

Pull the plug

The last of the meetings for stakeholders regarding the Keizer Revitalization Plan along Keizer's main thoroughfare was held this week.

The plan will provide a vision for revitalization of one of Keizer's major commercial areas: River Road and Cherry Avenue. The plan, which will incorporate recommendations to the city council from a citizens advisory council, will include suggested updated policies and use, development, and design standards for the plan area. Suggested public investments to achieve plan area objectives and includes strategies to implement the recommendations. The plan is a supporting document to the city's Comprehensive Plan and the city's development code.

A review of the consultants' initial report shows that there is nothing new here. The initial recommendations are what have been recommended by several previous revitalization and beautification projects—remember River Road Renaissance? Remember Keizer Compass and the proposed districts up and down River Road? It is all the same. Thank goodness the consultants are being paid with a grant from the state and not from city coffers.

The process wherein Keizer is trying to design the future of the city's main commercial street is, once again, missing a major component—the property owners whose support will be needed to achieve even a portion of some of the early recommendations.

Perhaps it is time to put this project on indefinite hold. Instead of trying to devise a plan, then get stakeholders and the public to endorse it, focus on repair and main-

tenance of River Road and Cherry Avenue and let the free market decide what works best.

The problem is that what is being recommended is the same as what has been called for in previous iterations of River Road projects. In lieu of something new and forward looking, it is best to just to let it go.

Are Keizer home and business owners ready to bear the financial burden of a more beautiful River Road? Businesses are already under the gun for new taxes the Oregon legislature is seeking. Wouldn't Keizer readily get behind a plan that more efficiently moves traffic around our city?

That would have more of an impact on the everyday life of Keizerites than what's recommended in the initial revitalization report.

Some may exclaim, "What about all the time and money spent on this project so far?" Put the final report aside and open it in the future when Keizer is ready to stomach the cost and disruption.

We would be open to the city reviewing zoning codes along River Road and Cherry Avenue, in partnership with the private sector, to create an atmosphere that fosters economic development.

The city will have more than enough on its plate when the call for expanding the Urban Growth Boundary gets louder and louder. The state decrees that Keizer needs more space to accommodate expected growth. That means Keizer must decide if it will grow vertically or horizontally.

Let's pull the plug on these redundant beautification idea projects and focus on the important question of Keizer's future growth overall.

—LAZ

our
opinion

Too many visitors?

There have been reports that some of the world's important historical and tourist spots are being overwhelmed by visitors. The globe's burgeoning middle class has discovered its wings and has joined First World tourists to cram such draws as Machu Picchu in Peru and Venice, Italy.

Machu Picchu, the ancient Incan citadel, high in the Andes Mountains, has been visited by about 5,000 people each day from May to October, the high tourist season. That is about one million people each year. Now, Peru is building a world-class airport that will bring more planes and more people to the area. Once completed the airport would allow visitor traffic to more than triple today's counts.

Another mount getting overcrowded is Everest. Recent photos show climbers—amateur and professional—all in a line, one right after another. The world's tallest mountain was once accessible only to the most prepared and hardy climbers. That's not true anymore. The increased climbing traffic is resulting in a trail of waste from base camp to the sum-

mit. Venice, Italy and its canals are under assault from millions of tourists. The city was already sinking, add millions of people plus the affects of cruise ships on the docks and piers and you've got a disaster in the making.

Many nations around the world have experienced economic growth in recent years. Never in the history of man have there been so many people with the resources to travel to other parts of the world. China alone has hundreds of millions of people able to be tourists outside their own country.

The adverse affect of growing tourism will not abate anytime soon. Around the world, those entering the middle class are ready to enjoy the bounty of their success, and that means taking to the roads, skies and seas of other lands.

It seems that the world will love its historical and tourist spots to death unless there is a way to limit the number of people each year that visit vulnerable sites. Tourism means economic vitality but the world has to ask: at what cost?

—LAZ



Can we build a moral economy?

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

Do you build the economy from the top down or from the bottom up? And is the main purpose of the economy the production of things or the enhancement of life?

I can imagine immediate objections to both questions. Don't all successful economies involve bottom-up and top-down elements? Doesn't everybody claim to be a bottom-up person at heart? And don't "things" (such as the laptop I am writing on) enhance "life"?

Well, sure. Almost all questions involving binary choices are flawed in some way. But these two concerns underlie the sometimes explicit, often subterranean, debates going on in the country -- and, especially, in the campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren has been rising in the polls because of the sheer, impressive bulk of her policy proposals, but also because she is pressing the issue of what it takes to build a moral economy.

The vision of a lower-tax, lightly regulated economy, which gained ascendancy during the Reagan years, was always defended by its advocates as a bottom-up idea because it extolled the role of the entrepreneur who bravely started a business. If he or she worked hard enough and had something worthy to sell, the business would take off, creating jobs and new opportunities. It's why Republican politicians argue obsessively that what's good for "job creators" is good for the rest of us.

But this conception of economic life is not really bottom-up. It has

little concern about concentrated economic power. Its policies reward those at the top. That's where the term "trickle down" comes from. Investors and business people are the heroes of this story. The worker owes everything to them.

This view of the economy has gone in and out of style. It loomed large in the 1920s but was badly discredited by the Great Depression of the 1930s. It won a new lease on life in the Reagan years but began coming into question with the ensuing surge of inequality. It lost its hold entirely after the crash of 2008.

We thus live in a time when one narrative is dead but the new one is yet to be written. We're on "one of those blank pages in between chapters," as Pete Buttigieg put it when formally announcing his presidential campaign.

No one is doing more than Warren to fill in those blanks. Put all her ideas together and you find two core themes. One is that, contrary to myth, government is always shaping the economy, both by what it does and what it chooses not to do. The issue is: Whose side should government be on? Whose interests should it serve?

This leads to her other core principle: that the economy starts not with the investor, but with the worker, who had a starring role in the New Deal era spanning the 1930s to the 1970s. Enhancing blue-collar purchasing power was the way we drove prosperity. Bernie Sanders' speech last week defining democratic socialism highlighted not foreign models but the need to "take up

the unfinished business of the New Deal and carry it to completion." In defending a very similar objective, Warren proposes capitalism of a bottom-up sort with antitrust policies aimed at making the economy more competitive by busting up economic behemoths.

Every one of her many plans has come under criticism from one direction or another, but that's what happens when you're very specific. Her achievement is that she has laid the groundwork for the debate the country must have about what the next economy should look like.

Joe Biden, for one, is hearing the music. It was striking that during his visit to Ottumwa, Iowa, last week, he criticized the legendary conservative economist Milton Friedman, challenging the idea that "the only obligation corporations have is to stockholders." Why are investors seen as "the only job creators"? Of workers, he asked: "Aren't they creating jobs?"

"We've got to start to reward not just wealth," Biden concluded. "We've got to reward work."

Next week, Democrats will have their first debate, a sprawling two-day affair. To rein in the chaos, the moderators might consider having the candidates focus on specifics as to what it would take to build a system that does reward work. Let's hear them talk about how we might organize our economy so it enhances rather than disrupts our families and communities. Yes, productivity and growth matter. Our everyday lives matter, too.

We don't usually think of the word "moral" as attached to the word "economics." It's time we started. (Washington Post Writers Group)

other
voices

The deficit in media questioning

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Trade secret: We in the news media often hate the media, too.

I had such a moment Tuesday at the Peter G. Peterson Foundation's annual summit when CNN senior congressional respondent Manu Raju interviewed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The topic was supposed to be "fiscal sustainability"—a Washington phrase for curbing spending and slowing the growth of the \$22 trillion debt.

Deficit spending affects every American in the pocketbook. The federal debt is an IOU that amounts to \$49,000 for every man, woman and child in America. Still, Raju barely touched on the subject.

The CNN reporter began with a question about President Donald Trump's remarks from Normandy, where world leaders had gathered to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Trump—reacting to a *Politico* report that Pelosi told her caucus she wanted to see Trump "in prison"—told Fox News' Laura Ingraham that Pelosi was a "nasty, vindictive horrible person" and a "disgrace."

"What bothers me is that we're talking about that instead of how to reduce the national debt," Pelosi responded, as she criticized Trump for being overly political while overseas.

Raju followed up with a question wondering how Pelosi can work with someone who insults her. "I just consider the source," Pelosi countered.

Here's the short version of Raju's other questions: Do you think

Trump should be in prison? Why aren't you for impeachment? Would you support impeachment if the majority of Democrats supported impeachment? You believe he committed crimes in office, right? So isn't it your obligation to pursue impeachment?

When Raju asked about Trump's threat to impose tariffs on Mexico, Pelosi offered that she would have declined to come to the event if she had been invited to discuss Trump. The audience clapped in approval.

Around minute 18, Raju asked: "Right now, the debt is like \$22 trillion. How come dealing with the national debt in a serious way is not a bigger priority with this Congress?"

It was an odd question coming from someone who didn't think the debt was important enough to address in the first half of a talk that was supposed to be about the federal government's unsustainable spending trajectory.

Pelosi faulted the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, passed by the GOP Congress and signed by Trump in December 2017, for adding \$2 trillion to the national debt over the next 10 years. Indeed, the Congressional Budget Office predicted the measure would increase the projected deficit by \$1.9 trillion through 2028.

When Raju asked Pelosi if she supports "Medicare for All" and the New Green Deal—the latest fashion in left-leaning policy—Pelosi responded, "Everything is on the table to be reviewed, but what I do support is pay as you-go." Pelosi did not

offer exactly how she would pay for those massively expensive programs. But at least there were two spending questions in the half-hour debate.

Otherwise, there were so many things not to like—the obsession with Trump, a clear bias against the president and the usual lack of self-knowledge about exactly how off the mark this approach appears to the news-consuming public.

And there was the cheesy pursuit of a sound bite to "make news" on the story of the day, which is always Trump. And the big revelation? As CNN hyped it, "Pelosi: Impeachment is 'not off the table'" —as if that is news to anybody in America.

It was frustrating to watch because the summit provided an opportunity for follow-up questions—an opportunity unavailable to reporters during White House pool sprays and departure gatherings, where the best one can do is shout a question that reaches Trump's ears and awakens his fancy.

Also at the summit, CNBC's Eamon Javers managed to squeeze hot news topics into a meaty half-hour exchange with acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney. Since Trump took the oath of office, the national debt rose from \$19.9 trillion to more than \$22 trillion. The 2019 deficit is on track to exceed \$1 trillion.

Prompted by Javers, Mulvaney admitted he did not know whether the administration could get the annual deficit below \$1 trillion while Trump is in office.

It was a chilling admission about out-of-control spending that will haunt the taxpaying public for years to come. (Creators Syndicate)

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year:
\$35 in Marion County,
\$43 outside Marion County,
\$55 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