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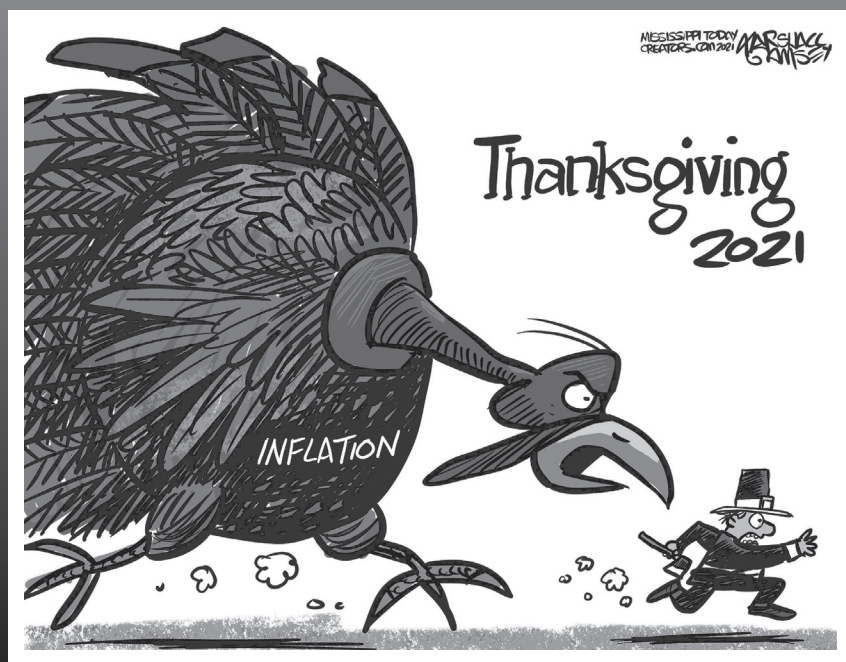

When local is sold

Guest COLUMN

By GENE H. McINTYRE

Personal friends include a couple who own a successful Oregon farm, including thousands of fertile acres. They're septuagenarians but not retired due in large measure to the fact their four grown offspring do not want to farm for a living. Best guess is they'll sell out to a large corporation, likely overseas located. Based on the history of land sales like theirs, formerly having grown apples, blueberries, peaches, and the like, the land will be bulldozed for the most profit-yielding by large machines and small workforce crops.

Then there's the Roth's Fresh Market story. Roth's stores were founded by local guy Orville Roth and a partner nearly 60 years ago. Orville swore to remain locally-owned "forever." His son will now sell all the Roth stores in one big deal to a Canadian billionaire with a chain of grocery stores in Canada. The new owner has promised to retain the character, range of inventory and services for which Roth's stores have become famous. Such promises too often disappear within a year's time.

Billionaires and big corporations are almost always absentee owners who come onto the local scene from afar—once the sale is finalized—along with teams of experienced accountants, lawyers, high-powered MBA executives and 'tried and true' employees already having proven their profit-making worth elsewhere. They will determine who the local movers and shakers are, the city council members and legislators, and bring silver-tongued lobbyists to connect with those folks. Of course, they'll make certain that virtually every move made is according to codes, rules, regulations and laws while seeing to it that modifications thereby are made and suited to their success.

Because the owner and executives almost always hail from elsewhere and are typically located in large cities, they will not spend time locally unless dire necessity calls for it. It is a near absolute prediction that local persons who work for them will not know them or even recognize them should they visit their investment. Rare indeed around here, it's surmised, will be a billionaire owner or corporate CEO who assumes a role like those of an Orville Roth or a Jerry Frank.

Corporate heads and CEOs are seldom in favor of unions or any worker protection associations. Since they have no ties to the local people, they are not much concerned about whether the wages and benefits help to maintain a well-established middle class where persons living and working there can afford a home, food on the table, quality of schools, or recreation opportunities. It all adds up far too often to mitigating changes where what was once a shared sense of belonging, social connectedness, equity in the standard of living, and upward improvements any longer represent the place.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

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Logic of political violence should alarm us all

other VOICES

By MICHAEL GERSON

A disturbing question now hangs over the conduct of American politics. "At this point," said an audience member at a recent pro-Trump event, "we're living under corporate and medical fascism. This is tyranny. When do we get to use the guns?" As the crowd applauded, the man persisted: "No, and I'm not—that's not a joke. I'm not saying it like that. I mean, literally, where's the line? How many elections are they going to steal before we kill these people?"

The question is important, not only for the depth of its extremism, but for the clarity of its logic. For years, many on the right have defended the Second Amendment with the "in case of emergency break glass" doctrine. Maintaining armed forces outside the U.S. government, in this view, is necessary for opposing the government if it grows tyrannical. A significant number of Americans have armed, trained and organized themselves with this possibility in mind.

At the same time, a former president and other leaders on the right are urging their followers to believe that they are living under despotic rule. How else could you describe an illegitimate regime enforcing medical fascism through needle jabs mandated like the mark of the beast?

The political syllogism is unavoidable: If citizens are armed against the advance of tyranny, and tyranny is advancing apace, then violence is justified, even if it is not currently advisable.

This is what Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., was referring to when she recently said, "If you think about what our Declaration of Independence says, it says to overthrow tyrants." A significant portion of our political community is turning to the Declaration, not for inspiration about human dignity, but for a right to revolution.

It is tempting to dismiss this as the talk of posers and blowhards. But some posers and blowhards have live ammunition at their disposal. We have already seen deadly violence spark at the edges of social controversy—in Charlottesville, in Kenosha, Wis., in the U.S. Capitol. These are becoming the culture war equivalents of the Boston Massacre—brief, blundering clashes that take on mythic significance as indictments or rallying cries.

It is worth noting that political violence, while relatively rare during the past 50 years, is not uncommon in American history. If MAGA militants are searching for models of brutality fed by religious fervor, they can find them in America's founding.

The Sons of Liberty—known to their victims as the Sons of Violence—were more than a threat to unattended tea. The tarring and feathering of loyalists could be a brutal process that blistered skin. Loyalist officials often had their houses attacked and looted. The rebel cry of "liberty and property," one colonial governor sardonically observed, was "the usual notice of their intention to plunder and pull down a house."

Since the morally murky days of the Revolution, the American story has been marked by political violence at regular intervals. There has been violence against the federal government (starting with the Whiskey Rebellion), against abolitionists, against African Americans, against immigrants, against Catholics and other religious minorities.

What lessons are to be drawn from this occasionally bloody history? First, the relative social peace we've seen since the early 1970s is more fragile than we imagine. Americans have often been tempted to express their anger and achieve their goals outside the boundaries of the constitutional order. The peaceful conduct of politics is not a natural state; it is a social achievement. Maintaining it requires positive moral effort.

Second, public and media figures who feed or accommodate the impulse of violence have entered a special category of ignominy. They are unleashing the force of nihilism in American politics—the mad desire to blow up our political order and put citizens at one another's throats. Donald Trump clearly believes that he benefits from such chaos. But it could take our country to a very dark place.

Third, the only way to discredit the logic of violence is to dispute each of its steps. No, we are not living under "medical fascism" or "tyranny" of any sort. No, elections have not been routinely stolen. And no, "these people" are not enemies to be killed with assault rifles; they are neighbors and fellow citizens.

Correcting these fallacies would seem a rather unexceptional, entry-level commitment for public service. But to do so has become profoundly controversial within the Republican Party. And when House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., refuses to discipline members of his caucus for threats of political violence, the message is further mixed.

It is often said the Republican leaders have no moral bottom. But there eventually is a bottom, marked in blood.

(Washington Post)