

from our viewpoint...

Post Office plans to raise stamp price

If you're still upset because the price of a stamp jumped from 37 to 39 cents this year, hold on to — OK, men don't wear hats anymore — just hang on.

Things are about to get a whole lot worse. The U.S. Postal Service has filed for another increase, one which will drive the price of mailing a letter to 42 cents by next year.

And the service says to expect increases every year for a while. The Postal Service, which has been running a billion-dollar profit just a couple of years ago, now sees itself awash in a sea of red ink. The service sees sharp increases in postage as its salvation, but the truth is, they may only succeed in driving more business away.

E-mail and other electronic delivery have taken much of the service's once-lucrative first-class volume. Mailers faced with a 7.6 percent increase in costs on top of this year's 2-cent hike might start to bail out.

Utilities already offer bills by e-mail or a web site. Other firms will join in. Many offer electronic payment options, and the list will grow.

Most people don't bother to write friends anymore. They go the computer and send an electronic message, e-chat or even an e-greeting card.

As mailers jump ship, increasingly the postal system will be left only with advertising mail — what most of us refer to euphemistically as "junk mail."

And the Postal Service is getting ready for that future. It plans to consolidate mail sorting at a few large centers around the country that will be highly automated.

Postal carriers, who now spend part of their time sorting and organizing their mail, will just deliver packages to each home. Even a letter to your neighbor may travel hundreds of miles to be sorted by machine.

Of course, the service says its delivery standards won't suffer. They've been saying that ever since they took the mail off trains and started to fly most of it.

"Improved" service will result in even less mail, and the death spiral will accelerate. Many mailers fear the Postal Service is a dying dinosaur, and you don't want to be around when a critter that big is thrashing about.

Newspapers are left with a real problem, and so are our readers. Service has gotten so bad for cross-country delivery that many of readers have given up. Others are perpetually disgusted. The shift to central sorting could ruin the excellent service we get at local and regional offices in our area.

On top of that, the Postal Service wants a 24.2 percent increase in rates for newspapers delivered in the county where they are mailed. Never mind that publishers sort this mail in delivery order and take it right to the post office in most cases. The "economic model" says it's costly to delivery.

Out-of-county mail will see similar hikes, with already-poor service likely to suffer as sorting is centralized. Readers, we fear, will turn to Internet editions and publishers will be forced to hire carriers for in-town delivery.

It's a scary thought, but this could be the end of our two-century era of universal mail delivery, the end of getting your newspaper in the mail, the end for an American tradition.

As publishers, we hope not. Our national groups plan to put up a fight. We hope the Postal Service will come to its senses and try to keep newspapers in the mail.

But don't bet on it. You can, sadly, bet on slower service, higher subscription prices and more expensive stamps. — Steve Haynes

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The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

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1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

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Republicans need to run like Democrats

Over the past 30 years, there has been an inexorable growth of party-line politics in Washington. Where crossing party lines was once an accepted and routine part of congressional practice, it is now almost as rare as in a parliamentary government, where massive defections on any issue could bring down the government.

The growth of party-line voting reflects a parallel tendency to nationalize congressional elections, a trend that dates back to Newt Gingrich's revolution of 1994, in which he wrested control of both houses from the Democrats. Until Gingrich, the maxim of his predecessor Tip O'Neill that "all politics is local" was the order of the day.

But national funding of political campaigns, central discipline over political consultants by party apparatchiks, partisan control over reapportionment and the nationalization of congressional issues have enforced a conformity on candidates from both parties, which makes them little more than local stand-ins for the national party.

All this is terribly convenient when your party is awash in good times. The money rolls in while you run in your comfortably gerrymandered district, advised by spin doctors who are adept at putting the party line out in ever more artful ways and are especially trained by the national party at eviscerating an opponent with negative ads.

But in bad times, the party's ties bind too closely. They restrict a Republican candidate's ability to run to the left or a Democrat's to move



dick morris

• commentary

to the right to avert defeat in a partisan landslide. The party discipline makes maneuver impossible and forces the incumbent to hunker down in his partisan fortress and hope that he can defeat the barbarians at the gates.

For the first time since the Gingrich revolution, the Republican Party is facing massive defeat. Will its congressmen and senators go down in the upcoming 2006 elections like the Democratic lemmings did in 1994, faithfully parroting their president's dogma while they sank below the horizon? Or will they have the dexterity and flexibility to move to the center and the left to meet the coming onslaught?

The only way for a Republican to survive in 2006 is to run like a Democrat. The GOP line on oil companies totally misses the fact that voters see a vast conspiracy by big oil companies to manipulate the price to feather their own nests. All talk of supply increase or demand decrease is quite beside the point for the average voter. The issue is whether or not you are part of the conspiracy to fix and raise prices.

The Republican position on climate change — that it isn't happening or, if it is, it's inevitable — also completely misses the views of the average voter who sees hurricanes,

droughts, tornadoes and such as the consequence of years of air pollution.

The GOP wisdom on Iraq also fails to address the underlying isolationism that is catalyzing opposition to the war. Instead of searching for a decent way out, most voters are just disgusted with the party that landed us in this no-win situation.

Taken together, the only way for a Republican to survive 2006 is to shed himself of his party ideology and run like a Democrat, using the entire playing field — left, center and right — to address voter concerns.

But is the Republican Party able to allow its candidates the doctrinal freedom to do so? Will its donors permit such heresy? Are its consultants wise enough in the ways of the center to bring their clients over from right field? Will the administration allow apostasy?

Lately some have suggested that candidates use local issues to survive. But the wisdom of Tip O'Neill will not save a party that has convinced the nation that Gingrich was right — that congressional races are national, not local. It is only by moving to the center and the left that the congressional Republican Party can respond to the massive voter anger its candidates encounter at every turn.

Unless the harness of party discipline loosens, GOP congressmen and senators will go, in step, over the cliff.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. Email for Dick Morris is dmredding@aol.com.

Bush proved I was right



michael reagan

• making sense

ing an estimated 103 million persons to legally immigrate to the U.S. over the next 20 years — fully one-third of the current population of the United States.

"In contrast to the 103 million immigrants permitted under CIRA, current law allows 19 million legal immigrants over the next twenty years. Relative to current law, then, CIRA would add an extra 84 million legal immigrants to the nation's population."

The report shows that the bill would grant amnesty to 85 percent of the current illegal immigrant population, or some 10 million individuals.

CIRA creates an entirely new "temporary guest worker" (H-2C) program. There is nothing temporary about this program; nearly all "guest workers" would have the right to become permanent residents and then citizens.

If all illegal immigrants were granted amnesty, federal tax payments would increase by some \$3,000 per household, but federal benefits and social services would increase by \$8,000 per household. Total federal welfare

benefits would reach around \$9,500 per household, or \$35 billion per year total. The study estimates the net cost to the federal government of granting amnesty to some 3.8 million illegal alien households would be around \$5,000 per household, for a total federal fiscal cost of \$19 billion per year.

Until just two hours before he spoke Monday night, the president had failed to alert the governors of the Mexican border states that he plans to use the National Guard for border security. That's just plain arrogant.

Finally, it's just plain stupid to ignore the fact that the immigration issue is the hottest political issue around. To ignore the demands of the majority of the American people risks losing control of both houses of Congress and the consequences that would follow: endless investigations that would occupy much of the president's time in the middle of a war, and dooming the nation to a flood of expensive Marxist programs that would cause a gigantic increase in federal taxes. And that's just for starters.

There's only one possible answer to the president's request that his immigration program be enacted: NO!!!

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. Email Comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.

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