

from other pens...

## Joke’s punchline hurts state’s image

It’s one thing to laugh at ourselves, but when the joke is available to the masses, the punchline can hurt.

Recently, a Subway restaurant in Oregon had an advertisement promoting a new salmon sandwich with the punchline, “Another reason you’re lucky not to live in Kansas.”

The sandwich is available for a limited time and the ad ran in a limited area, but two Kansas people saw it and were upset. Those Kansans contacted Subway and Kansas media to get the word out how upset they were.

They had every right to be mad.

The humor in Subway’s ad is there since there isn’t any salmon native to Kansas. But the mood of the one-liner has a negative, insulting feel. The ad implies Kansas is not as good because it doesn’t have salmon.

It all boils down to another massive corporation using insults and negativitiy to get attention. It’s common in mass advertising.

Years ago, another fast-food franchise advertisement implied those who only have a junior-college education were not as smart as other people. A junior college advocacy organization quickly contacted the company, told them the concern and the ad was removed.

Watch today’s television commercials. A large majority of the time someone or something, is made fun of in commercials. It’s usually men who are browbeaten.

Remember the commercials during this year’s Super Bowl? It was a man frozen to the steering wheel of a Ford Mustang. It was a man who was made fun of in the nut commercial. It was a male rap singer thrown over the fence in the potato chip commercial.

Advertising agencies whose work is broadcast across the nation, or even regionally as in Oregon, need to change their strategies to avoid the insults if they want to be funny.

Remember the “Where’s the beef” lady from Wendys?

Apparently, a lot of advertising agencies have.

— John Van Nostrand, Colby Free Press

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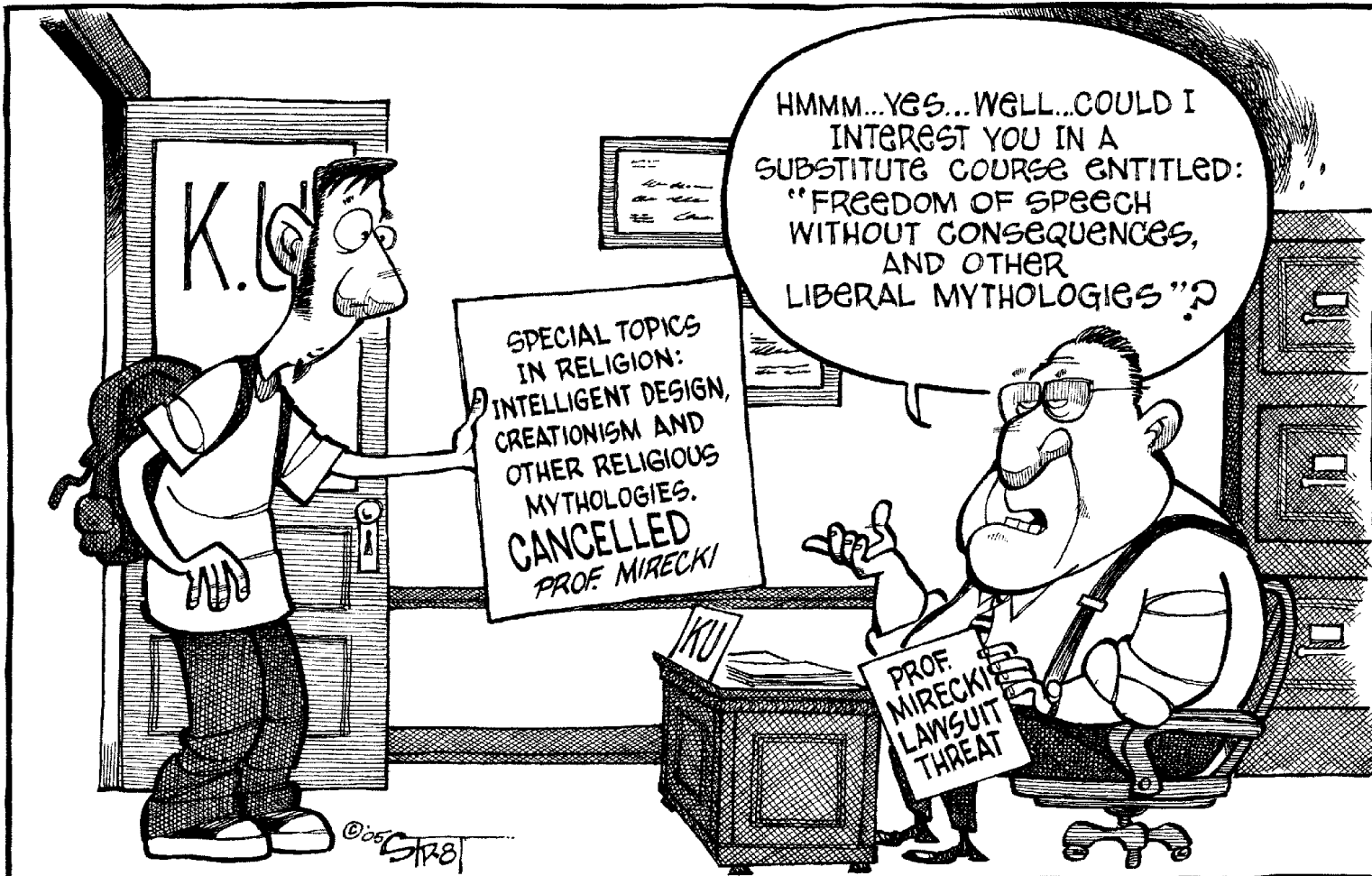
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## Education commissioner off to rough start

Poor Bob Corkins.

The state’s new commissioner of education is off to about as poor a start as a public official could ask for.

It’s probably not fair, but it’s hard to see his tenure outlasting the current board, which will change over a year from January.

Caught up in the emotion surrounding the evolution-intelligent design fight, he’ll hardly have a chance to make an impression on the sprawling Department of Education before the fall elections.

In a way, that’s too bad, because if anyone would listen, his message might be worth hearing. He might at least be able to start a debate on his core issue, the idea of instilling some competition in the school system.

It doesn’t look like people are going to hear much of what Corkins is advocating. Hatred of him and his cause spread before he even took office.

Listening to the questions when he stopped in western Kansas recently, it was obvious his detractors had no idea what he was saying. They had heard plenty of what he *hadn’t* said.

Corkins’ first mistake is not being a school superintendent. Every commissioner before him was, and most had doctorates in education.

Connie Morris of St. Francis, one of the most controversial members of the state Board of Education’s conservative majority, toured with



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the commissioner and introduced him as “Dr. Bob Corkins.”

It’s in law, from the University of Kansas, by the way. Not education. And Corkins is the first commissioner not to have been a superintendent.

He’s just not a member of the club.

There’s been a lot of hysteria about what Mr. Corkins and the board want to do. While the board has focused mostly on a “religious right” agenda revolving around evolution, the new commissioner wants free-market competition in schools.

He told western crowds he wants to do that with some kind of limited voucher system allowing parents to choose among public charter schools and traditional public schools. Charter schools have a lot of freedom to try new ideas and attract students, he said.

No one was listening. Detractors accused him of backing private and church schools over public schools, though he and Mrs. Morris said that’s not the issue.

In one revealing comment, the commissioner

admitted he has no plan drawn up, and that shows how he’s been sucked into this vortex with little thought for tomorrow.

Our guess is he never thought the board would hire him, with his limited experience outside lobbying and the Legislature. He was probably as surprised as the superintendents.

Competition might be good for schools, though the idea scares administrators, board members and teachers. How to establish it is yet another issue.

And its far from certain that it’s a good idea: Free, universal public education is one of the bedrock cornerstones of our society. We won’t trifle with it.

It’s not likely that Corkins will get a hearing anyway. The board that hired him, focused as it is on a narrow religious-right agenda, represents a minority of Kansans.

Its members got elected because, despite the lessons of the 1990s, no one much cared who won state board races.

That will change next fall. A new board majority is in the offing, and with it, most likely, a new commissioner.

Evil-lootion will be back in the science standards and all will be right in Topeka.

In a way that’s too bad, because this competition thing might have some merit. It’s just that in the current emotional climate surrounding the school debate, no one wants to hear about it.

## Questions about Iraq war not one sided

I’m not questioning the performance of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, but some people are asking how long our troops will be targets in these war-torn countries.

Those questions are not all being asked just by Democrats, although that is what the administration and other pundits want people to believe.

It is a political strategy to point the finger back at the one asking tough questions to deflect attention when there is no good answer. The real questions are, what are our plans for getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and does the Bush administration have a clue what victory will look like?

In past wars, the opposition party (either Republican or Democrat) has asked the same sort of questions, and used the pressure to win elections. That was true with the Korean War, when Republican candidate Dwight Eisenhower made a campaign pledge to bring the troops home by Christmas. (At last check, American troops are still stationed in Korea under a ceasefire.)

Again in Vietnam, there was an outcry when the basis for sending 500,000 American troops to Southeast Asia was questioned.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed President Lyndon Johnson and later Richard Nixon to send American troops into battle. From the time American troops were first sent to Vietnam in 1958 to the final withdrawal and collapse in 1975, over 50,000 American lives were lost.

The Tonkin resolution passed quickly by both houses in Congress in 1964, supposedly in response to a North Vietnamese gunboat attack on an American destroyer off the coast of Vietnam. By 1968, support for the war had



**tom betz**

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begun to shrink. There were calls for American troops to be pulled out, and antiwar demonstrations forced Johnson not to seek a second term.

As a Republican presidential candidate, Nixon made the war an issue on a “peace with honor” platform. President Johnson decided to bomb Hanoi to try to force the North Vietnamese to quit in 1968. It didn’t work. In 1972, President Nixon tried mining Haiphong Harbor, but that didn’t work either. At the end of this first term, Nixon found himself trying to use secret negotiations to find a peaceful way to bring the troops home.

His policy included “Vietnamization” of the war, as American troops were being withdrawn while the South Vietnamese took on the defense of their country.

Sound familiar?

The South Vietnamese had been struggling for peace for over 20 years, but in the end the North overran the country and they are in control today.

Today, we watch Saddam Hussein make speeches during his trial, and are glad he is not in power in Iraq. It was a good thing to take him out, even if the “reason” was as false as the gunboat attack of 40 years ago.

We do not like to watch Americans die for freedom, no matter how noble the cause. History has shown, we all rally around when the call to arms is to defend freedom, and there is

no doubt today both Republicans and Democrats support the troops in whatever foreign land they may be stationed.

The U.S. Senate on a 70-19 vote in November passed a resolution asking the Bush White House to keep the elected representatives updated on what is happening in Iraq and what plans there are to get us out. That resolution did not ask for a timetable, or make any specific demands, but it did pass with all the Democrats and most of the Republicans voting in favor.

In a democracy, one of the things that keeps us free is the ability to question and oppose actions of our elected representatives all the way up to and including the President. To date, there has been one Republican president nearly impeached, one Democratic president impeached and one Republican president who resigned in the face of impeachment. These actions are proof the American political system works, even with all the flaws of the two-party system.

We hope the Iraqi people are more successful at taking charge of their own affairs than some of our friends in the past.

### Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: [<star-news@nwkanssas.com>](mailto:<star-news@nwkanssas.com>).

### garfield

