

OPINION

THE HUTCHINSON
NEWS

Editorial Board

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EDITORIAL

Questionable 'help'

DCF secretary has a backward method of encouraging people

Gov. Sam Brownback's top officials with the Department for Children and Families have a revolutionary idea on how to reduce the number of children in poverty: Make parents pay more for child care.

As reported by the Kansas Health Institute, DCF Secretary Phyllis Gilmore, who also is chair of the Governor's Task Force on Reducing Childhood Poverty, suggested that increasing the co-pays for subsidized child care would encourage parents to work longer hours and pursue workplace promotions.

Parents who make less than 180 percent of the federal poverty level — about \$2,900 a month for a single mother with two children — receive the subsidy to help offset the expensive cost of child care while the parent works. Some parents also can receive a child care subsidy to attend school — a benefit that also was questioned by some top DCF brass and task force member Joyce Crumpton of Kansas City.

Crumpton said that single mothers need to realize that the cost of public assistance programs is "unsustainable" and that the government is not responsible for rectifying single parents' poor choices.

"She might have to postpone her education," Crumpton responded to an example of a single mother working several low-paying jobs and trying to attend school.

So the logic of top DCF officials and some task force members apparently flows like this: Working parents who aren't making enough money to pay child care costs should pay more for their child care, which effectively will lower their hourly wage. That, in turn, will encourage those parents to work more hours or pick up an

extra job to make ends meet.

Apply that logic to the business world, and the soundness of such logic starts to unravel. Reducing government subsidies or tax breaks will force businesses to work harder, produce and sell more product, and eventually free themselves from the need for government assistance altogether.

That's not how the real world works — for either businesses or people. In the business world, reduced subsidies result in layoffs and downsizing, or in some cases a decision to relocate to an area that offers better perks. In the world of single parents, higher costs for child care serve as a deterrent to full-time employment, as those parents make less for each hour their children require paid care. And those increased costs help create more "latch-key" kids who are left unsupervised — or supervised by unqualified people — while their parents are away at work.

The idea of moving people to self-sufficiency should be the goal of all public assistance programs. But the governor and his top officials don't seem to understand how to help people reach that goal — nor do they understand the struggles and challenges that people of limited means face in their daily lives.

Furthermore, there seems to be a sense from the current administration that any person on public assistance is nothing more than a freeloader who won't even wait to leave the DCF parking lot before selling his or her Vision card to the highest bidder.

Certainly the state's public assistance programs contain fraud, and public benefits are sometimes abused or misused. The state should root out such costly behavior. But increasing child care costs for impoverished families who are working — and trying to move out of poverty — doesn't seem like the sort of "help" families need to reach self-sufficiency.

WESTERN FRONT

Picking a big 'plum'

I am not writing this to denigrate illegal aliens, but to call attention to how the IRS is redistributing your income. Congress has ignored this scheme for years. The dollar outflow gets heavier by the day.

Inspector General Russell George says that the magnitude of the problem grows exponentially but the IRS does nothing to stop it. An Indianapolis investigative reporter recently exposed a scheme where the IRS has granted an "additional child tax credit" for children not even living in the U.S. They are added on by astute relatives who see a good thing and milk it for some giant tax refunds. The Individual Taxpayer I.D. (ITIN) allows those aliens filing an IRS return under it to claim these bogus credits without any proof whatsoever.

Inspector General George says that the U.S. now shells out \$4.2 billion yearly to these folks. (Some experts who have studied the loophole say that's a low estimate.) Whistleblowers who have tried to expose this fraud have hit a stone wall. No one at the IRS answers the inquiries.

Investigative reporter Bob Segall has documented interviews (on film) of workers who say, "Why not take advantage of it?" He says two million undocumented workers are quick to pick this giant plum. His comment: "Meanwhile, American kids can't see the inside of the White House because it's closed. We can no longer afford the tours that let them in."

If you think this is worth investigating, I suggest you clip this and send it to your senator.

Ask him what he knows about this redistribution of your income. You may get a big surprise.

**ELLEN VERELL
Hutchinson**

Soup kitchen not moving

Friends, I need to say to the clients and friends of the Soup Kitchen, we are not moving to the Hub.

The Soup Kitchen is at 301 E. Third Ave. and will remain at that address. The Bread and Cup ministry is moving to the Hub.

The Soup Kitchen feeds meals on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 5 p.m. We send meals home with the clients who ask for one on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday so we know that they will be able to eat on the days we are closed. If our clients don't have food and cannot go to the Reno County food bank, we give them food for their homes. I don't know how the rumor got started that the Soup Kitchen was moving, but it is not.

We pray much success to the Hub and the Bread and Cup ministries because all of us are in the same business — to feed the hungry of Hutchinson, soul and body. Thanks for the calls of concern; we plan to be on the corner of Third and Maple when you need us.

**STANLEY MURDOCK
Soup Kitchen director
Hutchinson**

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

The News encourages readers to share their opinions on this page and offers a number of ways to do so:

(1) Write a letter to the Western Front on any topic. Send to The News at 300 W. Second Ave., Hutchinson, KS, 67504-0190; fax to (620) 662-4186 or email to westernfront@hutchnews.com.

Letters should be limited to 500 words. Poems, consumer complaints, business testimonials and group-written letters will not be accepted. Please sign your name and provide your address and a phone number so we may

call to verify the letter. We strive to publish letters within one week of verification. There is a 30-day waiting period between submissions.

Western Front letters are subject to editing for space considerations and libel concerns.

(2) Respond directly to a newspaper editorial by joining our online opinions blog. Go to www.hutchnews.com/editorialblogs and comment on any of our latest posts. A selection of constructive comments may be excerpted to go with opinions that are published in a later print edition of The News.



COLUMNISTS

Many heroes and one main hero

Two recent engaging columns got me thinking about heroes:

"Living in the hometown of a superhero" (6/27/13), by Jessica Lucas, and "Hall of Fame trip was a super honor" (6/30/13), by John Montgomery. They both praised the communal fun and the positive results of Hutchinson's retreat to the mythical Smallville, Kan., and its favorite son: Superman.

Living in McPherson, I sadly missed all the revelry of the day. I did, however, enjoy the special issue of the "Daily Planet," the paper where Clark Kent was a "mild-mannered reporter." His alter ego, Superman, was "faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound," and always sought to protect "truth, justice and the American way." To a lot of us kids, Clark Kent, a.k.a. Superman, was our superhero.

Heroes are very important. Randy Travis sang about heroes with his great song, "Heroes will help you find good in yourself; your friends won't forsake you for somebody else. They'll both stand beside you through thick and through thin. That's how it goes with your heroes and friends."

Both heroes and friends help us become. We may take them for granted, but they are the ones who shape us into just who we are. Who are today's heroes?

We must choose our heroes very carefully. Heroes can destroy as well as enliven; they can disappoint as well as inspire; they can humiliate as well as elevate. We've suffered the tragic downside of hero worship. The 19 young Muslim fanatics who forfeited their own lives while murdering some 3,000 innocent victims were likely following their hero, a diabolical genius named Osama bin Laden. Every young suicide bomber reflects such idolatry. Their "hero worship" brings death and destruction to many innocent persons.

There also are much less serious, but still very painful, consequences to making any human being our hero. The repeated moral failures of media stars, political figures and sports champions would dictate that we remember that all human heroes have clay feet; that all hu-

Community columnist



Father Bob Layne

manity is flawed and will eventually fail excessive adoration.

Lance Armstrong, Mark McGwire and Aaron Hernandez come to mind. President Bill Clinton was a hero of mine, yet when his immoral tryst with that young girl was revealed, I was deeply disappointed and truly hurt. What a sullied pleasure for shattering his whole legacy. With human heroes, caution is the rule.

After some 80 years of life, I don't expect human beings to be spotless heroes. That our "founding fathers" were flawed seems historically accurate. From slave owners to plutocratic landowners to misogynistic chauvinists, to the ethnic cleansing program against Native Americans, these are all part of the story of the early leaders of our nation. Facing those realities helps establish a needed national humility. Our national hero, Uncle Sam, also has often fallen short of the glory of God.

Then again, who are my heroes? My father was my first hero. A 6-foot-4 Texan with a big white hat, an engaging personality, and the best salesman I ever knew. I gained much from him. Early teachers positively impacted my vision and abilities, expanding the first and sharpening the second. A university history professor turned me toward the study of history, for which I remain grateful. Many vocal music leaders and certainly clergy helped me embrace the faith and sing God's praises.

One bishop of the church lifted me up when I was at my lowest, and gave me a third chance at ministry. All were heroes to whom I still give thanks. Another hero of mine is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who opened my eyes to a truth I'd ignored, and then inspired me to follow his lead, striving to make his dream increasingly come true. Of course, Nelson Mandela, who sacrificed so much to free so many. Now President Obama is my

most cherished living hero. His courage in "going where no black man has ever gone," in facing contempt more vicious than any president before him, while still seeking to serve all his fellow citizens and not just the rich and powerful like his opposition, is an inspiration to me and, I hope, to many others.

Increasingly, I've found my heroes among those who give and serve. They no longer are among the champions, the stars, the warriors, or the victorious. My heroes are those who give of themselves for the benefit of others, who are willing to serve and seek not to master; who make little noise but leave a large impact.

The valiant Arizona firefighters who recently died seeking to protect others from the flames that engulfed them are surely heroes. So, too, are all public safety servants. I saw a video that showed nurses running to help someone in need. The caption said: "Not all superheroes wear caps and masks." Such heroes give life and never take it; they are due honor and emulation.

Who, then, is my ultimate hero? He lived some 2,000 years ago; won no victories; had no portfolio; was awarded no degree; even had no place to lay his head. Yet in His suffering, death and resurrection, all sin was forgiven and death was conquered, the only two things He defeated. His name is Jesus; He is my only true hero.

I'm often asked why I wear that "little cross" around my neck. It is a precious gift from my beloved wife. It contains a 2,000-year-old broken piece of glass that existed when Jesus walked this Earth. I tell folks, "I'm just like NASCAR, where cars display symbols of their sponsors — who it is that fuels their energy."

That little cross is the symbol of my sponsor — the one who fuels my energy. He really "helped me find good in myself, and did never forsake me in spite of myself. He stood beside me through thick and through thin." He truly is my hero and friend. I commend Him to you, too.

Father Bob Layne is a retired Episcopal priest living in McPherson, supplying on Sundays in parishes with no resident clergy. I still love to talk about Jesus. Email: fatherbob33@cox.net.

Misconceptions about Middle East dog us

The military coup that ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi marks another failure in U.S. foreign policy over several administrations, which have erroneously promoted the notion that American-style democracy in Islamic lands will produce a nation more like ours.

The Founders wrote a Constitution. When properly read and obeyed, it guards against pure democracy and makes "we the people" subject to laws that cannot be abolished by popular vote. Benjamin Franklin properly called what the Founders wrought a "Republic." Representative government would guard against the passions of a majority. No such safeguards apply in Egypt (or, for that matter, throughout most of the Islamic world).

George W. Bush famously said that freedom beats in every human heart. To paraphrase Bill Clinton, it depends on the meaning of freedom.

Definitions are important. To a radical Islamist, Sharia law defines freedom. Constitutions guaranteeing equal rights for all (including religious minorities like Coptic Christians in Egypt), as well as multiple parties and free speech, are mostly absent from societies where Islamists rule. And so majorities, often followed by the mob, and then the army, rule.

Secretary of State John Kerry spent most of his recent visit to the Middle East focusing on the establishment of a Palestinian state. This failed policy is a sideshow and irrelevant to the turmoil throughout the



Cal Thomas

region. The Obama administration is calling for an "inclusive" political process in Egypt, which would include a role for the Muslim Brotherhood. But the Muslim Brotherhood's radical religious outlook and earthly agenda are the problem, not the solution. Why should the United States expect a different government if a different "brother" is elected, or if Morsi is somehow reinstated?

How can Egypt have a stable government when the Brotherhood claims to be doing the will of God at the same time the military says it carried out God's will by removing Morsi and secularists say they don't want Islamists governing Egypt?

Writing in The UK Daily Telegraph, Fraser Nelson, editor of The Spectator, says the Arab world needs capitalism, more than democracy. He suggests that Western aid to Egypt be conditioned upon property rights. Throughout the Arab world, he writes, bureaucracy and corruption keep many people from starting businesses without paying costly bribes: "... under Hosni Mubarak, for example, opening a small bakery in Cairo took more than 500 days of bureaucracy. To open a business in Egypt means dealing with 29 government agencies. The same story is true throughout the region: The av-

erage Arab needs to present four dozen documents and endure two years of red tape to become the legal owner of land or business. If you don't have the time or money for this, you are condemned to life in the black market: No matter how good you are, you will never trade your way out of poverty."

The right to own property was fundamental to America's founding. In the beginning, only white male property owners were allowed to vote. Discriminatory, yes, but the point about the importance of being invested in the new nation by literally owning a piece of it was thought to be a fundamental component of citizenship.

American policy in the Middle East has failed over many decades because of false assumptions, especially when it comes to Israel. While often treating that tiny land as a weed that ought to be dug up, rather than a flower in the desert to be nourished, U.S. policy has focused on placating Arabs and Muslims, many of whom wish to destroy Israel and America.

Perhaps now that the United States is rapidly headed toward energy independence (enhanced if the opposition to the Keystone pipeline and fracking can be overcome), this and future administrations won't feel the need to bow to Middle East dictators and will push a "re-set" button that has a better chance at succeeding than the one that for too long has been stuck and inoperative.

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