

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Is Regionalism a thing to come?

Ideas are hard to change. Years old competitiveness between towns may not be in everyone's best interests as the 21st Century progresses.

I know there is a certain amount of booing and hissing when Colby or Goodland or Oakley gets a new business instead of them. The best would be that each town is recruiting different businesses not competing against each other.

I have not seen any predictions that populations will not continue to decrease as well as age. Do we need to capitalize on this area as a haven for the older members of our population?

This might favorably impact health care and increase those types of jobs. In our wildest dreams maybe they would bring their families with children to ease the burden of declining numbers in our schools.

If we take a regional approach to development, do we get along and trust each other to use one person much less one office. Where would we locate it?

If fuel costs continue to rise will people be able to afford to live in a different town than they work? Our debates on time and miles commuting pale in reference to what is the norm in large metropolitan areas.

Change is a scary subject. Do we face change head on so we have some input or ignore it and whine that no one asked?

A discussion on regionalism is a long way from just having water to drink, a dry place to be and food to eat after Katrina. May we count our blessings.

— *Pat Schiefen*  
*Free Press Interim Publisher*

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 [pjschiefen@nwkansas.com](mailto:pjschiefen@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com).

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### Finding what we lost

As bad as the picture seems to be in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we should probably take time to step back and evaluate some things.

In spite of the effects of a level 4 hurricane hitting a major population center which also happens to be mostly below sea level about a week ago, recovery efforts are already beginning to bear fruit.

In spite of having a large portion of their manpower among the missing, the New Orleans police and fire departments are managing, with the help of the army, to bring order from the chaos.

We need to remember that the police and firefighters did not choose to stay so they could loot or pillage, nor did they stay out of false bravado. They stayed simply because it was their job.

Many of them probably had the means to leave, but because not everyone could go — or would go — they stayed.

We might also do well to remember that, in spite of the oppressive heat and lack of even basic needs, there were those who did not loot, plunder or assault their neighbors.

It is easy to complain about what was and is wrong with the response to this event. The plain and simple truth is no plan survives first contact.

In other words, there are things wrong with the plan that were known about, but not corrected for whatever reason and there are things wrong with the plan that no one saw until



#### Jay Kelley • Speaking MyMind

Katrina was upon the cities of our gulf coast.

It is also easy for the mayor of New Orleans and the governor of Louisiana to decry the federal response to the disaster.

It gives them a two-fold benefit: popularity for the next election and diversion of attention away from their own failures.

In the end, much of what went wrong was the decay of our civilization.

When the thin veneer of civilized accouterments — running water, indoor plumbing and air conditioning — was removed, many became no better than animals.

In the same way, however, much of what went right was in the area of civilization as well. In spite of the same barriers, some helped one another get through.

The unfortunate part is that those helping often seemed to be the ones being attacked.

It seemed as though everyone else, including the local elected officials, were too busy whining about what they didn't have and why doesn't someone do something.

The real downside to all the political jock-

eying is that it will ensure that nothing is actually learned from the incident.

In the first place, any critique which puts any responsibility for preparation at the local level (remember folks, this is supposed to be a republic, not a democracy) will get shoved under the table because expecting Big Brother to bail us out has become the only thing in politics that is really bipartisan.

In the second place, we seem to have forgotten that God is bigger than us.

Oh, I know some of us don't like to think about God sending hurricanes and tornadoes and such, but if it happens, he at least allowed it.

Maybe that's what we should be learning. We can only remove God from our homes, our schools and our lives at our peril.

We seem to think our technological prowess can insulate us from any antiquated conventions the Almighty might want us to follow.

Yes, we'll rebuild New Orleans and we should. It has been the major seaport on the coast since long before even Packingham and Jackson squared off and we need a seaport on the Mississippi River.

We need to remember, however, that it isn't there because we did it. It's there because he allowed it.

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### What happened?

#### Ken Poland

##### • Ken's World

reason, to engage in that, apparently, hopeless endeavor. We neither had sufficient numbers of military personnel on active duty nor were they adequately equipped for the aftermath of the initial invasion. National Guard units have been called in to try filling that gap. This has left inadequate personnel to respond to local emergency situations. Can three years of dependence upon emergency standby resources be defended when we are involved in foreign local affairs? We were not invited, we had inadequate intelligence, we defied the United Nations and all of our major allies, and we stubbornly declare "We will stay the course".

I am going to make a statement here that I will, most likely figuratively if not literally, be cursed and spat upon for making. We are treating our honorable military personnel like rats on a sinking ship. If we are going to "stay the course" then call on the home folks to start sacrificing time and resources to adequately fund and equip our troops. We must send in the troop numbers needed, even if it requires reinstitution of the draft and calling the elite and privileged as well as the common folks. If we can't afford the cost, then we must reverse the tax reductions and adequately assess taxes to meet the financial cost. We must declare in definitive terms what our ultimate goal is and how we are going to measure when that goal has been reached. When the defense team (we call them insurgents) become the offensive team and attempt to recover what

they have lost, we must face the reality of what the ongoing cost will be to defend that goal.

The emergency situation in the Gulf Coast region is primarily a local situation. The rest of the nation will feel the effects of that emergency, as you have already observed by the increase in fuel prices. Northwest Kansas agricultural interests will be negatively effected in a very dramatic way. Our livelihood is, almost, totally dependent upon production and distribution of grain and livestock products. The initial emergency is not threatening our survival or safety. Our responsibility to this disaster is a compassionate concern for the welfare of our fellowman. It is easy for me to question that man's intelligence for living in the path of such destructive forces or for choosing to build in flood prone areas. But, God has not commanded me to judge my fellow man. He has commanded me to show compassion and reflect His love. My health, financial worries and the pressure of time limitations to get my seasonal work completed in timely fashion pales in comparison to what those masses of people are facing today.

We must respond to the pleas of those people and their elected officials with whatever they ask or need, without judgmental declarations of blame or excuse. No matter what our theological faith or political affiliation is, we must hear the plea of those people. If you claim Christianity, your God hears their plea and he expects you to be the hands and feet that deliver evidence of his love and compassion.

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The awesome power of nature quite often does to man what a fly swatter does to the house fly. We seem to have an exaggerated opinion of the power of man to defy nature and come out the winner. In reality, I think, we are inclined to read the eighth chapter of Psalms and only remember verses 5 and 6. Did God promise to bless man if man determined that lord dominion meant he could plunder the resources of nature?

Man has cut down forests, drained swamp lands, paved vast areas, dug diversion ditches to change the course of natural flow, built levees or dikes to hold water out of natural overflow basins, plowed fragile landscapes, and the examples can go on and on. Incidentally, much of this has been done with the hope of enriching the developers pockets, not necessarily to meet critical needs of mankind.

When disaster strikes, e.g. Katrina, we are overwhelmed. Those types of disaster bring out the best and the worst responses of man. Man's best laid plans are always inadequate, when such disasters strike. Our response is, all too often, a "cover my butt" by political operatives. A battle over who is in charge of what ensues. Quite often a quick reversal of who has or should have authority to do what is the defense to excuse responsibility. The National powers say they can't act without formal request from Local powers and Local powers blame Federal rules and regulations to excuse the Local failures.

What constitutes a national emergency? Who has authority over our "National Guard"? — Governors or Presidents — has often been debated. Is the present situation in Iraq a national emergency? We chose the time for invasion. We were not adequately prepared, for what ever the

#### Doonesbury

##### • Gary Trudeau

