

from our viewpoint...

We see good news showing progress

The winds whipped snow across the plains at the end of the week, but by Sunday the sun was warm and the winds had died, and people were out enjoying the nice weather.

The snows storms this winter have set some records, but farmers hope they will see some record-breaking crops with the moisture. Weather experts say these storms could signal the end of a drought and the beginning of a wet cycle.

That news has put smiles on faces around Sherman County. We know there are many things than can happen to the wheat before harvest, but the winter has given farmers a good start on their year.

On another note, everyone should congratulate Pat and Clark Jordan for being Citizens of the Year chosen by the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce.

These two, tireless supporters of the Genesis Food Bank and the Salvation Army, have been out many a cold, windy day, standing in front of Wal-Mart ringing their bell and thanking people for the coins and dollars they put in the red kettle.

President Ken Clouse has a big smile these days, and he and his staff at the Northwest Kansas Technical College are proud of their accreditation. This lifts the college up into a new level of accomplishment as a institution of higher learning, one that excels in hands-on vocational training.

Expansion of the Diesel Technology building will improve the ability of students and teachers to handle the larger trucks and tractors being used today.

Change has come to the Edson gym with the resale of the building to a printer cartridge company from Denver. The firm has been open for a few months, and already reports a booming business.

The owners have been pleased with the quality and honest work ethic they found in the people here. This plant supports several families, bringing a little more economic activity to the county.

Activity at the Goodland Energy Center geared up again as cranes arrived to lift major pieces of the coal-fired power plant, weighing from 16 to 45 tons, into place. Now the outside of the plant can begin to take shape and the boiler will be assembled.

The winter may have slowed progress a bit, but workers spent the time getting parts ready to be put in place this month.

The ethanol plant is moving forward, and more tanks are being readied to be put in place and the main building soon will be finished.

These are some of the good things that are going on in our county, part of the constant change and progress we see.

Chamber banquet speaker David Beardsley, owner of Heritage Healthcare Management and Goodland's Wheatridge Acres, said if a community is not growing and changing it can only mean one thing — it is dying.

We believe Goodland and Sherman County are not dying. The pioneer spirit of the people who came here over a century ago lives today, and we believe the community will weather all kinds of storms to see some bright, sunny days of success. — Tom Betz

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Sunny in Denver, but we couldn't go home

As we sat in the hotel in Denver and looked out at the sunshine, it was hard to imagine why we couldn't go home.

We attended the annual Colorado Press Association convention last week. We have done this every year since 1981, when we became publishers of *The Mineral County Miner* in Creede, Colo., population about 800.

Back in 1981, we were in our 30s and had three children ages 6, 3 and 6 months. We were young, fresh faced and eager to learn how to run our own newspaper.

We learned through the usual processes — mistakes, accidents and hard work. We asked a lot of people for help and learned a lot from seminars, watching how others did it and figuring that if this doesn't work, maybe that will.

By 1988, Steve was president of Colorado Press and we were publishing six newspapers.

In 1993, we sold out and left town, sort of. We left our newspapers, our home and our friends, but we didn't leave everything.

After settling in Kansas, we continued to attend press conventions in Denver, see old friends and spend time in Creede.



cynthia haynes

• open season

We still do all those things more than 13 years later. This year, we did a bit more than usual.

One of the highlights of the Colorado Press convention is a visit with the governor at the executive mansion.

Over the years, we have visited with governors Dick Lamm, who ran as an independent for president some years ago, and Roy Romer, a good 'ol boy from Holly, Colo., population about 1,000. We moved during the second of Romer's three terms and completely missed Bill Owens' eight years in office.

But we got to see Gov. Bill Ritter on Thursday. He hasn't had a lot of experience in statewide office, but was one of 12 children. He was able to answer every question the reporters threw at him. We think he'll do. We hope so.

After lunching with the governor and a hundred other reporters and publishers, we had the opportunity to attend press sessions on the Internet, advertising, writing, legal issues, postal problems and a job fair.

We talked to old friends and made a few new ones.

However, Saturday afternoon, when it was time to go home, we couldn't

Both I-70 and U.S. 36 were closed from Denver to past home. In fact I-70 was closed all the way to Salina.

We heard that there was a 30-plus vehicle pile up near the Denver airport. Blowing snow and blinded drivers caused a rush-hour mess. Of course, at the Denver airport it always seems to be rush hour.

The hotel let us stay an extra day, so as the sun set over the peaks of the Front Range, I looked out over the city and thought how much I had enjoyed the visit and how much I was looking forward to my own bed, the cats, the dog and home.

Cities are nice to visit, but I wouldn't want to live in one again.

The late, great American nation

"It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties." — James Madison

We live in a fundamentally different country since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Not only do many Americans view their government with suspicion, but the way their government views them has changed, too.

A perfect example of this took place last fall. Prior to the elections that transformed the makeup of Congress, the Bush Administration pushed for the inclusion of two stealth provisions into a mammoth defense budget bill. The additions made it easier for the government to declare martial law and establish a dictatorship.

Since the days of our Founding Fathers, when King George III used his armies to terrorize and tyrannize the colonies, the American people have understandably distrusted the use of a national military force to intervene in civilian affairs, except in instances of extreme emergency and limited duration.

Hence, as a sign of the Founders' concern that the people not be under the power of a military government, control of the military was vested in a civilian government, with a civilian commander-in-chief. And the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 furthered those safeguards against military law, making it a crime for the government to use the military to carry out arrests, searches, seizure of evidence and other activities normally handled by a civilian police force.

However, with the inclusion of a seemingly insignificant rider into the massive defense bill (the martial law section of the 591-page Defense Appropriations Act takes up just a few paragraphs), the Bush Administration has managed to weaken what *The New York Times* refers to as "two obscure but important bulwarks of liberty." One is posse comitatus. The other is the Insurrection Act of 1807, which limits a president's domestic use of the military to putting down lawlessness, insurrection and rebellion where a state is violating federal law or depriving the people of their constitutional rights.

Under these provisions, the president can use the military as a domestic police force in response to a natural disaster, disease outbreak, terrorist attack or to any "other condition." According to the new law, Bush doesn't even have to notify Congress of his intent to use military force against the American people — he just has to notify them once he has done it.

The provision's vague language leaves the doors wide open for rampant abuse. As writer



john whitehead

• rutherford institute

Jane Smiley noted, "The introduction of these changes amounts, not to an attack on the Congress and the balance of power, but to a particular and concerted attack on the citizens of the nation. Bush is laying the legal groundwork to repeal even the appearance of democracy."

The main reason we do not want the military patrolling our streets is that under martial law, the Bill of Rights becomes null and void. A standing army — something that propelled the early colonists into revolution — strips the American people of any vestige of freedom. Thus, if we were subject to martial law, there would be no rules, no protections, no judicial oversight and no elections. And unless these provisions are repealed, the president's new power will be set in stone for future administrations to use — and abuse.

A fundamental principle of American government is to not trust public officials. But modern Americans, primed by television pabulum and ignorant of their history, have a tendency to trust people in office simply because they appear to share a common faith, say the right things or come from a certain region of the country. But lest we forget, power has a tendency to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The way this was handled proves that we cannot trust government officials. Sneaking this provision in as a rider to a larger bill avoided public debate and media attention. Had the provision been openly discussed and debated, there would have been opposition and outcry. It most likely would have been soundly rejected. Instead, it was rushed through the Republican-controlled Congress prior to the elections and enacted into law.

The Founding Fathers would have literally been up in arms over Bush's actions. They understood the dangers inherent in vesting power in a single person, which is exactly what this legislation does. There's no limit to what the president can now do: the "any condition" language opens the door for total power, a dictatorship. The people are left with no defense.

Furthermore, this legislation erases the balance between the states and the federal government. The state governors understood this,

and that's why many opposed the provisions. But it was to no avail.

Who's to blame here? Congress has utterly failed to exercise its power to check the growing power of the Executive Branch. The media have also been woefully remiss. Although a handful of bloggers sounded the alarm, the major media outlets failed to report on it. If it weren't for a recent editorial in *The New York Times*, most people would still be in the dark. What's the point of a free press if you can't rely on the media to report the news?

However, the larger blame rests with the Bush Administration, whose actions over the past six years suggest that the American people are the enemy. Think about some of the changes that have already moved us closer to a police state: the invasive USA Patriot Act; increased domestic surveillance of citizens' e-mails and telephone calls; attempts to deny habeas corpus to prisoners; a national ID card; and now this alarming new law.

In addition to opening the doors to a military state, the law facilitates militarized police round-ups and detention of protesters in camps that are already being built on American soil by the Halliburton Corp. Americans are incredibly naïve if they believe those camps being built are just for illegal aliens.

A pattern is emerging, predicated on one horrific incident in 2001. The administration is laying the groundwork for a military state, and this is our final wake-up call.

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