

State's actions speak louder than words

One by one, the welfare offices in western Kansas are closing. With them go precious state jobs that likely won't be replaced. Instead of being able to go to an office and talk to a case worker or other professional, Social Services clients now will go to a "kiosk" where forms and pamphlets will be stocked. They'll call a toll-free number and talk with someone they'll never see.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and her staff have done nothing to stop this travesty.

On one hand, the state Department of Commerce says it's trying to help us find more plants and more jobs. On the other, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services takes jobs away.

This is nothing new. The Department of Transportation closed many rural shops a few years ago, taking scarce state jobs out of places like Jennings and Selden. The Highway Patrol consolidated all dispatchers in Salina, creating a staff that most likely will never see the roads they send troopers out to patrol.

It's true that state jobs are not economic development, and it's also true that the state is nearly broke. It needs to cut back and save money wherever it can.

But these consolidations save little, if any, cash. They are designed to create larger offices where workers are all in the same room. That makes them easier to control.

In fact, it's the workers who bear the brunt of these moves. They either have to uproot their families and move across the state, commute long distances to keep their jobs or find other work.

Some veteran highway patrol dispatchers, looking at a move to Salina, simply pulled the pin. Others couldn't afford to retire yet.

Social Services workers are in the same boat. Many will be driving an hour to and from work as they shift to offices in Colby or Hays that will be open.

The department admits it isn't going to save much, if any, money by closing its rural offices. It's just shifting things around.

The fact that small-town Kansas and small-town employees suffer doesn't faze the welfare bureaucrats. Despite pleas from legislators and others, they've crammed their reorganization through.

The end result of all this is more state jobs in Topeka and in places like Hays and Salina.

Topeka has more than enough state jobs already. And while Hays and Salina, Garden City and Wichita might like to have a few more jobs, they don't need them as badly as Norton, Selden, Oberlin, St. Francis or Hoxie.

If the governor does care about the economy in rural Kansas, she should do something.

What's the point of one agency trying to find new jobs while others take state jobs and move them to the cities?

Instead, the state ought to be shifting jobs out of Topeka and into rural Kansas, not just the west, but all over, and not to the places that have jobs, like Garden City or Hays, but to places like Selden and Smith Center, Humbolt, Iola and Ashland. With modern communications, there is no reason why this can't be done.

Rural Kansas has been bleeding population and jobs for years. The state's not to blame for that, but it doesn't have to be part of the problem.

Governor, do you care?

— Steve Haynes

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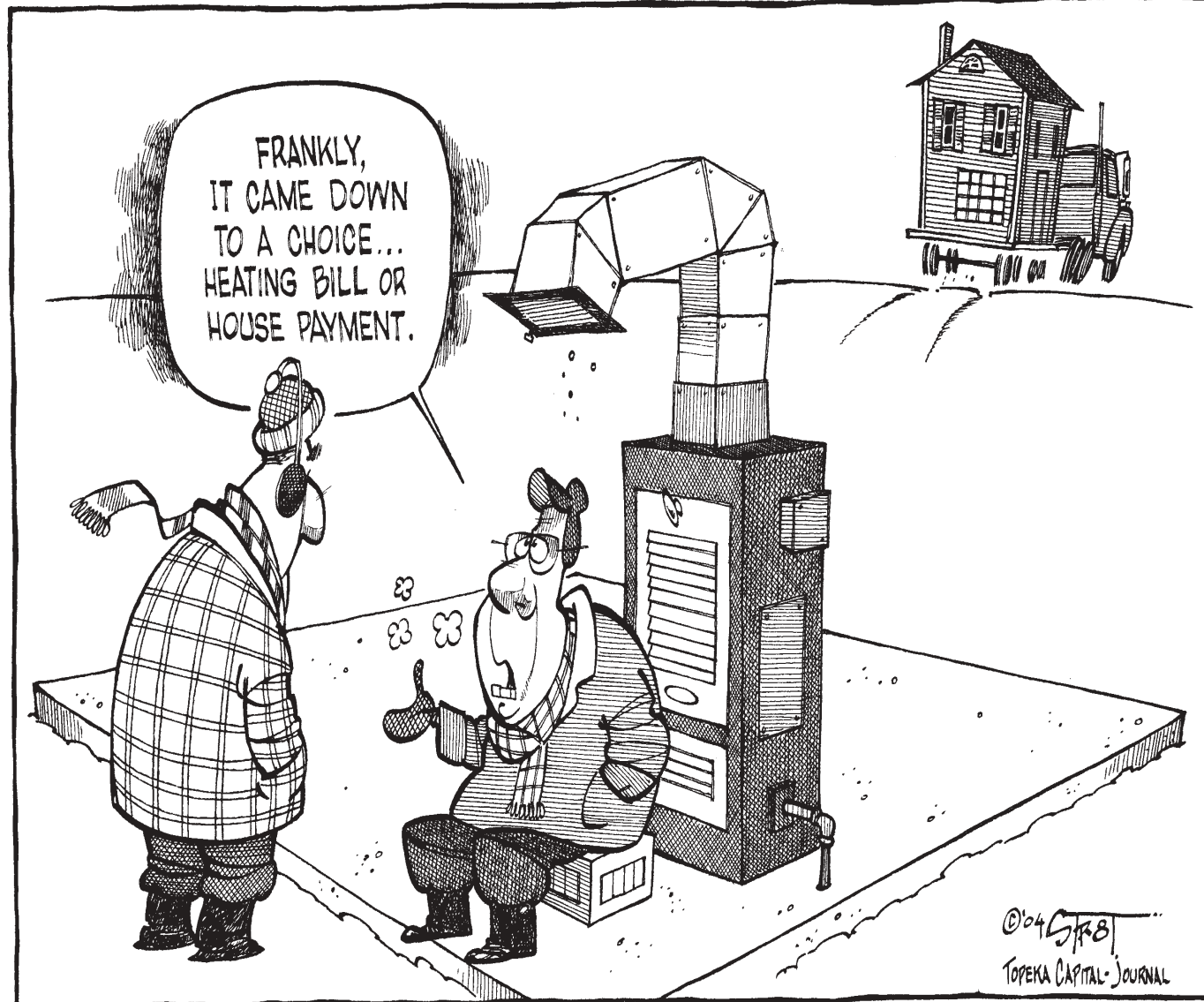
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Doing nothing can take a lot of time

You'd think I didn't have anything better to do this morning than read old e-mails and flip through the channels.

Truth of the matter is, I should be getting ready for work right now, or washing dishes, or doing a load of laundry; anything that is more productive. People say, "Oh, you're so busy." If they only knew, I can waste more time than anyone I know. I will think it'll only take a few minutes to look through a magazine. An hour later I'm still reading recipes and critiquing the "before and after" makeover stories.

You've heard the expression, "If you want something done, find a busy person to do it." Or, find someone like me who will wait until the deadline is almost upon them before they start. I have always said, "I work better under pressure," when, in fact, "under pressure" seems to be the only time I work.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



I hear my friends talk about planning meals. What is that? When we get hungry, I look in the refrigerator. If it's in there, we eat it. Mom was a little the same way. At least she seemed to manage a well-balanced meal. Oh sure, we have a main course. But sometimes it's the only course.

Let's not even talk about cleaning house. I'm a good house "cleaner" but a lousy house "keeper." My goal is simple. Keep a path cleared between the front

door and the kitchen. Anything more aggressive than that, and I get in trouble.

It's not that I don't want a tidy house. I do. It just seems that I'm incapable of actually maintaining that level of order.

Some women can't stand clutter, but clutter is my friend. We get along well. I embrace clutter. I like to think of it as organized clutter. This pile is stuff I want to read; that pile is stuff I have read. Another pile is stuff I don't want to read, but haven't managed to throw away yet.

Thank goodness I'm married to a man who has the same affliction. Jim is like Pigpen in the "Peanuts" comic strip. A cloud of dust follows him wherever he goes.

It's true, Jim has more than his share of clutter around here. The difference is, he has the benefit of the whole outdoors and every storage building on the place to keep his clutter in.

Squirrel stirs up fond memories

Last week, one of my fellow workers went to the front door and there was a squirrel just outside, she tried to get a photo, but the squirrel was too quick. Then another worker came in and said she had to stop in the street because the squirrel was sitting there looking around.

I looked for something to feed it because he should not have been out in the snow, but I didn't have anything but chocolate and I thought the little fellow would not appreciate that as much as I was going to later in the afternoon.

The incident stirred my memory. When I was in the second grade and in country school, there were only a few of us — I don't remember how many, but I do remember going to the creek for a school picnic. We ate and played games and the boys wandered off, climbed a tree and brought a nest of little squirrels.

I know they should not have done that and I remember they got in quite a bit of trouble, but the teacher allowed several of us to take the tiny little squirrels home, because she felt the mother squirrel would not claim them and they certainly were too small to survive on their own.

My sister and I each took one home and begin to feed them milk with eye droppers and then our doll bottles. I would wrap them in a blanket and push them in my doll buggy. Somehow, those two squirrels grew to "adulthood".

My dad made a cage for them and they had to stay outside as they grew, but sometimes my sister and I would "sneak" them into the house and not watch them close enough and they began to chew on my mother's furniture and chewed on one of the piano keys.

One of the squirrels got lost and the neighbor told us later about the wonder-

Memories

Sonya Montgomery



ful "squirrel" dinner he had. Mom tried to console us that it was not our squirrel, but we knew.

The other squirrel which I was sure was mine — I could tell, because he looked different — but, I'm not sure my sister agreed. One day he also had disappeared and we could not find him. Fortunately it was warm

weather and we heard a scratching in the oil heat stove, opened the door and there was a skinny little squirrel that was more soot than fur. He, no doubt, climbed on the roof of the house and fell down the chimney. We fed him, cleaned him up and put him back in the cage.

Well, after the piano key was chewed, it was the last straw and Mom said the

squirrel had to go somewhere. Dad suggested we take him to Norton to the courthouse trees and we finally agreed.

We seldom went to Norton, but everytime I did for a lot of years "Frisky" would come to me and I would take nuts for him and he would run and hide them.

One day J. C. Tillotson saw me petting the squirrel from his upstairs law office and called to me and said to leave "his friend" alone. I assured him it was my squirrel and I would not hurt it. Then it occurred to me that probably a lot of people were feeding Frisky.

I do not recommend squirrels for a pet, but he certainly was my friend for many years. I had other pets, dogs, cats, sheep and even a one-eyed little pig until he dug in my mother's garden, then he had to go to the hog pen with the others.

Children can learn so much from pets, especially if they are required to take full care of them. My children had dogs, cats, white mice, rabbits, sheep and lots of fish. I liked the fish the best.

My oldest son rode his bicycle on his Topeka Daily Capital paper route and his dog would run along side. One morning, a man driving a truck ran over the dog and nearly hit my son. My son thought it was deliberate and I don't doubt him. I cannot imagine why a person could be so cruel.

No longer have a pet and I have told my children if they ever think I need one and they bring one to me, they will return home with the pet in tow.

Thanks again to pets however, for some wonderful memories.

WRITE:

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