



Other Viewpoints

Turbines build on Kansas strength

At last. Kansas will get a wind turbine manufacturing plant — about 20 years late.

The state Finance Council ... approved a \$5 million bond issue to help Siemens Energy build a plant in Hutchinson to make the electricity-generating components of wind turbines. Siemens has a blade plant in Iowa.

Germany-based Siemens expects to spend between \$55 million and \$65 million on the facility, which will be the first plant in Kansas to make parts for wind turbines, despite the fact that Kansas has always been a prime location for wind farms and should have been host to turbine plants when the industry was still taking form decades ago.

The Hutchinson plant eventually will hire about 400 workers, Siemens said.

Not to get overly somber about the subject, but Kansas, Texas, Colorado and the many other windy parts of this great land of ours ignored the energy-producing potential of wind turbines until the price of oil reached and then exceeded triple digits because of short-term thinking....

So the industry was pioneered by the Germans, the Dutch and the Spanish and ignored in the U.S., a country well-equipped to design and build turbines, or, for that matter, any other piece of high-tech machinery

The lesson to be learned is that we have made a huge mistake to move away from manufacturing and industrial design and give up those essential components of modern living to the Europeans and the Asians

— *The Iola Register, via The Associated Press*

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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

**PERIODICALS POSTAGE** paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

**THE BUSINESS OFFICE** at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 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 herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Let's get those fly swatters swinging

It's fly season.

Anyone over the age of 5 probable recognizes a pattern here. Every year, as the nights grow cooler, the flies try to move inside.

Here at the *Colby Free Press*, the flies seem to be winning the battle with us swatters.

They have a lot of opportunities. First off, being good, energy-conscious citizens, we work to cut air-conditioning costs and take advantage of those cool nights by opening up the doors in the morning, letting cool air in and warm air out.

Any building with lots of plate-glass windows has lots of warm air to let out. Any visitor to our offices when the wisecracks are flying around knows that there's a certain amount of hot air to let out as well.

Anyway, all those open doors lead to traffic jams on the flying-insect thoroughfares. They all seem to congregate around my desk. That could be just my perception, of course. Fly swatters have been busy all through the office. I'm beginning to think we need to watch for a bulk discount sale on the things, so everyone can have a swatter for each hand.

Except me. I have no more hand-eye coordination than a ... bug. Flies are in danger when I pick up a swatter, but only because they are liable to die laughing. I swing the swatter, and



**Marian Ballard**

• Collection Connections

they zoom away with a good six inches to spare. I sneak up on them and they land on top of the swatter.

The worst part is that is. when there isn't a fly swatter within reach, they all gather around. They have conventions and continuing education conferences on my "in" tray. I go looking for a swatter, I get back to my desk, and there isn't a fly to be seen. One late-comer buzzes past 10 feet away, sees that everyone left, and goes to the new "in" spot – on the desk that I stole the swatter from.

A week or two ago, I was watching one of the office's champion hitters, and thinking of the story "Seven at One Blow," by Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm. In it, a rather self-important tailor sets aside a slice of bread and jam which is quickly covered with flies.

He swats it once, kills seven flies, and decides he has more important things in his fu-

ture than sewing coats. He closes his shop and takes off to seek his fortune. Of course, in the manner of all good fairy tales, he is a great success, killing giants, marrying a princess, and eventually becoming ruler of all the land. All of this, and it's based on the simple confidence built up from being a good fly swatter!

It is not true that being a failure at killing flies can have the opposite effect, but it can be demoralizing. After all, how can such a little insect be so hard to overcome? It's enough to drive you to homicide – er – insecticide. But getting out that aerosol can, spraying chemicals around, somehow seems unsporting. Not to mention the fact that, even with a spray can, those are fast little bugs.

I cheer for the spiders spinning webs, catching flies to feed their future babies. And, as always, I know that the fly season will pass, the weather will get cold, and we'll have a break before we see a new generation.

Maybe by next year, I'll get better with the fly swatter.

*Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.*

Climate bill a no win for agriculture

If the climate-change bill becomes law, it would not benefit farmers, ranchers and rural Kansas. Also know as cap-and-trade, this legislation would cause farmers and ranchers like the Handke brothers from Muscotah to see big increases in their operating expenses.

Terry and Paul Handke feed 5,000 head of cattle in their feedlot and farm another 2,000 acres of row crops in Atchison County.

"We could easily see more than \$100,000 added to our operating expenses if this legislation is implemented," Paul says. "It's impossible for us to pass on these additional operating costs to consumers when selling our commodities."

The Handkes believe they could ride out such a hit during a short-term period of from one to five years. However, during the long term, they wouldn't be so lucky.

"Such an increase would force us to decide whether or not we could continue to farm and feed livestock," Paul says.

Much of the initial increase in operating expenses would come in fuel costs and higher nitrogen (fertilizer) costs. Natural gas is expected to increase at least 10 percent on the low end and more than 50 percent on the high end.

There is much uncertainty out there, says Troy Dumler of Kansas State University Research and Extension. There are still too many



**John Schlageck**

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unanswered questions about the short-term, as well as long-term, impact of this climate-change legislation.

While some studies have been completed, much more research is needed to provide a clear picture of what the costs and benefits will be, Dumler says.

The Handke brothers agree. The Atchison County stockmen definitely feel uncomfortable talking about the future ramifications of this legislation because there is so much about it they don't know.

Based on what they know now, Terry believes there will be hardly any benefit for their Atchison County operation. He said many of the proposed offsets would afford little opportunity on their farm.

The Handkes already use no-till methods and have for years. Carbon sequestration will more than likely not provide help either.

"You sure wouldn't want to run a farming operation like ours and expect it to help the

cash flow," Terry says. "There are just too many unknowns about what it will do on the expense side of our operation."

The brothers believe their cost of doing business – producing crops and livestock – will increase. They also foresee every American family experiencing increased costs should this bill become law.

"If this passes, we're all going to see higher food prices," Terry says. "Eventually, someone has to pick up the tab, and it won't just be agriculture that pays."

In early September, the Handkes took Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins on an ag tour of their farm. After the visit, Jenkins thanked them for weighing in on this key issue and how it would impact their family farm and ranch operation. She promised to take their message back to Washington.

"It's been a great opportunity for me to gather information and tell the Handke's story when I return to Washington," the representative said. "Cap-and-trade will adversely affect all of our farmers and ranchers here in Kansas and throughout the Midwest."

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

