

The lack of long lived public works projects

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



One of the biggest disappointments among many in the administration's response to the Great Recession has been the lack of a meaningful public works program, one designed to put lots of people to work and get things moving.

Oh, we got the Recovery Act, or "stimulus bill," with its "shovel-ready" projects. What a joke. The projects, few and far between as they were, were hardly ready. Most took a year or two to get going.

Compare that to the Works Progress Administration and the other "alphabet" agencies of the New Deal. For whatever you thought of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he got things done. His agencies put people to work and they built practical things we use today.

Republicans, many of them, thought Mr. Roosevelt was the devil incarnate, of course. They sued to block his "socialist" programs at every turn. His first take on public works with the Civil Works Administration was no great success, but that didn't stop FDR.

He pressed on, creating the WPA in 1935 to build things (and in those days, everyone knew what the initials meant), the Civilian Conservation Corps to hire labor, and a dozen other agencies. Existing departments, including Interior and Commerce, geared up to finance new works.

Just in Goodland, today we have the barrel hangar at the airport and the original building of the high school, built in 1937.

Other area towns got swimming pools, county shops, city buildings, band shells, highways, schools, parks, lakes, you name it. WPA's genius was that it reached into nearly every county in the country. It hired workers, built projects of lasting value, left a legacy we see and use nearly 80 years later.

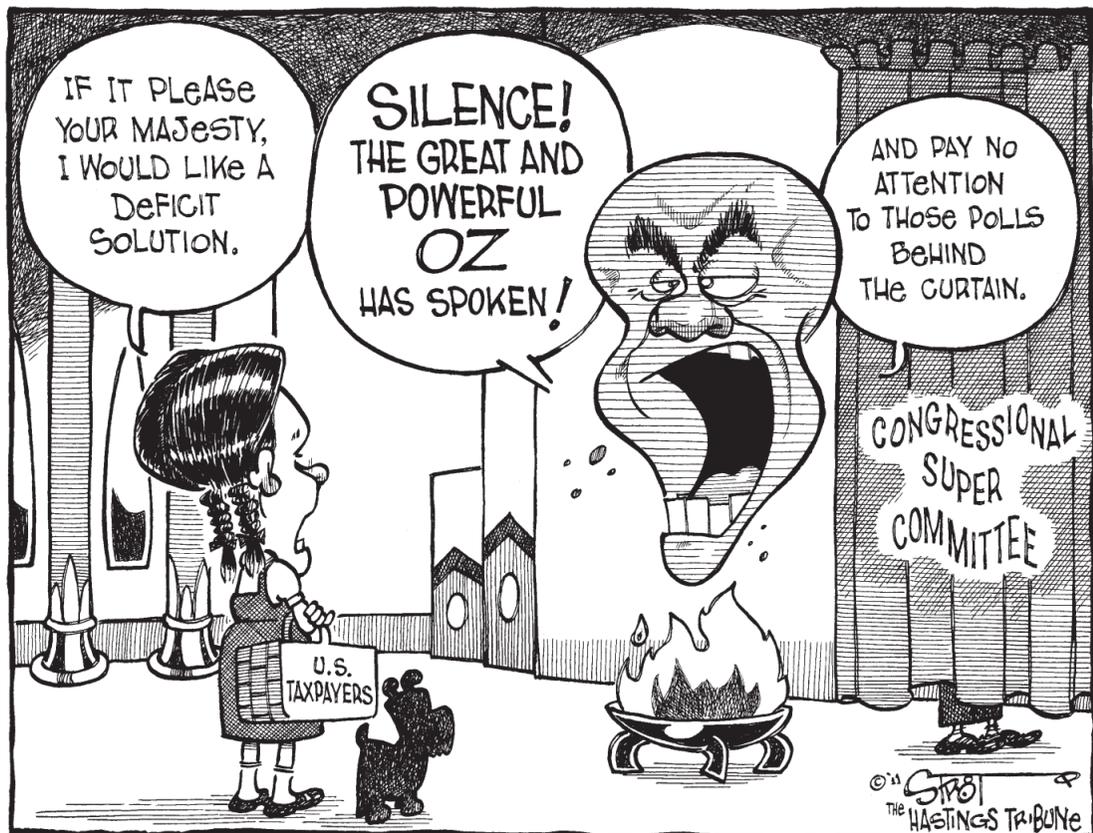
Farther west, the Roosevelt-era agencies built trails and roads in national parks and national forests, including the world-renowned Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park. Again, Americans use these every day in the 21st century.

Goodland did better than most towns with Recover Act programs, receiving \$2 million in stimulus money for its water project, about \$750,000 for a project at the airport and about \$600,000 for repaving on K-27 north of Interstate 70.

Still, much of the area will show no broad and lasting legacy from the Recovery Act and its siblings. America will little note nor long remember most the few things built during this brief era.

Not to have emulated the broad reach and deep roots of the WPA seems a major missed opportunity, but for this administration, it's par for the course.

No one except perhaps the most rabid "birther" would mistake Mr. Obama for the devil, but 80 years hence, who will remember his public works programs? 'Tis a shame. — Steve Haynes



The fall temperatures cause laid back behavior

As a fitting tribute to Labor Day I did absolutely nothing; nada; zip; zero; zilch. I got up. Yep...that was about it. I got up; I went back to sleep. And, Jim let me. It was about 1:30 p.m. when I opened my eyes again. He wasn't in the house so I phoned him to see if he got the number of the truck that ran over me. He was in the wood shop working on drawers for the pantry and said he was sure hungry.

Hopefully, I redeemed myself by fixing some rib eye steaks with fresh, steamed carrots on the side for lunch. We savored the steak knowing it will be the last solid food Jim will eat for a day or two. He is having a medical procedure done and can't have anything but clear liquids for a couple of days. Out of sympathy for him I won't eat anything either. At least, not in front of him.

-ob-

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



Fall is my favorite time of year and I ought to be ashamed of myself for frittering away one of the most beautiful outdoor days in history. I should be working in the yard but, I'm not. There will be plenty more days to work outside. And, unfortunately, it won't be long before we're complaining about the cold, snow and ice.

The temperature dropped, overnight, to 54 degrees. Perfect sleeping weather! But, early in the morning I actually got out of bed to close the balcony door. The weather was just right for pulling covers and snuggling deep for a few

more minutes.

-ob-

Have you noticed how modern technology sometimes makes you oblivious to what is really going on in the world around you?

We were in the neighboring town where our son, James, works. It had been a busy morning with errands and shopping. James' wife, Charlotte, called on my cell phone and we chatted away. Finally, I said, "Well, we're parked outside the grocery store and we need to go on in."

Charlotte said, "I'm parked outside the store, too."

We both turned our heads and there we were, with only a car parked between us. We had a good laugh over that.

Certainly proof that cell phones can distract you from the "real" world.

Has justice been served

Letter to the Editor,

I would like to publicly express my outrage over the latest plea bargain of former Norton police officer, Ryan Zwegardt. This is a man who was charged with two counts of rape, one count of aggravated criminal sodomy, and one count of aggravated battery against two women on two separate occasions while employed as a Norton police officer.

To quote County Attorney Doug Sebelius, "This solution best serves the interest of justice. The defendant has the opportunity to better himself without suffering the full repercussions of what could come from taking the case to trial." No mention was made of Zwegardt's two victims. How did Norton County justice serve them?

Norton County has become a joke, and is fast becoming an unsafe place to live. If you want to get away with a crime, do it here.

As far as I'm concerned, yet another travesty of justice has been committed in the Norton County court system.

Pat Ambrosier
Almena, Kan.

Recent consumer research has shown there's a segment of the U.S. population that is willing to pay more for tender and very tender cuts of beef. So how do you determine what is tender and very tender?

Some would argue, "We all know what a good, tender steak is because we've had one and enjoyed every bite." Sure you know what you like and I know what I like, right?

A tender cut of beef is easy to chew. You can almost cut it with a fork. No gristle. Now that's a tender steak.

But is there any way to tell for sure? Visually you can't see tenderness. Sometimes even with a Grade A Prime cut of beef you may receive a less than tender piece.

Today, the discerning steak lover wants a guarantee that the particular cut of beef he/she is about to order in a restaurant or buy at the supermarket, is indeed tender or very tender.

Retailers, packers and now livestock producers have heard this reverie and are listening. They all understand the customer is right, give the people what they want and in this case, there may very well be a positive adjustment to everyone's bottom line.

To ensure the livestock producer, packer and retailer can deliver a tender, very tender cut of beef, the ASTM subcommittee on Livestock, Meat and Poultry, Marketing Claims has nearly completed its efforts to establish a standard for beef tenderness, according to Mark Nelson, Kansas Farm Bureau

Insight

John Schlageck

Commodities Division.

"This standard will allow us to numerically define cuts of beef that are either tender or very tender," Nelson says. "This is important because consumers will then know for certain what they are buying meets these standards."

Nelson says this program isn't in place yet and may not be for up to another year. He believes it is important that livestock producers understand this is coming down the pike and they should be talking to their packer-buyer once these tenderness standards are in place.

"It's up to us as beef producers to go to our packer buyers and ask them, 'Hey are you paying a premium for tenderness?'" Nelson says. "We need to ensure we as producers are paid for stock that grades tender and very tender."

So how will tenderness be determined in beef carcasses?

There are many variables that contribute to beef tenderness, Nelson notes. To begin with you have livestock genetics and age. Then there is grade including select, choice and prime. In addition, the amount of marbling although this deals more with the taste of the cut of beef.

One measure of tenderness in

the industry is the Warner-Bratzler, developed at Kansas State University, and the slice shear force test. These measures are based on the amount of pressure it takes to cut a steak. It mimics the pressure it takes to push you knife through a cut of beef.

According to Warner-Bratzler, a steak that requires 3.9 kilograms of pressure to slice through the beef may be a very tender cut, Nelson says. One that requires 4.4 kilograms may be labeled tender. Anything above that will be considered a common cut of beef.

Nelson notes that while the U.S. beef industry remains the gold standard around the world, there are still roughly 17 percent of the carcasses processed in this country that will not make the cut as tender or very tender.

"Our goal with this standard is to sort out carcasses and pieces of meat based on tenderness," Nelson says. "One day in the not too distant future everyone who buys a cut of beef will be able to look at the label and see whether its tender or very tender along with the grade, weight and price."

These continuing efforts, including the proposed tenderness standards are vital as the livestock and meat industries adopt new technologies and more of us pay, or are paid for, the many and varied livestock and meat attributes delivered. And as always, beef producers will continue to listen to and produce products for the consumer.

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Thumbs up to the Northern Valley Cheerleaders for hustling over after their volleyball practice to cheer on the cross country team. Called in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.