

KeizerOpinion

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You, too?

Social media has been filled with posts that say “Me, too,” over the past week or so. That two word message alludes to the fact that the poster had been a victim of sexual harassment.

The ‘Me, too’ campaign started after it was revealed that a Hollywood producer had paid out huge sums of money to a number of his accusers. That producer has since lost his company and has been kicked out of some organizations including the one that passes out the Academy Awards.

It is good there is a ‘Me, too’ campaign; it brings the issue to the forefront of the news. It does not necessarily bring it to the forefront of the collective consciousness. There are people who will harass regardless of public norms. Harassment is, and always has been, a matter of power and control, not about sex.

No one asks to be a victim of this behavior. No one invites inappropriate comments and physical touch. And certainly, no one is eager to have their career in the hands of a boss who uses their position to maintain control.

Harassment has been part of the human condition forever. If you don’t put out, you’re put out. How does society stem the tide of this type of harassment?

As all things, it needs to start at the beginning. We teach our children the golden rule—do unto others as you

wish them to do unto you. We don’t want our child to be a bully. There are so many positive messages that need to be instilled at an early age (one need look no further than Robert Fulghum’s *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, which is as relevant today as the day it was written in 1986. The messages in that book are a great place to start for teaching kids about how to behave and share.

We all know that there are people who are not susceptible to positive messages—harassers come from somewhere. Bad behavior is the reflection of what a person has seen or endured. If a child sees an adult belittle and harass another person and there is no consequence, the message is received: I can control with this type of behavior.

The antidote is in the telling. No one should let themselves be a victim of harassment. The notion that a victim doesn’t tell because they feel no one will believe them is wrong. Victims of harassment should tell everyone, all the time, about what has happened.

Truth is the greatest disinfectant. A perpetrator will have few places to hide and lurk if it is publicly known who and what they are. No job and no career is worth putting up with belittling and soul-crushing harassment. Go on, tell the world “Me, too” and let’s start ending harassment now.

—LAZ

our opinion

What if a band-aid cost \$345?

By DON VOWELL

Donald Trump doesn’t even care that I can’t afford a massive dose of Viagra. I don’t really know that but it looks like the most reliable way to get his attention is to publicly insult him. He invariably takes the bait and nothing is more public than this newspaper.

One symptom of pulmonary fibrosis is pulmonary hypertension. Fibrosis constricts your arteries and makes your heart work harder to pump blood through your lungs. You don’t want that for your lungs or your heart.

The currently favored drug to open the arteries in your lungs, or any body part that might work better with increased blood flow, is Viagra. My pulmonologist actually said a “massive dose of Viagra,” and then prescribed it.

We live in a world today where no one has the sense to be embarrassed about anything so I figured it was alright if I showed up at the local pharmacy to pick up a massive dose of Viagra, despite some anxiety about advertised possible side effects. I wore my portable oxygen generator so they could easily understand my legitimate G-rated need for this drug.

At a dosage of three a day, my month’s supply was priced at \$1,639. I was just as unwilling as my insurance company to pay for the Viagra benefits as touted in television ads. I tearfully explained that I was only hoping to reduce my level of pulmonary hypertension. The pharmacist said that insurance companies would sometimes make an exception if the attending physician verified that the drug was treating pulmonary hypertension as a primary symptom. If, however, pulmonary hypertension is instead just a secondary symptom of fibrosis, then they

may not pay.

If they decide they needn’t pay because no field testing has shown that Viagra will be effective in this precise set of circumstances then I’ll need to pay.

You are right to wonder why on earth I would discuss all this here. I just thought you’d judge me more kindly when you see me at a busy corner holding up the “Will work for Viagra” cardboard. Passers-

by might be more giving if they knew I needed it for breath support rather than recreation. The same is probably true of a Kickstarter or GoFundMe campaign for financing Viagra.

I thank you in advance. You are already buying for me a newish drug called Esbriet. It is in the \$90,000-a-year range and my co-pay so far has been zero. Insurance is hard to understand. Esbriet is only marginally helpful.

If the price of a band-aid was suddenly raised to \$345 the American discussion would be about how we can afford the subsequent rise in insurance premiums rather than challenging the cost of a band-aid. Dr. Kitzhaber has been trying to explain that for years.

Sometimes obscure diseases are brought to light when a very famous actor or sports hero steps up to advocate for research and funding. Not so with Viagra. Who’s going to buy a team jersey or spend money watching a first run movie featuring some poor schlub who needs Viagra?

Thus I need to provoke the president so he’ll pressure Big Pharma into reducing the cost of this drug. So, tweet this Mr. President. Real men need Viagra and can’t afford it. Clearly the problem is inflation.

(Don Vowell gets on his soapbox regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)

a box of soap



Tax cuts bound to increase debt

By DEBRA SAUNDERS

Speaking to a group of workers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania recently, President Donald Trump said that his proposed tax-cut package “will be rocket fuel” for the U.S. economy.

It was Trump’s sly way of reinforcing a message that the White House has sent since it first rolled out a framework for the tax cut in April. The message: Instead of adding to the \$20 trillion national debt, the GOP tax cut will pay for itself; there’s no need to produce some \$5 trillion in savings over the next decade to pay for the cuts.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin uttered that mantra after the rollout when he told the Institute of International Finance, “The plan will pay for itself with growth.”

The current package would lower the corporate tax rate from 38.9 percent to 20 percent and lower personal income taxes; the top rate would fall from 39.6 percent to 35 percent. That should mean a bigger deficit, right?

No, supporters maintain, because the package would eliminate a number of deductions, and that would broaden the tax base and generate some new revenue. The rest would come from growth as corporations, spurred by tax cuts, buy more equipment and hire more workers.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget supports tax reform but has observed that tax cuts in 1981 and the early 2000s widened deficits and figured that for every dollar in cuts, economy activity would have to produce \$5 to pay for itself. Don’t hold your breath on that score.

other views

“I think that very few economists would agree that the revenue loss would be fully offset with revenue growth,” budget expert Alan Viard of the American Enterprise Institute told *The Hill*.

The Tax Policy Center estimated that the framework would increase the federal deficit by \$2.4 trillion in its first 10 years. There are two caveats that go with any estimate. The first is that the plan drafted by GOP leaders offers few details. While the nine-page framework boasts three new tax rates—12 percent, 25 percent and 35 percent—it does not delineate what the tax brackets would be.

The second caveat is that it is not clear or even likely that Congress will stick with provisions that would remove tax deductions, such as the deduction for state and local taxes, in order to finance lower tax rates. The state and local deductions add up to \$1.3 trillion over a decade, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. Already the pressure is on lawmakers from high-tax states such as New York, New Jersey and Maryland to refuse to support the package unless the GOP leadership restores the status quo.

With Trump in the Oval Office, all of a sudden GOP senators and representatives don’t see deficit spending as being wasteful as they framed it under President Barack Obama. Also, GOP lawmakers have little incentive to try to cut spending, given that Trump never has been a fiscal conservative and likely would oppose cuts.

No budget hawk, Trump campaigned on not messing with Social Security. “We’re not going to raise the age and we’re not going to do all the things that everybody else is talking

about doing. They’re all talking about doing it, and you don’t have to,” he said on the campaign trail. “We’re going to bring our jobs back.”

In office, Trump has become even more inclined to magical thinking when it comes to other people’s money.

Trump told a gathering of truckers in Harrisburg that the stock market grew by \$5.2 trillion since he won the election—“that’s a quarter of the \$20 trillion that we owe.” Then Trump apparently multiplied the \$5 trillion by the four years of his first term and figured, “I’ve increased the value of your U.S. assets by more than the \$20 trillion that we currently owe.”

Wrong, responded Patrick Newton of the Committee for a Responsible Budget. “Stock market gains benefit investors. They do not pay down the debt.”

Republicans aren’t all wet when they talk up the dynamic powers that tax cuts can have. The GOP plan would allow corporations to write off equipment purchases in the year they are made—an incentive to buy equipment. A lower tax on corporate profits overseas could convince CEOs to return offshore dollars to the United States.

But can it make a rabbit disappear? In a recent phone call for “Not One Penny”—a Democrat-leaning group that opposes the GOP plan—venture capitalist Nick Hanauer scoffed at the notion that tax cuts for wealthy individuals will increase dynamism and growth.

“It is extraordinary that they continue to try to sell this nonsense to the American people,” he said. He likened the approach to “giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.” (Creators Syndicate)

Is US condemned to repeat history?

By GENE H. MCINTYRE

Americans not now interested in Russia may want to reconsider that indifference. After all, while Russia may no longer export internationally, it hasn’t stopped trying to involve itself in the internal affairs of other countries, namely, for one salient example, the U.S.A.

An essay, titled *What Ever Happened to the Russian Revolution*, by American writer Ian Frazier, that appeared in the October issue of *Smithsonian*, brings much light to those in search of understanding Russia, a nation most often nowadays depicted here as an arch enemy. One notice that heralds our attention is that the Russian Revolution marks its centennial this year.

Before that landmark year, 1917, Russia experienced for a hundred years, great disorder mixed with a whole lot of political violence. Its considerable contributions to literature previously became a backdrop to revolution unlike the world had ever seen. Frazier commented in his article that “today, a hundred years afterward, we still don’t know what to make of that huge event” while the Russian people themselves, he says, “aren’t too sure about its significance.”

Of course, the Russian Revolution took time to complete and, while underway in momentous happenings, for a long time prior to actualization, required most of a year to bring to the Bolshevik foundation of a new order. There had been drastic failures in trying to deal with the people

who worked the land, the shortcomings of an inept autocracy to address an exploding industrial society, the inadequacies of the Romanovs, and, among so many other matters not redressed, the deplorable conditions of land-born workers who were living in squalid conditions in Petrograd and other Russian industrial cities.

The Russian people writ large reached a point of critical mass where they screamed something like ‘we’re mad as hell and will not take it any more.’ As you may remember there were many individuals and groups vying for top dog status while Lenin’s Bolsheviks ultimately succeeded at grabbing the baton of power. However, a Socialist revolution encompassing the entire world came up far short of the glorious expectations of the Bolsheviks. Fact of the matter is, there was not another country in the world at the time that followed Russia’s attempt at world leadership.

Eventually, there were others who followed. China’s revolution, by far, added the most people under Communist rule. It remains the most significant nation among any who had leaned toward or tried Communism to embrace Lenin’s dream of a worldwide proletarian uprising. Fifty years after the 1917 revolution, about one-third of the world’s population was under a version of Communism; however, even among them, now, they’ve swung toward a market-based economy.

But the Bolsheviks in our time have not gone en masse to their graves.

Instead, they’ve found mischievous ways to intrude themselves into a presence throughout the world and, most poignantly, recently, U.S. elections and those of several other Western democracies.

Nevertheless, there would not have been a Soviet Union without Lenin. Today, Lenin would likely be disappointed that a Marxist utopia never materialized. Yet, the way he got things done may be what’s his greatest contribution to a Russia without the USSR. You see, it’s Lenin’s tactics that are alive and well in 2017.

Russia is now more capitalistic than communistic but what you see in the workings of President Vladimir Putin is that his takes care of his friends, holds power absolutely and will not compromise with anyone. But you see Lenin in America, too, where the strictest rules of partisanship prevail while President Trump’s pal, *Breitbart News*’ Steve Bannon, has said that he’s a Leninist who wants to bring everything crashing down and destroy America’s establishment.

However imperfect and divided our nation, it just seems as though there are enough of us who view our way of life important enough to fight to preserve rather than surrender to Bolsheviks, Steve Bannon and their ilk. The alternative being a form of the Soviet Union that Russia evolved into where nothing works well and the only national objective is to try to take the freedoms and rule of law away from countries like ours with a 200-year effort underway for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)



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