

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

And how did you view the press conference?

President Bush went before the cameras Tuesday night to update the American people on the situation in Iraq. It wasn't pretty. But his message was clear: we are there to see this thing through.

That declaration was no surprise. He has said all along that the U.S. won't cut and run. He also felt comparisons of Iraq with Vietnam serve no good purpose and, in fact, sends a mixed message to our fighting forces and to those shooting at us in Iraq. Can't argue that point.

President Bush was making reference to Sen. Ted Kennedy's sickening attempt to tag Iraq as "President Bush's Vietnam." What a sick mind he (Kennedy) has. Ted Kennedy should be seen and not heard. Isn't he the guy who was involved in a deadly accident on a bridge many years ago, resulting in the drowning of a female passenger? Many of us have not forgotten. He should have had to serve time, but political power and influence as a member of one of the country's wealthiest families prevented clinker time for this party guy of the past.

President Bush was not comfortable at his only third presidential news conference as he faced questioning from the White House press corps. They were tough questions, there was hesitation on his part to find answers to some of them. And some questions never brought a direct response.

How he performed is a matter for each viewer to decide. From this corner we were satisfied with the way he handled it. Too many people try to compare him with President Clinton who was Mr. Smooth whenever he was in the public spotlight. These two guys are as different as night and day.

We know, from the press conference, that perhaps as many as 20,000 more American men and women will see battle time in Iraq as Mr. Bush assured his top generals that what they need is what they will get.

We know, from the press conference, that President Bush was well aware that this past week, in particular, was not a good week for us over there (Iraq).

We know, from the press conference, that he's on a mission and will see it through, if that be the wishes of the electorate on Nov. 2.

Some talking heads billed last night's press conference as a "do-or-die" situation for Mr. Bush. We thought that was overkill. It was important, but at this early time in the campaign it is doubtless anyone made up their mind on what they are going to do in the polling booth in November on the basis of one presidential news conference.

Mr. Bush was pressured into holding the press meeting by his very own White House. Polls this week show Mr. Bush trailing Sen. John Kerry, 50-43 percent. That'll cause hair to turn gray.

But a lot of things can happen between now and Nov. 2.
Tom (TD) Dreiling
Free Press Publisher

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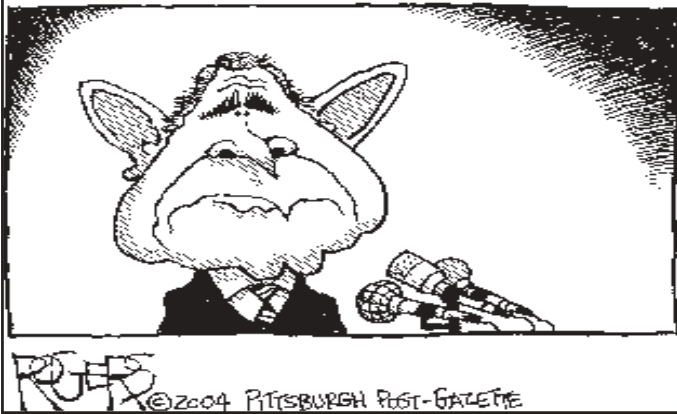
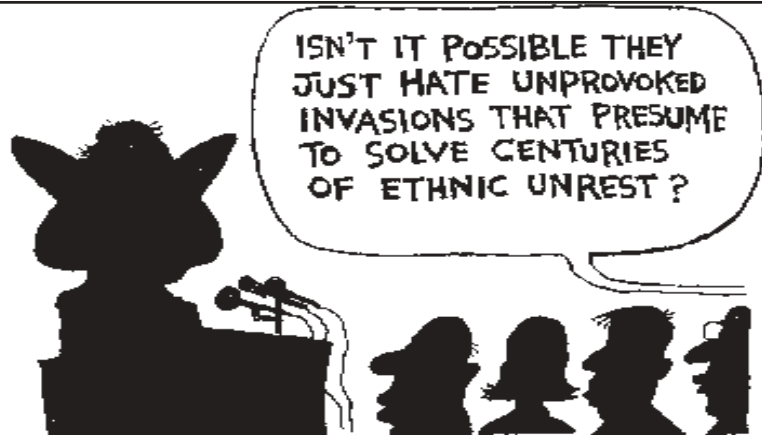
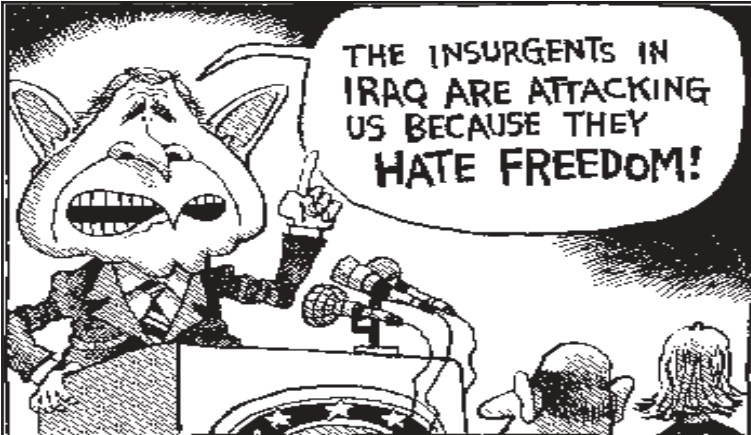
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9/11 Commission a good thing

IF you, like me, are watching evening C-Span reruns of the day's 9/11 Commission hearings, you have to come away from this week's edition with one message: the FBI and CIA were engaged in that old kid tease, "I know something you don't know!"

And what a shame that is.

I never in my wildest dreams thought those two agencies were as adrift from one another as they were — and probably still are.

If what we are hearing is an accurate portrayal of the bad blood that exists between these snoopers and intelligence folks, then it is easy to understand the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

It just goes to show that we are an arrogant society, we think we are untouchable, we aren't overly serious about serious matters and, in fact, we were nothing more than sitting ducks awaiting the exact time for the hunters to pull the trigger.

I have never blamed President Clinton and would never blame President Bush for what happened.

But I would blame those in whose hands — security wise — our very survival rests. And the data they provided President Clinton and President Bush on which to act was almost laughable, if it wasn't for the thousands of American lives lost in the attack of Sept. 11, 2001.

Connecting dots is easier to do after the fact. But aren't these supposed to be the most brilliant minds on the planet? Apparently they weren't. And from the lack of cooperation between the



Tom Dreiling

• My Turn

FBI and the CIA should be a real eye opener for all of us.

Blame some of this on the ever growing federal bureaucracy. It is so large — so, so large — that it is impossible to manage. There are just too many voices in the mix and this clouds the picture. In this case, more is not better.

I'm glad for the 9/11 Commission hearings. Sometimes the panel members are letting their political colors show, but all the while we are getting a real picture of how events like 9/11 were allowed to happen.

Heads need to roll. And I kind of feel like we are going to see some of those spin right on out onto the street after the Commission's report is issued in late July.

Something needs to be done to bring these two agencies back to reality, and back to the table of communication.

If not, hold onto your seats.

KINDNESS is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. —Mark Twain

THAT most welcomed snowfall overnight Sunday was such a beautiful sight. And it should not have come as a surprise. After all, snow falls here as late as mid-May, and in some instances it has even fallen in late May. Although not with regularity, we aren't out of the snow woods this early in the spring. As long as it's moisture, bring it on!

AN elderly gentleman was on the operating table awaiting surgery and he insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. As he was about to get the anesthesia he asked to speak to his son.

"Yes, Dad, what is it?" the son inquired.

"Don't be nervous, son," the old man said. "Do your best and just remember, if it doesn't go well, if something happens to me ...your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife...."

SPEAKING of aging...the older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for.

THERE will be a lot of young people in town on Thursday. Colby is the site of the "State Large Group Music Festival" at the high school all day.

HAVE a good evening!

Tom Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays.

I need to hear from you

To my constituents in the 121st District:

I today read an article in the "Hoxie Sentinel" written by Mr. Jim McDaniel, Superintendent of the Hoxie Schools. He ended that article saying "It is time for district patrons to express to area legislators how they feel about our schools." Since I represent the 121st district I agree and would very much like for you to send me a letter to PO Box 366, Colby, Kan. 67701 or email to jmmorriso@ink.org your thoughts regarding funding for our schools.

I really need to know the support there is for increasing income and sales taxes to support education in Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and Graham counties. Most all the information I receive says "Do NOT raise my taxes!" I really think people need to reconsider that statement. Our taxes are being raised every year. Look at your property tax statement. Are you paying less now than you did previously? How much more in property tax are you paying now than you did five years ago? In my view that is the most onerous of taxes.

Property tax is not based at all on ability to pay. Income tax is based on earned income and sales tax is based on purchases. State increases in sales and income tax are used to offset our need for increased property taxes. Hoxie, if the schools do not get some help may have to increase the LOB by as much as 11 mills! If the State of Kansas does what it should that raise will not be necessary.

If the Legislature does increase taxes, as I earlier mentioned, then there just might not be a need to raise local property taxes. That will likely result in your paying less, not more, tax than you do now or will in the near future.

I strongly support more help for education including increased funding. I have voted to increase spending for schools this year and will continue to do so. Jim McDaniel is correct when he says I voted yes on this last vote to support an increase in funding for education. That "yes" vote was to send it on to a final vote the next day. It would not have passed without my "yes" vote so there would not have been any final action on the increase.



Jim Morrison

• Capitol Review

The next day I was on the phone with Mr. McDaniel as the vote was taking place and explained to him that if the vote to pass when the vote was closed was 68 or more that I would change my vote to a "no." It had 77 votes for passage so I switched to a "no" vote knowing that the passage was secured.

I am not going to take time to explain why I did that but people need to think about politics as the game of baseball. Sometimes to win the game a hitter must make a sacrifice out to get the final run in. The Senate then rejected to bill as "too much" spending. They also rejected our earlier bill that increased about 50 million. At least the House agrees with me that there needs to be more spent for education and other services to people.

Being a Legislator is incredibly hard work and requires ability to gain consensus to get required votes for issues to pass. We work all year helping people in our districts with problems in state agencies. It is a full time job, somewhat stressful and actually will cost a western Kansas legislator out-of-pocket-money to represent their district. Most are surprised to learn it can cost as much as \$4,000 or so out of pocket to represent the district. I do not mind and love the job and contact with people. I need your help now and I do not frequently ask anything from my constituents. This is, however, very important.

The future of our communities lies in the health of our community health care system, schools and businesses. These are things people moving to the area first look at. How good are the schools, health care systems and how is local business doing.

Throughout my district one of the largest

employers and source of income is education. Putting more money into the business of education helps the local business community and health community. In fact, in some areas the schools ARE the primary economy. We do not get the increases in funding that the larger schools do because we do not build new schools nor have the bilingual problems that others who receive extra money that is counted in the "increased" expenditure for education by the state.

Our schools are actually losing money and having to do away with programs and teachers. That snowballs into reduction in the local economy that forces a raise in the local property tax and an increase in the Local Option Budget. Simply put, the schools need more money and I know that and have always supported that. You may see some votes that do not reflect what you might consider a reflection of support but you need to see the entire game and what I do as a player to fully realize that a NO sometimes means a YES for a later issue of greater importance. Politics is not for the faint of heart or for someone that can only provide part-time involvement. At least for us in rural Kansas the legislature is a full time commitment.

So how can you help? Send me notes, emails, letters expressing your support of more money for education which includes a state tax increase. I need to know what taxes in which you would support an increase or that you absolutely will not support me voting for any state tax increase — remember, local taxes will have to be raised if we (the state) do not do something to help, so simply say you do not want a tax increase will not be acceptable.

Tell me what taxes you would support, knowing that a increase is likely inevitable. Local property taxes must be raised if the State of Kansas does not increase the spending for schools and for other programs to help people.

But that helping people is another long subject.

Sincerely,

Jim Morrison
Representative 121st district
(Letter #22)

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

