

from our viewpoint...

## Prairie dog fight out of character

Government agents enter land against the owners will, spreading poison.

An armed officer stands guard, keeping the landowner away. The government plans to send the landowner the bill for killing his animals.

This happens in Communist China, perhaps? Soviet Russia? Fidel's Cuba?

No, western Kansas, where the deer and the antelope play, and the skies are not cloudy all day.

It's a high-stakes game of prairie dog eradication, and the script just drips with irony.

The land in question is owned by Larry Haverfield, a maverick rancher who touts unorthodox grazing ideas and thinks that deep down, prairie dogs might not be so bad. He's convinced there's a place for all of God's creatures and he *sure* doesn't want the county telling him how to run his ranch.

His neighbors don't see things quite that way. They share the average western prejudice against prairie dogs. They read all the stories about how we've killed millions and millions of the little critters, reduced their range and driven them near to being listed as an endangered species.

And they think that's a pretty good start.

Most of them, if they could push a button and eliminate every single prairie dog from the face of the earth, they'd do it. In a heart-beat.

Larry Haverfield thinks you should leave some, maybe not all, the rodents around. His neighbors think he's nuts — maybe worse.

Other landowners want Haverfield's dogs eliminated. They have the Logan County commissioners and the weight of the law behind them. Commissioners, under pressure from other landowners, refused to approve any plan from Haverfield that includes keeping prairie dogs around.

What really rankles many landowners is the Haverfield and a couple of friends have invited the federal government to help them "manage" the prairie dogs by reintroducing the black-footed ferret on their land. This rare, endangered species lives among and eats prairie dogs. How well it can control them remains to be seen, since only a few hundred of the cute little devils remain.

Commissioners and landowners fear if the endangered ferret is let loose in Logan County, they'll never be able to poison prairie dogs again. Opposition is at a fever pitch, and you can almost see the villagers gathering, pitchforks and firebrands in hand, to confront the evil that lurks.

On any given day, we're sure, most of the farmers, ranchers and county officials of Logan County are decent, conservative types who support the National Rifle Association and belong to the Farm Bureau. They likely espouse the freedom to own guns and private property.

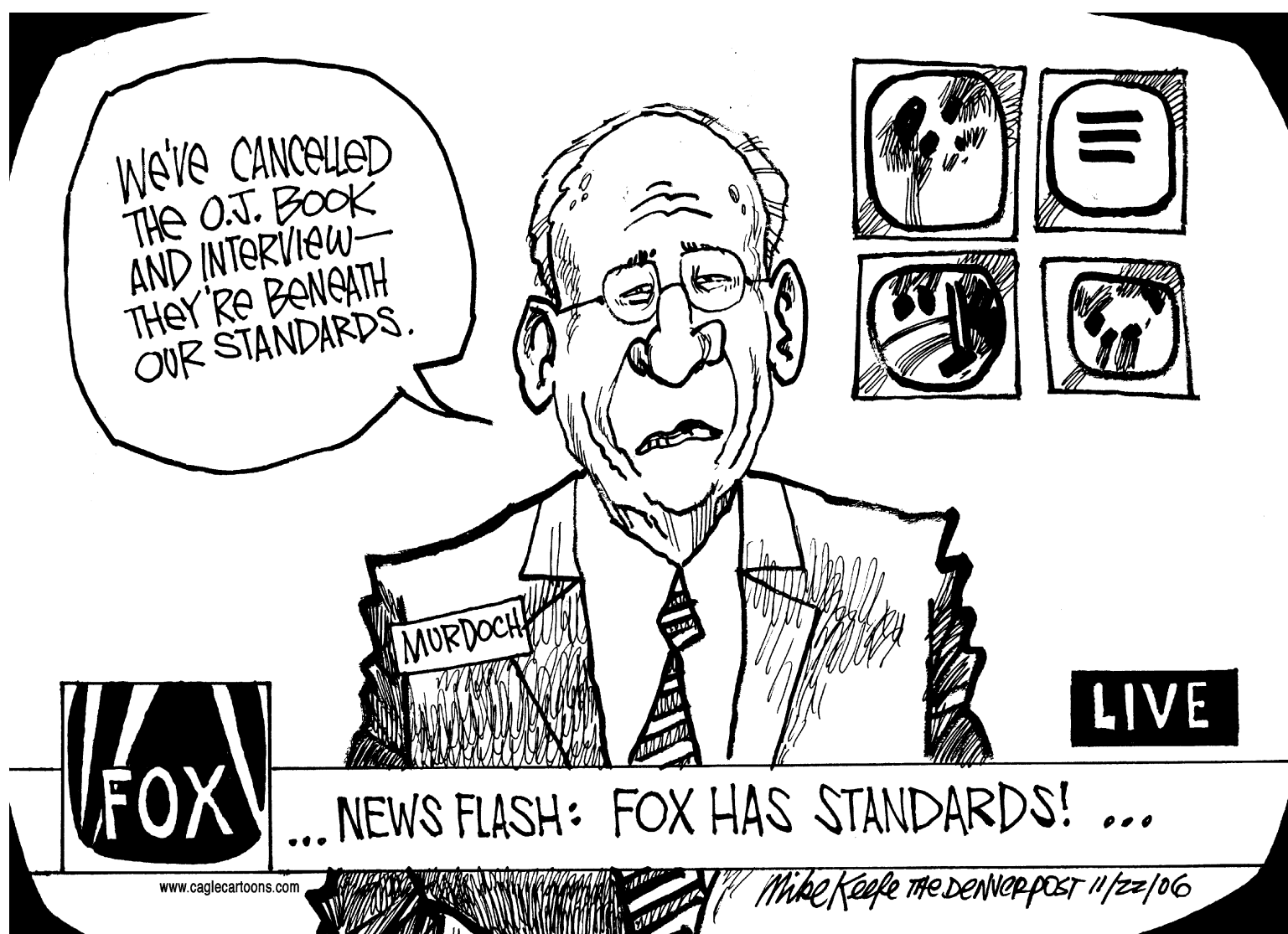
Property rights, however, go just so far, and in Logan County, they apparently don't cover harboring vermin — or cute little endangered ferrets.

How else can you explain the county sending exterminators unannounced onto private land and an armed officer to keep landowners from interfering.

Sound sort of un-American to you?

Apparently, property rights are only for those we agree with.

With all due respect to the feelings most ranchers and stockmen have about prairie dogs, maybe this is carrying things just a bit too far. — *Steve Haynes*



## Republicans lost because they lost their way

We are hearing all sorts of reasons why the GOP got, in George Bush's word, "thumped."

We're told it was Iraq, or that it was the incompetence and corruption of some of its members. Some cited the unpopularity of the president, implying that it rubbed off on the House members who went down to defeat last Tuesday.

While there is some validity to all these complaints, they miss the mark by ignoring the real cause of the Nov. 7 electoral disaster — the fact that Republicans had stopped acting the way Republicans are meant to act, and began acting as clones of big-government, big-spending Democrats.

In September, I wrote that unless congressional Republicans put the brakes on spending, "you can bet that the Republican Party is going to lose control of Congress next year, and with Democrats in power, government spending will go through the roof."

In 1994, the Republicans took control of Capitol Hill, mostly on the strength of the Contract with America. Over time, that turned into the contract on America.

The GOP leadership allowed some to corrupt their own party. In the notorious, pork-laden "bridge-to-nowhere" transportation bill last year they promised earmark goodies to certain members if they would support the bill. They might have called that politics, but I call it bribery.

That bill contained a mind-boggling 6,371 pet projects, or earmarks. My dad, Ronald Reagan, once vetoed a highway bill because it



**michael reagan**

● making sense

was loaded down with a mere 152 pet projects.

Over time, the Republican Party gradually became the party they replaced. The line between the two got so blurred that it was hard to tell the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Allegiance to a party goes out the window when people can't tell the difference between their party and the opposition. Voters just rise up and throw the bums out and start all over.

As far as the Iraq war goes, the president got the message Tuesday: It's time to win the war and stop having people micro-manage it from Washington. That's what lost the war in Vietnam. Moreover, he was told to allow the military to do what the military does best: win the war — forget the tender sensibilities of the anti-war peaceniks and kill people and break things if you have to — and, above all, win.

I'm convinced that had the president replaced Donald Rumsfeld six months ago, the GOP would have won the elections Tuesday. He became the face of a war the public believes has been badly mishandled, and by keeping him around the president continually reminded voters of just how badly the war was going.

Writing in the Thursday's *Opinion Journal*, former House Majority Leader Dick Arney recalled that the Republican takeover in 1994

"was the culmination of years of agitation by a relatively small group of political entrepreneurs in the House."

Before this small group could beat the Democrats and their "culture of corruption," he wrote, they had to beat "the old bulls of our own party," who were also "driven by a parochial vision, and had grown complacent with the crumbs offered them by the majority."

The Contract with America, Arney explained, established "a national (as opposed to a parochial) vision for the Republican Party. When we took control, that positive Reagan vision of limited government and individual responsibility provided a great deal of discipline and allowed us to govern accordingly. Our primary question in those early years was: How do we reform government and return money and power back to the American people?"

Eventually, he continued, "the policy innovators and the 'Spirit of '94' were largely replaced by political bureaucrats driven by a narrow vision. Their question became: How do we hold onto political power? The aberrant behavior and scandals that ended up defining the Republican majority in 2006 were a direct consequence of this shift in choice criteria from policy to political power."

If they ever expect to regain control of Congress, Republicans are going to have to start being Republicans again.

*Mike Reagan, eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. E-mail comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.*

## Thanks for helping clean up yards

To the Editor:

A note of appreciation to the Goodland High School students for their great efforts on Wednesday, Oct. 25, in cleaning up people's yards.

You made a big improvement on the town!

Due to my having lymphoma, I was not able to clean my yard this fall. Thanks to the city workers and others who assisted in this fall cleanup effort!

With the continued efforts of our people, youths and adults, we can improve our curb appeal. This will help with our economic development.

It shows "we care."

Arlo and Mary Lou Hansen  
Goodland

To the Editor:

The letter to the editor regarding the Postal Service in your Oct. 27 newspaper was disturbingly inaccurate. While we agree that the Postal Service is facing challenging times, we are confident we can successfully address our challenges and continue to provide Goodland and the nation with excellent customer service.

Here are the facts:

The United States Postal Service has no plans to move any operations from the Colby Post Office to another city.

Like any major corporation, the Postal Service is continually adapting to change. Specifically, since 1998, single-piece First-Class Mail volume has dropped by 11 billion pieces — due in large part to email and online bill payment.

When volume for your most profitable product is down significantly, and you're not taxpayer supported, you have to look at ways to do things differently. So, the Postal Service is reviewing its mail processing and transportation operations to identify locations where we can efficiently consolidate operations, such as postmarking, while maintaining the high level of service our customers have come to expect.

But these reviews are nothing new. We've been doing them for 30 years. And each new review includes a public input process.



**from our readers**

● to the editor

As for the assertion that we are catering to corporate special interests, the facts are that mailers, large and small, do receive discounts, but only because they prepare significant volumes of mail in a manner that makes it easier and less costly for us to handle.

Like the Postal Service, these mailers — some of which are in Goodland and in sur-

rounding communities — are an integral part of the nation's economy.

The Postal Service has been serving this nation for more than 230 years, so we have a lot of experience successfully adapting to change.

Today, as always, our objective is to remain the world's premier provider of postal services. We need to operate the Postal Service as efficiently as possible to ensure it remains a valued and viable organization well into the future.

Michael Holloway  
District Manager  
Central Plains Performance Cluster  
Omaha



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