

from our viewpoint...

## McCain was right on banning torture

Here's one where John McCain is right and the White House is just plain wrong.

The administration finally gave in and agreed to McCain's language barring any use of torture by the U.S. government.

Well it should have. There's no conceivable circumstance where torture by U.S. officials or military personnel should be sanctioned.

Sen. McCain ought to know. As a Navy pilot, shot down over Vietnam, he spent nearly seven years as a prisoner of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese.

Few Washington decision makers can say they've been tortured, unless you count having to sit through innumerable committee hearings and floor debates in the Capitol.

McCain knows whereof he speaks. He thinks America should set a higher standard.

It's scary that, in a recent Associated Press poll, a majority of Americans (61 percent) said it might be OK "sometimes" for U.S. officials to torture suspected terrorists. Of all the allies polled, in fact, only South Korea had a higher tolerance for torture. Ninety percent of Koreans thought torture might sometimes be OK.

What are we thinking about, folks?

Torture is not just wrong. It's poor policy. It seldom produces the desired information. It can harden a victim, or make them say anything to stop the pain. Either way, the nation that uses torture never wins.

While President Bush maintains torture is not U.S. policy, Vice President Dick Cheney argued that is might be necessary in extreme cases. There's a lot of that "what-if" stuff, "what if a terrorist knew the location of a nuclear device in a U.S. city, and the only way to save millions of lives was to torture him?"

It's not good.

A devoted terrorist likely would die rather than tell.

Or lie to stave off the inquisition until it was too late.

These are people, after all, who are willing to blow themselves up for some demented idea of God and country.

In most of Europe, a majority is firmly opposed to torture in any form, any time. We should join that union.

Fortunately, there's no credible evidence so far that the U.S. government in fact uses torture against prisoners, even terrorists.

The midnight follies at that Iraqi prison, though wrong and stupid, hardly rise to the level of torture. The same can be said for treatment of some prisoners held in Cuba.

We need to make clear, though, what the President says already is U.S. policy. This is one time we need to take the high road.

Thanks to the administration's agreement with Sen. McCain, that'll soon be written into federal law.

And that is no loss to our effort in the war against terrorism, or any other war. — *Steve Haynes*

## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: [star-news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansas.com)

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Erica Harlan, Copy Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Pat Schiefen, Reporter

Greg Stover, Sports Editor

Mona Carver, Yvonne Ornelas, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

### Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight,

Betty Morris, Heather Merklin, Adam Stuhlmiller,

Jerry Kirkpatrick, Lana Westfahl



**nwkansas.com**

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

([ntbetz@nwkansas.com](mailto:ntbetz@nwkansas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nw-kansas.com](mailto:star-news@nw-kansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkansas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

### The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

### The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

### THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

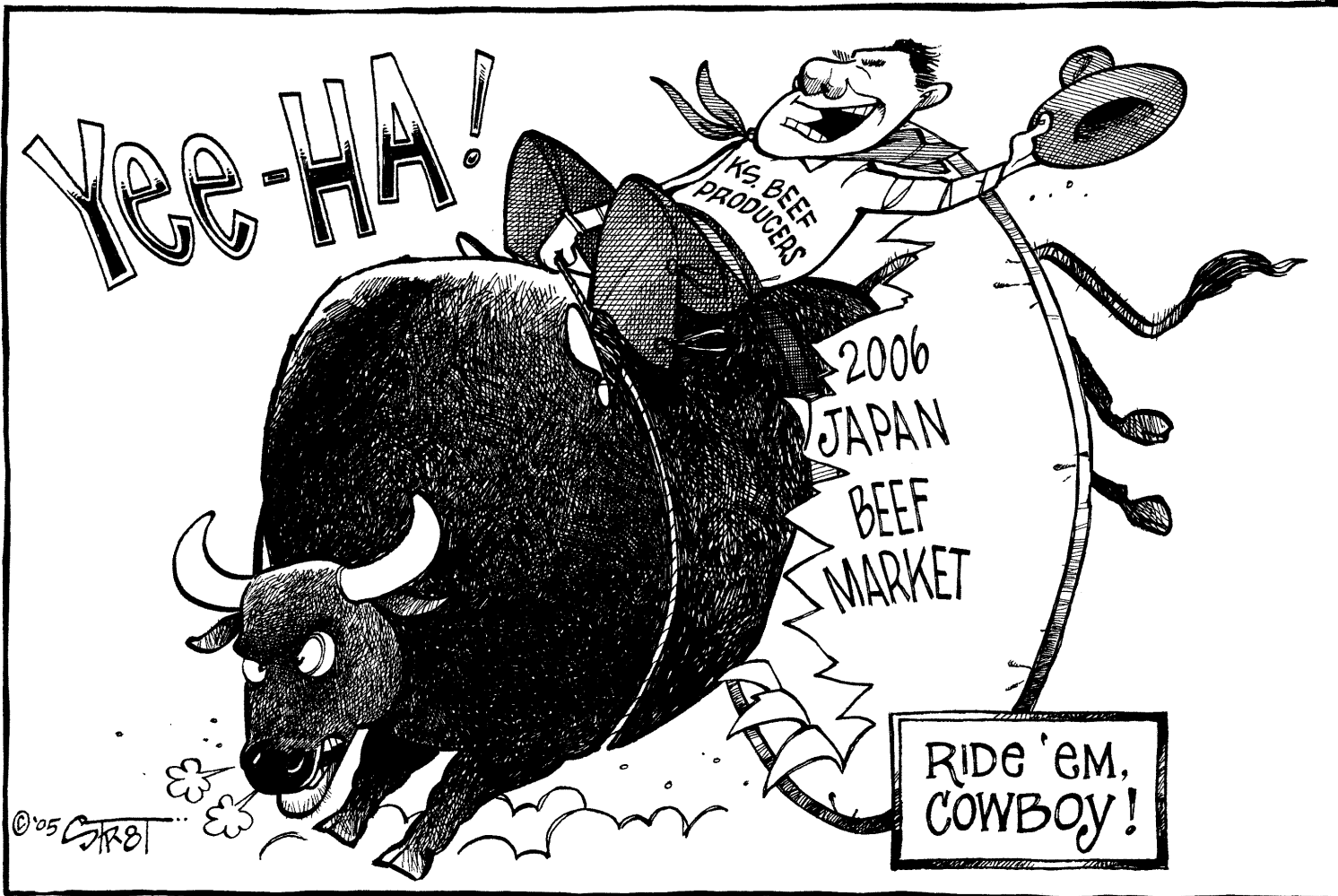
Founded by Eric and

Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

### Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



## Alan Alda: A liberal who loves markets

Viewers of "The West Wing's" presidential debate episode on Nov. 6 must have thought the left side of Alan Alda's brain had been taken over by Milton Friedman.

One minute Alda was advocating school choice and saying people of underdeveloped countries would benefit from being exploited by Nike factories. The next he was mocking global warming hysteries and arguing in favor of drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

On live television, in front of nearly 10 million Americans, Alan Alda — the card-carrying Hollywood liberal-humanist — was saying wildly un-Democrat stuff like "I believe in the free market" and "The government didn't make the Prius the hottest car in Hollywood; the market did."

It was not Alda's inner conservative/libertarian finally breaking free. He was playing Sen. Arnold Vinick, the fictional Republican presidential candidate on "The West Wing," the NBC White House poli-drama whose ratings and left-wing bias are no longer as solid as they used to be.

Alda had those good words for free enterprise put into his liberal mouth by Lawrence O'Donnell, "West Wing's" executive producer and highly partisan MSNBC political analyst. O'Donnell, who used to work for Sen. Patrick Moynihan and proudly calls himself a "practical European socialist," wrote the script for the debate episode. I talked Nov. 8 to O'Donnell, who was working on "The West Wing" somewhere deep in Hollywood.

Q: How do you define Alan Alda's character's politics?

A: It's very simple. He's a "California Republican." He's a statewide-elected senator in California. You cannot get elected statewide in California and be pro-life. That is not possible. So he is a moderate on abortion. He's pro-choice, but he's against partial birth abortion. And that's the only thing in his politics, as we've constructed it, that separates him from what is now considered the winning side of the Republican Party nationally.

Q: What about all that Milton Friedman free-market stuff?

A: The country doesn't like it. The country basically likes the simplicity of "Those damn oil companies are charging too much for gasoline, let's do something about that." The country has not been educated that you create a bigger problem by trying to do something about high gas prices. So the country is very susceptible to rhetoric that it doesn't even think of as liberal ....

Q: It's populist economics.

A: Right. They don't think of it as liberal if you say "Those oil companies are charging way too much money and we should do something about it." They think that makes sense. So American liberal rhetoric, in general, has much more appeal than certainly the free market does. The free-market position actually doesn't have a lot of rhetoric that goes along with it. It has a lot of logic and it has a lot of rational analysis that you need a fair amount of education to do. Unfortunately, I suspect it takes almost at least a college level of education in economics to fully embrace the market's power or to fully go that way.



## bill steigerwald

### ● newsmakers

Q: So you weren't faking it when you were writing that dialogue. You actually believe this stuff — or just understand it?

A: Yes. I believe (the late supply-side economist) Jude Winniski's arguments about how high tax rates damage the economies of poor African countries. But what I would not want to suggest about it is, if we fixed the tax rates, everything is going to be OK. The other *huge* problem that Africa has is American agriculture subsidies, which are a disastrous policy, I believe, on every level, in terms of what it does to poverty internationally, in terms of what it does to our misallocation of resources here. I wouldn't know that if I hadn't majored in economics in college. I just wouldn't.

I was in discussion with one of our cast members about the African tax rates, for example. In the Vinick speech where it said "the Nike plant" — I specifically wrote "Nike." The cast member said, "Are you saying that poor African countries would be better off if they had a Nike plant?" I said, "Let me be very clear what I am saying: What I'm saying is that those countries would be *lucky* if they could get some really expletive sweat shops in there."

Q: I think there's a libertarian in you trying to get out.

A: No, no, no. I'm a European socialist, believe me — I'm far to the left. But I understand. I'm a kind of practical socialist. I know we failed. A lot of our ideas have failed, so I'm not with them anymore. I'm willing to take from a grab-bag of stuff that works. I said, "I very specifically said 'Nike,' because I *want* you to think about it as a sweatshop. I don't happen to think it is, but I want you to think of it that way. I want you to think they're an evil employer and that country would be *lucky* to have an evil employer — that would be a huge step up for them."

So she's trying to process this. And I try to make it simple for her. I say, "Here's my position: My position is slavery is better than death. Employment is better than slavery. That exploitative wages are better than nothing. And that a fair wage and justice is the ideal."

She can't accept any sentence that isn't about the fair wage and the ideal. Literally and truly. She's a very, very smart woman. She couldn't process what I was talking about. She couldn't process that one penny is better than zero. There are children in the world who would be lucky — *lucky* — to be employed 12 hours a day in expletive child labor situations where they are making 10 cents a day.

Unfortunately, I think respect for the market seems to be something that I have not seen anyone derive outside education. I haven't seen people gravitate toward a natural respect for the market. And it doesn't have rhetoric to go with it. I think the rhetoric Vinick used about it was about the best I've heard — especially the Prius argument, by the way, which was designed specifically for Hollywood liberals, but no one told them to.

Where Vinick was talking about the market most clearly was in the energy discussion, when they talk about government support for alternative forms of energy. And Vinick starts with, "I don't think politicians are going to be very good at picking energy sources." And then he says "The government didn't shift us from using shale oil to using the oil discovered under the ground."

That to me is the ultimate example in today's discussion about where are we on energy. The market's the only thing that's ever going to take us from oil to something else.

Q: Will the Alda character do a better job of carrying through on his rhetoric and principles than Bush II has done?

A: Yes. I think Vinick would be a libertarian's favorite president. Not that libertarians will *ever* come close to being satisfied with a president. (laughs) He's not going to abolish Social Security, but I think he would be the most responsible deliverer of what Republicans say they are about.

Q: Many people watching are probably being introduced to these free-market arguments for the first time — they have never heard them stated so clearly and so well. Are you at all worried that you are subverting the Democratic Party in the real world?

A: No. I don't think the Democratic Party needs to be an opponent of pharmaceutical companies. I mean, look, I worked on the Democratic side of the Senate. I believe everything in the debate that the Republican candidate said about the pharmaceutical companies. I don't think that is a necessary component of liberalism, attacking pharmaceutical companies. It seems to me one of the most juvenile components of it. We have a lot of great and responsible American corporations who are delivering great things to the world and American liberalism has to get in synch with that and not sound so anti-business.

Q: So you're reteaching Hollywood something?

A: Yeah. Listen, I'll tell you this: Plenty of people working right here at "The West Wing" in the heart of Hollywood liberalism have changed their minds about drilling in ANWAR after hearing Sen. Arnold Vinick talk about it.

This Vinick character has changed a lot of the thinking of people around the show and showing them ways about thinking about issues. And there is an increasing list of agreements that liberal friends of mine are having with Republican free-marketer Arnold Vinick, the fictional character.

I guess it is because he has found a way of saying these things that politicians have not found.

That line that Vinick had in the debate, where he said the market has the power to change the way we think and the government can never do that. You need to dwell on that a while, which of course all libertarians have done. But most people haven't. They don't really get it. There have been totalitarian regimes all over the planet for the last century *desperately* trying to change the way people think — and failing. Every government that has tried to impose thought has failed. The market effortlessly — *effortlessly* — is manipulating our thought all the time.

Bill Steigerwald is a columnist at the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. E-mail Bill at [bsteigerwald@tribweb.com](mailto:bsteigerwald@tribweb.com).

### garfield

