

OPINION

THE HUTCHINSON NEWS

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EDITORIAL

Economic stimulus

Time will tell whether the Democratic prescription for economic relief was the right one and whether a single party-run federal government was able to get more done than a split Washington.

And President Obama likely is right when he says that his star will continue to rise or fall based on whether he and Congress got this economic stimulus right.

A few moderate Republicans managed to moderate a little the enormous government spending packed into the economic-recovery bill compromise hammered out Wednesday. But only a little.

The House-passed version was chock full of spending on Democrat-favored programs, much of which seemed to have little to do with creating jobs in this miserable economy. Moderate Republican senators managed to improve the bill with more tax cuts and less government spending.

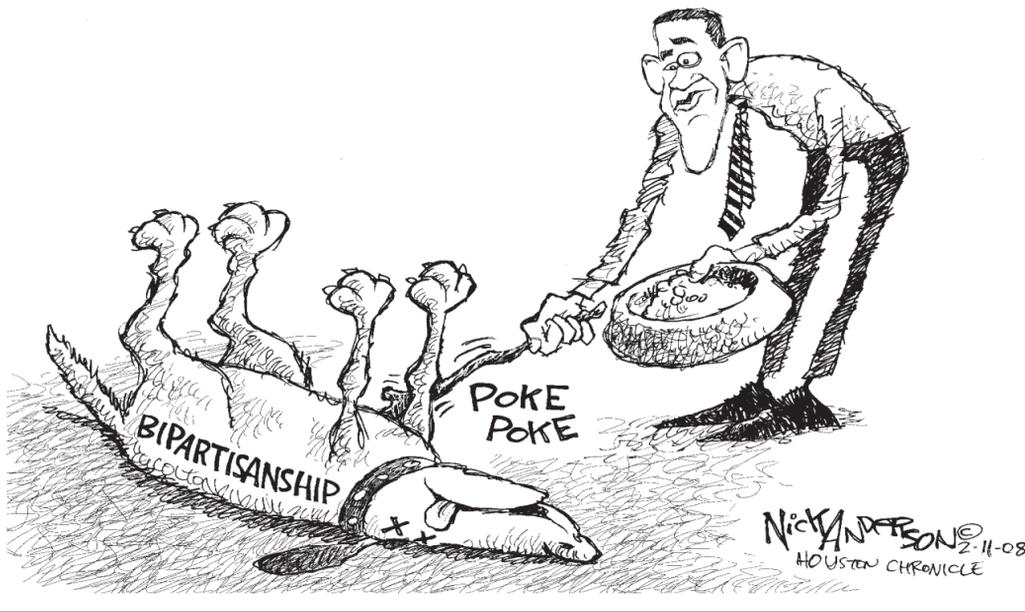
The final deal appears to be an improvement over earlier versions. But it still seems light on job creation, and it entails staggeringly more government spending—adding \$789 billion to an already soaring national debt.

Of that total price tag, \$276 billion goes to tax cuts, including a \$400 tax credit for low- and middle-income workers and \$800 for couples. That much of this is good.

So, too, is about \$150 billion for public works projects. That will put people to work and leave a lasting benefit.

Other spending is more about aiding out-of-work Americans than putting them back to work. It includes expanded unemployment benefits, food stamps and subsidies for health insurance.

It is far too early to pass judgment on this legislation. America needed something out of Washington, and this is it. We all should hope it does some good.



COLUMNISTS

The golden era of BB class basketball

During the 1952-53 basketball season, I was a seldom-used reserve for Charlie Seshier at Hutchinson Junior College. One of the starting five was Doug Clash, a 6-foot-6 center who the previous year had led the Brookville Cardinals to the first state championship of the newly formed BB class. That class, for high schools with fewer than 60 students, was the largest of the four classes in Kansas athletic competition.

Clash had an improbable background for a Hutch Juco basketball player: The following from a new book, "Title Towns! Champions of Kansas," by Steven Farney outlines his story: "Clash grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and in the summer of 1949, decided with his friend Jim Shaefer to hitchhike across the country as far as the money would take them." Clash's brother, a military man, took the boys to Kansas City, where their adventure began. Enter Artie Bradley, a Brookville High School alumnus, who picked up the boys in Wamego and brought them to Brookville, where they stayed the summer with Bradley's mother. As August approached, Shaefer returned to Detroit, but Clash announced he would stay in Brookville on one condition: He wanted to graduate from high school in three years. So began the process of Clash attending extra classes to shorten his high school days. He was an adequate student, but as a tall basketball player, he was very, very raw. His coach, Gene Arnold, helped turn raw into refined, however, and as the '52 season approached, "the hitch-hiker and the rest of the Cardinals were ready for a state run."

Coach Arnold would leave Brookville before that championship season to be replaced by George Holmes. The Farney book goes on to describe each of the games Brookville played during that epic winter.

My friendship with Clash during that season at Hutch would not be my last brush with BB basketball. And it

Community columnist



Jack Wempe

would be noteworthy in a couple of other respects. It was the first season played in the Hutchinson Sports Arena and it was the Blue Dragons' last losing season.

Later, in 1956, I was preparing to graduate from Rockhurst College in Kansas City, supposedly prepared as a teacher. That Jesuit liberal arts school had no placement bureau. An ad in The Kansas City Star for a teacher-coach in a small community in northern Miami County caught my attention. After interviewing separately with the three board members, all at their respective farms, I would again encounter BB basketball. I became the new coach of the Wea Eagles. Wea Rural High School, Bucyrus, Kan., had 30 students.

That first year I coached grade boys, grade girls, high school boys, A and B, and high school girls. I taught English, physical education and American history. I coached 67 basketball games.

The Wea Eagles were members of the Johnson County League. Other member schools were Fontana, Edgerton, Kansas State School for the Deaf, Stilwell and Stanley. Stanley was the only class "B" school with its 65 students. Stanley and Stilwell together now comprise the Blue Valley District.

Over the next five years, the Wea High School boys became a strong team in BB circles, although not advancing to the state tournament. In 1958, the district tournament was won, but the first game in the regional was lost to Wilsey. In 1959, a loss in the finals of the regional tournament to

Prescott preceded its third-place finish at state. In 1960, a regional loss to Quenemo preceded its winning the state tournament in record fashion. The star player, Dennis Bolen, became a Hall of Famer at Emporia State.

Class BB existed from 1952 until 1968. Many of those towns that had championship seasons have long since lost their high schools. In the western half of the state those "title towns," as depicted by Farney, include Dorrance, Rozel, Mullinville, Burdett, Montezuma, Rolla, Brewster and Winona. The eastern half includes Tescott, Durham, Burns, Dwight, Wilsey, Strong City and Quenemo, in addition to Brookville.

Farney's book is a detailed history of BB basketball. His foreword captures the essence of small town sports:

"Title Towns' harkens back to the day when nearly every town in Kansas had its own high school.... Towns virtually shut down each Tuesday and Friday night to travel with the team.... Small gymnasiums were packed to the rafters to watch teams battle for league titles and the ultimate, a trip to the state tournament.... Basketball championships were celebrated with community dinners and guest speakers. Not only was the team being honored, the town was being honored as well."

Farney terms these years as a golden era. From my perspective, I agree completely.

My connection with tiny Wea High School remains to this day. My wife is from that community. I see former students frequently. And I suspect the stories we tell about those basketball nights are repeated in every BB town in Kansas.

Each preceded by, "Do you remember that night at...?"

Jack Wempe grew up in the Hutchinson area and is a former educator, state legislator and member of the Kansas Board of Regents now living in Lyons. E-mail: jwempe1@cox.net.

READER OPINIONS FROM HUTCHNEWS.COM

•Congress still doesn't get it. They want to give to the poor and lower class a measly \$400 tax break? If they were to give the money from this bill to the consumer, the consumer would have to use it to pay down their debt. That is money going back into the lenders' coffers. Then the lenders would have more money to loan out again.

•This bill isn't designed to stimulate anything but more votes for Democrats. John Kerry stated on "Meet the Press" that the \$600 checks last year didn't work, so why are they doing it again? So they can come back and say we have to do this every year! That is not a "tax cut." That's tax redistribution.

•They told me if I voted for John McCain we would get the third Bush administration. Well I voted for McCain, and now we have the third Bush administration. Isn't this basically the same thing Bush did last year? Give money to individuals and extend bailout from business to state government. The bill might reduce job losses that would result from government funding problems, but there is no way it's going to create millions of jobs.

•This is nothing more than a welfare program that will have zero effect on the economy and is full of pork. The economy has a better chance doing nothing at all! The real taxpayers are getting the shaft along with grandkids and several generations later left to pay!

•In his campaign, he stated he would do away with the earmarks that are tacked onto bills. Well what happened to that? He's talking out of the side of his mouth but says nothing and answers nothing. Just watch and see if he answers questions or sidesteps them. Or refers the question to a cabinet member who doesn't answer the question.

•Anyone seen the porkulus bill posted on the Internet yet? Obama said he would post all bills for five days on the Internet before they were voted on to give people a chance to see them. ... What's the rush if they don't have anything to hide? This is really an open, transparent government we have. Unfortunately the country gets what they vote for. And they used to call Clinton "Slick Willie." He can't hold a candle to this guy.

•I noticed that they are going to give more money to those who do not make enough money to pay taxes. To me, it is giving these people one more reason not to try to improve their lives. Those of us who work a job to make the same amount of money as those on welfare get little in return, and those who receive their non-taxed paychecks from the welfare department (and, yes, it is welfare) get a bonus for not working.

•History tells us that government spending doesn't stimulate the economy. History shows that deep tax cuts to businesses and those that hire people stimulate the economy. Time will show that the Democrats are wrong, as usual. I cringe every time Pelosi or Reid speaks. They haven't a clue how America works.

•Look at every major war and economic disaster that has befallen this country in the past 100 years. Tell me who was in control of the U.S. government before and after. Tell me what party was in control of the U.S. government during World War II and after which many here cite as the greatest time in American history? I would suggest before people start making blanket statements that they brush up on their history. One might find that the ideals they thought were true are not.

WESTERN FRONT

Prejudiced judgment

If you find yourself before a Kansas court, fasten your seat belt, you may be in for a bumpy ride. You may find the judge handling your case is not the impartial arbiter we have been led to believe they should be.

Some district judges use the bench to dispense justice according to personal prejudice, rather than the law. Many have held office so long they have acquired a sense of infallibility.

Local courts have an assortment

of judges who use power as an extension of their personal beliefs and may retaliate against those who have a different view. They have become creatures of a privileged bureaucracy.

Always order a copy of the court transcript; you may be surprised by the inaccuracies you discover.

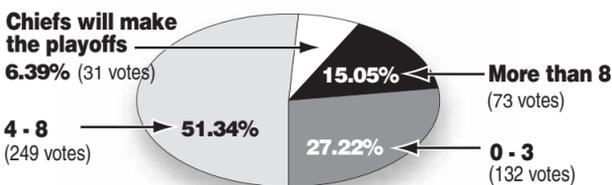
With the Kansas Commission on Judicial Qualification acting as goalkeeper for Kansas courts, they stand safe from all but the most serious ethical violations.

GREGORY BONTRAGER
Hutchinson

NEWS POLL

Results of online poll conducted Feb. 6 to Feb. 13 on hutchnews.com

How many games do you think the Chiefs will win next season under new head coach Todd Haley?



This week's question: What does Hutchinson need most to make it a more 'hip' community?

Is Black History Month already history?

Once again it is Black History Month, a time when Americans of all colors increasingly ask, among other questions, whether we need to have Black History Month.

Or maybe we don't remember well enough to ask. In New York, for example, four years after the state created a commission to promote the teaching of black history in public schools, the New York Times reports that the commission has never met and several positions remain unfilled. Is that state's black history commission already history?

Other states, such as Illinois, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan and Colorado, have adopted legislation similar to New York's requiring that black history be included in public school curricula along with a variety of other ethnic experiences. In fact, that sounds a lot like what black scholar Carter G. Woodson had in mind when he founded the concept as "Negro History Week." "We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history," he said in 1926. "What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice."

If ever there was a month when African American history was significant, it is this one. Abraham Lincoln—you remember "the Great Emancipator?"—was born exactly 200 years ago on Feb. 12. A hundred years later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the nation's



Clarence Page

oldest and largest civil rights organization, was born on Lincoln's birthday. A century later we have our first biracial president. What a country.

Long before Obama came along, most of the founding agenda of the NAACP was achieved with the hard-won victories of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. A 1908 race riot in which seven died in Springfield, Ill., led to the birth of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A few blocks away and a hundred years later, Obama launched his presidential campaign in that same town. Obama's victory sparked an outpouring of heartfelt flag-waving patriotism across color lines unlike any seen since the September 11 terrorist attacks—and under much happier, hope-filled circumstances.

Appropriately, civil rights leaders like the NAACP's new President Benjamin Todd Jealous, 35, are asked where the movement goes from here. In interviews, he has pointed in the way most traditional black leaders do, to statistics. It is still too easy to find tragically big statistical gaps between blacks and whites in income, prison incarceration,

academic achievement and the like.

Yet, since at least the 1980s, color alone has not told the whole story. The gaps between have's and have-nots in black America have grown larger than the gaps between blacks and whites. Obama himself has pointed out that it would not be fair to give preference in college admissions, for example, to his daughters based on race when they obviously are more advantaged than many high-achieving white students.

Obama's hardly the first person to make that modest class-based argument, but it's hard to think of anyone else could do it with as much moral authority.

Yet when I, among others, have made this point to Chairman Julian Bond and other NAACP leaders, they tend to rebut the argument, saying their emphasis is on civil rights, not social action. But Lincoln offers a valuable lesson here. He defended slavery and white supremacy on several notable occasions early in his rise, but changed his mind when he received new information, partly with the help of the abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass.

As national NAACP leaders ponder their next century, a new generation of local leaders is looking for new ways to close the gaps in parenting, mentoring and other social problems that lawsuits, elections and protest marches can't solve alone. If so, we will be able to look at the NAACP with continued admiration and without saying that its best days are behind it.

