



Restoring Confidence

BY MICHAEL REAGAN
CagleCartoons.com

Help us, we're falling and we can't get up again. Once upon a time — in 1988 and 1998 to be exact — the United States was the best country for a baby to be born and raised in, at least according to *The Economist* magazine.

But the 2013 edition of the magazine's "where-to-be-born" index has us down at No. 16 — tied with Germany and one spot ahead of the United Arab Emirates.

Switzerland, Australia, Norway, Sweden and Denmark — nice countries but not exactly world famous as destinations for millions of people seeking opportunity — are ranked 1 through 5.

The Economist's annual ranking tries to quantify what country "will provide the best opportunities for a healthy, safe and prosperous life in the years ahead."

It crunches and weighs the numbers for 11 indicators — everything from geography and demography to GDP per capita, the cost of living and future economic growth prospects. And, unfortunately for the United States, it weighs government debt.

The Economist doesn't factor a debt-related reason America will likely continue to slide in these rankings — no one today has any confidence in our political leaders to solve our economic problems.

Our economy is stuck on a reef. Growth is too low. The prospects of a real recovery coming anytime soon are dim and getting dimmer, not brighter.

It's so bad, even illegal aliens are losing confidence in America and leaving the country. And Citigroup just announced it is laying off 11,000 employees. Obviously, its bosses don't have much hope for a better future, either.

Back in the 1980s, we had more confidence in our political leaders because they actually earned it from time to time.

When my father was in the White House and Democrats controlled Congress, both parties fought bit-



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terly with each other.

But when it came time to work out a solution to get the economy moving forward, they sat down and cut deals to lower or simplify taxes and to ease or eliminate onerous regulations.

In the 1990s, the roles were reversed. Clinton was president, Republicans ran Congress and partisanship was fierce. But when they had to do it, the leaders of both parties worked out a way to balance the budget and reform welfare.

In the old days, conservatives and liberals — loyal R's and die-hard D's — buried their hatchets and ultimately found a way to work together.

Today, we don't seem to even want both parties to cooperate. We demonize the other side so much we can't imagine ever working with them to fix the Capitol Building's roof, much less the economy.

Fast-forward to 2012. Does anyone have confidence in our leaders to work together to pull the Supertanker of State off the reef, much less turn it around?

We know what makes America work better for everyone today and in the future — or we used to. It's when government is smaller and the private sector is bigger, not vice versa.

The American people have lost confidence in their leaders for good reasons. Politicians from both parties in Washington have to join to clean up the economic mess they created or that confidence will never be restored.

If they don't do it soon, being ranked No. 16 on *The Economist's* "best place to be born" index will look pretty good to our grandkids.

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Getting Steamed Over Susan Rice

BY KATHLEEN PARKER
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WASHINGTON — A variety of insults have been deployed in opposition to Susan Rice's likely nomination for secretary of state: She is not qualified; she's too aggressive; she "misled" the public following the lethal attack on the American consulate in Libya.

Upon closer examination, however, the real reason may be less complicated. She's not a member of the most elite club in America, the U.S. Senate. Also, she appears to be President Obama's first choice.

As anyone with a television knows, Rice has come under fire by the new, revised *Tres Amigos* — Republican Sens. John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte, plus Susan Collins of Maine. All have expressed concerns about Rice's role in delivering the administration's explanation following the Benghazi attack, which initially was blamed on street protests over an anti-Muhammad video, but later confirmed as a terrorist attack.

While Collins, who previously supported Rice, says she still has unanswered questions, McCain — whose understanding of qualified women candidates is legendary — has promised to block Rice's nomination. Graham, who most certainly will be "primaried" in the next election by South Carolinians who doubt his commitment to hard-right lunacy, followed suit, as did Ayotte.

Off somewhere letting her hair grow, Hillary Clinton knitted her brows and noted that Rice has been an excellent U.N. ambassador. Which is to say, she didn't exactly go to the mat for her female colleague, who had the audacity to support Obama for president rather than the former first lady.

In Ganglandia, it's the New Kids versus the Clinton Machine. How dare Rice, once a Clinton administration appointee, defect?

Clinton, a McCain buddy from their years in the Senate, reportedly prefers another Senate pal, John Kerry, as her successor. So does McCain & Co. And so, needless to say, does Kerry, whose chiseled jaw alone constitutes a diplomatic arsenal. There's clearly no profit in Clinton, a likely presidential candidate in 2016, alienating allies and devaluing her own currency for Rice.

Even so, the opposition's arguments are weak, chief among them that Rice isn't qualified. This from McCain, whose vetting history includes about 80 minutes of conversation with Sarah Palin before selecting her as his running mate in 2008. McCain's opinion



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about Rice's qualifications is only slightly less compelling than his thoughts on Playtex versus Spanx.

For the record, Rice is a graduate of Stanford University and a Rhodes scholar, who served as the assistant secretary of state for African affairs. Even this is troubling to Collins, who said that the Benghazi attack "in many ways echoes the attacks on (U.S. embassies in Africa) in 1998 when Susan Rice was head of the African region."

Given this logic, shouldn't all eyes now be on Johnnie Carson? No, not the former "Tonight Show" host, Johnny Carson, but the current assistant secretary of African affairs. If Rice is somehow responsible for the 1998 attacks, shouldn't Carson be scrutinized for Benghazi?

Everybody brave enough to enter the public arena gets a few free passes when they utter something short of brilliant, but most of the criticisms aimed at Rice seem ungrounded in reality. To blame Rice for representing the administration's position as provided to her at the time is missing the target, which is properly the White

House.

Does Rice have an aggressive personality, as some have said? And does this pose a risk in nominating her? Yes and yes. She notoriously once flipped the bird to diplomat Richard Holbrooke during a State Department meeting.

Such an impulsive act is no recommendation, but is it emblematic or merely anecdotal? Aggression — and even occasional rudeness — is rarely considered a flaw in men. And even aggressive men learn to temper their impulses as circumstances warrant. Thank goodness Rice didn't tell Holbrooke to go do that which one cannot do to oneself, as Dick Cheney once suggested to Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy. Or, heaven forbid, insist that we invade another country based on bad intelligence, as another Rice, who became secretary of state, once did.

The investigation into what transpired in Benghazi — bad things sometimes happen in dangerous places — is certainly appropriate. The administration's incoherent handling of information deserves scrutiny. But Rice, barring something we don't know, clearly has the qualifications for secretary of state.

And thoughtful Republicans might reconsider the image of white men ganging up on a highly qualified black woman as they ponder the reasons for their collapsing tent. The road to redemption ain't thataway.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Immigration: Move Beyond Rhetoric

THE TIMES AND DEMOCRAT, Orangeburg, S.C. (Dec. 4): If you're thinking Congress took a step toward cooperation on immigration policy with a recent action on the STEM Jobs Act, don't believe it.

First, there is the matter of priorities. Congress has a lot on its plate between now and Dec. 31, notably budget issues and the "fiscal cliff." ...

The action came in the Republican-controlled House, with the GOP apparently anxious to show quickly it has softened positions on immigration policy in the wake of rejection of the party at the polls by Hispanics and other minorities.

By a 245-139 vote, the House approved the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Jobs Act that would make green cards accessible to foreign students graduating with advanced science and math degrees from U.S. universities. ...

GOP leaders also added a provision making it easier for immigrants working in the country legally to bring their spouses and children to the United States while they wait for their visa applications to be approved. ...

But as much pro-business and pro-family sense as the changes make, they represent little more than symbols by Republicans who have made a name for themselves, rightly or wrongly, as anti-immigrant.

According to an Associated Press report, Democrats, including members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, reacted to STEM passage by calling the GOP's hand on its intent. They note the legislation offsets projections of 55,000 new permanent-residency visas by eliminating a program that provides green cards to people with traditionally lower rates of immigration, particularly those from Africa. ...

With the election providing new incentive for cooperation, Republicans and Democrats should... push the effort toward big-picture solutions. The immigration rhetoric has gone on long enough.

SPEAK OUT!

Share your thoughts with us. Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on a topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, Dec. 6, the 341st day of 2012. There are 25 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 6, 1922, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State, came into force one year to the day after it was signed in London.

On this date: In 1790, Congress moved to Philadelphia from New York.

In 1884, Army engineers completed construction of the Washington Monument by setting an aluminum capstone atop the obelisk.

In 1889, Jefferson Davis, the first and only president of the Confederate States of America, died in New Orleans.

In 1907, the worst mining disaster in U.S. history occurred as 362 men and boys died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, W.Va.

In 1917, some 2,000 people died when an explosives-laden French cargo ship collided with a Norwegian vessel at the harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, setting off a blast that devastated the city.

In 1942, comedian Fred Allen premiered "Allen's Alley," a recurring sketch on his CBS radio show spoofing small town America.

In 1947, Everglades National Park in Florida was dedicated by President Harry S. Truman.

In 1957, America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit failed as Vanguard TV3 rose about four feet off a Cape Canaveral launch pad before crashing down and exploding.

In 1962, 37 coal miners were killed in an explosion at the Robena No. 3 Mine operated by U.S. Steel in Carmichaels, Pa.

In 1971, the original Auto-Train, which carried rail passengers and their motor vehicles from Lorton, Va., to Sanford, Fla., went into operation. (Although the privately owned line went out of business in 1981, Amtrak revived the service in 1983.)

In 1982, 11 soldiers and 6 civilians were killed when an Irish National Liberation Army bomb exploded at a pub in Ballykelly, Northern Ireland.

In 1989, 14 women were shot to death at the University of Montreal's school of engineering by a man who then took his own life.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush pushed Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and economic adviser Larry Lindsey from their jobs in a Cabinet shakeup. Actress Winona Ryder was sentenced to community service as part of a probationary term for stealing more than \$5,500 worth of merchandise from a Saks Fifth Avenue store in Beverly Hills, Calif. Ten Palestinians, including two U.N. employees,

were killed in chaotic battles when Israeli forces poured into a Gaza Strip refugee camp, searching for a fugitive militant. Anti-war activist Philip Berrigan died in Baltimore at age 79.

Five years ago: CIA Director Michael Hayden revealed the agency had videotaped its interrogations of two terror suspects in 2002 and destroyed the tapes three years later out of fear they would leak to the public and compromise the identities of U.S. questioners. President George W. Bush announced a plan to freeze interest rates on subprime mortgages held by hundreds of thousands of homeowners. Republican Mitt Romney, speaking at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Texas, said his Mormon faith should neither help nor hinder his quest for the White House and vowed to serve the interests of the nation, not the church, if elected president.

One year ago: Declaring the American middle class in jeopardy, President Barack Obama, speaking in Osawatimie, Kan., outlined a populist economic vision that would drive his re-election bid, insisting the United States must reclaim its standing as a country in which everyone can prosper if provided "a fair shot and a fair share." A suicide bomber slaughtered 56 Shiite worshippers and wounded more than 160 others outside a shrine in Afghanistan's capital. Balladeer Dobie Gray, 69, who recorded the hit "Drift Away" in 1973, died in Nashville, Tennessee.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Dave Brubeck is 92. Comedy performer David Ossman is 76. Actor Patrick Bauchau is 74. Country singer Helen Cornelius is 71. Actor James Naughton is 67. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is 67. Rhythm-and-blues singer Frankie Beverly (Maze) is 66. Former Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., is 64. Actress JoBeth Williams is 64. Actor Tom Hulce is 59. Actor Kin Shriner is 59. Actor Wil Shriner is 59. Actor Miles Chapin is 58. Rock musician Rick Buckler (The Jam) is 57. Comedian Steven Wright is 57. Country singer Bill Lloyd is 57. Singer Tish Hinojosa is 57. Rock musician Peter Buck (R.E.M.) is 56. Rock musician David Lovering (Pixies) is 51. Actress Janine Turner is 50. Rock musician Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl) is 50. Writer-director Judd Apatow is 45. Rock musician Ulf "Buddha" Ekberg (Ace of Base) is 42. Writer-director Craig Brewer is 41. Actress Colleen Haskell is 36. Actress Lindsay Price is 36. Actress Ashley Madekwe is 31. Christian rock musician Jacob Chesnut (Rush of Fools) is 23.

Thought for Today: "Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot; but make it hot by striking." — William Butler Yeats, Irish Nobel Prize-winning poet (1865-1939).

FROM THE BIBLE

Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead! 2 Kings 2:23. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Compassion Needed

Lois Thomas, Tabor

I read the letter by Michael Welch ("Criminal Coddling," *Press & Dakotan*, Nov. 23). This article was clearly written by a parent that has been blessed with children that have been no major problems. Some parents haven't been that lucky but maybe that helps us to reach out to people because we've been in those circumstances and know the hurt.

My husband also had a difficult childhood without much parental love or guidance. Alcohol can destroy lives and homes. My husband finally reached out to the Lord, and I know God changed my husband into the wonderful man he is today.

I agree with restitution and that working is necessary to raise responsible kids. I have empathy for this young man. I don't know him, but I know losing someone you love can do a number on you, and if you don't have a stable home life it's not easy. Sometimes, we need love the most when we are the most unlovable. I pray that God puts people in his path that reach out to him in love.

I, for one, am glad we have lawyers that are compassionate and judges that maybe can see the potential in a person and try to rehabilitate them without just locking them up and throwing away the key. Pray that God is the answer to turn lives around.

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