

from our viewpoint...

Communism still the big bad wolf?

It seems the fear of communism is still firmly entrenched in the minds of some Americans.

Rep. Allen West, speaking at a town hall in Jensen Beach, Fla., last week when he was asked how many card-carrying Marxists or International Socialists there are in the Legislature. His response was "It's a good question. I believe there's about 78 to 81 members of the Democrat Party who are members of the Communist Party.... It's called the Congressional Progressive Caucus."

First, let's do a little History 101. The label "communism" is often incorrectly applied to states or political leanings that are actually socialist or even fascist, not communist.

Karl Marx envisioned a society without class distinctions, where wealth and materials belong to everyone and are distributed based on need. He contended that in an ideal state, there would be no real government, and everyone would be free to develop their own capabilities and talents. There have been a lot of interpretations and by a lot of other political philosophers over the years, but that's the general idea.

The idea of government controlling everything is socialism or fascism. Marx thought that to get to his idealistic version of pure communism, you'd have to go through a socialist system to force the wealthy ruling classes to give it all up. That's where the wheels came off the wagon in the modern world.

Most of the "workers' revolutions" around the world were taken over by horribly brutal dictators who never let go of their power and never moved past socialists. There has never been a true communist state, at least not the way Marx wanted. The Soviet Union, China, Cuba and North Korea never made it to a pure communistic system.

The second problem is that West is just plain wrong. Factcheck.org, a non-partisan site that looks into political claims, did an exhaustive check on West's statement.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus is the largest Democratic caucus in the House Representatives. It's been around for more than 20 years and champions Democratic issues. A spokesperson for the caucus said it would be a surprise to them if any members were communists.

First of all, in the United States, the communist party is extremely small, something like 5,000 members; that's incredibly small in a nation of 313 million people and nowhere near enough to get anyone elected in any congressional district. They say that no sitting Legislator is a member of their party. While they did indeed list the Congressional Progressive Caucus as an ally, party Vice President Libero Della Piana said that doesn't mean they are actually communists, just that their policies are something that party members support. Piana admitted that just because his party supports the Congressional Progressive Caucus, doesn't mean the caucus supports the Communist Party.

So why in this day and age did the question need to be asked in the first place? Are we still so afraid of communism? We won the Cold War, didn't we? The "threat" of the so-called communists that were undermining America in order to secure a Soviet victory. Are we going back to the days of McCarthyism? Are we going to start background checks into whether people are now or have ever been members of the communist party?

Or rather should we support people's right to belong to whatever political party they wish and not be prosecuted for it. We have freedom of association, it's written right in the Constitution. And in any case we should not be accusing people of secret political affiliations without proof. It harkens back to a time when we went to far in the name of security and to Joe McCarthy who is rightly reviled by history. —Kevin Bottrell



Earth Day worth remembering year round

Next week marks the 42nd anniversary of what many consider the birth of the modern environmental movement. The first Earth Day celebration began April 22, 1970.

This is also a special week for those farmers and ranchers who are involved with the production of food, fuel and fiber. The original premise of Earth Day was to promote the conservation of our natural resources. It is only fitting that on this day we showcase the progress of the Kansas farmer and rancher—but is there really any question most people who live on the planet Earth support its survival?

Begging the question – could any cause be more humane?

To help put Earth Day in perspective, this celebration of our planet really began gathering steam at the beginning of the '90s. It was at this time that almost everyone jumped on the bandwagon. It became a very "in" thing to bang the environmental drum.

Back then, I remember *Fortune* magazine proclaiming for the first time that the environment was a cause worthy of saving. Others shouted from the mountaintops that while Motherhood, apple pie, baseball and the flag all may be subject to controversy – saving our planet was beyond debate.

Noble, without question. But isn't there a big difference between the desire for clean air, clean water, clean places to hike and the passion by some who would overhaul this planet?

The entire concept of Earth Day is so popular because it appeals strongly to the "deep" longings shared by many people. Flashback



Insight this week

• john schlageck

— now there's a word from the '60s – 30 years and recall the generation who contemplated a world of natural beauty and harmony.

This same idea is back in vogue today. In this perfect world, people will fully understand the tools they use, and some believe they can provide for themselves without depending on the professionals and specialists.

In this revamped world, life would slow down and be viewed as a whole. This ideology offers a sense of place – of being rooted. Ancient wisdom and grassroots democracy are essential. Quality and equality of life are where it's at. Much is said about ends but little about means. This ideology speaks poetically about much – plainly about little.

So what happens after Earth Day passes?

Most folks go about their daily lives and forget about Earth Day. Some will focus on small things like recycling or changing their shopping habits. Some fringe environmentalists may be forced to re-think their radical positions of imminent apocalypse.

Protecting and caring for this old world we call home is often a struggle. Like each day's sunrise and sunset, we often take it for granted. Conservation of our planet can be a challenge because some regard the land as a private commodity.

Others, including farmers, ranchers and those who make their living from the land, view this planet as a community to which they belong. They love, respect and care for the land. They adhere to an ethic, which enlarges the boundaries of their community to include soils, waters, plants and animals. Collectively – the land.

There is no other way for the land to survive the impact of modern man. We must always remember that while our land yields fruits, vegetables and grains, it also yields a cultural harvest – one we as inhabitants all share and must nurture.

We must ensure our educational and economic systems are headed toward, rather than away from, an increased consciousness of the land.

Today only a handful of people make their living from the land. Today many middlemen, countless machines and sophisticated technology separate man from the land. Many have no vital relation to the land. For them, it is generally thought of as, "that space between cities on which crops and grass grow, or cattle graze."

Let's remember throughout the year, not only on Earth Day, that land is used right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the living community. It is used wrong when it tends to be otherwise.

We can never throw away or limit the tools which have provided so much for so many. Let's remember throughout the year our commitment to the successful and wise use of our life-giving land. Let's remember that we have not outgrown the land.

Volunteers perform ferret count

To the Editor:

Last month, I participated in the effort to count the black-footed ferrets in Logan County, joining some 30 volunteers from across Kansas and the United States. One biology student even drove from New Jersey just to participate in this unique opportunity to see one of the rarest animals on earth.

Because of drought and predation, the prairie dog population has declined in the areas where the black-footed ferrets live. Likewise, the ferret population is down. There is no reason not to anticipate a decline in the number of ferrets; a mother black-footed ferret needs to



from our readers

• to the editor

kill a prairie dog each night to feed her babies. Obviously this job is much more difficult when there are fewer prairie dogs to be found.

During the days of Buffalo Bill, prairie dog colonies were huge. It has been said that they stretched for miles on end. Today this unique ecosystem has been reduced to tiny clusters.

The remaining colonies are essentially large outdoor zoos. All of the animals such as the black-footed ferret that depend on the habitat and food provided by prairie dogs will cease to exist unless we find a way to preserve a place where they can live.

The expansive prairie dog ecosystem has been lost to history. There is too much pressure to feed a hungry and crowded world. However, we should preserve a small remnant and give budding biologists and other tourists a glimpse at the prairie as it once was.

Tim Peterson, Monument

Every child deserves a home

The home that nine year old Raven lived in with her parents was filthy.

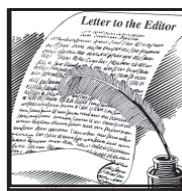
Alcohol had become her mother Christine's single-minded obsession. Neglect of Raven and their home was the collateral damage of Christine making sure she got to the liquor store when it opened in the morning. It's hard to prepare meals or run a vacuum when the rest of the day is spent sleeping or in a deep depression.

Alcohol also fueled terrible fights between Christine and her husband Paul. They were never physically abusive to Raven, but the family was spiraling into the depths of dysfunction and despair.

Their situation culminated in Christine being arrested for drunken driving. A judge ordered Raven removed from the family home. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services placed her in foster care.

Five months later, Christine and Paul are sober. They have a good relationship with Raven's foster parents. Raven will rejoin her family at home in May.

It's like a before and after picture from a makeover show. But what happened to bring this family back from the brink is the result of months of hard work and introspection on the part of Christine and Paul, as well as the



phyllis gilmore

• SRS secretary

dedication of social workers at SRS and TFI Family Services.

"They never pointed a finger; they held our hand and showed us the proper outlook," Christine said. "They always found something positive in me -- even when I was at my worst."

We're so thankful we were able to help Christine and her family to overcome a tough situation. Her attitude and hope for the future is inspiring. And we are happy Raven will be able to return to a safe, caring home.

Truth of the matter is, SRS would rather not have to step in at all. We'd rather all families stay healthy.

Even though that's not a realistic scenario, we do work to prevent child abuse through education. Increased awareness of the problem is the first step toward making it a rare occurrence. With that goal in mind, Gov. Sam Brownback proclaimed April Child Abuse Prevention Month in Kansas. This month

we're planting shiny blue pinwheels around the state as a reminder of the importance of child abuse prevention.

There have been almost 13,000 substantiated reports of abuse or neglect in Kansas since July 1, 2011. Many of those cases were reported by concerned neighbors, friends or family members.

Maybe they observed a malnourished child who never seemed to want to go home. Or saw bruises or other injuries that couldn't just be attributed to childhood clumsiness. Perhaps a child was overly passive, compliant and withdrawn, but always watchful, as if waiting for something to happen. Or maybe their alarm couldn't be put into words, but their instincts said something just wasn't right.

State law requires SRS to guard the anonymity of individuals who report alleged cases of abuse or neglect. On our website you can find out more about signs to look for that may indicate child abuse: www.srs.ks.gov. If you know a child who could be the victim of abuse or neglect, call our 24-hour hotline, 1-800-922-5330. An SRS caseworker will follow up within 72 hours.

Please do your part. Every child in Kansas deserves to be safe at home.

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Kevin Bottrell, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor
Advertising Department
Jessica Corbin and Jeff Dreiling
Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Jim Bowker, James Jackson,

Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,

Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving 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).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company