

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

A Rare Moment In The Political Wars

One of the more jarring sights attached to President Obama's visit to South Dakota last week — other than seeing President Obama actually in South Dakota — was seeing him greeted at the airport by South Dakota's lawmakers.

That welcoming delegation included Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, and Rep. Kristi Noem.

All of them are Republicans, elected to office in one of the nation's deeper red states.

And yet, there they were, welcoming the Democratic president — indeed, welcoming THIS Democratic president — to vast spaces and friendly faces of South Dakota.

There's so much disrespect and political animosity that seems to poison the air now that it's almost shocking when we see Democrats and Republicans even in the same vicinity together, much less greeting one another.

And in fact, that could have easily happened for the most part. Any one of those Republican lawmakers could have found a convenient excuse not to be in Watertown last Friday to meet the president as he set foot on our home soil.

To some outsiders, this seemed like an unlikely image. As the *Washington Post* noted in covering Obama's trip here: "There's hardly a state in America that's more hostile to Obama than South Dakota, where the president's disapproval rating hovers around 70 percent and the local Republican Party last summer passed a resolution calling for his impeachment."

But sometimes, there are some things a bit more important than politics.

In this case, it was the president of the United States visiting our state, and our lawmakers were there to welcome him. There were no R's and D's attached to the names or the agendas. There were no political calculations guiding each step.

It could almost make you forget about all the rancor that squirms in Washington or all the vitriol that pours out from the cable television news channels, the radio airwaves, the newspaper commentaries or the political blogs.

Obama delivered a message of educational commendation and hope at Lake Area Technical Institute, and the crowd loved it. Watertown loved it. The state loved it.

For one day, at least.

None of this will last, of course. That's not the way our political universe works.

But for a moment last week, it was a nice thing to behold.

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OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, May 13, the 133rd day of 2015. There are 232 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On May 13, 1940, in his first speech as British prime minister, Winston Churchill told Parliament, "I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

On this date: In 1607, English colonists arrived by ship at the site of what became the Jamestown settlement in Virginia (the colonists went ashore the next day).

In 1846, the United States declared that a state of war already existed with Mexico.

In 1918, the first U.S. airmail stamps, featuring a picture of a Curtiss JN-4 biplane, were issued to the public. (On a few of the stamps, the biplane was inadvertently printed upside-down, making the "Inverted Jenny" collector's items.)

In 1935, T.E. Lawrence was critically injured in a motorcycle accident in Dorset, England; he died six days later.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Act. The musical play "The Pajama Game" opened on Broadway.

In 1958, Vice President Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat, were spat upon and their limousine battered by rocks thrown by anti-U.S. demonstrators in Caracas, Venezuela.

In 1968, a one-day general strike took place in France in support of student protesters.

In 1973, in tennis' first so-called "Battle of the Sexes," Bobby Riggs defeated Margaret Court 6-2, 6-1 in Ramona, California. (Billie Jean King soundly defeated Riggs at the Houston Astrodome in September.)

In 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot and seriously wounded in St. Peter's Square by Turkish assailant Mehmet Ali Agca (MEH'-met AH'-lee AH'-juh).

In 1985, a confrontation between Philadelphia authorities and the radical group MOVE ended as police dropped a bomb onto the group's row house; 11 people died in the resulting fire that destroyed 61 homes.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton nominated federal appeals Judge Stephen G. Breyer to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace retiring Justice Harry A. Blackmun.

In 2000, explosions at a fireworks warehouse in the Netherlands killed 23 people and injured nearly 1,000 others. (A suspect was found guilty of causing the blasts, but his conviction was overturned.)

Ten years ago: The Pentagon proposed the most sweeping changes to

its network of military bases in modern history, a plan that would close 33 major facilities in 22 states and reconfigure hundreds of others. The president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, praised the dedication of Mexicans working in the United States, saying they were willing to take jobs that "even blacks" wouldn't do, a statement that prompted criticism in the United States. Government troops in Uzbekistan put down an uprising they blamed on Islamic militants; opponents said the troops fired into crowds and killed hundreds of people.

Five years ago: Three Pakistani men who authorities say supplied funds to would-be Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad were arrested in a series of raids in New England. President Barack Obama met with police officers who responded to the attempted car-bombing, greeting them at the New York Police Department's high-tech Real Time Crime Center.

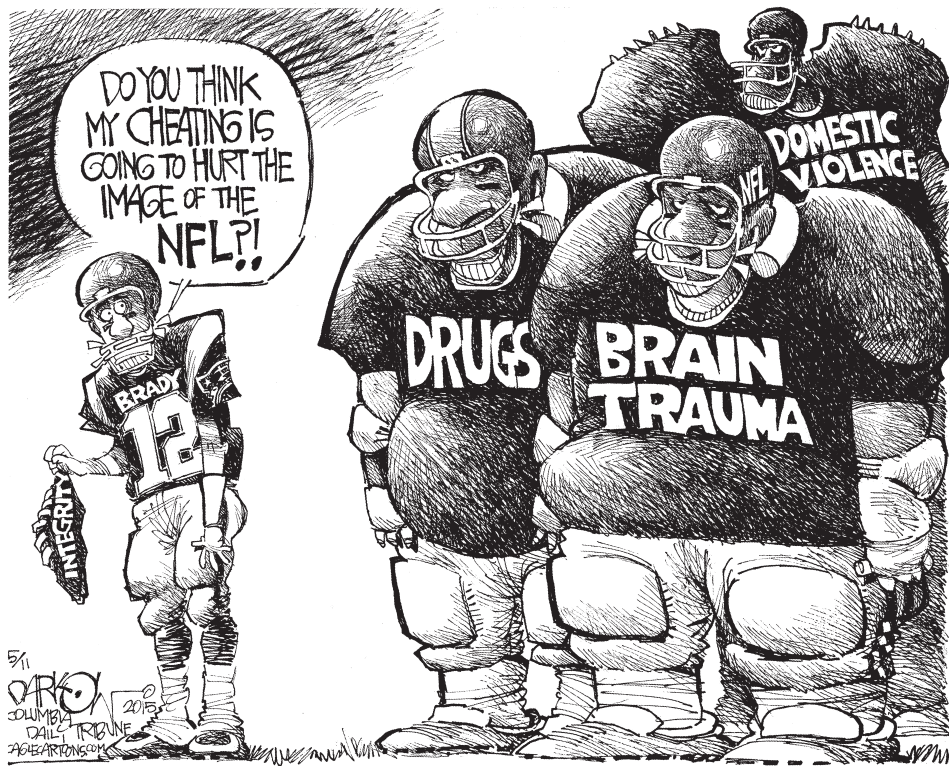
One year ago: A mine fire in Soma, Turkey, killed 301 workers. A European court, in an important test of the "right to be forgotten," ruled that Google had to amend some of its search results at the request of ordinary people when they showed links to outdated, irrelevant information. Israel's former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was sentenced to six years in prison for his role in a wide-ranging bribery case (he has remained free pending an appeal).

Today's Birthdays: Actor Buck Taylor is 77. Actor Harvey Keitel is 76. Author Charles Baxter is 68. Actor Franklyn Ajaye is 66. Actress Zoe Wanamaker is 66. Singer Stevie Wonder is 65. Actress Leslie Winston (TV: "The Waltons") is 59. Producer-writer Alan Ball is 58. Basketball Hall of Famer Dennis Rodman is 54. Actor-comedian Stephen Colbert is 51. Rock musician John Richardson (The Gin Blossoms) is 51. Actor Tom Verica is 51. Country singer Lari White is 50. Singer Darius Rucker (Hootie and the Blowfish) is 49. Actress Susan Floyd is 47. Contemporary Christian musician Andy Williams (Casting Crowns) is 43. Actress Samantha Morton is 38. Rock musician Mickey Madden (Maroon 5) is 36. Actor Iwan Rheon is 30. Actress-writer-director Lena Dunham is 29. Actor Robert Pattinson is 29. Actress Candice Accola is 28. Actor Hunter Gelber is 28. Folk-rock musician Wylie Gelber (Dawes) is 27. Actress Debby Ryan is 22.

Thought for Today: "What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar." — Thomas R. Marshall, U.S. vice president (1854-1925). (To which American humorist Franklin P. Adams replied, "What this country really needs is a good five-cent nickel.")

FROM THE BIBLE

On the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. Leviticus 23:3. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



Nike And America's Wage Problem

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

Last Friday, President Obama chose Nike headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, to deliver a defense of his proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership.

It was an odd choice of venue.

It's true that over the past two years Nike has added 2,000 good-paying professional jobs at its Oregon headquarters, fulfilling the requirements of a controversial tax break it wrangled from the state legislature. That's good for Nike's new design, research and marketing employees.

It's also true that just before the president spoke, Nike announced that if the Trans-Pacific Partnership is enacted, the company would create as many as 10,000 more American jobs.

But this would still be only a tiny fraction of Nike's global workforce. While Nike still makes some shoe components in the United States, it hasn't assembled shoes here since 1984.

Last year, Americans made only 1 percent of the value of Nike products that generated the corporation's \$27.8 billion revenue. And Nike is moving ever more of its production abroad. Last year, a third of Nike's remaining 13,922 American production workers were laid off.

Most of Nike's products are made by 990,000 workers in low-wage countries whose abysmal working conditions have made Nike a symbol of global sweatshop labor.

As wages have risen in China, Nike has switched much of its production to Vietnam, where the minimum wage is less than 60 cents an hour. Almost 340,000 workers cut and assemble Nike products there.

In other words, Nike is a global corporation with no particular loyalty or connection to the United States. Its loyalty is to its global shareholders.

I'm not faulting Nike. The company is only playing by the rules.

I'm faulting the rules.

I'll get back to Nike in a moment, but in case you hadn't noticed, America has a huge and growing problem of inequality. Most Americans are earning no more than the typical American earned 30 years ago, adjusted for inflation — even though the U.S. economy is almost twice as big.

Since then, almost all the economic gains have gone to the top. The so-called economic recovery that began in 2009 has been notable for having had no effect on the wages of most Americans. Jobs are coming back, but wages are still stuck in the mud.

The president is upset with Democrats who won't support his trade deal. He should be angry at Republicans who won't support American workers.

Their obduracy has worsened the potential impact of the deal on the wages of typical



Robert B.

REICH

American workers, and has contributed to the nation's wage problem.

Congressional Republicans refuse to raise the minimum wage, whose inflation-adjusted value is now almost 25 percent lower than it was in 1968.

They won't extend unemployment benefits, even though millions of Americans remain unemployed.

They refuse to invest in job retraining, which is necessary for Americans to upgrade their skills.

They won't enlarge the Earned Income Tax Credit. They won't improve the nation's infrastructure. They won't expand access to public higher education.

Here's where Nike comes in.

Now, congressional Republicans — and the president — want a giant trade deal that protects corporate investors but will lead to even more offshoring of lower-skilled American jobs.

We know that when Americans displaced from manufacturing jobs join the glut of Americans competing for personal service jobs — retail, restaurant, hotel, hospital, child care, elder care and other such work — their wages decline.

Jobs being lost to imports pay Americans higher wages than the jobs left behind. Government data show that wages in import-competing industries (e.g., manufacturing jobs) beat those in exporting industries overall.

Without a higher minimum wage, an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, affordable higher education and a world-class system of job retraining, most Americans will continue to experience stagnant or declining wages.

True, the Trans-Pacific Partnership would allow Nike and other American-based global corporations to import their products — made in Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and other low-wage countries — more cheaply.

But don't expect those savings to translate into lower prices for American consumers. As it is, Nike spends less than \$10 for every pair of \$100-plus shoes it sells in the U.S.

Needless to say, the trade deal wouldn't require Nike to pay its Vietnamese workers more. Nike's workers aren't paid enough to buy the shoes they make, much less to buy exported U.S. goods.

It's not Nike's fault. As I've said, Nike is simply playing by the rules. But the rules are tilted against the interests of most American workers, and toward global American corporations.

Which is why, even six years after the start of the economic recovery, wages are still going nowhere.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on Netflix, iTunes and Amazon.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prison Policy

Ethan Audiss, Yankton

I'm writing about a situation that affected the entire population of inmates that get visits in both Yankton Minimum Unit and Springfield's MDSP. I was inspired to write this article after reading the *Press & Dakotan* article (April 3) talking about how the visitation promotes healthy families.

I'm not saying that they don't allow visits; I'm saying there is intense security there due to the K2 infiltration, and you can't leave the table with your family and children. This issue has affected potentially hundreds of dads, mothers, brothers, sisters and cousins, not to mention hundreds of children and the inmates themselves. I have testimonies from all of the aforementioned stating their complaints.

I'm not writing this statement to be vindictive or spiteful. I'm writing to get the visits back to the way they were when they actually promoted healthy families in the prison system.

I'm going to begin with the key points of

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."* — **The FIRST AMENDMENT to the U.S. Constitution**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It's Your Right To Know!