

Everyone has to give if auto bailout is to work

The bailout bill for the “Big Three” automakers died last week when Republicans in Congress refused to bow to union pressure over a wage deal.

Everyone involved lamented the fact that a deal was maybe minutes away when the talks broke down, and the bailout may not be dead.

Many will see the Republicans as risking the entire economy here, but there’s an important principal at stake. That is whether the car makers will be propped up to serve only as job generators, or whether they will be revived as competitive enterprises.

If the United Auto Workers has its way in this, there will be no end to federal subsidies for the car makers. We’ll wind up with socialized industries growing fat and bloated at the public trough, and taxpayers who moan and suffer under the yoke of oppressive taxation.

Even the British have given up on this kind of unproductive, unsustainable state socialism. We should not allow our economy to take this detour.

Government-run enterprises tend to become beholden to their unions. Amtrak is a good example of how this works. Union jobs become an end rather than a means, and job cuts are discouraged at almost any cost. Public unions gain enormous political power, and the cycle spirals downward.

Why is this such a threat?

Because as bailouts go, 30 years of Amtrak at \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year are nothing compared to the potential for the automakers. Successful bailouts, such as the 1980s rescues of Conrail out of Penn Central and the first Chrysler Corp. rescue, require real sacrifices by unions, management, stockholders and banks.

After a bad start by management — with executives jetting in to be humbled by Congress — everyone was on board except the unions this time. What Congress wanted was for the auto workers to pare their pay and benefits package down to match costs at non-union, foreign-owned plants in the South.

The auto workers did agree to that, in a limited way, but only two years down the road. And that could be way too late to make General Motors and Ford competitive. Bankruptcy may follow, because then the companies can repudiate their leases and loans — and union contracts.

While that may be appealing — the major airlines have washed out their costs that way — it’s tough on investors and union pension-holders alike. Both would be left holding the bag.

A compromise may be in the offing. We hope so. Our economy needs strong and vital automakers to keep things rolling.

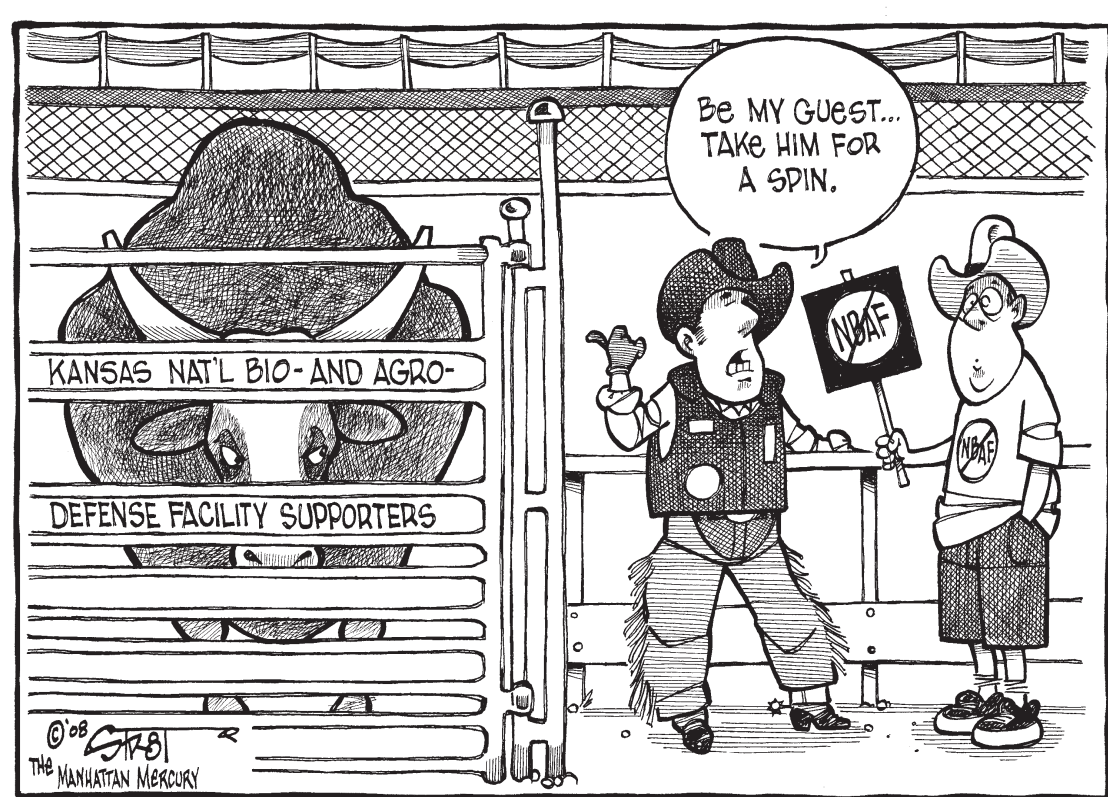
America does not need socialized industries, however. That path has never led anywhere but down. The cost of keeping union wages high would be more than taxpayers can afford.

This is not to say that unions are bad — they have been a key ingredient in American’s prosperity over the last century — but that they can’t take too much power or they will bias the economy in nonproductive, noncompetitive ways.

That we can’t afford. It’s good the Republicans stuck by their guns.

The auto workers should take stock of their potential losses and get onboard before the train leaves the station.

— Steve Haynes



Chicken’s water, pipes freeze

I know it’s winter, because our cold-water faucet in the kitchen froze up last night. It’s the only plumbing on the north side of the house, and couldn’t take the subzero temperature.

A little portable heater thawed the pipe with no problem, but it’s too early in the season to have to worry about frozen pipes every night.

—ob—

We picked up a Christmas present for the chickens over the weekend. Actually, I’m the one who will benefit from it. I saw a heated water bowl and decided that was what we needed instead of me hauling water every day or breaking ice for the old birds.

I can say, “Old biddies,” because they aren’t laying right now. Molt-ing season, plus it’s just too blamed cold.

When I go out to feed them, I remember the words of a business executive I used to know. He would say, “If you ain’t makin’ me money, you’re costin’ me money.”

Right now, with the feed they’re eating, it’s all input and no output. Come spring, they’re gonna owe me.

Some of the chickens aren’t going to make it to spring, though. We have an oversupply of four roosters. That’s three more than we need, and



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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they’re making life miserable for the hens. I keep threatening the old boys with the “noodle bath.”

—ob—

The Christmas Kitchen at the Plotts house is kicking into full gear. Bananas are ripening on the breakfast bar and Butterfinger Balls are chilling in the ‘fridge. Another batch of fudge, plus some caramel corn, will round what I need to finish for Christmas boxes for the kids. I really want those boxes in the mail by Wednesday. The Postal Service is good, but why push it?

—ob—

Jim finally felt good enough Saturday night to put up some outdoor lights. He’s barely scratched the surface of what he wants to do. However, time and temperatures are working against him.

If he doesn’t get any more up, it’s OK with me. I’m going to sprinkle a few little Christmas knickknacks around and call it good.

Did you hear about the hillbilly that installed expensive thermal-pane windows in his house? The contractor who installed the windows waited more than 12 months to get paid for the job. Finally, he called and demanded payment.

The hillbilly said, “Duh, your salesman told me the windows would pay for themselves in a year.”

From the Bible

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. Luke 1:30-31

Holiday lights tangle her up

I love Christmas lights, and Steve and I put them up every year.

It was really great when we had kids around. We’d go out on a nice Saturday or Sunday right after Thanksgiving and string lights all over the yard. Then we’d get out ladders and send the children with a staple gun onto the roof of the porch to string lights.

Rather amazingly, we never had a trip to the emergency room — or even a stapled hand.

Since the last child left home almost 10 years ago, though, it’s been tough getting the lights up. These days, we just put them out on the bushes in front of the house.

For the last few years, Steve and I have gone out anytime between Thanksgiving and a couple of weeks before Christmas and spread lights all over the yard — sometimes on the grass and sometimes on the snow. We then spend several hours testing lights and tossing them on bushes and the smaller trees. We no longer mess with ladders.

Then through Christmas, we enjoy the lights. In fact, we left them up so late after Christmas one year, a neighbor came by and unplugged them. I think it was just before Valentine’s Day.

So this year, I got Steve to help me move the decorations from the attic of the garage on Thanksgiving



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Day with plans to put things up that weekend.

The weekend came, the weekend went and the boxes of decorations sat cluttering up our kitchen and living room.

Then on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Steve left on a trip to Kansas City, Columbia, Mo., and odd places in eastern Kansas.

I was left with a dozen boxes of Christmas decorations and a forecast of approaching storms.

I had to work until 6 p.m. Tuesday, but that night, while it was still relatively balmy, I unpacked outside lights, tested them and started throwing them at shadowy bushes.

I found the orange extension cords in the garage, the controller box and several strings of dead lights. Soon I was ready to plug it all in.

The colored lights on the front bushes looked great. Now all I had to do was connect the white chasing lights on the forsythia beside the house. However, the two plugs I had to connect to each other and the

controller box seemed to be missing those little metal ends. Somewhere on that bush were the right ends, but it was dark and I wasn’t in any mood to pull everything apart. So, I figured I’d go on to the lights on the little 10-foot cedar tree.

I had a new set of lights — 150 new sparklers with two-strand wire. This time, I made sure all the little prongs were at the right end. Unfortunately, they didn’t seem to want to go into the little holes in the next cord — no way, no how. I tried putting an adapter between them. That worked, but when I turned on the power, I could either get the top of the tree lit, or the bottom. Basically, I couldn’t get the new guys to work with the old ones.

It only took me a week and a half to get back to the lights. I just bought new ones for the cedar tree.

Everything is lighted now. It looks great, and it will until sometime after Christmas, when the neighbors get tired of all that holiday cheer and unplug them again.

Reader wants principal for job

To the Editor:

The following letter was sent to all members of the Oberlin School Board:

I am writing concerning the news of the resignation of Mr. (Pat) Cullen as superintendent. At the school board meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. tonight (which is open to the public), you are again presented with an opportunity to improve our school district while also striving to meet required budget cuts.

I am urging you to offer the position (of superintendent) to Duane Dorshorst. He is willing to not only take on the position of superintendent, but also retain his position as principal at Oberlin Elementary School. This alone would make a significant difference in budget cuts, decreasing our administration by one.

If you’d take the time to talk with Mr. Dorshorst, I think he knows exactly how he can be successful

Letters to the Editor

ful at both positions. He has been extremely dedicated to this school system and is one of our greatest strengths. He would bring years of experience with him, not only in administration, but as a teacher, coach and parent of four children who have been through our school system.

He supports all aspects of our district — staff, academics, sports and music. Most of all, he supports our children and strives to provide the best for each and every one of them! We have been extremely lucky not to lose him to another school district which acknowledges his strengths and commitment to excellence in education.

Please don’t let this opportunity to keep him as one of our greatest

assets slip by again! I would ask you to offer him the position — foregoing paying a search fee, again, to find someone “qualified” for our school district. Mr. Dorshorst is not only qualified, he has shown his commitment to our district time and time again.

I urge you to remember you represent the people who elected you. Talk to them, find out how they feel about it! Don’t let your own personal feelings or agenda get in the way of what the people you represent desire.

This is the time to do what is right. You won’t get this opportunity again!

Parent of school students, taxpayer and concerned citizen.
Robyn Rouse, Oberlin

School shouldn’t be shiverfest

To the Editor:

My name is Mark Witt; I live in Great Bend and grew up on a farm northeast of Oberlin. I moved to Great Bend from Oberlin in January 1994. I have several friends and relatives in Oberlin and Decatur County and try to keep up with what is occurring in my hometown.

This weekend I became aware of a situation that has caused me great concern. I was informed that a good portion of the Decatur Community High School building has no heat and has had no heat for some time! I was told that staff and students have to wear coats, gloves and warm clothing in the northern half of the complex.

Why has the school district not

repaired or replaced the malfunctioned heating system and why are they allowing classes to continue in this environment? I just checked the current temperature in Oberlin and it was 0 degrees. I imagine the wind chill factor is several degrees below zero. On Monday morning, what student is going to want to go to a cold school building to try and learn in a freezing environment?

All I have read in *The Oberlin Herald* the past few weeks is the uproar about the school district’s superintendent. It appears to me that the superintendent has been doing his job, but some individuals are upset that his family did not move to Oberlin when he was hired and other issues.

How many citizens in Oberlin work in other communities like Norton, McCook, Jennings, Atwood, etc.? To be fair, shouldn’t these individuals live in the community where they are employed?

These negative comments ... about the school board, teachers, parents and others are not perceived well by those outside of Oberlin and Decatur County.

By the way, now that these individuals have gotten their way with the recent resignation of the superintendent, maybe they could direct their supreme intelligence toward getting the heating system fixed at the high school!

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