

from our viewpoint...

Union cuts derail automakers bailout

The bailout bill for the "Big Three" automakers died last week when Republicans in Congress refused to bow to union pressure over a wage deal.

Everyone involved lamented the fact that a deal was maybe minutes away when the talks broke down, and the bailout may not be dead.

Many will see the Republicans as risking the entire economy here, but there's an important principal at stake. That is whether the car makers will be propped up to serve only as job generators, or whether they will be revived as competitive enterprises.

If the United Auto Workers has its way in this, there will be no end to federal subsidies for the car makers. We'll wind up with socialized industries growing fat and bloated at the public trough, and taxpayers who moan and suffer under the yoke of oppressive taxation.

Even the British have given up on this kind of unproductive, unsustainable state socialism. We should not allow our economy to take this detour.

Government-run enterprises tend to become beholden to their unions. Amtrak is a good example of how this works. Union jobs become an end rather than a means, and job cuts are discouraged at almost any cost. Public unions gain enormous political power, and the cycle spirals downward.

Why is this such a threat?

Because as bailouts go, 30 years of Amtrak at \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year are nothing compared to the potential for the automakers. Successful bailouts, such as the 1980s rescues of Conrail out of Penn Central and the first Chrysler Corp. rescue, require real sacrifices by unions, management, stockholders and banks.

After a bad start by management — with executives jetting in to be humbled by Congress — everyone was on board except the unions this time. What Congress wanted was for the auto workers to pare their pay and benefits package down to match costs at non-union, foreign-owned plants in the South.

The auto workers did agree to that, in a limited way, but only two years down the road. And that could be way too late to make General Motors and Ford competitive. Bankruptcy may follow, because then the companies can repudiate their leases and loans — and union contracts.

While that may be appealing — the major airlines have washed out their costs that way — it's tough on investors and union pension-holders alike. Both would be left holding the bag.

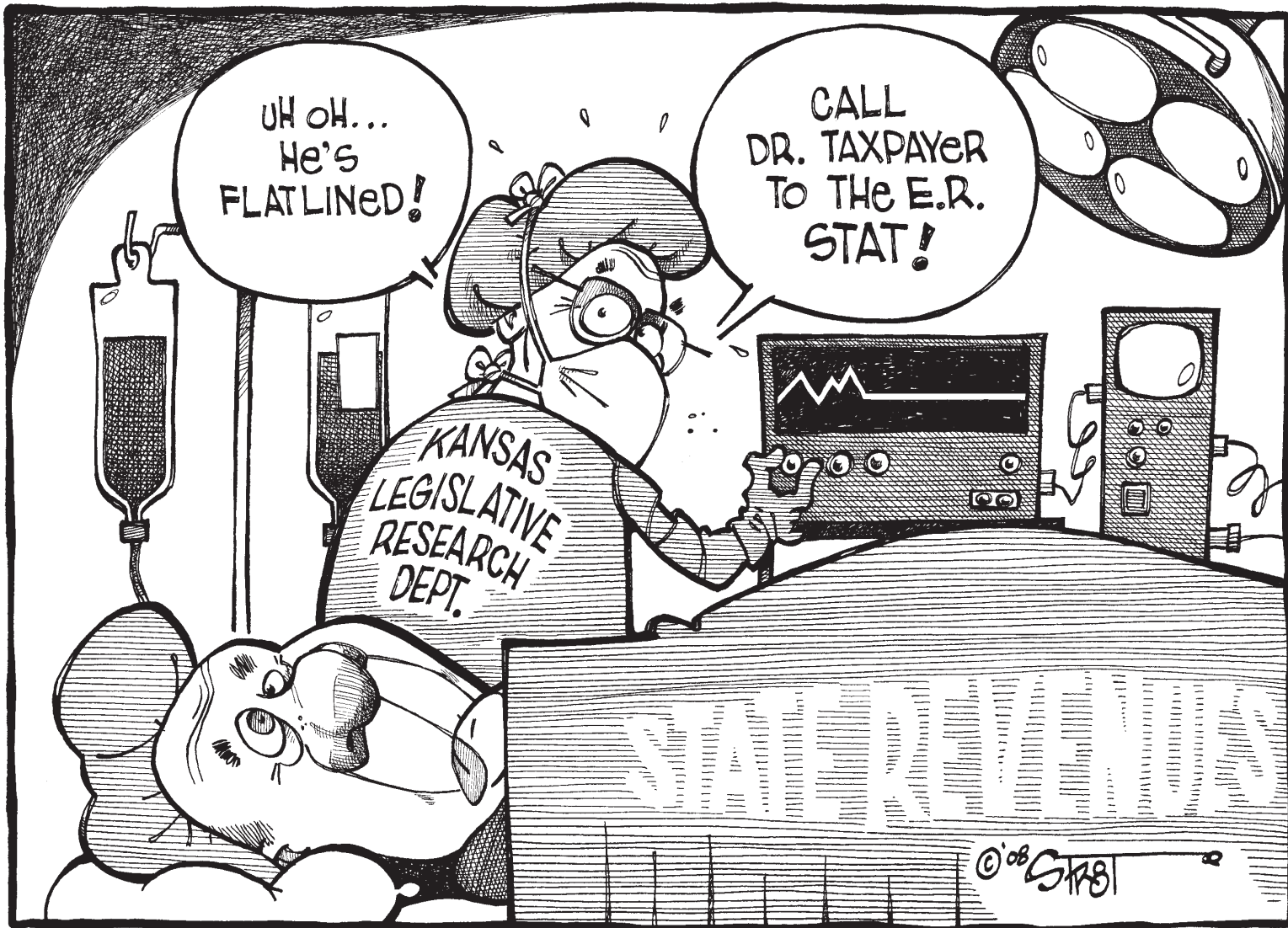
A compromise may be in the offing. We hope so. Our economy needs strong and vital automakers to keep things rolling.

America does not need socialized industries, however. That path has never led anywhere but down. The cost of keeping union wages high would be more than taxpayers can afford.

This is not to say that unions are bad — they have been a key ingredient in American's prosperity over the last century — but that they can't take too much power or they will bias the economy in nonproductive, noncompetitive ways.

That we can't afford. It's good the Republicans stuck by their guns.

The auto workers should take stock of their potential losses and get onboard before the train leaves the station. — *Steve Haynes*



He left me with all the Christmas stuff

He left me. The dirty dog left me with all the Christmas stuff to do, a daily paper to put out and the menagerie to feed.

Mind you, this isn't the first time Steve has taken off and left me behind to cope with the daily problems of home and businesses. And this time at least, he isn't off to some exotic locale while I toil away here at home.

Last time he took off it was to China — Taiwan to be exact. Before that, he's left me for trips to the United Arab Emirates, Nicaragua and Tunisia.

This latest exciting adventure is taking him to Concordia, Emporia, Lawrence, Kansas City and Columbia, Mo., so I'm not too bent out of shape this time.

Actually, the trip was supposed to be just to Columbia for a National Newspaper Association meeting and then on to Kansas City for an Associated Press meeting. But since he was headed that way anyway, he said he'd stop by and see my mother in Concordia. Since he was going that way, I decided he should stop by to



cynthia haynes

• open season

see his sister and brother in Emporia and take some food I had to our son in Lawrence.

I went with him on this trip last year. Same itinerary — Concordia to see Mom, Emporia to see in-laws and Lawrence to see son then on to Columbia.

Since I'm not on the board of the newspaper association, I didn't have to attend their meeting. Instead I got to spend the day in exciting downtown Columbia. It was snowing lightly and the temperature was about 10 degrees.

I spend the entire day in a coffee shop addressing and signing Christmas cards. I downed two lattes and a giant chocolate brownie. I upgraded my table twice as I moved away from the front door, which let in freezing air every time someone came in.

So, this year we decided that maybe I could stay here and take over the job of putting out the Colby paper for a week.

Hey, no sweat. I've been publishing weekly newspapers since 1980. I figured I could handle one small daily for a week.

But, I figured without all the hoopla over Christmas and our animals.

The cats had vet appointments. The dog had an eye infection and had to have antibiotics twice a day — and I didn't get my Christmas cards addressed.

I did get the outside lights put on the bushes out front and even decorated the little cedar tree in the back yard, but that's another story.

You'd think I'd have lost weight with all the running I've been doing this last week. Nope, I gained three pounds.

Meanwhile, I'm waiting for Steve to reappear. 'Cause he left me and the dog and the cats and all that work.

And we know who's doing the work. Ain't the dog.

Food safety starts at home

With the holiday season upon us ensuring our families eat the safest, tastiest and most nutritious meals is the most important consideration during this special time together.

So, where do the most significant food safety problems occur — on the farm or in the kitchen?

If you guessed the kitchen, you're probably one of those wise consumers who may already be well on your way to a wholesome, healthy eating lifestyle. On the other hand if you guessed the farm, chances are your kitchen may be a place where food is mishandled or poorly prepared.

There is unnecessary anxiety about food safety in our country today that is diverting attention from this nation's leading public health problems including cigarette smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, AIDS and failure to use life-saving technology such as seat belts, smoke detectors and screening techniques to detect disease at early, treatable stages.

Today, consumers can be confused about the food they eat. And why shouldn't they be?

Americans are continually bombarded with information about what they should and should not eat. Such mixed messages about our food supply can be frustrating. Many health professionals will tell you too much time, energy and resources are spent worrying about minute or nonexistent pesticide residues on foods such as fruits and vegetables. They believe such energy could be better directed at making sure each individual family and the public eats a variety of foods in moderation.

There is little doubt pesticides in significant quantities may be toxic, but the U.S. government has in place a highly efficient system to ensure the levels of residues in foods remain extremely low — if they are there at all. The Environmental Protection Agency sets these tolerances and the Food and Drug Administration



from other pens

• commentary

tion evaluates our produce to ensure tolerances are not exceeded.

Minute levels of pesticide residues detected in some U.S. produce have been found to pose no hazard to the health of children or adults, according to nutritionists.

Trace amounts of pesticides are so miniscule it's virtually inconceivable they can have any health affect. There is always that chance some individual may have a sensitivity to any kind of chemical — hair gel, tooth paste, pesticides — but these are generally isolated cases.

There has never been one documented case of ill health linked with the regulated and approved use of pesticides.

The claims these tiny residues cause cancer is irresponsible and unscientific. The only evidence against these agricultural chemicals

is derived from laboratory studies where rodents are exposed to large amounts of these substances and manifest an increased rate of cancer. There is no relevance of this finding for the minute exposure to human beings.

While proponents of organically grown food like to tout their produce as safer because it contains no pesticide residues, today's shopper need only purchase their produce and other foods, wash them thoroughly and cook them properly.

Remember while you are preparing the many meals your family and friends will enjoy this holiday season, that our country enjoys the safest, most wholesome food in the world. The safeguards are in place to ensure our food is protected. Making sure we safely prepare food for our loved ones is our responsibility.

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