

*Letter  
to the editor***Central Fair confusion***To Editor:*

There seems to be a lot of confusion over who is at fault for the Central Navajo Fair being hosted by the community of Pinon instead of Chinle. I will attempt to explain.

The Chinle community made every attempt to get land to permanently establish a fair ground where there would be enough acreage to accommodate the excitement of the fair and room for expansion in the future as the fair expands. The main obstacle was getting the land for this purpose. This has to be done by an agreement document called "consent form" signed by all those who have a claim to the proposed location. These people absolutely refused to sign the consent form, so there was no land secured to put the fair within the Chinle community. And last year after Miss Central was crowned, there was a huge dispute over who was actually Miss Central. At that time the Chinle chapter with the help of the Council delegates tried to intervene but Ms. Irene Bahe, who is still the chair of the Central Fair committee, delivered a letter to the chapter officials and Council delegates with a legal opinion by the Justice Department saying that the chapter and the Council delegates had no jurisdiction or authority nor control over the fair committee and the entire fair activities. She wrote that the fair committee is in sole control of the Central Fair and did not want any outside interference. The chapter and the Council delegates honored her letter and was no longer involved. Any questions pertaining to the relocation of the Central fair should be directed to Ms. Bahe and answered by her or her committee.

So the people of Chinle who are upset with the decision to relocate the fair to Pinon for one year should not blame the Council delegates, but talk to the land users for their consent to give up some land so the Central fair can come back to Chinle next year. The Council delegates by law cannot force these people to sign the form or get involved in land issues at the chapter level. It is the responsibility of the elected grazing representative to negotiate with the land users to secure signatures on the "consent form" to obtain land for a fair, business and all other proposed establishment which require land.

It is sad that this had to happen because Chinle has all the facilities and establishments to host this annual fair and it should be brought back to Chinle. However, there is still the land issue which need to be addressed immediately so preparation can begin for next year's Central fair in Chinle, where it belongs.

Harry Claw  
Chinle**The beginning  
of the end in Iraq**By Helen Thomas  
Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Baghdad and other key cities in Iraq marks the beginning of the end of the tragic war there.

While it's not over yet, the Iraqis are celebrating and happy — free at last from American control.

Well, almost.

We have had six-and-one-half years of the on-going conflict, with American war dead totaling 4,320 and more than 31,000 wounded. More than 100,000 Iraqis also were killed and thousands more wounded.

Add some 4 million refugees to those formidable numbers of human cost.

Then there is the small matter of an estimated \$682 billion as the financial cost of the war, which is still costing about \$1 billion a week.

Have we seen former President George W. Bush's 2003 banner "Mission Accomplished" finally come true? Not quite.

None of the American officials who sold us this disastrous war are in the dock, though maybe they should be. The falsehoods they told to justify this tragic invasion stressed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and ties to the al-Qaida terrorist network. This was false.

The neo-conservatives who plotted and masterminded the war have faded into safe havens — universities and right-wing think tanks — and are free to make mischief another day.

Was it worth the losses, the pain, the sorrow of families, the fatherless children, the disabled and mentally disturbed veterans — for a war waged on the basis of wrong information?

The damage to our reputation as a peace-loving people is incalculable. Our reputation was further sullied by the torturing of prisoners and the detention of hundreds of captives who were never charged, tried or convicted.

The U.S. has violated international laws on several scores, to our shame. The federal government also violated U.S. law by spying on Americans with warrantless wiretaps, all in the name of national security.

Are we leaving the Iraqis able to take care of themselves or are they worse off? The answer is that their 5,000-year-old civilization has survived modern imperial Western colonialism and will manage somehow.

To this day, the American people have not been given an honest answer about what prompted Bush to go to war in the turbulent Middle East. After the 9-11 catastrophes, it was anything goes.

The American people were hoodwinked into a war with Iraq that had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks on the U.S. That apparently didn't matter to Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney or the hawkish advisers who used those attacks as a springboard to invade Iraq.

**Letters to the Editor policy**

GALLUP — The Independent encourages letters to the editor, which are published twice weekly — Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Letters must include writer's name, address and phone number although only the name and community of residence will be published.

Letters may not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. The Independent may choose not to print any letter for any reason.

Anyone may submit a letter, and there is no charge for publication.

Letters may be mailed, delivered in person, faxed or e-mailed to: Editor, The Independent, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, New Mexico 87305, (505) 722-5750 (fax); editorialgallup@yahoo.com (e-mail).

**The Honduras predicament**

Help me out here. President Obama immediately "meddles" in the affairs of Honduras, denouncing a military coup, the intent of which is to preserve the country's constitution, but when it comes to Iran's fraudulent election and the violent repression of demonstrators who wanted their votes counted, the president initially vacillates and equivocates. Are we expected to accept this as a consistent foreign policy? Even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was reluctant to call the removal of President Manuel Zelaya a coup, if for no other reason than it would stop U.S. aid flowing to the impoverished Central American nation.

The fingerprints (or in this case the boot prints) of the Castro brothers, Venezuela's dictator Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua are all over this. If one is known by the company one keeps, the specter of the Castros and their protege dictators joining President Obama in denouncing the Honduran military coup is not reassuring. Clearly Zelaya was the choice of the dictators to help spread "revolution" to America's back door. The coup is a setback for them, though perhaps temporary, depending on how much pressure "world opinion," which can be as fickle as some politicians' marriage vows, can assert.

One of the flaws in U.S. policy in this and in the Bush administration has been our commitment to elec-

tions as an end and not a means. Elections can put scoundrels in power and the election that elevates them is often the last one a country sees until the miscreants are overthrown. That has been true of Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections of 2006, Germany under Hitler, as well as Ortega and Chavez, among others. The United States should be supporting electoral processes that put people in office who are committed to the rule of law and representative government.

The threat by Chavez to send his troops into Honduras ought to be another signal to the Obama administration that thugs can't be made nice by talking to them. So far, the world's tyrants have been unresponsive to Obama's offer of a new start and a pushing of the "reset" button, which Secretary Clinton famously offered Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The word on the device she gave Lavrov was meant to say "reset" in Russian, instead, roughly translated, the word meant "overcharge." Overly optimistic might be a better word to describe this nascent administration's approach to bad guys. They are getting the message, but it's a different one than President Obama hoped to send. The message is that

Cal  
Thomas

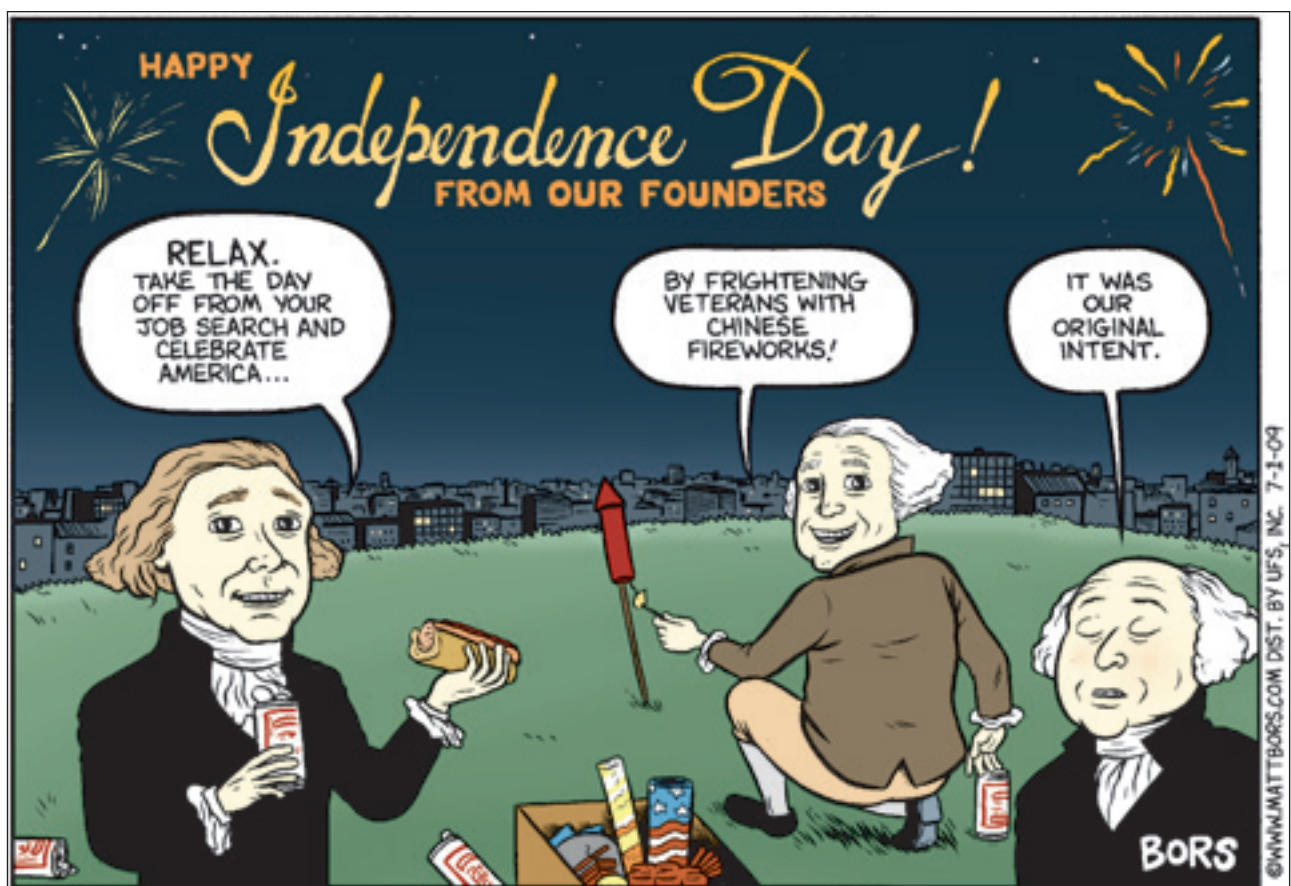
Obama is weak and can be had.

It is one thing for a president to be liked, but in a dangerous world with dictators who have, or wish to acquire, nuclear weapons and by these and other means destroy the United States, it is better that an American president be feared.

Does this administration have a "Plan B" for dealing with thugs and dictators should their rules of social and diplomatic etiquette fail to produce their announced objectives? Suppose Kim Jong-il follows through on his threat to launch a missile at Hawaii on July 4? If he does and America shoots it down, what happens then? If missile defense fails (the administration and Congress are cutting the budget for a missile shield) and the missile hits Hawaii and kills a lot of people, what then?

Will there be strong denunciations, UN resolutions, or a rapid and devastating retaliation? Given this administration's commitment to "dialogue," I'm not betting on retaliation. More like handwringing and wondering aloud what we might have done to make them hate us, as we heard from many leftists following Sept. 11.

The administration is being tested on several fronts, as Vice President Biden predicted. Honduras is one of many challenges. Will the administration meet them, or retreat? We may know sooner than many of us might expect.

**High noon for health-care reform**

A friend whose son began having convulsions as a teenager worries that he'll never be able to get health insurance when he has to leave her health-care plan because of his "pre-existing condition."

A guy I know who had a job but no health insurance — not an unusual situation in New Mexico — needed a kidney transplant. He gave away everything he owned and moved in with his parents so Medicaid would pay for the surgery.

And a business I covered was forced to close its doors after the owner's daughter was injured in a car accident. He couldn't afford health insurance for his employees or himself. When his daughter's medical bills wiped him out, 30 people lost their jobs.

You don't have to go far to hear health-care disaster stories. This is what we need to remember above the din of the health-care debate.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman finds himself in the middle, both politically and procedurally, as the only Democrat on both the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the Finance Committee, the two bodies crafting the health-care bill. HELP wants to reform the system; Finance must figure out how to pay for it.

The HELP committee's chairman, Sen. Ted Kennedy, is sidelined, and Kennedy's old friend Sen. Chris Dodd has stepped into the vacuum, but both Kennedy and Dodd are farther to the left of Finance Chairman Max Baucus, a Montana Democrat.

**All She  
Wrote**Sherry  
Robinson

However, Bingaman has a lot in common with Baucus. The two westerners are about the same age, they're alums of Stanford Law School, and they share the same moderate views.

Politico sees in Bingaman a changing of the Democratic guard: "Much as Dodd is Kennedy's natural confidant, Bingaman may be the intellectual bridge Kennedy and Obama need to pull the two wings together."

The senator's low-key, deliberate approach even inspires the magazine's comparison with actor Gary Cooper in "High Noon." I guess that's how easterners would view a long, lean, quiet-spoken westerner.

Bingaman has written about his goals for the bill: Ensuring that everyone has access to affordable health insurance, rooting out inefficiency and waste that inflate costs, and improving the quality of care.

So far, business, insurers and the AMA have agreed to four of the steps needed to get there: Insurers must stop denying coverage for pre-existing conditions or throwing up other barriers. (Insurers have agreed

they could be more inclusive.) Everybody, including the young and healthy, must participate. Poor people will need tax credits or subsidies to afford insurance. And small businesses should get a tax credit for providing health-care benefits.

Like the president, Bingaman says if you have health coverage you like, you can keep it. He's not pushing single-payer, but he's also clear that real reform means competition between public and private insurance plans. The public option, he says, could take different forms.

Predictably, the left thinks anything short of single-payer is a sell-out. The right screams about socialized medicine, a rant that defeated free government distribution of the Salk polio vaccine during the 1950s epidemic. Others still believe the market will solve this problem, even though we watched the market fall on its face and private industry embarrass itself. If insurers were capable of solving this problem, they would have done it by now. Instead they've organized a small army to argue with us about what they're not going to cover.

In "High Noon" Marshall Will Kane has hung up his badge to marry his sweetheart, but on his wedding day he learns a criminal he sent to prison is returning, with his gang, on the noon train. The lily-livered townspeople he protected refuse to help. Our hero has to face the bad guys alone.

Bingaman also faces a towering challenge, but he doesn't face it alone.

**Quotations of the day**

By The Associated Press

*"In this business, the pressures and things that you go through, you never know what one turns to."*

— Jermaine Jackson, saying he would be "hurt" if toxicology reports showed his late brother Michael Jackson abused prescription drugs.

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The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 35:1