

from our viewpoint...

Power plant issue about big money

The debate on whether to build two new coal-fired power plants in Holcomb, west of Garden City, has dragged the state into emotion, hyperbole, corporate politics, exaggeration, greed and maybe a little mudslinging.

Some may think the real issue is global warming, but the battle is far more complex. People take sides based mostly on their environmental faith and political belief.

But giant corporations know it's about money. And they play to win.

Full-page ads began appearing last week in a few Kansas newspapers, touting either wind energy or natural gas as an alternative to the supposedly dirty coal plant.

But while it's true that the environmentalist Sierra Club is among the leaders opposing the coal plants, big money for some ads has come from an Oklahoma natural gas producer.

The copy claims Kansas will get "all the pollution" from the two proposed coal plants, while the owners export most of the power to other states. Of course, the same could be said of the General Motors auto plant in Kansas City or the Goodyear tire plant in Topeka.

In fact, the principal owner, Hays-based Sunflower Electric Power, is a cooperative owned by western Kansas farmers and rural residents through their rural electric co-ops. One of them is Prairie Land Electric out of Norton. Sunflower, which operates a smaller generating plant in Holcomb, says it believes the new plants will be "carbon neutral," producing no net increase in greenhouse gases once in operation.

The opponents never mention that. Nor the fact that Sunflower's principal partner is a Colorado "generation and transmission" co-op, Tri-State, which could presumably build in Colorado, where any pollution would drift mostly into Kansas.

Some ads tout wind power as an alternative to the coal-fired plants, ignoring the fact that wind power is at best a supplement to fixed-load plants, nuclear, coal-fired or gas. The wind only blows part of the time, and we have no technology to store large amounts of power.

Environmentalists have blocked construction of nuclear plants in this country for nearly three decades, despite an enviable safety record. Opposition based on the deadly, eternal nature of nuclear waste makes some sense.

Ads which appeared Sunday bore the signature of Know Your Power, billed as "a growing coalition of concerned doctors, health organizations, educators, citizens, businesses and students."

And natural-gas producers, apparently. The ads tout "clean-burning, domestically produced" natural gas as cutting carbon emissions in half.

Profitable for Oklahoma, too.

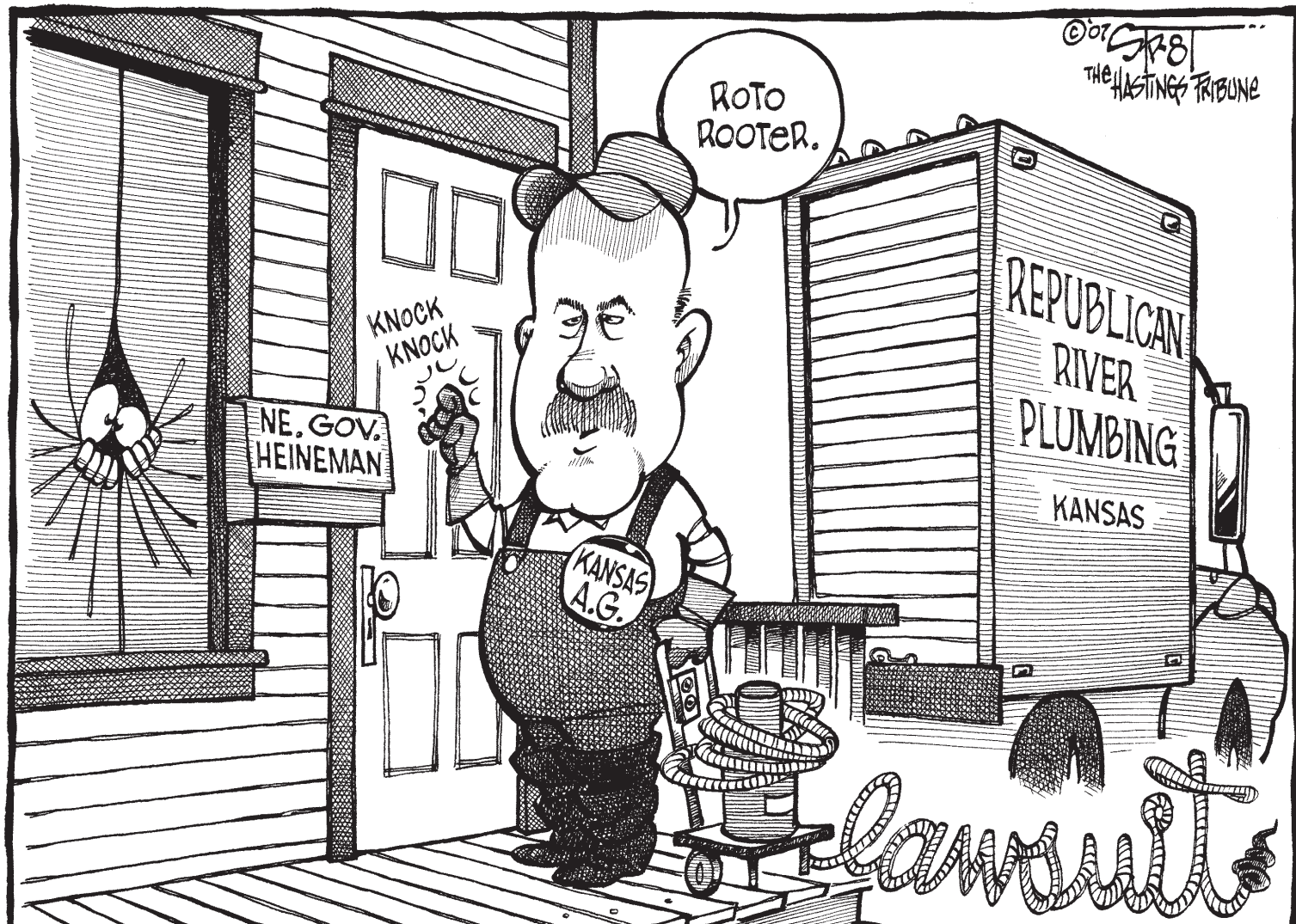
It'd been good to hear out the pros and cons of these plants in a fair, honest fight. That's not going to happen.

Our view: The nation is going to need this power. If Sunflower can produce coal power in a "carbon neutral" system, the state of Kansas should issue permits for the Holcomb plants.

Southwest Kansas wants and needs the jobs they will provide, just as Kansas City and Topeka need GM and Goodyear jobs. Colorado needs the power; so do we.

Someday, perhaps, we'll learn to make power from manure and wind and hydrogen, and be able to store the wind for use tomorrow. Then, we can depend on winds and pigs for power.

That's not going to happen next year, is it? — *Steve Haynes*



Think pink, then take action

Pink isn't normally a color that comes to mind when we think of the colors of fall. But pink is the color of the month during October for breast cancer awareness.

This month brings fond memories of my dear friend and mentor Teedie Richardson Tremble. We lost her to breast cancer in January 2006.

Teedie didn't discover the disease as a result of a breast self-exam. She fell off of her bicycle and bruised her chest. The doctor found a lump while he was examining her, but it was too late.

Although she vowed to fight the cancer, which took center stage in her life, within months she was in hospice care and within weeks of that, she was dead.

It was during that time I realized how long it had been since I did my own breast self-exam, I couldn't remember when.

I immediately did a check up. Thank God I



ramona sanders

• my ramblings

didn't find anything. But it was then I promised myself that I would follow the experts' advice and do a self-exam each and every month.

Even now, after losing one so dear and feeling so scared about my own neglect, I realized this month that, again, it had been too long since I checked myself. Far longer than a month. Again, a self-check showed no problems. But I asked myself, how can I be so negligent about my health?

We see the pink ribbons, we read the ads, we hear the commercials, yet many of use fail to check ourselves. A breast self-examination takes less than five minutes and can usually

be done easily in the shower or before getting dressed. It's probably the most efficient and inexpensive medical test you'll ever have.

If you're not sure exactly how to do a breast self-exam, go to www.breastcancer.org for a step-by-step guide. If you don't have access to the Internet, call your doctor's office and ask for a brochure.

I urge you, my sisters, to take five minutes and be good to yourself. If you find nothing, think what a relief it will be. If you find something, hopefully it will be early enough to get successful treatment. Statistics show that early detection of breast cancer through a self-exam is one of the best ways to beat the disease.

Do it for yourself. I know I do. And I do it in honor of Teedie, one of the best friends I have ever had and someone who would probably be here today if she had just seen the pink — and then taken action.

Men, women and the housework enigma

Get this: Married men do less housework than fellows who cohabitate.

A study by George Mason University and North Carolina State University found the following:

- Cohabiting men do more housework than married men.
- Cohabiting women do less housework than married women.
- Cohabiting men do less housework than cohabiting women.

And married men, the sexist Neanderthal oppressors, do less housework than EVERYBODY.

Shannon Davis, an assistant professor of sociology at George Mason and the study's lead author, summed up her findings:

"Beliefs about this egalitarian notion of women and men sharing equal responsibility for paid work and household tasks matter differently for cohabiting men than it does for married men."

I'm no sociologist, but I think I know why. Men generally cohabitate so they can get the goodies of marriage (you know) without the hassles (commitment, in-laws, binding legal contracts).

Men may not be the sharpest knives in the gender-identity drawer, but the cohabiting ones are smart enough to figure one thing out: If they pretend to have an egalitarian view toward housework, they're going to get a lot more of the goodies of marriage.

But men hate housework. We're not good at it. We don't care if food is rotting in the refrigerator or a spider's nest has formed behind the dresser. We only care if women care. That is why, says P.J. O'Rourke, we clean our place about once every girlfriend.

And that's what is missing in the housework study. It overlooks a very important consideration:

Men and women are different.

Michael Gurian, author of "What Could He Be Thinking? How a Man's Mind Really Works," told me why. After examining decades of neurobiological research -- he compared radioactive and magnetic imaging of male and female brains -- he was able to show that the male and female noggins are entirely different.

Take listening. One brain-imaging study shows that men listen with only one side of the brain, whereas women use both. Women wouldn't believe how many other things we use only half a brain to do.

Another brain study shows that women can listen to two separate conversations, whereas men can barely follow one (particularly if it involves feelings or the spring sale at Bed Bath & Beyond).



tom purcell

• commentary

The male brain doesn't pick up as many sensory cues as a woman's. When a man walks into his home, his senses don't gather what a woman's will. A man is less likely to notice dust -- which, apparently, consists of fine, dry particles that settle on furniture.

The male mind doesn't care as much about the inside of the house as the outside. Our noggins are wired for larger spaces, such as the garage, the driveway, the yard.

Sure, some men are neat freaks and homebodies and some women are sloppy and couldn't care less about the inside of their homes. But where biology is concerned, the male and female brains are DIFFERENT.

But the housework study isn't so interested in biological truths. It is more interested in one of its key findings: that the institution of marriage appears to change the division of household labor.

In married relationships, even if an egalitar-

ian viewpoint is present, men still report doing less housework than their wives, says Davis.

"Marriage as an institution seems to have a traditionalizing effect on couples -- even couples who see men and women as equal," she says.

In other words, marriage itself is the reason women are forced to pick up stinky socks and wipe up the slop in the kitchen after dinner.

Marriage itself is some kind of gender factory that indoctrinates kids into believing that Mommy is supposed to do all the dirty work, while Daddy sits on the couch watching football and sucking down beer.

Gurian doesn't agree. He said if the study had compared couples with kids who have cohabitated for 10 years against couples with kids who have been married for 10 years, there likely wouldn't be much difference.

The housework gender gap has more to do with biology than marriage. Still, men should work harder at housework.

At the very least, we could pretend to notice dust every once in a while.

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