizens must stand up and demand a return to the principles of SMALL government:

"That government is best which governs

the least, because its people discipline themselves." — Thomas Jefferson

"The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government — lest it come to dominate our lives and interests." — Patrick Henry

"Our best protection against bigger government in Washington is better government in the states." — Dwight D. Eisenhower

Unfortunately, Dwight, we abandoned that concept some time ago. Unless Americans wake up and remember the origin of our greatness — it's the people, not the government — we are poised for the government to expand more, and take more and control us more.

Humorists understand the ramifications better than anyone:

"The primary function of the government is — and here I am quoting directly from the U.S. Constitution — 'to spew out paper.'" — Dave Barry

"The difference between death and taxes is death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets." — Will Rogers

"Did you ever notice that when you put the words 'the' and 'IRS' together, it spells 'THEIRS'?"

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