

COMMENTARY

One Moment, Please... Made in the Midwest

By Jason Sethre
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For decades, America has been battling the outsourcing of manufacturing and services to countries like Mexico, China, Philippines, and India.

The United States has lost so many jobs to other countries for a variety of reasons, including labor costs, environmental restrictions, and tax incentives.

Most people would be surprised to hear that some newspapers have fallen into that bear trap.

There is a corporate-owned newspaper in Southeast Minnesota (not the *Fillmore County Journal*) that outsources their



Jason Sethre

advertising design to a company based in India. So, a local customer cannot directly speak with the designer about placing an advertisement in the local newspaper. The ad content is sent via e-mail overseas to a company in India. That company designs the ad and sends it back to the newspaper, and that's how the process works.

At some point, that newspaper decided to sell their soul to the Devil in order to save money by getting rid of local people.

I've seen it happen throughout the newspaper industry. The *Star-Tribune* and *Des Moines Register* have both gone down that path, outsourcing their advertising design to India. Another family-owned newspaper west of Fillmore County has succumbed to the pressure, and they are outsourcing their advertising design to India, as well.

This is a travesty. Along with losing jobs in America to

another country, what about the personal connection that local people have with the customers they serve?

I firmly believe that when we hire local people to serve our local customers, we will serve them in the best way possible. That's good business sense.

Every week, I receive e-mails and phone calls from companies based out of India who are offering graphic design and web design services -- saying "We can save you money!" They want our newspaper to outsource our graphic and web design services. There are even foreign-based companies offering services for writing articles and editorial proofing. Are you kidding me?

That won't happen here. Not with our newspaper.

We are blessed with an incredible team that lives among the people they serve.

Members of our team live in Canton, Cresco, Decorah, Fountain, Harmony, Houston, Lanesboro, Mabel, Preston, Rushford, Spring Grove, Spring Valley, and Wykoff.

We are made in the Midwest.

Still hopeful

By Julie Little
Harmony, MN

It's amazing how creative and resilient humans can be. Here, in the midst of fear and tragedy, good arises. It was an odd Easter at home. But churches live streamed services. I heard the pastor play his trumpet and it was the most uplifting and triumphant sound coming right into my home. My parents, who are in their 90s and homebound pandemic or not, were able to attend church at home too. All at once, they're like everyone else in the congregation.

I hear that there is a new rush to purchase garden seeds and greenhouses. What better way to find food security than to grow your own? I hope that local farmers will find a wealth of new clientele too. Bring the ability to feed ourselves back home. Nothing can replace the experience of dining at a restaurant and we have some nice options here, but the meal prepared and shared at home had been going the way of the dinosaur. I heard that the size of kitchens in new houses has been shrinking steadily because "nobody cooks anymore." Still, there is pleasure in preparing and sharing meals. Maybe kitchens will once again be the place everyone gathers. Then the next shortage will be chest freezers to hold the leftovers and the bounty of produce. If you do get a freezer, buy a side of beef or other fresh meat from a local farmer. I know from experience that it's delicious.

And speaking of local, could we please bring home the production of all components we need to treat our sick and keep our health care workers safe? Let's do it. At the very least, let's

learn from this and be better prepared for the next crisis.

Where are the opportunities within the trials? I heard one mom say, considering that this stay at home order is not going to last forever, she's looking at it as a chance for more "cuddle time" with her young kids. Families on the go will need to adjust but may also find new opportunities to connect. Walks together are becoming a common way for families to be outside together and see others. More people are using parks and trails, not just hiking their neighborhoods. Singing together is a new phenomenon in many places. Maybe this is something that feels good and will continue on in some way after COVID-19. New habits take time and the longer shelter-in-place persists the more likely new habits will develop.

We have clearly seen problems with the way we do healthcare in this country and the precarious situation for small businesses, gig workers or those who live paycheck to paycheck. No matter what your politics are, and solutions will differ, I believe there is a new recognition of the issues as well as the need to fix them.

There are many gifts within a challenge. More people are beginning to wear masks, for instance. It is a gift to wear a mask because you are protecting others even more than yourself. It feels strange and awkward. But I hope you do it anyway. Tough people wear masks because they value protecting others. Rebels wear masks because they're strong enough to be trend setters. I'm not saying that mask wearing should become a new tradition but, while the virus is with us and no cure exists, wearing a mask shows that we have empathy and care for others. And isn't it heartening to see how sewists are stepping up to produce homemade cloth masks (Facing COVID-19, 3/30/20)?

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Government this week

Monday, April 27

- Caledonia City Council, City Hall, 6 p.m.
- Spring Valley City Council, Community Center, 6 p.m.
- City of Rushford City Council, City Hall, 6:30 p.m.
- Chatfield City Council, City Hall, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, April 28

- Fillmore County Commissioners, Courthouse, 9 a.m.
- Fillmore Central School Board, Via telecommunication, 6:30 p.m.

Monday, May 4

- City of Houston Planning Commission/EDA, City Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- Kingsland Work Session, HighSchool Conference Room, Teleconference, 6 p.m.
- Lanesboro City Council, City Hall, 6 p.m.
- Preston City Council, City Hall, 6 p.m.
- LeRoy City Council, Community Center, 6:30 p.m.

*Please check appropriate websites for latest updates in meeting status.

the robber barons. Where is their financial contribution to the recovery? Where is their willingness to leave the oil in the ground and furlough the workers? To donate oil to the national strategic reserve? To donate gas and diesel fuel to farmers spring planting?

As we all go through this time of enforced austerity, I hope we are all noticing how little we need, to be fed and comfortable; and how much we don't need, if getting it endangers us; how good it is to spend time at home, with family, taking a break from servitude, interacting verbally instead of physically, being

still, instead of in constant transitions.

Some of us already had lives that avoided unnecessary shopping, took place mainly at home, and had a secure, if minimal, income. For me, life hasn't changed much, except I seem to have a little more money left at the end of the month. If everyone just lived as simply as I do, we could save the planet. And we could all shed some crocodile tears for the earth destroyers. Poor babies might have to do without their gold toilets and hunting preserves and castles.

Alima Fairchild
Rushford, Minn.

Editorial Cartoon

