



Free Press Viewpoint

State socialism still not the answer

The bailout bill for the "Big Three" automakers died last week when Republicans in Congress refused to bow to union pressure over a wage deal.

Everyone involved lamented the fact that a deal was maybe minutes away when the talks broke down, and the bailout may not be dead.

Many will see the Republicans as risking the entire economy here, but there's an important principal at stake. That is whether the car makers will be propped up to serve only as job generators, or whether they will be revived as competitive enterprises.

If the United Auto Workers has its way in this, there will be no end to federal subsidies for the car makers. We'll wind up with socialized industries growing fat and bloated at the public trough, and taxpayers who moan and suffer under the yoke of oppressive taxation.

Even the British have given up on this kind of unproductive, unsustainable state socialism. We should not allow our economy to take this detour.

Government-run enterprises tend to become beholden to their unions. Amtrak is a good example of how this works. Union jobs become an end rather than a means, and job cuts are discouraged at almost any cost. Public unions gain enormous political power, and the cycle spirals downward.

Why is this such a threat?

Because as bailouts go, 30 years of Amtrak at \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year are nothing compared to the potential for the automakers. Successful bailouts, such as the 1980s rescues of Conrail out of Penn Central and the first Chrysler Corp. rescue, require real sacrifices by unions, management, stockholders and banks.

After a bad start by management — with executives jetting in to be humbled by Congress - everyone was on board except the unions this time. What Congress wanted was for the auto workers to pare their pay and benefits package down to match costs at non-union, foreign-owned plants in the South.

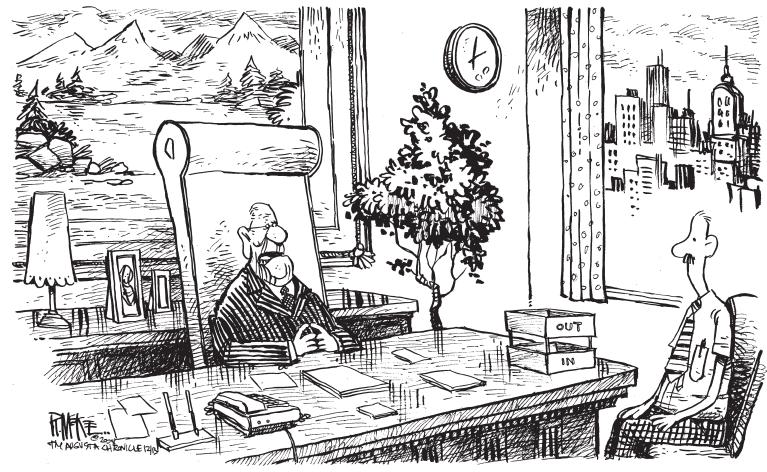
The auto workers did agree to that, in a limited way, but only two years down the road. And that could be way too late to make General Motors and Ford competitive. Bankruptcy may follow, because then the companies can repudiate their leases and loans - and union contracts.

While that may be appealing - the major airlines have washed out their costs that way - it's tough on investors and union pension-holders alike. Both would be left holding the bag.

A compromise may be in the offing. We hope so. Our economy needs strong and vital automakers to keep things rolling.

America does not need socialized industries, however. That path has never led anywhere but down. The cost of keeping union wages high would be more than taxpayers can afford.

This is not to say that unions are bad — they have been a key ingredient in American's prosperity over the last century - but that they can't take too much power or they will bias the economy in nonproductive, noncompetitive ways.



"JENKING, AS YOU and I ARE the ONLY ONES LEFT in the COMPANY, ON the COUNT OF THREE, WE'LL LAY EACH OTHER OFF and ESCORT ONE ANOTHER OFF the PREMISES."

Busy schedule makes lighting tough

I love Christmas lights, and Steve and I put them up every year.

It was really great when we had kids around. We'd go out on a nice Saturday or Sunday right after Thanksgiving and string lights all over the yard. Then we'd get out ladders and send the children with a staple gun onto the roof of the porch to string lights.

Rather amazingly, we never had a trip to the emergency room — or even a stapled hand.

Since the last child left home almost 10 years ago, though, it's been tough getting the lights up. These days, we just put them out on the bushes in front of the house. Since at least some of those are rose bushes and the rest are a sticky kind of evergreen, even that can be exciting and occasionally painful.

For the last few years, Steve and I have gone out anytime between Thanksgiving and a couple of weeks before Christmas and spread lights all over the yard - sometimes on the grass and sometimes on the snow. We then spend several hours testing lights and tossing them on bushes and the smaller trees. We no longer mess with ladders.

Then through Christmas, we enjoy the lights. In fact, we left them up so late after Christmas one year, a neighbor came by and unplugged them. I think it was just before Valentine's Day.

the decorations from the attic of the garage on house. However, the two plugs I had to connect Thanksgiving Day with plans to put things up to each other and the controller box seemed to that weekend.



The weekend came, the weekend went and the boxes of decorations sat cluttering up our kitchen and living room.

Then on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Steve left on a week-long trip to Kansas City, Columbia, Mo., and odd places in eastern Kansas.

I was left with a dozen boxes of Christmas decorations and a forecast of approaching storms, cold weather, ice and generally nasty conditions.

I had to work until 6 p.m. Tuesday, but that night, while it was still relatively balmy, I unpacked outside lights, tested them and started throwing them at shadowy bushes.

I found the orange extension cords in the garage, the controller box with the decorations and several strings of dead lights, which I tossed. Soon I was ready to plug it all in.

The colored lights on the front bushes looked great. Now all I had to do was connect the both female ends, so neither would plug into the box. Somewhere on that bush were the right ends, but it was dark and I wasn't in any mood to pull everything apart and redo it. So, I figured I'd go on to the lights on the little 10foot cedar tree in the back yard.

I had a new set of commercial-quality lights 150 new sparklers with two-strand wire. This time, I made sure all the little prongs were at the right end. Unfortunately, they didn't seem to want to go into the little holes in the next cord — no way, no how. I tried putting an adapter between them. That worked, but when I turned on the power, I could either get the top of the tree, where the new lights were, lit, or the bottom, where the old lights were. Basically, I couldn't get the new guys to work with the old ones. I was stuck with half a tree, so I chose the top half. It looks less silly that way.

It only took me a week and a half to get back to the lights. I just bought new ones for the cedar tree and rearranged the forsythia.

Everything is lighted now. It looks great, and it will until sometime after Christmas, when the neighbors get tired of all that holiday cheer and unplug them again.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, So this year, I got Steve to help me move white chasing lights on the forsythia beside the toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c havnes @ nwkansas com

That we can't afford. It's good the Republicans stuck by their guns.

The auto workers should take stock of their potential losses and get onboard before the train leaves the station.

— Steve Haynes

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be missing those little metal ends. They were

Santa bypasses the establishment clause

This time of year, every public school administrator has to know a simple fragment of Constitutional law. It has many implications in the school setting during the holiday season. "Jingle Bells" is OK. Christmas hymns with

denominational themes are not.

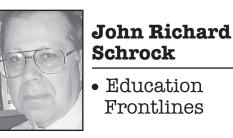
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." is the first part of the First Amendment. This segment is called the "Establishment Clause" because it prevents the government and all of it's federal, state and local units from "establishing" or otherwise becoming entangled in promoting or prohibiting religion.

While we are a democracy, or more precisely, a representative republic, a majority with one religious belief cannot use a government agency-in this case, a public school-to impose its religion upon any student.

My student teachers cannot pass my methods course without being able to write out this Establishment Clause letter-perfect from memory. And they all do. I have this absolute requirement because this clause is the foundation for understanding how to handle lessons when teaching science concepts that may contradict particular religious beliefs.

The science teachers I train are not concerned with Christmas carols, but with families that dispute the benefits of blood transfusions, the value of vaccinations, the need for sex education, the concept of evolution and many other science lessons.

Science teachers in American public schools teach science, not religion. In 1999, when the first of the recent dust-ups occurred over evo-



lution in the Kansas Science Education Standards, I communicated with the famous Oxford professor Richard Dawkins and published his response to the "Alabama insert," a textbook disclaimer that had to be pasted inside every biology textbook in that state (a requirement that was later overthrown). In his e-mail, Professor Dawkins suggested that U.S. teachers should just invite opposing clergy into the science classroom for a debate on evolution versus religion. We cannot do that.

England had a state church. We had a Revolutionary War. We now have the Establishment Clause.

In science and other disciplines, American teachers ask students for "understanding." We do not compel "belief."

If parents do not want their student exposed to ideas not in agreement with their religion, Kansas is one of many states that has a religious opt-out. State law says that "No child attending a public school in this state shall be required to participate in any activity which is contrary to the religious teaching of the child if a written statement signed by one of the parents ... is filed ... requesting that the child not be required to participate in such activities and stating the reason for the request."

Simply saying that the request is based upon religious principles satisfies the "reason."

Recent world events should cause us to appreciate our Establishment Clause and the way it has established our climate of tolerance. Some theocracies in the Middle East require all women, regardless of belief, to wear head scarfs. To the other extreme, France - also without our Establishment Clause - bans such head scarfs for university students.

Yes, Virginia, there is an Establishment Clause. If you want to believe in Santa Claus, or wear a head scarf tomorrow — that is your choice, too.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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