

from our viewpoint...

We cannot afford another Antietam

Monday was the 150th anniversary of the bloodiest single-day battle in American history.

On Sept. 17, 1862, Union forces under Maj. Gen. George McClellan attacked Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee along the Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, Md. It was the first major battle in the Civil War.

The Confederate force, outnumbered nearly two to one, fought the Union Army to a standstill. Lee withdrew the next day and poor Union leadership allowed him to escape.

3,654 men were killed, with another 17,000 wounded, all of them Americans. The true tragedy is that the battle was tactically indecisive. Though the Union force was superior, McClellan failed to commit much of his army and ended up letting Lee escape, something that would plague Union commanders throughout the rest of the war. The only bright spot for the Union about the battle was that it ended Lee's invasion of Maryland.

Had McClellan pressed his advantage, he might have been able to destroy Lee's army and end the threat of the Confederacy's single greatest general.

20,000 men was a large price to pay with little to show for it. Americans today are not used to those kinds of casualties in war. In the entirety of the Iraq War, 4,805 Americans were killed in eight years. Compare that to nearly 5,000 dead in three days at Gettysburg and 6,821 dead in 30 days on Iwo Jima.

Modern wars are different, and while the sacrifice of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines is no less meaningful today, we should still take lessons from our past.

The United States has become increasingly divided in recent years. It is no longer the Blue and the Gray, but the Blue and the Red. We have become as bitterly separated over things like health care and Social Security as we were over slavery and state's rights 150 years ago.

We simply cannot afford another Civil War. The last one cost more than half a million lives and completely destroyed the economy in the South.

What would a civil war look like today? Red States and Blue States are scattered around, and no state is completely homogeneous between liberals and conservatives. There would be no Mason-Dixon line, no clear dividing line between opposing nations. It would truly result in a country going up in flames.

The bottom line would be that with advances in technology, another civil war would be utterly devastating. America nearly destroyed itself 150 years ago, and if brother fought against brother today, it would truly destroy itself.

We must remember that there is more that unites us as Americans than divides us, that despite our political differences, we must learn from our past and keep those differences in the realm of discourse, and not let it come to arms. — Kevin Bottrell



Twelve hundred days in the wilderness

Aug. 11 marked 1,200 days since the U.S. Senate last passed a budget. 1,200 days.

A family business or corporation could not operate even 30 days — let alone 1,200 — without a plan for how it would spend and borrow money. Even a household cannot function without some semblance of an idea about where money goes.

Yet, somehow, the U.S. Senate believes America can operate responsibly without a budget.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the federal government borrows \$4 billion a day, resulting in trillion-dollar annual deficits and a \$16 trillion mountain of debt.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the last time the federal government actually cut spending was before Elvis Presley released his debut album — that's 1955.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the "solution" favored by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and President Obama is to just find a way to get more money — without having to cut spending. They would rather allow all the Bush-Obama tax relief to expire than produce a budget.



tim huelskamp
• u.s. rep.

If only Washington could behave more like American businesses and families. When they face hard times, rarely is there the option to find new money; no, the only choice is to rein in spending. But, instead, Washington just continues to spend more than it takes in.

According to Congressional Budget Office data aggregated by the Heritage Foundation, spending as a share of the nation's economy averaged 20.2 percent between 1960 and 2008. Revenue averaged 18.1 percent. Yet, in 2012, spending is projected to account for 23.3 percent and revenue for 16.1 percent. So much for a balanced approach!

Certainly a poor-performing economy is the chief reason that Washington has less revenue. The formula is easy: the less economic activity, the lower the tax revenue. But, rather than address the reasons why our economy is in a

shambles, too many in Washington — including Harry Reid and President Obama — would rather just spend more money we do not have and raise taxes.

Without a plan for spending, Washington will continue to spend more than it takes in. And, Washington will continue to send a message of uncertainty to businesses and consumers — the very entities and individuals we need to engage in commerce (and, thus, spur increased revenue as a result of more economic activity).

Not only would a budget fix Washington's spending woes, but so too would comprehensive tax reform. While the House has passed a one-year extension of all the major Bush-Obama tax cuts, we have also advanced a bill paving the path for full, comprehensive reform in 2013. Perhaps Sen. Reid and President Obama could take a little time off the campaign trail to tackle this issue, too.

America cannot afford to wait another 1,200 days for a budget or for an overhaul of our outdated, ineffective and punitive tax code.

Be responsive to societal concerns

While farmers and ranchers have always adhered to sound principles of animal husbandry and livestock care, society's views on animal welfare continue to evolve.

Today, there is a heightened awareness of the animal's quality of life. While there are extreme fringe groups, "activists" if you will, many people have honest questions and concerns about the quality of life for animals while they are in the production environment.

Who are these people? These people are average individuals. They're you, they're me.

Today's informed consumer wants to know that while that sow is going through the production cycle she has a reasonable quality of life.

Consumers want to know that animals are not abused, subjected to inhumane conditions, are well cared for and that the people who care for them honestly care for them.

Agriculture cannot afford to seek out a



Insight this week
• john schlageck

"culprit" or "scapegoat" for the animal welfare issue. Agriculture cannot afford to blame anyone. Those in the livestock industry must view this as our culture and society, continually evolving and coming to terms with new types of social issues. It just so happens that animals have become integrated into this process.

One reason for this interest in animal welfare may be that agriculture has become so highly regarded, so productive throughout the world. Today, Western European, Japanese and U.S. consumers do not have to worry about where their next meal comes from.

Whether we like it or not, farmers and ranch-

ers are going to have to accept and ensure that sound animal husbandry practices are used.

If agricultural producers honestly show they are putting effort into meeting a certain standard of care that is conducive to a healthy animal, the public will accept and embrace those who raise and care for livestock.

Livestock producers must listen to societal and consumer concerns and be responsive. We must continue to enhance animal well-being throughout the life cycle of our food-producing animals. And we must be willing to listen to and have conversations with those than enjoy eating meat.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Five day camp-out on four days of food

The title describes a lesson at the Hong Kong International School, where I taught many years ago. The description of this optional outdoor education unit for our middle school students made it clear that the culminating activity would be the killing, dressing, cooking and eating of a chicken for the last day's dinner. There would be no other food available that day.

After four days of providing chicken feed to their last meal, the kids were given a cleaver and their live chicken. No kid was forced to kill the animal. Some chose to go hungry that day.

Among the "objectives" of the lesson: "don't expect someone to do something for you that you are not willing to do for yourself," and "there is a connection between the plastic-wrapped, sanitized piece of meat in the supermarket and a living animal."

Our grandparents knew where their meat came from. It is time for the educational system and the meat processors to get back into reality education.

Unfortunately, today, lawyers in the distant offices of various meat-packing firms, are making it difficult for Kansas biology teachers to do the most elementary of dissection lessons. Nothing generates more awe and respect for the complex structures in an eye than the careful dissection and examination of a cow eyeball. Yet several major packing



education frontlines
• John Schrock

companies have closed off our long-standing access to cow eyeballs on the grounds that nerve tissue might carry mad-cow disease. It is a non-existent problem — there are no "mad cow" prions in today's cattle herds in the United States.

Part of this week's Kansas State Fair is a competition among our 4-H kids who show livestock and sign "intent to sell" forms — they know where their food comes from. But our city kids often haven't a clue how their hamburger or chicken gets into their favorite sandwich. As rural populations shrink, we cannot afford to see this imbalance between the aware and the ignorant grow.

Temple Grandin, the Colorado State University professor of animal science who has designed livestock handling facilities used by meat processing plants, agrees. Speaking at the Animal Science Conference and Venture Forum at the MinnWest Technology Campus in Willmar, Minn., on Sept. 5, she explained: "We've got to show what we do. We've got to get over being bashful." As reported in the West Central Tribune in

Willmar, "Grandin urged the industry professionals at the conference to "show stuff done right" and to "put up tons and tons of videos showing the entire process..."

Far from driving students away, she contends that this understanding will encourage many young people to consider agricultural technology as a career.

The current educational oppression of No Child Left Behind testing has prevented teachers taking any field trips, let alone trips to cattle lots and packing plants. But middle school is the age that my Hong Kong school and Temple Grandin recognize is the time for this reality check with interesting lessons.

Kansas schools need to introduce our agriculture, ag-technology businesses and related careers to students in middle school. We need the participation of our meat industries and they need to be fully open about what they do. Over time, it will take the impact away from animal rightist sensationalism.

At last week's conference, Grandin summarized it clearly: "If you don't show kids interesting stuff, they won't get interested in interesting stuff."

John Richard Schrock is a board member of the National Animal Interest Alliance and trains Kansas biology teachers at Emporia State University. This column represents his personal views only.

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