

from our viewpoint...

Don't use turnpike to fix universities

What was she thinking about?
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius proposes taxing drivers on the Kansas Turnpike to pay for fixing up old buildings at the state's colleges and universities.

The governor suggests raising tolls every two years to bring in \$575 million. The money would be used to pay for repairs at state universities. Up to \$300 million in bonds would speed the remodeling projects, and those would have to be paid out of the tolls — with interest.

The plan met a cool reception in the Republican-controlled Legislature. Everyone except college presidents — from the Turnpike Authority to the truckers — thought it was a bad plan.

Reggie Robinson, chief executive officer for the state Board of Regents, called the plan "serious, creative and comprehensive." OK, he would.

The state has to do something to fix up its colleges, but the governor's plan — though it is creative — just doesn't make sense.

Why tax truckers and other drivers to fix up classrooms? Why not telephone users or electric "rate payers?" Makes just as much sense.

If the Kansas Turnpike has that much excess toll-generating capacity, maybe the authority could use the money to add lanes on the crowded section between Kansas City and Topeka — or even build a whole new road from the Kansas City airport to Manhattan on the north side of the Kaw River.

But using tolls to finance colleges? It's just a disguised tax increase, and not a very appealing one at that.

Doing something about the nearly \$727 million in building repairs supposedly needed at state colleges is one of the top issues facing the Legislature this year. Kansas should do something, but a tax increase is out of the question.

This is one of the problems created by the state's fixation on public schools over the last 10 years. Colleges and universities have been left to fend for themselves. They've hiked tuition, but have raised nothing for building repairs and renovation.

The Legislature needs to come up with a plan. This isn't it.

They should pare the list to essential projects and find a way to pay for those.

If you want to tax people fairly, usually you apply a tax to those who benefit from the spending, or to the state at large. Taxing drivers to pay for colleges just makes no sense at all.

Creative, yes. Realistic, no.
But it is that time of the year in Topeka.
We can and must do better. — *Steve Haynes*



Mike Kagle for THE DENVER POST 02/11/07 www.caglecartoons.com

When there was romance

Hey, pallie, what the heck happened to romance?

I use the word "pallie" in deference to the great Dean Martin. Last summer, just before the annual Dean Martin Festival in Dino's home town of Steubenville, Ohio, I decided to compare today's hits with his.

I started with the No. 1 song on Billboard Magazine's Hot 100 list, "Hips Don't Lie" by Shakira. This song was a hit, no doubt, because of its eloquent lyrics:

Nobody can ignore the way you move your body, girl
And everything so unexpected — the way you right and left it
So you can keep on shaking it

No. 2 on the list was "Ridin'" by Chamillionaire, a rap performer. Here's a little taste of that song's poetry:

Tippin' down, sittin' crooked on my chrome
Bookin' my phone, tryin' to find a chick I wanna (slang expletive)

No. 3 on the list was "Promiscuous" by Nelly Furtado, a song brimming with love and affection:

You expect me to let you just hit it
But will you still respect me if you get it
Ah, modern romance. Things sure have changed since Dino dropped off the charts. Now I know why: Romance is dead.

Whereas the top three hits above celebrate human nature at its most base — wiggling one's hips to stoke male arousal, looking for "chicks" to satisfy your urge, or wondering if a fellow will stick around after he samples the goods — Dino's simple music spoke to the heart.

Consider the lyrics to "Amore":



tom purcell

• commentary

When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie

That's amore
When the world seems to shine like you've had too much wine

That's amore
Amore means "love" in Italian, a mysterious and magical energy that every human longs for. Love is the basis of many of Dino's songs. It's nowhere to be found in the three hit songs I just referenced.

In 1964, when The Beatles' new sound was making them the most popular band on Earth, Dino knocked "Hard Day's Night" out of the top spot. He did so with "Everybody Loves Somebody," an old-fashioned song that resonated with all age groups:

Everybody loves somebody sometime
Everybody falls in love somehow
Something in your kiss just told me
That sometime is now

Whereas many of today's hit songs celebrate fear, anger and cynicism, Dino's songs celebrate sweetness and innocence. His songs are idealistic and uplifting. They are ROMANTIC.

Dino's songs celebrate the subtle dance of the spirit between a man and a woman — the magic that occurs when two complementary natures collide.

They celebrate mystery — the deep interest and curiosity a man holds for a woman and a woman for a man.

They celebrate hopefulness — they focus on the future, on the hopes that one day a special person will enter your life and sweep you off your feet, a person you will love forever.

The simple, intense lyrics of his song "Sway" sum up this longing well:

Other dancers may be on the floor
Dear, but my eyes will see only you
Only you have the magic technique
When we sway I go weak

I know Dino had his peccadilloes in his personal life, but his music remains untainted. With every passing year, as coarseness seeps into our culture a little more, his songs hold more power over me.

We need to get back to the spirit of his music — the spirit of romance. I can't think of a better day to do so than Valentine's Day.

All we have to do is observe older couples who fell in love years ago, when Dino was still king of the charts. I marveled at the eloquence of such couples at the Dean Martin Festival last summer.

As the Dean Martin impersonator began to sing — a fellow so convincing you'd think the old crooner was there in the flesh — they sauntered to the front of the stage, holding hands. They began to sway with a sweetness and easiness that couples knew long ago.

When there was romance.

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Now it's Hornbeck's parents abusing him

(Sydney, Australia) I haven't any real idea of what Shawn Hornbeck was forced to endure during his four-and-a-half years as a captive of an obviously deranged child abuser, but I know exactly what he's going through now at the hands of his parents.

During those years you have to assume that he was probably sexually abused by Michael Devlin, who reportedly had child porn material on his computer. Tragically, having escaped captivity and abuse he is now being abused by his parents.

Shawn's parents have been dragging the boy from TV show to TV show, from interview to interview to interview. Four-and-a-half years this kid was held captive — probably more mentally than physically — and now that he's finally safe and home with his parents, he's once again a captive, this time to the public's insatiable thirst for details of his ordeal, and to his parents' determination to satisfy that thirst.

Without showing any reluctance to exposing Shawn to the red-hot glare of publicity, Shawn's parents couldn't wait to put him on view on the Oprah Winfrey show less than a week after his release.

I don't care how warm and fuzzy Oprah Winfrey is, but when his parents allow themselves to be asked by the hostess if they think he was abused, while he is sitting there helpless to avoid having such intimate details about him aired before millions of viewers, they



michael reagan

• making sense

agree that he was.

In my opinion, what they are doing is tantamount to child abuse, taking him from show to show and making him captive to the media. They seem to be wallowing in their 15 minutes of fame gained not by their own actions, but exploiting their son's ordeal.

The other day the New York Post put their finger on the matter when they wrote "Shame on boy's folks and Oprah."

Think about it. If you were a parent whose son had been stolen from you, taken away for four-and-a-half years, and after you learned that the abductor who stole your life and ripped your heart out was into child porn and probably had his way with your son, would you have your boy go on Oprah Winfrey?

It wouldn't surprise me if they next drag Shawn to Jerry Springer's show.

I find it shocking that Shawn's parents said that while they haven't asked him about what happened to him because it would be too pain-

ful, they nonetheless have no problem with putting him on public display.

This really is a form of child abuse. If what I believe happened to Shawn did indeed happen to him, I hope and pray that he will survive all this, but if he doesn't you could put as much blame on his parents as on his abductor.

This is what I was getting at in my book "On the Outside Looking In" when it was just going to come out in 1987 or the first part of 1988 and I wrote that I hoped the national media would not get a set of the nude pictures my abuser took of me before I could tell my side of the story.

I was terrified that if they got to it before I had a chance to tell you my whole story suicide might well have been an option.

I know from personal experience the mental torture any victim of sexual abuse is forced to endure. To have that experience paraded before the public is another form of abuse, made more painful when it is the parents who inflict it on their child.

Say a prayer for Shawn Hornbeck.

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally as part of the Radio America Network. E-mail comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com.

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