

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Free market worked to regulate supply

Little noticed amidst the cries about higher fuel prices is the fact that the free market worked well to regulate supply and prices as Mother Nature delivered shock after shock to the system.

First is was Hurricane Katrina, which shut down as much as 10 percent of the nation's refining capacity and much of the oil production in the Gulf of Mexico.

Then came Rita, spreading the damage west into Texas at a time when many of the Louisiana refineries were just coming back.

The two combined to push high gasoline prices to near-record levels. Pipelines serving the southeast were shut down, causing some shortages. Within days, though, everything was working well and the price headed back down.

The market really is a marvel. As Katrina hit, with rumors of shortages and higher prices, people rushed out to fill their tanks. The price shot up, discouraging hoarding, and people stopped buying.

Any dealer who thought he could get \$5 found out quickly that he was wrong. Any merchant who tried to hold prices down quickly ran out of gas.

Then the nation flexed its limbs and discovered that, though bruised and battered, it was whole. Prices started to decline.

Rita came with another blow, but people are used to the drill now. Prices have not jumped anywhere near Katrina levels.

Contrast this with the 1970s, when the government slapped price controls on fuel and suddenly, no one could buy gasoline. Drivers had to line up at stations that often ran out of gas. Supply was precious. The country was in a panic, and we wound up with the 55 mph speed limit.

Price controls are never a good solution. They're inflexible and bound to create shortages. Government rationing is inefficient and prone to corruption.

Despite cries about prices and profiteering, the fact is, the market works. It responds quickly and with great flexibility.

As oil gets more scarce and demand continues to rise, we can count on the market to ration the supply without intervention. There is no grand conspiracy to prosecute.

While the government has failed to push us toward alternative fuels, they're out there. When the price is right, industry will develop them — and we'll buy them.

China and India are major drivers in the higher price of fuel. Their economies are awakening and demanding more oil.

It's not correct to say that we'll run out of oil. There'll always be some, but as supply goes down, the price will go up.

As that happens, we'll find alternatives. Society isn't going to give up the things we love: electricity, communications, entertainment, industry. We need not fear for the future.

The market is there to save us.

Steve Haynes

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 pjschiefien@nwkansans.com or pdecker@nwkansans.com.

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### Most politicians have not been in combat

I was, recently visiting with an old friend about the end of the war with Japan. He had been in the European theater and they were aboard ship heading for the U.S. and then on to Japan, when they received the news. He's normally not very emotional, but he kind of choked up when he was talking about the experience. He said the feeling was impossible to describe or relay. Very few of our veterans who experienced actual combat conditions like to talk about those experiences.

Our politicians and even most of the military brass that are pushing our present conflict have never experienced, hands on, what war is really like. The majority of them have never known the uncertainty of what day light or night fall will bring. They have never experienced the frustration of reading the orders, cut and delivered from the safety of the equivalent to our pentagon building, today. Their families have not waved good bye to them along the siding as the long troop train pulled away — knowing that the destination would be the front lines. Most of the politicians and brass, have never had to pick up the tags and personal belonging of a buddy, who never made it out of the fox hole. Political privilege is a fact and there is no question that our military is represented by, mostly, the middle to lower income and less influential families in our society.

When they talk of the patriotism of our military, they have no idea of the real meaning of

#### Ken Poland

#### • Ken's World

patriotic duty that puts a person in places and positions without knowing if support or backup will arrive as scheduled. A very small percentage of our military personnel think combat duty is glorious. I don't hear or see very many of those political leaders, military brass and bureaucrats, who have actually experienced the down and dirty of war in the field, glorifying war, regardless of why we are in conflict.

And, no, I cannot speak from experience, myself. I was too young for Korea and too old for Vietnam. I can identify with the waiting on the siding for the arrival or departure of troop trains. I can identify with the anxiety when too much time had elapsed since the last correspondence.

My oldest brother served in WW2 and two brothers served during the Korean conflict. I had a very close uncle, who shipped out with one of the first Sea Bee units headed for the South Pacific to build run ways and bases for

the military units as we began our slow and costly recovery of territory. We lived in constant fear of the arrival of the dreaded telegram or messenger that would bring unwelcome news. Thank God, we never experienced that call or message. I have a son-in-law who left his wife and children in Germany and answered his call to service in Iraq.

Regarding the war in Iraq: We rejoice in the fact that we are not among the nearly two thousand families who have received notification of the supreme sacrifice or the over ten thousand families who have welcomed home the severely maimed. Those numbers have been hyped as being insignificant in comparison with statistics from earlier wars and conflicts. I'm quite sure they are not insignificant to the families and individuals who have felt the anguish and pain of their loss.

I will express my deep appreciation and gratitude to those who have served honorably, some who sacrificed their lives.

Have very little respect for an administration that has relied upon deceit and emotional rhetoric to justify a war that appears to have very little chance of any lasting benefit and no end in sight. Neither can I think that God looks down with approval as we settle our differences with military might.

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### Farming, ranching bestows dignity

Think of farmers and ranchers and this old, often forgotten tribute comes to mind. It fits farmers like seed in the soil or ranchers like a new-born calf takes to its mother's udder.

I've often heard friends, neighbors and family — my dad for one — quote bits and pieces of it. I've heard others refer to it at meetings, in church, at a sale barn, funerals and many other places where rural people live, work and congregate. It exemplifies the farm and ranch vocation. It goes something like this.

A man's greatest possession is his dignity and no calling bestows this more abundantly than farming. Hard work and honest sweat are the building blocks of a person's character.

Farming and ranching, despite its hardships and disappointments, is the most honest and honorable way a man/woman can spend days on this earth. The vocation of agriculture nurtures the close family ties that make life rich in ways money can't buy.

Children who are raised on a farm or ranch

#### John Schlageck

#### • Guest Commentary

earn values that last a lifetime that can be learned no other way. Farming and ranching provides education for life and no other occupation teaches so much about birth, growth and maturity in such a variety of ways.

Without question, many of the best things in life are free — the splendor of a sunrise, the rapture of wide open spaces, the exhilarating sight of the landscape greening each spring — true happiness comes from watching crops ripen in the field, watching children grow tall in the sun, seeing your whole family feel the

pride that springs from their shared experience living, working and harvesting from the land.

Farmers and ranchers believe that through their shared vocation they are giving more to the world than they are taking from it — and honor and privilege that does not come to all men or women.

Agricultural producers believe their lives will be measured ultimately by what they have done for their fellow men/women and by this standard, fear no judgment.

They believe when they grow old and sum up their days, they will stand tall and feel pride in the life they've lived. Farmers and ranchers believe in their vocation because it makes all of this possible.

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John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of Kansas Living, a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

### Doonesbury

#### • Gary Trudeau

