

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Refugees: A Shameful Silence

CHICAGO TRIBUNE (Sept. 9): Munich is some 1,600 miles from Syria, and far removed from the political and religious disputes that have fueled the 4-year-old civil war there. But in recent days, thousands of Syrian refugees have arrived there by train, to be greeted with applause, welcoming signs, tea and food.

Germans are under no special obligation to help Syrians, but the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel has agreed to take some 800,000 of them — inspiring some to proclaim the chancellor, “Mama Merkel, Mother of Outcasts.” Merkel said, “The fundamental right to asylum does not have a limitation.”

It’s an easy sentiment to preach but a hard one to live. Some nations, like Germany, have gone to heroic lengths to accommodate this tragic exodus, which includes some 4 million souls. And some nations have not.

Conspicuous among them are some of Syria’s wealthiest neighbors. “The six Gulf countries — Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain — have offered zero resettlement places to Syrian refugees,” notes Amnesty International.

These nations are not only physically close but have a great deal in common with Syria, particularly in language, religion, culture. They feel enough of a connection that some of their governments have provided money and weapons to groups fighting to remove Syrian President Bashar Assad. But while Germans (and others) are making room for the migrants, the Gulf states are making excuses.

They point to the \$1 billion contributed by their citizens and charitable organizations to help these Arab brethren. That’s significant, but it’s only a quarter of humanitarian aid furnished by the United States, the biggest donor. The U.S. has been faulted for agreeing to admit so few refugees from the Syrian conflict (1,500 so far), but that’s better than the Gulf nations, which ought to feel a vastly greater responsibility, given their proximity and their wealth. The average income in Qatar is \$143,000; in Saudi Arabia, it’s \$52,000.

Yet these countries have evaded a burden taken on by poorer nations like Lebanon, which has 1.2 million Syrian refugees, and Jordan, which has 630,000. The Gulf countries have grounds to be wary of large inflows that could upset existing political balances. But the same could be said of Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, which have stepped up anyway.

Another rationalization is that the Gulf states have native populations that are greatly outnumbered by foreigners. In the UAE, 88 percent of residents come from elsewhere, mostly to work. In Kuwait, the figure is 70 percent. But if they can take in hordes of Indians and Filipinos to clean houses and bus tables, they should be able to absorb Syrians, who are also capable of working. The UAE has 8 million foreigners but can’t take a few thousand Syrians?

Even people in the Gulf nations are embarrassed by their failure. A newspaper columnist in Kuwait lamented, “We’re seeing a silence that’s scandalous.” Cartoonists have caustically ridiculed the inaction. The Washington Post reports, “The Arabic hashtag #Welcoming_Syria’s_refugees_is_a_Gulf_duty” was tweeted more than 33,000 times.”

Recently Egyptian telecom magnate Naguib Sawiris offered to buy an island from Greece or Italy to serve as a haven for hundreds of thousands of desperate migrants. California real estate tycoon Jason Buzi had earlier proposed founding a new nation for such exiles, so “at least they’d have a place to live in safety and be allowed to live and work like everybody else.”

Some of them are lucky enough to have found a place where they can find safety and sustenance. Some of them are not. The U.S., it’s fair to say, can do a lot more than it has to shelter these unfortunate souls. But the greater obligation falls on those of Syria’s neighbors that have closed their doors.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The View page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, Sept. 10, the 253rd day of 2015. There are 112 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Sept. 10, 1955, the Western series “Gunsmoke,” starring James Arness as Marshal Matt Dillon, began a 20-season run on CBS television.

On this date: In 1608, John Smith was elected president of the Jamestown colony council in Virginia.

In 1813, an American naval force commanded by Oliver H. Perry defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. (Afterward, Perry sent out the message, “We have met the enemy and they are ours.”)

In 1846, Elias Howe received a patent for his sewing machine.

In 1919, New York City welcomed home Gen. John J. Pershing and 25,000 soldiers who’d served in the U.S. First Division during World War I.

In 1935, Sen. Huey P. Long died in Baton Rouge, two days after being shot in the Louisiana state Capitol, allegedly by Dr. Carl Weiss.

In 1939, Canada declared war on Germany.

In 1945, Vidkun Quisling was sentenced to death in Norway for collaborating with the Nazis (he was executed by firing squad in October 1945).

In 1963, 20 black students entered Alabama public schools following a stand-off between federal authorities and Gov. George C. Wallace.

In 1974, the West African country of Guinea-Bissau became fully independent of Portugal.

In 1979, four Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned for a 1954 attack on the U.S. House of Representatives and a 1950 attempt on the life of President Harry S. Truman were freed from prison after being granted clemency by President Jimmy Carter.

In 1987, Pope John Paul II arrived in Miami, where he was welcomed by President Ronald Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan as he began a 10-day tour of the United States.

In 1991, the Senate Judiciary Committee opened hearings on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ten years ago: Cadaver dogs and boatloads of forensic workers fanned out across New Orleans to collect the corpses left behind by Hurricane Katrina; cleanup crews towed away abandoned cars and even began readying a hotel for reopening. Kim Clijsters won her first major title, cruising to a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Mary Pierce at the U.S. Open. Clarence

“Gatemouth” Brown, the singer and guitarist who’d built a 50-year career playing blues, country, jazz and Cajun music, died in Orange, Texas, at age 81.

Five years ago: During a White House press conference, President Barack Obama blamed Republicans and election-year politics for thwarting his efforts to do more to spur a listless national economy. Juan Mari Bras, 82, an elder statesman of Puerto Rico’s independence movement, died in Rio Piedras.

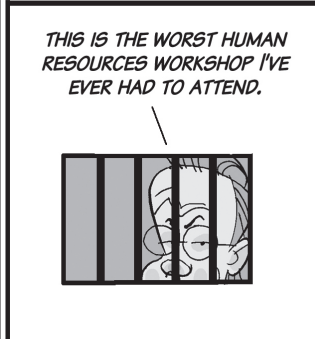
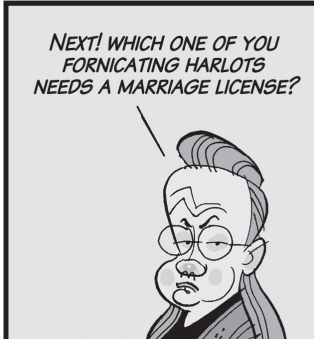
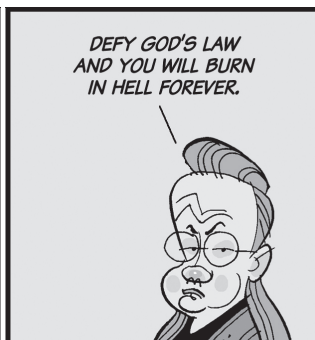
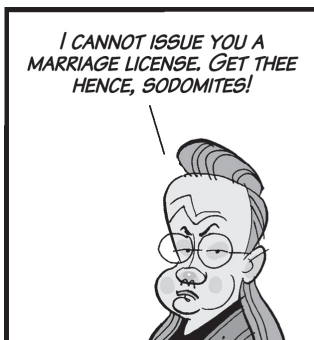
One year ago: During a prime-time address, President Barack Obama announced he was authorizing airstrikes inside Syria for the first time along with expanded strikes in Iraq as part of a “steady, relentless effort” to root out Islamic State extremists. Missouri executed Earl Ringo Jr. for a 1998 robbery and double murder. Richard Kiel, 74, the towering actor best known for portraying the steel-toothed villain “Jaws” in a pair of James Bond movies, died in Fresno, California.

Today’s Birthdays: World Golf Hall of Famer Arnold Palmer is 86. Actor Philip Baker Hall is 84. Actor Greg Mullavey is 82. Country singer Tommy Overstreet is 78. Jazz vibraphonist Roy Ayers is 75. Actor Tom Ligon is 75. Singer Danny Hutton (Three Dog Night) is 73. Singer Jose Feliciano is 70. Actress Judy Geeson is 67. Former Canadian first lady Margaret Trudeau is 67. Political commentator Bill O’Reilly is 66. Rock musician Joe Perry (Aerosmith) is 65. Actress Amy Irving is 62. Country singer Rosie Flores is 59. Actress Kate Burton is 58. Movie director Chris Columbus is 57. Actor Colin Firth is 55. Rock singer-musician David Lowery (Cracker) is 55. Actor Sean O’Brian is 52. Actor Raymond Cruz is 51. Baseball Hall of Famer Randy Johnson is 52. Rock musician Robin Goodridge (Bush) is 50. Rock musician Stevie D. (Buckcherry) is 49. Rock singer-musician Miles Zuniga (Fastball) is 49. Actress Nina Repeta is 48. Rapper Big Daddy Kane is 47. Movie director Guy Ritchie is 47. Actor Johnathan Schaech is 46. Contemporary Christian singer Sara Groves is 43. Actor Ryan Phillippe is 41. Actor Kyle Bornheimer is 40. Rock musician Mikkey Way (My Chemical Romance) is 35. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Timothy Goebel is 35. Ballerina Misty Copeland is 33. Rock musician Matthew Followill (Kings of Leon) is 31. Singer Ashley Monroe (Pistol Annies) is 29. Singer Sanjaya Malakar (“American Idol”) is 26. Actor Chandler Massey is 25. Actress Hannah Hodson is 24.

Thought for Today: “If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge.” — The Talmud.

FROM THE BIBLE

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Romans 10:15. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



Donald Trump Proves Ignorance Doesn't Matter

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

Our question for the day: Does ignorance matter?

Our lead exhibit — you will not be shocked to hear this — is Donald Trump.

Last week, the billionaire real-estate mogul who is seeking the Republican presidential nomination stumbled over a question about terrorism from conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt. Specifically, he was forced to admit that he could not identify the leaders of Hezbollah and al Qaida, among other terrorist organizations.

There is a pattern for how Trump reacts when cornered, and he was true to it last week.

First, he made the usual vague, grandiose promises about how effective he will be once in office (“I will be so good at the military, your head will spin...I’m a delegater...I find absolutely great people and I’ll find them in our armed services.”)

Then he attempted to kill the messenger, bashing Hewitt on Twitter as a “very low ratings talk-show host” and a “3rd-rate gotcha guy.”

As has also become part of the pattern, a gaffe that might have totaled another candidate’s campaign seems to have not even scratched the paint on this one. Or, as a Politico headline put it: “Trump Bluffs Past Another Crisis.” Indeed, Trump has come to resemble nothing so much as a real world Sebastian Shaw — a Marvel Comics supervillain who gets stronger every time you hit him.

After insulting Mexicans, insulting his rivals and insulting Fox “News” personality Megyn Kelly with a tasteless jibe that he claimed wasn’t about menstruation, though it transparently was, Trump continues to lead all contenders for the Republican presidential nomination.

Nor is the ignorance of world affairs he betrayed on Hewitt’s show likely to change that.

It’s a fact that speaks volumes about the present state of the Grand Old Party. This is, after all, now the third presidential election cycle in a row in which one of its stars has shown himself or herself to be spectacularly clueless on some relatively simple question of



Leonard PITTS

presidential readiness.

There is a straight line from Saran Palin in 2008 — unable to give coherent answers to questions about the economy, foreign policy and her own reading habits — to Herman Cain hemming and hawing and shifting in his chair in 2011 when asked about Libya, to Trump bristling and pouting because he was quizzed about major figures in Middle East terrorism.

One is reminded of the old political axiom that people want a president they could imagine having a beer with. And that’s fine. But you’d think they would also want to imagine him or her being able to find North Korea on a map.

And, in the last few years, there have been some political contenders and pretenders who you suspect could not do it even if you spotted them a hemisphere.

Since when did running for president become a reality show? How does Trump or anyone else figure that a presidential candidate should not be asked hard questions? And what does it say about us that fundamental ignorance about things a president should know does not automatically disqualify you from credibly contending for that office?

Perhaps it says that some of us want the world to be simple, and that they want a president who will not ask them to think too deeply, nor proffer any policy prescription too complex to fit on a bumper sticker.

Perhaps it says that some of us embrace an extremist resistance to social change and are willing to support whoever promises most loudly to drag the country back to an imagined yesterday of purity and strength.

But the world is not simple and never was. And yesterday’s gone, yesterday’s gone.

Does ignorance matter? Well, Donald Trump is still the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination.

So obviously, it doesn’t matter nearly as much as it should.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Moore’s Response

Garry Moore, Yankton

Mr. Kettering can spin words any way he wants (*Press & Dakotan*, Sept. 4), but he still knows what the intent was of a perceived quote in the Sept. 2 edition of the *P&D*.

Two reasons people don’t like to become involved is because of the fear of intimidation and the twisting of words and facts such as Mr. Kettering attempts to invoke. I fear neither!

Mr. Kettering used a quote directly out of the *P&D* which may or may not have been taken out of context. I don’t need anyone to tell me how the formula works or what the law says. The provisions of SB1 are exempt from 10-31 — that is the property tax reduction act on owner occupied residences. Effectively, property taxes will go up with no regard for the intent of the Legislature and former Gov. Bill Janklow in the mid 1990’s to reduce the burdensome property taxes. Also, the proposed property tax levy will undoubtedly increase mortgage payments as those taxes are escrowed in the payment. In addition, the index factor will also apply to the proposed new levy, subjecting the new levy to annual increases

My numbers are accurate. A new, additional tax levy, in addition to the current tax levy I pay, it will cost me over \$250 per month to rent my own home from the county. That is over \$3,000 per year. In theory I might own my home, but in reality if I don’t or can’t pay the taxes, the county can take it away from me. I must thank the county for looking after those with meager and fixed incomes with a new tax and levy.

All levels of government have a huge appetite for money. Government must learn to live within its means as the taxpayer must do

P&D 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/

To Our Readers

With a referendum coming up on Sept. 29 regarding the proposed road and bridge levy in Yankton County, the PRESS & DAKOTAN has decided that it will no longer run letters pertaining to the issue free of charge. Any letters concerning the issue will be referred to advertising. This applies only to letters regarding Yankton’s County’s Sept. 29 special election. Thank you.

to meet all the increasing cost and demands in today’s economy. The county should never ask anyone to give something up in order to pay their taxes, until the county itself is ready to give up some of the fluff in the budget.

How About Grants?

Don Koepp, Yankton

I have been reading the letters on the tax levy for the roads and thought I should write a letter and express my thoughts on this matter.

As far as raising the taxes, we need to remember the older people living on a fixed income and the ones that are living from payday to payday. They have food to buy, and doctors and medication to pay for; their income will not stretch for anything additional. We have people who can’t feed their children and many people deciding whether to purchase medication or buy food. What are we trying to do? Make them street people?

We get grants for everything else and why don’t work on getting some grants for our roads?