

from our viewpoint...

County issues top election season

Traditionally the General Election campaign season begins on Labor Day, but this has not been a traditional year and it has been hard to tell there was much of a lull between the Primary and General Election campaigns.

With two months to the General Election on Tuesday, Nov. 2, it is time to begin the discussion of the two Sherman County issues to be voted on in the election.

It took more than three years to get the voters the right to decide if they want to elect county commissioners on an at-large basis, and this will be the opportunity to make that decision.

The fight was long and hard to get the bill through the state legislature to give Sherman County voters a right to choose, and along the way we had a split in the commissioners and a number of people worked hard to overcome the obstacles.

County commissioners are elected to serve all of Sherman County, and it makes sense that all the voters should have a vote on who those people are. The districts are meaningless when it comes to dealing with county government, and when the commissioner is sworn in the person swears to serve Sherman County.

The vote has a double majority requirement that the voters both in Goodland and the surrounding county have to approve the at-large voting or it does not pass.

Today those who live in the county should be supporting the at-large issue because all three of the commissioners are living in the country, and technically the Kanorado area has a commissioner under the at-large system although she has maintained a mailing address in her district.

The old complaint has been that if the commissioners were all elected at-large they would all come from the city. That could be true today as the majority of each district is within the Goodland city limits, but that has not happened. It has been rare over the years that one of the commissioners have actually lived in the city.

The second issue is one the voters already passed once, but a district judge ruled the April election was not valid. The voters will have a second chance to decide if they want to expand the commission from three to five members.

This issue was brought to the commissioners as a citizen petition, and passed by a vote of 761 to 630 in April 2009.

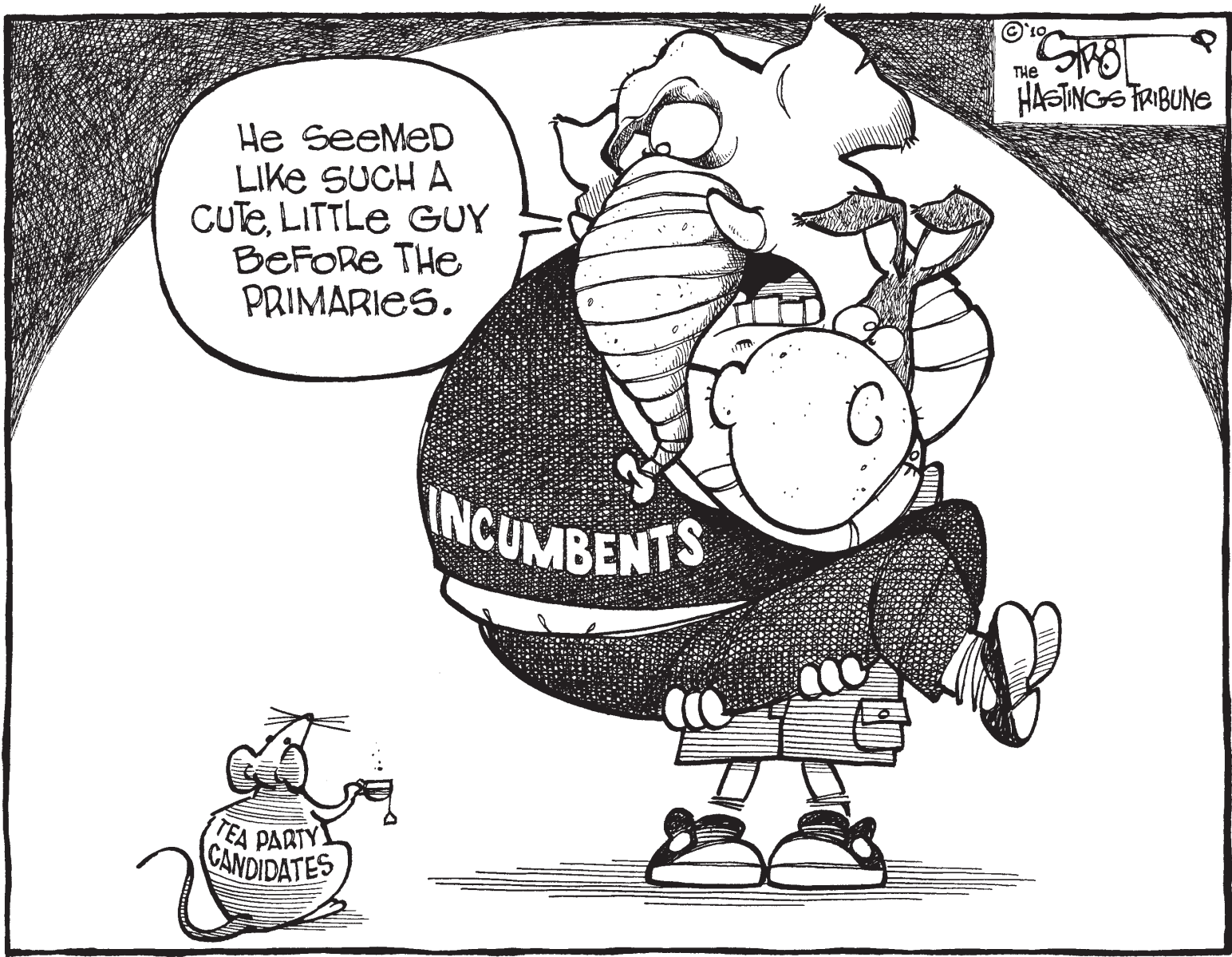
The county sued itself over the results and District Judge Schiffner decided in August the election was invalid because it should have been on a November General Election ballot. That ruling is why the expansion issue is to be re-voted in November.

With both issues on the ballot people need to discuss the options and understand what is going to happen if one or both are approved.

For those who want to keep the districts the Census will likely show a decrease in population will not help those who live in the country and continue to expand the majority in the city.

For those who favor expanding the commission to five members to share the responsibilities, without the at-large issue passing the county would have to split up into five districts. Again each would likely have a majority of voters in Goodland based on the Census figures.

Either way the General Election season is beginning and we hope the voters of Sherman County have an opportunity to openly discuss these issues to decide the future direction of our county government. — Tom Betz



Smutty corn not my kind of delicacy

As I walked out onto our brick patio the other day, my wife started throwing ears of corn at me.

Well, maybe she wasn't throwing them at me exactly, but onto the patio, which is really just a concrete slab. We just call it the brick patio, and I don't have time here to explain why.

Anyway, ears of corn were flying as she picked produce for dinner. We've been eating a lot of garden stuff lately — green beans, broccoli, tomatoes, squash and corn — and we love it. The lettuce and spinach, the peas and other early-season foods are gone, but they were good. The zucchini mostly died, but that stuff is easy to get.

Now it's summer, and time for the corn. And I apparently was in the way.

Cynthia shouted at me to get a basket for the dinner corn, then tossed something black and ugly at me. It did not look much like an ear of corn, but it was, or had been at one time.

"Most of this batch has smut," she said.

Oh, dirty corn? Well, in a manner of speaking. It's not reading pornography; it's an infection. Smut is a black-and-grey fungus that infects corn plants, taking over ears and



steve
haynes

• along the sappa

sometimes the male flowers as well.

"Don't complain so much," I said. "In China, you know, they think this is a delicacy.

She just snorted. She barely tolerates domestic mushrooms. In earlier years, she picked them out of soups and sauces, and later she started mincing them so she wouldn't notice. Actually, I kind of liked it when she picked them all out and gave them to me, but tastes change. She's even begun drinking red wine.

Another ear of smut hit my foot.

"You know, I'm allergic to mold," I said.

She just tossed another blackened ear. I am allergic to mold. Heck, I'm allergic to corn, too, and with all the corn blooming out there this summer, I've been sneezing and sniffing all season. Maybe with the wet weather, we've got a record crop of smut, too.

And if farmers could figure out some way to

harvest that, we'd have a new cash crop. (On the menu at Chinese restaurants, corn smut usually appears in English as "fungus." Really.) Well, with a little fungicide, you'd expect farmers don't have as much problem with the stuff as gardeners do.

By the time the corn dries down for harvest, of course, the fungus would be dried up, so maybe that's not a workable plan. When she was done, Cynthia tossed all her pickings in a sack destined for a bunch of horses in St. Francis, along with the empty stalks, so I guess we're not going to have stir fry with fungus any time soon.

The next batch of corn, she said, was in much better shape. Maybe it wasn't raining as much when it pollinated. In all, we got enough corn to give some away, with the hope of a few more ears when we get back from vacation. The smut didn't get enough to cause a real problem.

I managed to duck most of the black ears that came my way. Which brought up the question in my mind, "Is it worse to have smutty corn or a smutty wife?"

I suppose I'll find out.

Speak from your heart

Life experiences teach plenty to those willing to learn. From the time I was a small boy, I remember my dad, uncles and grandfather talking and debating the issues of the day whenever we visited one another.

As I grew older, I began to hear some of what they said. I began to understand what they were talking about. But it has taken me nearly 30 years to realize what my grandfather used to say about comprehending issues.

About the time I was half way through high school, something he said finally sunk in. Grandpa Bert always said when you know a little about an issue, it's easy to form an opinion. When you learn a little more, it becomes a little more difficult to make a decision. And when you learn even more about an issue, your decision becomes, "just plain hard."

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the issue of farmers and ranchers who often toil long days away by themselves. Sometimes they feel isolated with their backs against the wall. More than one farmer has expressed a feeling of, "It's me against the world."

Never before in agriculture has it been more important for farmers to express their basic wants, hopes and needs. Things like protection of personal property, a sound education for their children and a responsible, nonintrusive federal government, to mention a few.

Never before has there been such an opportunity to express agriculture's needs. Today there are countless satellites in orbit around our globe. Our cable system is loaded with hundreds of networks.

The information highway continues to speed forward and we can communicate with people



Insight
this week

• john schlageck

around the world instantly. Many farmers and ranchers use Facebook, blog and Tweet with the best of them

Today's technology allows individuals to access videos, music, news, weather, markets, and consumer information — literally anything happening in our world today and more importantly — instantaneously.

It's been nearly three decades since newspapers entered the era of national and international publications. In this country, *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Wall Street Journal* pioneered the way.

Magazines and newspapers from all over the world are on line today, available for anyone with the time and desire to read them. Of course, they are still being shipped by mail. You can read news, weather, markets and sports on the screen of your computer or in the palm of your hand. If you've got the money honey, communication's tools are there to purchase.

With all of these different information avenues at your fingertips, it may be easy for some to tune out and turn off. Farmers, ranchers, businessmen, bankers and professionals cannot afford to do that. We must utilize these communication tools to tell our story.

One way to help do this is by becoming active in the farm organizations and commodity

groups of your choice. They can provide the vehicle to help you tell agriculture's story while developing sound farming policy that must be communicated.

Agriculture finally arrived as a headliner during the farm crisis of the mid-'80s. Everyday, newspapers, radios, televisions and computers are chock full of stories about agriculture. Subjects range from food additives in processing to agricultural chemicals. Stories include animal care, cholesterol in the diet, passing on the family farm, increasing agricultural trade and the next farm bill.

Remember, farmers and ranchers must continue to voice their message in the public information arena. Agriculture must utilize this medium to promote and persuade others to bring about change. Change that will benefit agriculture and a society that relies on U.S. farmers and ranchers for the safest and most abundant food source in the world.

A Kansas citizen said it best nearly 90 years ago, "This nation will survive, this state will prosper, the orderly business of life will go forward only if men can speak in whatever way given them to utter what their hearts hold — by voice, by postal card, by letter or by press."

William Allen White wrote this in his *Emporia Gazette* during the post World War I recession in 1922. These words ring true today.

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