

Sebelius could bring true two-party system

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius seems intent on remaking the political landscape of Kansas.

The governor returns again and again to the liberal side of the Republican party for recruits.

First, she named John Moore, a respected Wichita Republican and Cessna Aircraft executive, as her lieutenant governor.

She had Mike Hayden, the Atwood native and former Republican governor, continue as secretary of wildlife and parks. She held over Secretary Janet Schalansky at Social and Rehabilitation Services.

More lately, Sebelius and her Democratic party minions persuaded Paul Morrison, a Johnson County Republican and veteran district attorney, to switch parties and run against the conservative Phill Kline for attorney general.

Now she has named Mark Parkinson of Johnson County as her new running mate. Parkinson is a former Republican legislator and a former state Republican party chairman under Gov. Bill Graves.

What the governor aims at is nothing less than a realignment of Kansas politics, a return to the two party system. She might be doing us all a favor.

For decades now, Kansas has been dominated by an odd political system, more or less a three-party setup with the Democrats only occasionally a player.

The Legislature has been controlled by nominal Republicans for years. Most governors have been Republican. Only when the GOP could not produce decent candidates has the Democrat had a chance.

And then, only exceptional Democrats — the Dockings, father and son; the maverick Joan Finney; the able and appealing Ms. Sebelius — have made the grade.

Because you had to be a Republican to play the game, many young politicians joined the GOP who in other states would have been Democrats. Mark Parkinson and Mike Hayden might just fall into that crowd, but they are legion.

The result was to reinforce the political paradigm: If everyone, liberal or conservative, became a Republican, then there was no future for the Democrats. There were so few of them in Topeka that no one paid any attention, save political reporters seeking to balance a story with a quote or two.

The liberal Republicans — euphemistically referred to as “moderates” in most news stories — have fought with conservatives in the way Republicans and Democrats fight in other states. Both groups allied with the minority Democrats when it suited their purposes. Each has had some success controlling the Legislature, but the liberals have produced more governors.

All that may be about to change.

No one should underestimate Kathleen Sebelius. This woman grew up in the Ohio governor’s mansion. She has an outstanding political mind. Popular and virtually assured of a second term, she has moved to seize the high ground and, perhaps, change the Kansas political landscape for all time.

If she succeeds in drawing off even part of the liberal Republican voters, making them Democrats or even independents, she might just restore the two-party system. And in doing so, she might restore a more “normal” look to Kansas politics.

Freed of its left wing, the Republican party could represent its core constituency, people who believe in economic freedom, smaller government, lower taxes and traditional values.

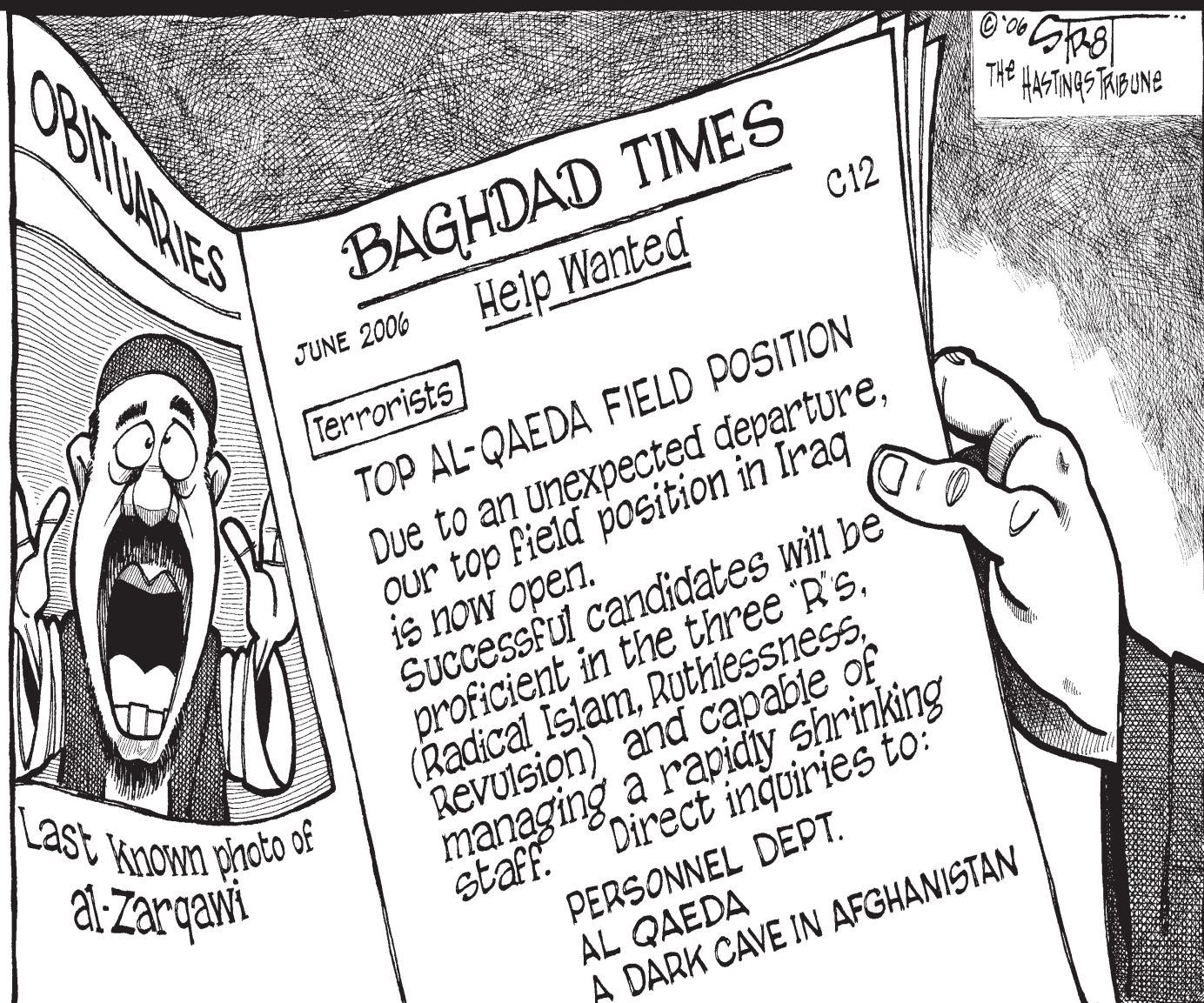
Both parties would have to play to the middle to win, of course, and it’s not likely there would be a clear-cut victory for liberals or conservatives. Extremists on either side would stand little chance of becoming governor.

But Kansans would have a clear choice between parties, rather than dealing with a bloated, but divided, GOP.

It’s the liberal Republican vote that elected Kathleen Sebelius last time, and the same voters will return her to office. The question is, can she and her party make the transition from one-time success to a permanent change?

The betting is, she’ll have four more years to work on it.

—Steve Haynes



Song says, 'Do you hear what I hear'

If you lay quietly, with your ear close to the ground, you’ll be able to hear it. Hear what? The combines rumbling this way, that’s what. Hard to believe, but harvest is literally days away. Driving to work last week, I thought, “When did that happen?”

Wheat fields all along my route had “turned” almost overnight. Now standing golden and ripe. Harvest is done in Texas and custom cutters are moving north. I’ve even heard that wheat in the Wichita area is ready and the prediction for this area is for some test cutting to be underway by the end of next week.

The big question will be was the moisture too little, too late.

—ob—

Our seven-year old granddaughter, Taylor, is coming to spend the month of July with us. I hope there might be a little wheat left to cut when she gets here. She’s never seen a harvest before and I would like for her to get to ride on a combine. Her mom did and she remembers it as a big deal.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



The year my brother, Dick, was working overseas, his wife, Donna, and I, plus her three boys and my two girls cut their wheat. Granted, it was only a few acres, but we thought it was a grand adventure. At least five of us were crammed in the cab of that combine while Donna drove. It’s a wonder she could even see where she was going.

We have two calves (still nameless) for Taylor to feed and water while she’s here. They’re not babies, though, so she’ll miss the fun of bottle-feeding. I won’t though. I don’t feel the least bit bad because they’re big enough to eat grass and grain. Feedings every four to six hours were for the birds.

Jim is starting the second week of a brick-laying job. I think retirement is looking pretty good to him right now. He comes home aching every night. Maybe this is his way of going out in a blaze of glory.

I hope you know that Jim’s idea of retirement is not to quit working, but to merely slow down some. Perhaps be a bit more selective of the kind of work he does. He said I have to quit telling people he’s retiring, because they think he’s not going to take on any jobs. That was never the case.

He is going to finish our house: that’s the first priority, then he’s right back to work. It will be the fall by then and he’s planning to put a new roof on his sister’s house and do some other work for her; I think he has some windows to install; siding to put up; cabinets to build; the list goes on. The hard part will be to get on his list.

So, make your reservations now, and take advantage of his “retirement.”

FROM THE MAILBAG:

'The Da Vinci Code' author tried pulling a fast one

To the Editor,

I have recently been reading with interest different comments in your paper regarding “The Da Vinci Code” book and movie. So that I can comment intelligently, I did attend the opening night of the movie here in Norton. I also bought a copy of the book (the cheapest I could find.)

Let me say first that “historical fiction” is one of my very favorite genres of literature and I am truly a “book-aholic.” In high-quality historical fiction, the foreground characters are usually products of the author’s imagination; but the background historical figures, places, and events should be as bona fide as can be determined from the most authentic and reliable historical records. A principled author and his editors will take great pains to be sure this is so.

Unfortunately Dan Brown, the author of “The Da Vinci Code,” apparently felt that flying fast and loose with historical facts was perfectly acceptable and THAT is the problem with the book. Everyone is welcome to his opinion, but everyone cannot have his own historical facts. What’s true is true whether you believe it or not.

Some say, “It’s fiction! It says “a novel,” right on the cover. (That is true, but only on the hard cover copy; my mass market paperback doesn’t have those words on its cover.)

The problem begins on the page just

before the “Prologue” where in big, bold print it says, “F A C T” beginning a series of so-called facts.

Just following is the statement, “The Priory of Sion” a European secret society founded in 1099, is a real organization. In 1975, Paris’s Bibliotheque Nationale (i.e. national library, added) discovered parchments know as *Les Dossiers Secrets*, identifying numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo da Vinci. This is NOT fact but an extremely clever mixture of fact and fiction.

These documents truly were “discovered” in France’s National Library after they had been forged and planted there by Pierre Plantard who later admitted they were phony. Plantard and some friends “founded” the Priory of Sion as a social club in 1956, to call for more low cost housing in France. After it dissolved in 1957, Plantard kept the name and began producing a series of documents “proving” the existence of a royal bloodline through Mary Magdalene and coming all the way down to (surprise, surprise) himself! Plantard spent time in jail in 1953, for (unrelated) fraud. Then in 1993, in court testimony, Plantard admitted, under oath, that the Priory scheme was a complete hoax. So, forget the 1099 secret society and its list of famous people.

The Opus Dei albino “monk” is also a complete fabrication. From the Opus Dei website you will find they have no monks

and certainly do not practice bloody self-mortifications as Dan Brown’s monk did. However, the written word and movies are such powerful mediums that even I have to admit that I would have had a mental picture of Dan Brown’s creepy, murderous albino monk whenever I heard “Opus Dei” if I hadn’t done a very brief research of the facts on www.opusdei.com.

Dan Brown’s final statement on this page is, “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” Nice try, Mr. Brown. He did get one thing right in his book: Paris IS in France.

If you want to read *The Da Vinci Code* as complete fiction, enjoy it. However, don’t believe a smidgen of the so-called historical “facts” behind it, Biblical or otherwise. My husband, Terry, and I will deal more with the Biblical and Church history errors in “CrossRoads” articles in some future Monday papers if you are interested and they are MANY!

In conclusion, Dan Brown’s editors should truly be ashamed of themselves for letting this piece of work get through the editing process with so many clear historical errors.

I have a feeling Germany, Italy and Japan would have won WW II under their historical scrutiny.

Loving the Truth,
Bonnie Laughlin
Norton

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