

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

They just continue taking jobs away

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 small communities. 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 it's 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
Nor'West Newspapers

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkans.com, fax (785) 462-7749, phone (785) 462-3963. All submissions must contain a signature, address and daytime telephone number. The address and phone number are used for verification only.

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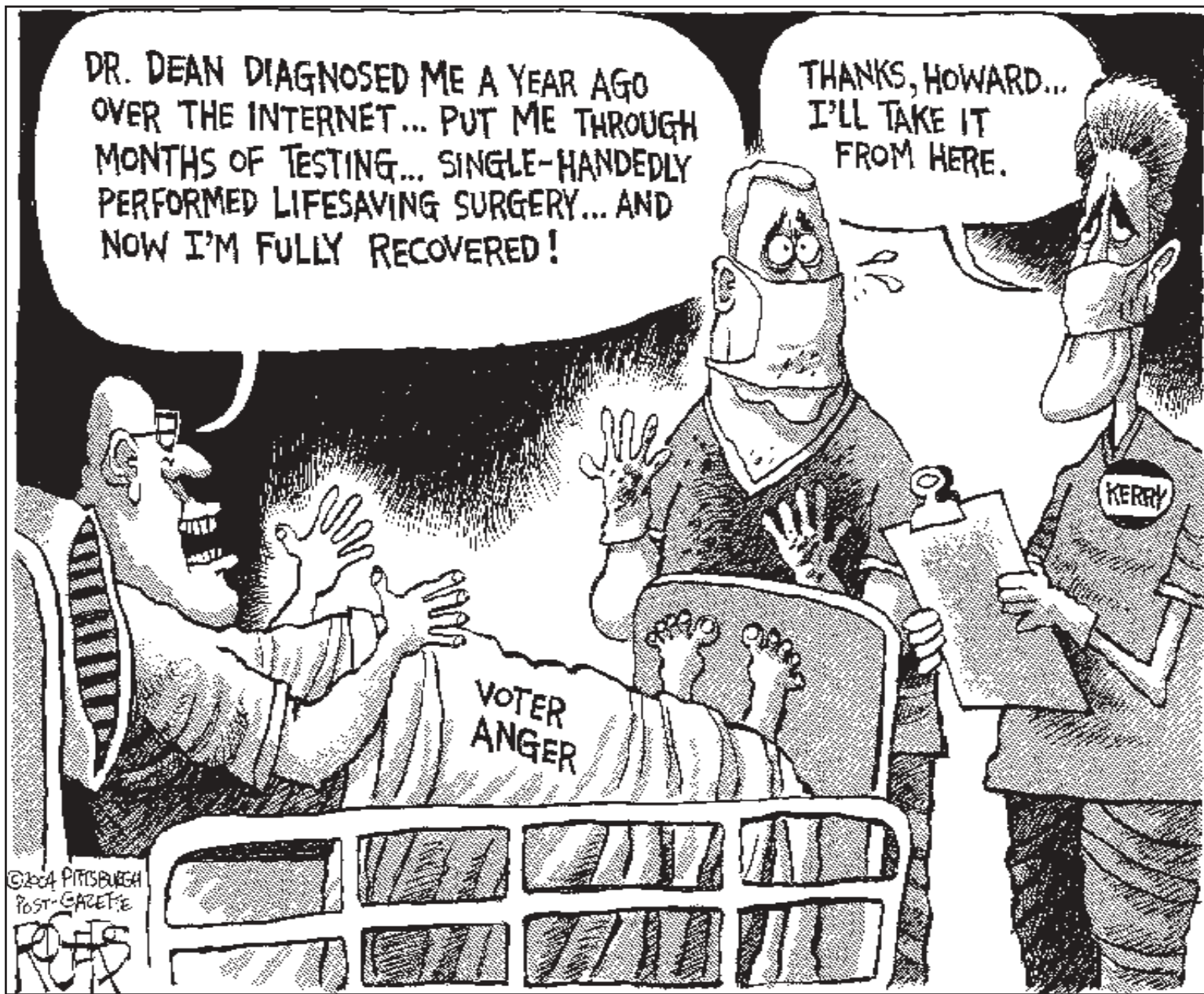
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Looking forward to next week

NEXT week will be a most welcome week. Lance, the oldest of my two sons (he's 33), will arrive at his homebase, Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas, for a leave from his assignment in South Korea. On his birthday, March 31, he will be winging his way back to Korea to finish his assignment, which should bring him back home for good in late August. Shortly after, he and his family — Tobie, Alyssa and Caleb — will move to Spokane, Wash., his next homebase. He's a career Air Force guy and is currently testing for rank of technical sergeant. Next Monday, he will fly from Korea to Dallas, nonstop. I haven't figured out what "next Monday" means — his Monday or our Monday as there is a difference of 15 hours from here to there. If he were to call me at midnight tonight (Wednesday) I know it's 3 o'clock in the afternoon Thursday over there. So, he didn't stipulate on whose Monday he will be flying back. Time will tell.

ICAN well remember my Air Force years — Feb. 1, 1955-Jan. 31, 1963 (four years active/four years reserves) — and my assignment to the Far East — Japan! Misawa, Japan in fact. It lasted for a bit over 24 months with no leave time. First thought after getting off the plane at Tokyo: "What am I doing here?" Then the long, long train ride from Tokyo north to Misawa and covered with coal soot by the time we detrained. My first thought: "What am I doing here?" And to think two years of "what am I doing here." Misawa, however, was an interesting place, home of a couple of American military facilities. I was in the U.S. Air Force Security Service, so what we did was, well...that's what we did. Misawa, at the time — so we were told by Misawans — was a town of around 30,000, but only about the size of Colby. No kidding. They lived differently, well at least in the late 1950s they lived differently. I think it would be fun and interesting to now visit the place I called home for a couple of years. I wonder what the bar girls that served up our drinks then would look like now — some 45+ years later. And, if any of them are still around, if maybe one or two would remember me if I used by "bar name" — a tag I've never repeated after I left that country.

There seems to be no end to the din over Mel Gibson's new movie about Jesus Christ's last hours on earth.

Jewish Rabbis are up in arms claiming the movie will spike new waves of anti-Semitism while the Catholic church is officially trying to distance themselves from the movie while being careful not to appear to be abandoning Gibson, who is one of their own.

Evangelicals are a mixed lot. While most seem to be excited about the project, some are attempting to distance themselves from racism charges, perhaps because of a mistaken view that Israel must be restored before the Christ can return.

One of the common themes in the furor is a shocking lack of understanding of the basic historical record.

First, crucifixion was a torturous form of execution. It was so bad, in fact, that Roman citizens were spared its cruelty. Only barbarians, as the Romans called everybody except them, were to be crucified.

So when we see the reality of scourging, whipping the flesh off the back of the intended victim with a whip affixed with bits of bone or metal, we should be horrified.

There is no way to confront the reality of the crucifixion without being sickened by the cruel jests by the Roman soldiers at the expense of their intended victim. Nor should we ignore the weight of a rough hewn cross and the pain inflicted by the nails, in reality spikes, placed be-



Tom Dreiling

● My Turn

MISAWA was a rural community. Out in no man's land. But not too far from one of the country's most visited ski resorts. That's where I learned I was not cut out to be a skier. There are some things you can do and some things you can't do heading down the slopes. Lesson hard learned. No broken bones. But I felt like my butt was repositioned to my shoulders. Funny feeling. Doctor at the resort just laughed — in Japanese. "You be fine. No worry, GI." Boy, those words were reassuring. But I questioned that laugh — in Japanese.

AS IT turned out, I really got to liking Misawa. Far removed from metropolitan Tokyo, its people were very friendly, "rural friendly" as I like to call those of us who live — not reside, but live — in rural communities. There's a difference. The seasons were much like we have here, except, that is, snowfall was much greater. The countryside was beautiful and visits to surrounding towns awakened this American from Kansas to an existence I never would have believed existed in the land of the Rising Sun. I will always remember my first glimpse of Mount Fuji on Honshu Island southwest of Tokyo. It's the highest peak in that country at just under 12,400 feet. I'll always remember the laughter I brought to a group of houseboys whose job it was to help Americans GI's unload their bags upon arrival at Tokyo International Airport to settle in at a barracks until the train's departure two days later. As we got off the bus taking us from the airport to our temporary quarters that morning, the houseboys greeted us with "Ohh-hio!" — in a quick, snappy way. "No," I yelled, "Kansas!" The reason for the laughter was what

they were saying was "good morning" in Japanese, using a shortened version.

I REALLY didn't intend to babble this much, but when I thought of my son in Korea and how much like Japan it must be from descriptions he relates, these thoughts all came to mind.

POINTS to Ponder (from Fred):

He who wants milk should not sit on a stool in the middle of the pasture expecting the cow to back up to him. — Unknown

Half the lies they tell me aren't true. — Yogi Bera

STEROIDS. Again? I thought we went through this stuff a few years ago, even as it involved athletes in highs schools, and learned a lesson. Guess we didn't. Now it's professional baseball. And I imagine other sports, too. And I imagine even in high school ranks, maybe even junior high. Who knows.

CHICKENS are now taking it in the knees. Remember when they told us to eat fish and chicken instead of red meat? Then they said beef is needed in the diet? Now they are saying watch out how much poultry you eat, it might not be good for you. People, eat. Eat what you want, just don't pig out because that's when you get into trouble. And walk. Do some form of exercise.

HAMBURGERS without buns? They are starting to sell us on that latest craze. Of course they say it's good for you not to cover your burger with a bun, cover it with lettuce! Next they'll be telling us to put salad dressing on ice cream — you know, a Roquefort sundae.

HAVE a good evening! This is Ash Wednesday the beginning of the observance of Lent, leading up to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

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No peace over the Passion



Jay Kelley

● Speaking MyMind

tween the bones of the arm and through the feet of Jesus.

Secondly, we need to remember it was a Roman execution. Pilate, though he tried to wash his hands of the whole thing, is no less culpable than the Jews. Nor are the Roman soldiers who carried out the foul deed.

Thirdly, we need to remember this evil murder was inflicted upon an innocent man at the behest of Caiaphas and the leaders of the Jewish people.

It is a matter of historical fact that the people in Jerusalem, and there were many from other places as well who were there for the Passover, went along and even shouted, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

Those people were as guilty of the murder of Christ as were the German people who stood by and allowed the murder of six million Jews, not counting the Gypsies, Slavs and other ethnic peoples.

Finally, we need to remember Christ's death

is the responsibility of everyone who ever sinned. That is the reason he died; to redeem us from the penalty of sin.

We live in an age where it is fashionable to distance ourselves from responsibility for our actions. In reality, our age is not so much different than any other. Man has sought to claim himself as a victim ever since Cain killed his brother and complained the punishment for that act was too harsh.

I will go see the movie. I will actually probably be impressed, though I am prepared for some historical inaccuracies. Gibson is, after all, a product of Hollywood.

As for those who are trying to stop the movie, they are no different than people of every age. It is not the crucifixion, or even the possibility of taking blame for something that happened many centuries ago that bothers them.

It is the fact that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ demands a response. One cannot hear the gospel story and not respond in some way, whether positive or negative.

Anyway you look at it, we all killed Christ. He allowed us to kill him so we wouldn't have to die for our own sins.

Wouldn't it be a waste if we didn't take advantage of the offer?

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