

from our viewpoint...

Homeland Security spending is scary

The great expansion of federal spending in the name of "Homeland Security" is nothing short of scary. Cities and counties today get money for things they used to just assume were part of their jobs, and while money's always nice to have, you'd think some of these things never got done before. The much-maligned Federal Emergency Management Agency has been pouring money into Kansas, as with other states, for everything from weather damage to emergency gear. There's money for planning for "bioterrorism," whatever that means, to fire trucks and hard hats for emergency crews. Most years, there's so much money to be had, the county has to go out and look for something to spend it on. Heaven help us if any of the money has to be sent back to the feds. Some of these things would be done whether the feds were giving us money or not. If the old fire truck wears out, we'll probably find money to replace it. If there's a federal grant, then it might be done a little sooner. Other things, like generators for small-town emergency shelters, well those towns got by without them for a century. They might make it for another 100 years. People don't usually stay in shelters too long here, or without power, for that matter. It's not that these things aren't all nice to have. Everyone knows that federal money is "free money," money that commissioners and council members don't have to raise taxes to get. It is taxpayers' money, of course, and not to be wasted, but everyone agrees, if we don't spend it, the feds will just give it to some other town or county. They never give it back to the taxpayers, that's for sure.

So for decades now, the battle cry of local government has been to "get a grant." If you can get a grant, you don't have to pay for it. But free money isn't always free. For one thing, "free" equipment has to be replaced. Often there's no grant for that. It's like the old police grants where the federal money paid to hire and train a new officer to hunt for drugs or drunk drivers. When the grant ran out, the city or county was expected to — gasp — pay the guy's salary. Or take the "free" vehicle a county picked up a few years back. It was seized by the sheriff after a drug arrest. No one ever claimed it. The ambulance chief asked if he could use it as a "chase" car. Well, it was free, wasn't it? Until the car started to wear out. By then, it had become an essential part of the ambulance service. The county spent thousands to buy another. That's where free will get you. So with the Federal Emergency Management Agency pumping money into the state every time a storm hits, whether it's millions to rebuild Greensburg, or a few thousand to reimburse counties for plowing the roads, public officials line up at the trough. Never mind that FEMA couldn't even find New Orleans when the chips were down. Today, they're our friends. It's hard to believe that just a few years ago, the cities and counties and maybe even the state would have paid for these things themselves — or maybe we'd have gone without. You have to wonder where this road is leading us, but we suspect it is no place good. Even free money has strings attached. And eventually, we'll know what those are. Loss of freedom. Local decision-making power. Priorities set by "mandate," whatever that means. Local governments run just to get federal dollars. But they'll be "free." — *Steve Haynes*

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, July 4th and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

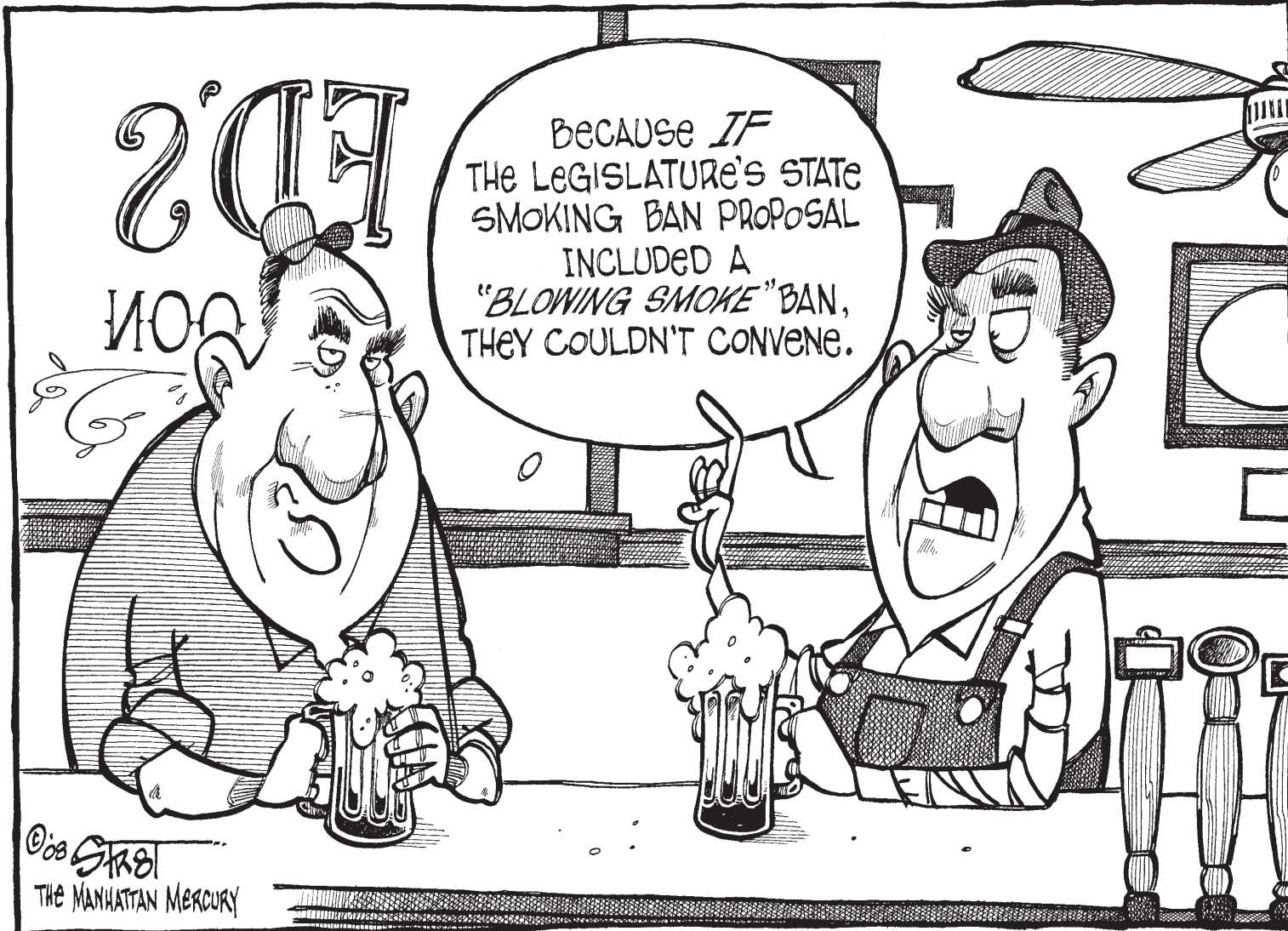
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1935-1989

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Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company



Moving in the right direction

Hey, good buddy, I'm finally headed in the right direction — and so is the rest of humanity.

I got a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) device for Christmas. It's amazing what the thing can do.

Not only does it allow me to search for a restaurant, store or any place nearby, it provides phone numbers and addresses. Then a female voice tells me exactly where to drive (I think they use a female because a male might not consult the GPS folks for directions).

GPS technology dates back to 1957. U.S. scientists were warily monitoring Sputnik 1 — the world's first satellite, which was sent into space by the Soviets — when they stumbled onto something unexpected.

As Sputnik approached their location, the frequency of its radio signal increased. As it moved farther away, its frequency decreased. This effect is known as the Doppler shift. Scientists were able to use this information to determine Sputnik 1's location in space.

But they also immediately concluded something else: They could use satellite signals to determine specific locations on the ground.

Since then the government has been perfecting the GPS concept. Our current system is composed of 24 satellites that orbit the Earth. Thanks to a directive Ronald Reagan signed in 1983, GPS, upon its completion, was to be made available to civilians.

And since the GPS system was enhanced and modernized in 2005, civilians have been using it like mad. Any fellow with a handheld GPS



tom purcell

• commentary

receiver can quickly determine his longitude, latitude and altitude — and, more important, where the nearest pizza joint is.

Which gives humanity plenty of reason to be hopeful about the future.

Look, 25 years ago when my family drove to the beach every summer, we had only one way to seek directions on the highway: my trusty CB radio. My handle was "Trail Blazer," good buddy.

Why did we have a CB in our car? Because of solid-state transistor technology, an innovation from the 1950s that replaced the old vacuum-tube technology. Solid-state transistors allowed CBs to be made smaller and cheaper, which is how a 12-year-old kid called Trail Blazer could afford one.

The CB saved my family on more than one occasion. The truckers helped us keep an eye out for Smokey. And when we needed crucial information, I'd pick up the mike and say, "We're at the 64-mile marker headed east on the turnpike. How far to the nearest bathroom!"

Now we have GPS devices that know exactly where we are and where we need to go. For less than a couple hundred bucks, any old fool has

nearly as much navigational capacity as the U.S. military did last time it went into Iraq.

If you're not amazed by that, you should be. I'm 45. I still marvel at the technology advances that have occurred in my lifetime.

In 1985 I worked for a high-tech firm and had access to one of the first portable computers in existence. It was the size of a large suitcase and had very little computing capacity.

Today, I sit in a coffee shop pecking away on a small laptop computer. It has more computing capacity than a mainframe machine did 30 years ago — one that took up a whole city block.

I use my cell phone to call anybody around the globe. My computer, via a broadband cellular modem, is continually connected to the Internet. I'm able to access and share reams of information with people all over the planet.

And if I need to find any location anywhere on Earth, I just consult my handheld GPS device.

I'm puzzled by folks who see only gloom and doom when it is such an amazing time to be alive. I can't imagine how many more advances we'll make in the next 25 years, but they're coming. We're going to solve a lot of problems.

I'll bet we'll look back to our current problems and laugh at how they once kept us up at night.

Know what I mean, good buddy? Tom Purcell is a nationally syndicated humor columnist. For comments to Tom, please email him at Purcell@caglecartoons.com.

You can't kill the truth



john whitehead

• rutherford institute

"We've got to give ourselves to this struggle to the end. Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point. We've got to see it through. Be concerned about your brother. Either we go up together, or we go down together." — Martin Luther King, Jr., April 3, 1968

As 1968 dawned, the vision of peace and hope that had seemed so promising the year before during the so-called "Summer of Love" was splintering.

On January 30, 1968, the Viet Cong launched what is now known as the "Tet Offensive." The powerful North Vietnamese forces attacked more than 30 South Vietnamese cities, including Saigon. The American military, which had earlier reported that most of Vietnam was secure and an end to the divisive war was in sight, was stunned.

With more and more Americans dying in rice paddies, it seemed as if the war would last forever. And Dwight Eisenhower's warning of a military-industrial complex taking over the country, delivered a few years before in his Farewell Address to the Nation, took on greater weight.

Reports of civilian massacres by American troops soon began to surface, and by the summer of '68, cynicism had set in among young people. Raised power fists and rebellion at universities and in the streets symbolized the moment. Many who believed that peace and understanding were going to change things, as I did, began to question such assumptions.

Distrust and even a hatred of all in authority — the "establishment" — emerged as a universal sentiment among the young. "You gotta remember, establishment, it's just another name for evil," Beatle John Lennon would remind us years later. "The monster doesn't care whether it kills all the students. It's out of control."

Trying to understand what was going on at the time was impossible, and many lost themselves in drugs and music. But these were only temporary, false respites from the grim reality of a world filled with violence, chaos and hate. It seemed as if we were being lied to on

all fronts, and there were very few people we could believe — let alone believe in.

Martin Luther King was that clear moral voice that cut through the fog of distortion. He spoke like a prophet and commanded that you listen. King dared to speak truth to the establishment and called for an end to oppression and racism. A peace warrior in a world of war, King raised his voice against the Vietnam War and challenged the military-industrial complex.

Little did we know that his voice would be prematurely silenced, but King knew his days were numbered. He was a target, not only by racists who wanted to kill him but by his own government as well.

King was in Memphis fighting for the rights of striking sanitation workers when he delivered his last, and most apocalyptic, sermon on April 3, 1968, on the eve of his assassination. Just that morning, as he was leaving Atlanta, King's plane had been delayed so that the airline could check all the bags, as well as the airplane — which had been under guard all night, to make sure they contained no bombs. Even the airlines seemed to understand the danger he was in.

However, King did not cower or hide away. He did not soften his message, hoping to pacify his enemies. He knew there was a larger force at work in his life. And that's how he concluded his sermon — the last words he spoke in public:

"Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will.

And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

Forty years after King's assassination, our nation is still plagued with wars, government surveillance and a military-industrial complex that feeds a national diet of warmongering.

And King, once a charismatic leader and voice of authority, has been memorialized in death to such an extent that younger generations recognize his face but miss out on his message: "Speaking truth in times of universal deceit is a revolutionary act." George Orwell once said. Such was Martin Luther King. They may have killed the man, but his spirit of truth lives on. We would do well to learn from him how to speak truth to power.

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