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Tis a gift...

The fortunate among us will wake Christmas morning and open presents. The day will continue with breakfasts, brunches, dinners, family and friends. As we anticipate the holidays and what they mean to each of us, we would do well to think of those less fortunate.

Regardless of the reason, some families will not have a full table during the holidays; there will not be toys for the boys and girls to open. Despite positive economic news there will always be families who have been passed by. Families struggling to stay together, to stay healthy, to stay fed, to stay in school.

Our minds understand that hunger and insecurity know no season; if a family is food insecure in December it might be food insecure in March or April or August. But our hearts tell us to reach out during the holidays to those less fortunate. Tis the season of caring and sharing after all.

How can we help those less fortunate? That's the easy part, there are many organizations that aid those in need. Marion-Polk Food Share and the Keizer Community Food Bank are instrumental in feeding hundreds of people. The people that patronize a food bank are not bums or lazy, they are families who have fallen on hard times and need a hand up. More than 80 years ago that's what Americans were doing for each other during the depths of the Great Depression—everyone seemed to be in the same boat.

That is not the case these days. Everyone is not in the same boat, some are thriving while others

struggle. We show what kind of society we are by how we treat the weakest and neediest.

It doesn't take much to change the daily lives of people. Donating cash instead of food allows the food bank to purchase more than we can give. We should all endeavor to see that the shelves of the Keizer Community Food Bank groan from the weight of all the food that is available for families in need.

Food is important, but so is personal security. We explore Keizer households to look through their closets for unused coats, shoes and other clothing items. A little child doesn't care what the label says or what color the coat is, they will be over the moon because they have a coat that will keep them warm.

What do you do with items you want to donate? Contact the Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul or any church. The Closet at McNary has been very successful at matching students in need and donated clothes and accessories.

We all have things we don't use that can easily be donated to make life better for someone else. Tis the season to do that. Let us do our spring cleaning now, in December, to gather unused items and give them a second life. Let us add a few more food items to the food cart when shopping to donate along with cash to the Keizer Community Food Bank.

Be generous this season, be kind to those in need. When we give we receive the warmth of being good humans.

—LAZ

our opinion



Republicans reveal inner plutocrat

By MICHAEL GERSON

Some political moments are like an X-ray—revealing down to the bone.

Here were Senate Republicans, poised for their first (and only) real legislative victory of the year. Tax overhaul, they knew, would be their main shot at shaping public perceptions of the GOP in the Trump era. The bill they were in the process of passing was utterly typical of Republican economic thinking—large tax reductions for corporations, broad income-tax relief for individuals and an increase in the child tax credit (deductible against income taxes). None of this surprising in the least.

Which was a problem. Insofar as blue-collar voters in places such as Pennsylvania and Ohio delivered unified Republican government, you would think their economic needs and struggles might find some central, or at least symbolic, place in the Republican agenda. So when Sens. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., proposed an amendment to make the child credit fully deductible against payroll taxes (which are the taxes actually paid by the working poor), it was clearly good policy and good politics.

The measure ended up getting only 20 Republican votes and was defeated 71-29.

How is this for symbolism: In their tax bill, Senate Republicans gave a break to private jet owners, but refused to increase the corporate rate by 0.94 percentage points to cover the cost of helping an estimated 12 million working-class families. The 20 percent corporate rate, Rubio and Lee were told, was sacrosanct, nonnegotiable—until the day after the vote, when President Trump conceded it

may need to rise anyway. What drives many elected Republicans to embody every destructive, plutocratic stereotype? Do they really need to wear spats and a top hat every time they appear in public?

A good case can be made for reducing the corporate tax rate below the 24 percent global average, making America a more competitive place to do business. And it is true that, in a progressive tax system, broad tax cuts will go disproportionately to people who pay a lot of taxes in the first place. But Senate Republicans were presented with a clear and conservative way to both seem and be more favorable to working-class families. And they rejected it decisively.

It was foolish of Senate Republican leaders not to see the obvious political benefit of this change to a bill that is currently unpopular. It was offensive that most Senate Democrats voted against the amendment, on the crassly partisan theory that nothing they oppose should be improved. It is even a bit disappointing that Lee and Rubio did not threaten to blow up the tax bill—any two Republican senators plus Bob Corker, R-Tenn., announced “no,” could have done so—in order to get their amendment included.

It is true enough that many liberals would only be happy with tax-code changes that are frankly redistributionist—designed to decrease inequality, even if overall economic growth were undermined. They think of the tax code as one way of addressing a structural injustice—the injustice of modern capitalism, which favors wealth over wages.

In contrast, compassionate conser-

vatives (the few of us who remain) view healthy, sustained economic growth as a moral achievement—justly rewarding effort and enterprise and allowing society to be more generous to those in genuine need. (What poor and stagnant nation would undertake Medicaid or the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief?) But this is different than saying that economic freedom is always identical to the common good. Particularly in an increasingly high-skill economy, it requires positive effort to (1) train as many people as possible for economic participation, (2) ensure that lower skill work can still result in a dignified life (through measures such as the earned income tax credit), (3) encourage the stability of families (through, for example, the child credit) and (4) increase the scale of private and religious efforts to meet society's desperate human needs (addiction, homelessness, etc.).

The goal of a compassionate conservatism is not economic leveling but social solidarity—an economic system that allows everyone to live lives of dignity. On the best historical and economic evidence, this is achieved through a mixed economy—allowing the freedom to create wealth, but depending on government and civil society to humanize an imperfect human system (as all human systems are imperfect).

The balance here is not always easy to determine. But most elected Republicans don't seem moved or motivated by either equality or solidarity— at least if the damning defeat of Lee-Rubio is any indication.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

other voices

Preparing students for work

It has been a few years since we first visited the Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) on Portland Road in north Salem.

Initially, there was residential construction and welding classes only in the massive building. Now, hundreds of students from Salem-Keizer high schools are taking classes in manufacturing, engineering, cosmetology, auto body repair and painting, and—most stunning—drone technology, robotics and video and game design animation.

These are classes that prepare our students for tomorrow's jobs. Salem's CTEC is the first public-private partnership of its kind. Dozens of tours each month show off the center to educators from around the state and around the nation. Innovation, thy name is Salem-Keizer.

The Career and Technical Education Center is preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, high demand careers while developing the skills, technical knowledge, academi-

ic foundation and real-world experience to assure their success once they graduate.

At full strength CTEC will educate about 1,100 students. The students will travel from their home high schools. Aside from the technical classes students are also taking classroom courses in science and math that correlate to the skill they are learning. For example, home construction students take math to learn about angles and ratios, the type of math used in construction.

The Career and Technical Education Center is exciting for everyone. Students are engaged (their graduation rate is above average), the teachers are focused and committed. Principal Rhonda Rhodes and the other CTEC leaders can hardly contain themselves when discussing the center.

The school district and the developers of CTEC deserve huge kudos for making their vision come to fruition.

—LAZ

Fact vs. fiction in today's news cycles

By GENE H. McINTYRE

Number 16, Abraham Lincoln, wisely pontificated more than 150 years ago that one cannot fool all the people all the time. However, we've got number 45 president now who's doing quite well at fooling something between 30 and 40 percent of them. His tactic is the use of “fake news” to have his way with these folks. So does the fake news syndrome bother you, the reader here, or you don't mind if truth and accuracy become quaint and irrelevant?

A whole lot of the fake news controversy started with Donald Trump's adversarial relationship with the press. His diehard supporters heartily devour the “fake news” claims he makes every day now but these same folks claim also that they never trusted any news in the first place. Yet, there are those who think the president is doing lasting damage by way of his dumbed-down tweets by condescending to his followers, making enemies of the press and vilifying the system of checks and balances the press provides, important enough back when to be number one in our Constitution's First Amendment.

Meanwhile, mainstream media, and the public's opinion of it, has been at a low point for years and continues to be. A Gallup poll in September 2016 found that American's trust and confidence in the mass media “to report the news fully, accurately and fairly” had dropped to its lowest level in polling history with only one in three of Americans polled saying they have even a fair amount of trust in the media. And that level was down even from the previous year.

During Trump's candidacy he was given inordinate attention by the

media, receiving what some assessed as blanket coverage for most weeks of his candidacy. Initially, journalists embraced him and his ratings were a bonanza for cable news. Then came his inauguration and thereafter, with Trump receiving more negative coverage than his predecessor, Barack Obama, his time in office has been marked by far more missteps, often self-inflicted, actually than any presidency in memory.

But it's Trump's use of Twitter, his bypassing the press and communicating directly with the public, that's viewed as unprecedented: twittering used by him like a bull-horn of inaccurate White House propaganda. His crude take-downs, threats and his lies have proven not only outrageous and never-ending, but idiotic, too. The bottom line though is that he's a cagey fellow who feeds his core supporters: in a divided nation where voters live in alternative political universes, it remains to be seen what happens to a 230-year old democracy after his off-the-cuff, gut-spawned, and supporter-bamboozling becomes the end for truth.

Trump is manipulating media in disruptive maneuvers and one of his victims is trust in the media. What Trump is doing may have been what other presidents wanted to do, but, it's surmised, didn't think they could get away with it such as Trump has generally succeeded to date. Thomas Jefferson wrote during his presidency, “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.” The translation: Jefferson as president had strong disagreements with the press

but recognized the importance and value of the media. Trump, it's argued, does not respect this view and, if not talking to himself, takes advice from destructive forces the likes of Steve Bannon and others like him who want to nuke our Constitution, institutions, values and way of life.

When a large part of society starts to believe that real truths cannot be found, they tend to grow cynical about everything and instead, as history discloses in multiple examples, put their trust in one person such as is true of Russia's Vladimir Putin. Putin, who it's believed Trump admires and seeks to emulate, does not have to convince Russians he's telling the truth; no, he must only force-feed his people into accepting that everyone else is a liar. Object to Putin and certain death follows. Truth died in Russia under Joseph Stalin's U.S.S.R. while it's an established fact that Putin was one of his most loyal followers, a higher up in the K.G.B.

The view this writer holds dear is that our nation, and its serious efforts at developing a working republic through democratic principles and practices, depends upon an informed citizenry where its sources of information are trusted as factual because its people are confident in how information is collected and processed. When the public does not have trust in the media to keep them informed, truth in absentia, on which daily life and public interactions are foundational, presents a clear and present danger. When a huge and growing segment of a nation's population surrenders itself to a leader who seeks absolute, authoritarian rule, as examples abound from the 20th century, then there's soon a violent end to freedoms and civil rights.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

guest column



Keizertimes

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year: \$25 in Marion County, \$33 outside Marion County, \$45 outside Oregon

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY
Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303

Periodical postage paid at Salem, Oregon

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