

from our viewpoint...

School finance stymies legislature

The Kansas Legislature so far has done nothing to solve the "school problem," and that may not be entirely a bad thing.

The state's schools probably will get some more money, but nothing like the billion dollars recommended in a consultants' report a couple of years ago — and demanded by a Topeka judge's ruling last month.

For one thing, no one can really say how much money Kansas schools need. They already take more than half the state budget

The state Constitution says the Legislature shall make "suitable" provision for the school budget. Half of everything might seem more than suitable to some, but schools are important.

Still, average test scores for Kansas students are high and they seem to do well in college or trade school. Kansas schools have better equipment and facilities than many, and the money is there for basic education.

There are inequalities.

Schools with shrinking enrollment — which includes most districts in rural Kansas, especially the northwest — are in a pinch, because student count is the biggest component of a district's budget.

Many, like Oberlin, put off the day of reckoning, but with times tight and no extra state money, they are cutting back. That hurts, but most Kansas businesses have been forced to do the same thing. So has the state.

It's easy to say that people can afford a tax increase, but most voters seem to disagree.

Then there are the growing suburban districts, places like Blue Valley, where wrestling mats retract into the walls of new high schools. These schools may not be exactly plush, but the evidence — and the copious course offerings — suggest they have more money than they could get by with.

Still other districts are pushed by demands for special education or English as a second language. Immigrants may bring growth and new dollars, but their children can be expensive to teach.

Other districts, eyeing the share of the pie going to neighbors, are unhappy with the way it's divided. That was the genesis of the lawsuit now making its way to the state Supreme Court.

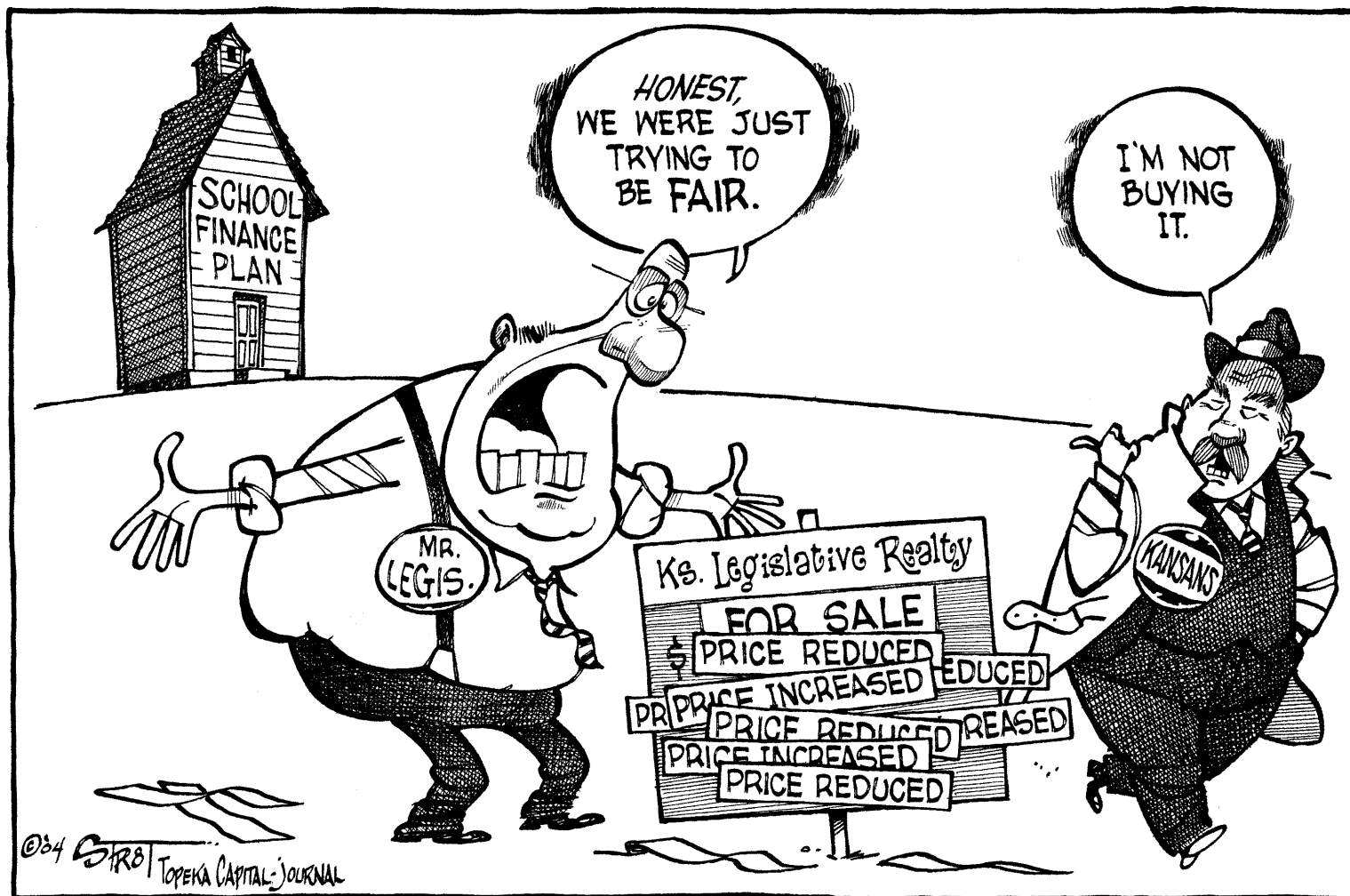
We hope the high court throws the suit out. In our democratic system, it's the Legislature and not the courts that should decide how much to spend on schools. Only our elected representatives should decide what is "suitable."

It's true that the state needs to deal with the inequities in the system, but that's no easy task and there is no money to throw at the problem. It'll have to be solved within the current budget, or nearly so. There will be no billion-dollar bonus for public schools. There is no need for one.

But the Legislature does need to apply itself to the task of making the school budget system a little more equal, and it needs to do that before the next session ends.

In the meantime, the courts ought to back off and let the system function, even if that means little or no change until the voters demand one.

In a democracy like ours, that's the way the system is supposed to work. If the Legislature doesn't act, it's made a decision, and the losers should not count on the courts to bail them out. — *Steve Haynes*



I'm intrigued by the English language

I don't know about you, but those who have read my columns for years know I'm intrigued by the English language.

It is constantly changing, seemingly faster with every passing year.

Just like time. Time passes much quicker than it did when I was a kid. And I suppose language changes faster because the pace of our society is faster also.

I am fascinated by words.

Most of us recognize the meanings of many more words than we actually use in our day-to-day conversations.

Unless we are particularly trying to impress someone or are college professors, we seldom speak the same as we would if we were writing a college research paper.

Reading is one of my hobbies — as well as a necessity of my job. And through the years, I have begun to notice certain things and question others.

I wonder the origin of a lot of phrases, some of which I have traced to the Bible. For instance, "setting the teeth of edge," "hang our harps on a willow tree," etc.

When I was in Korea recently, my youngest



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

son and I were talking about the books we were reading and had read recently. I remarked that although I never heard anyone use the word "cacophony" (meaning dissonance, disharmony) in normal conversation, I had begun to notice that it was used at least once in almost every book I read. He looked at me a little strangely (as children tend to do to their parents). "I don't know how I came to notice it, but now I look for it," I remarked.

I could tell he had doubts, probably because he reads a lot of history, military strategy, and war-gaming books. At the time of our conversation, he was reading a book about how political-correctness has hampered the efficiency of the military.

I think he even remarked that "cacophony" references probably depended on the type of book. I agreed he could be right, but since I read

a great variety of books, I still was finding it true: "cacophony" was contained in almost every book at least once.

The next day he was in another room reading when all at once I heard him make some type of utterance. I stopped reading to listen to see if he were speaking to me. He came into the room with his finger holding his book open.

He walked over to me, opened the book and pointed. I looked and then grinned up at him. "See, I was right!"

There in the middle of the argument against the merits of political-correctness, the word had jumped off the page at him: "CACOPHONY."

I'd venture to guess the word will now become a touchstone for him - just as it has for me.

Why don't you test my ridiculous theory too? Or maybe you can find your own word.

(Lorna GT has compiled some of her columns into book form. Please contact this paper at <star-news@nwkans.com> if you are interested in purchasing one. It is \$24 for a hardback book, which includes postage & handling.)

Arts Center wraps up "Produce for Victory"

To the Editor:

The Carnegie Arts Center has ended its showing of the Smithsonian exhibition "Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front, 1941-1945." I am writing to report on the wonderful activities that have taken place in Goodland in conjunction with this presentation and to thank the organizations and individuals who helped make this one of the most successful exhibits for the center.

Community participation and enthusiasm were high as the center hosted events to accompany the exhibit. Speakers from the Kansas Humanities Council presented programs, films from the 1940s were shown at the library, children and adults gathered weekly to knit in the basement of the center, a "Patriotic Celebration" was held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and a musical tribute was presented at Wheat Ridge Acres.

More than 550 guests visited the center during the exhibit, and people from as far as New Mexico and New Hampshire signed the guest book. Students from as far as Holcomb came to the exhibit to earn extra credit for their history classes. Veterans, as well as those who stayed at home during World War II, visited the exhibit and shared many memories with us.

The opportunity to host a Smithsonian exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Kansas Humanities Council. We were able to host this exhibition because of the existence of the Museum on Main Street program, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide. Museum on Main Street focuses on providing smaller Smithsonian exhibitions to rural communities and supporting them with locally directed public events. This was a rare opportunity for the Carnegie



from our
readers

• to the editor

Arts Center and we are grateful to have been a host site for such a quality cultural program.

We are grateful for the support of individuals and organizations that supported our efforts during this six-week exhibit. The Goodland Arts Council would like to thank the High Plains Museum for hosting the state companion exhibit, the Sherman County Historical Society for creating a local exhibit at the Handy House and the Goodland Public Library for hosting the film series.

Thanks to those who contributed items for our local exhibit at the arts center, especially the Big Timbers Museum of Lamar, Colo., and Tom Betz for helping organize the exhibition of their original posters from World War I, and John McDermott for loaning his collection of World War II pillow slip covers. Several local businesses also exhibited items during the show.

Many talented people assisted us in presenting programs. We would like to thank Carol Jolly and her students for the wonderful mu-

sic program and Wheat Ridge Acres for hosting the program, and Jessica Kannady and her dancers for entertainment at the Veterans of Foreign Wars; the speakers who shared their stories that day: John Boyington, Maxine Rauscher, Clarence Scheopner and Vernice Leslie; and Marilyn Imel for conducting the knitting workshop. Several people helped in other ways. The city crews helped moved crates at the beginning and end of the exhibit, and Carolyn Applegate loaned a popcorn popper, popcorn and supplies for our film nights.

Thank you to the people who helped publicize all these events for the arts center, *The Goodland Star-News* for the wonderful coverage of all our events, Curtis Duncan and KLOE for all your reminders on the radio, and Ron Barkley for his continued support of all our programs.

Finally, a big thank-you to all the gallery volunteers, staff and board members who worked very hard during the six-week exhibit.

We are pleased so many individuals from our area visited the arts center and our community during this exhibition. Thank you again to all who supported our efforts during this unique opportunity.

Tina Goodwin, director
Carnegie Arts Center
Goodland

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