

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Wait it out or act now?

From The Hutchinson News

The decline of stream flow in western Kansas' biggest river, the Arkansas, is not just about droughts and overuse in Colorado. It is not just what happens on the surface.

The drying of the Arkansas is about what we have done to what once was considered a "vast underground ocean," a great resource of groundwater that seemingly would sustain agriculture forever. Today it is a resource in peril.

The nation's fourth-longest river, mighty as it emerges from high in the Rockies at Leadville, Colo., goes dry through much of western Kansas. ...

Precipitation makes a difference, but this story is more about how irrigation farming - in Kansas the same as in Colorado - has sucked the Ogallala Aquifer dangerously dry. ...

The story of the Ark is a sad one. But it is not irreversible. State officials and lawmakers, however, must view the decline of the Ark - and correspondingly the death of vegetation and disappearance of wildlife - as clear evidence of poor water management. And then vow to change practices.

Ideas to pay farmers not to water are a start. But far more aggressive efforts will be needed, and the state may have to go to court over constitutional issues ultimately to curtail irrigation farming.

And of course, not irrigating is painful, too. Agriculture has been the lifeblood of western Kansas. But again, we see one more reason why rural Kansas economies must diversify.

Or, we can just wait this out. But be sure, now or later, irrigation will be over in western Kansas. Whether the state takes action to curtail irrigation or we wait until the water is gone, irrigation farming is not a long-term industry for western Kansas.

The benefit of doing something about it now is that western Kansas could remain habitable for other pursuits.

A healthy, flowing Arkansas River would be a pleasing sight, too.

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature.

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 jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com or pdecker@nwkanssas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkanssas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tc Cox@nwkanssas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkanssas.com

Kristi Powell - Advertising Sales

kpowell@nwkanssas.com

Emily Wederski - Advertising Sales

ewederski@nwkanssas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping, Ad Building

japplegate@nwkanssas.com

Everett Robert - Circulation, Classifieds

erobert@nwkanssas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkanssas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

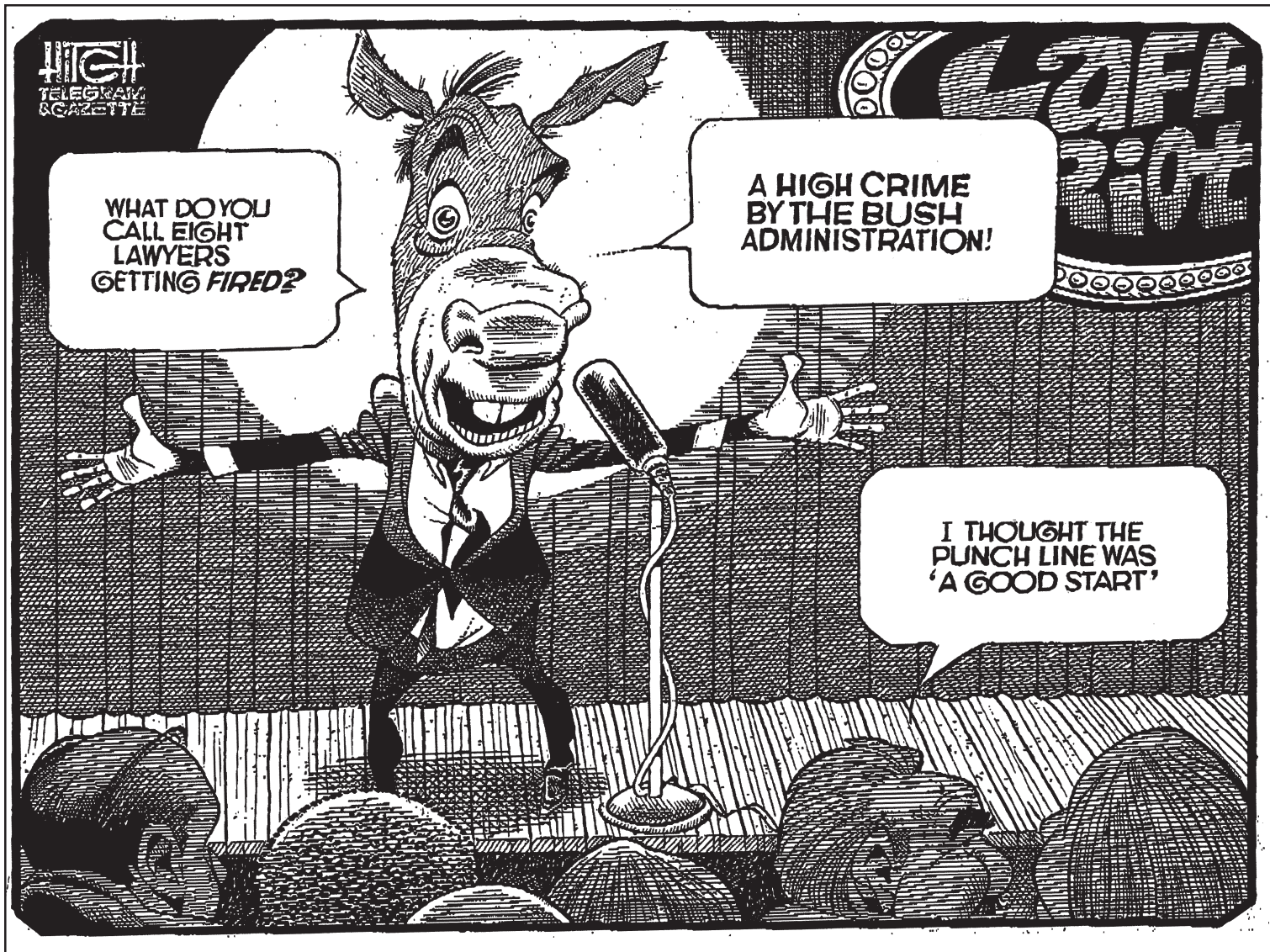
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Last laughs



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

about, the one that fooled millions didn't happen on April Fool's Day, but Oct. 30, 1938.

Orson Welles and the infamous radio broadcast of H.G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" scared the living daylights out of the country.

That one was only accomplished because of radio.

Now, with the Internet, almost anything is possible.

How can anyone forget the Y2K scare a few years ago?

On Wikipedia, it's almost April 1 everyday. It's a place where anyone and everyone can share their knowledge and update entries on almost anything.

The latest snafu on that Web site was a couple of weeks ago when somebody edited the entry for comedian Sinbad to say that he had died of a heart attack. Thing is, he's alive and well.

I've even experienced a hoax myself. It was a few years back, when I was living in Colorado. One of the radio stations, KTCL, was broadcasting that U2 was performing at a corner in downtown Denver.

People were calling in a panic, asking how long they were going to be there. Well, we figured out pretty quick they weren't there, because of the date, April 1, and the street corner was

actually two streets that ran parallel to each other.

It still brings a smile to my face, but it also makes me wonder why people are so well, gullible.

A cottage industry had developed on the Internet dedicated to debunking hoaxes of all kinds.

The biggest Web sites are snopes.com and urbanlegends.about.com, which both deal with urban legends and hoaxes, and museumofhoaxes.com, which details hoaxes from the 1700s to now.

It also lists the top 100 April Fools hoaxes of all time. The No. 1 hoax is Swiss Spaghetti Harvest of 1957: "In 1957 the respected BBC news show *Panorama* announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in, and many called up wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti trees."

Number 4 on the list came from 1996 when Taco Bell allegedly purchased the Liberty Bell from the government, and renamed it the Taco Liberty Bell.

There are too many good ones to list here.

I did learn a lesson this year. Watch out when it's April 1. You never know when someone will pull a fast one.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tc Cox@nwkanssas.com.

Time to decide



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

us go and we are leaving Iraq like a dog with his tail between his legs, will they be happy.

The story of the British 44th foot in Afghanistan about 150 years ago should tell us something. After an unsuccessful occupation wherein political rather than military means were used to pacify an occupied country, they tried to retreat and were hounded by the Afghans until they were finally wiped out in a battle that made the Little Bighorn look like a family squabble.

The technology is different today, but the game is the same. We are faced with two immediate choices — either decide to win or get out.

If we get out, we need to do it now. No timetable, no phased withdrawal and no pullback. Just get ourselves and as many of our allies out as possible in as little time as possible and deal with the repercussions (can anyone say \$5 gasoline?)

If not, we have to decide to win. That means a couple of things. First, we have to decide that we are not just staying until Iraq and Afghani-

One is tempted to wonder what game the Iranians are playing when they abduct 15 or so British sailors and marines just months before the United Kingdom begins a phased pull-out that will leave the Iraqi-Iranian border lightly guarded at best.

It almost seems a diplomatic faux pas on a grand scale. After all, they have the British, and the Americans, on the ropes. We are tired of the fighting and all we hear at home is the call to get out of Iraq. Why not let us leave and go right on doing what they have been doing?

Maybe they believe they haven't sufficiently whipped us, yet. You see, our whiners are ready to come home, but our troops are still willing to fight. We are clamoring to leave, but we are still deluding ourselves that it is on our terms.

We can still dupe ourselves that it wasn't cowardice on the part of our people and our elected representatives that lost this war — it was just a bad plan by a poorly advised and none-too-bright president.

Never mind that it's absolute rubbish. That's what we'll tell ourselves, if we are given the chance. But, if the Iranians and the insurgents and Al Qaeda continue to ramp things up just when we are getting ready to leave, they will bleed us dry until we are revealed for what they think we are — a paper tiger.

It is only when we are begging for them to let

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

