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Be careful what you wish for

If fully realized, this proposal would be transformational

In every decade it seems that Astorians hear about a grand Livision that would transform our region. Decades ago an aluminum plant was proposed for the Skipanon. Then there was a prospective coal terminal sponsored by South Koreans. For the past few months, the Portland.

town's maritime rumor mill has carried news of the latest Grand Scheme. It involves a wealthv Taiwanese-American businessman who wants to buy north Tongue Point from the Washington Group, which purchased it from the state of Oregon.

Edward Stratton reported details of Huy Ying Chen's concept in last Friday's edition. Chen is the chief executive director of Kirkland, Wash.-based Great Ocean Capital Holdings LLC. The key to attracting the investment for a scheme this large is a federal program that grants Conditional Permanent Resident status to foreign nationals who invest a certain level of money and create a specified number of jobs.

The heart of the Great Ocean proposal is a container port at north Tongue Point. That would demand the resurrection of the rail line between Astoria and

If there is an immediate benefit in Chen's concept it would be getting the Port of Astoria out of its Tongue Point lease.

While history indicates that monumental projects seldom come to fruition, there is a prospect that Chen will assemble his investment package and purchase Tongue Point. That's when things would get interesting.

The scale of job numbers that are projected is very large – about equivalent to employment now represented by the U.S. Coast Guard and Columbia Memorial Hospital combined. That would require a considerable amount of work force housing.

Chen's proposal for enlarging the capacity of the Astoria Regional Airport would alter that terrain considerably.

In sum, this Great Ocean proposal is far beyond the simple matter of a new employer coming to town. If fully realized, it would be transformational.

It's a smart move to protect forage fish

▲ lengthy effort by the Pew **A**Environmental Group and others to improve the Pacific Ocean's health by better protecting some of its smallest fish species is likely to win support from the Pacific Fishery Management Council this week.

Although not at the very bottom of the ocean food pyramid — a role filled by microscopic lifeforms like plankton — forage or baitfish including sardines, anchovy and herring are among the smallest vertebrate species. They play a foundational role in the overall health of the ocean ecosystem, feeding everything from salmon and tuna to many varieties of seabirds. Bison and antelope can't live without grass, and salmon and tuna can't live without forage fish. They convert plankton into nice, oily flesh — a movable feast for bigger species.

The foundational nature of forage fish has produced an unusual sense of near-unanimity within the PFMC. The Oregonian's Kelly House last Thursday described the expected federal restrictions on new forage fisheries off the mainland West Coast as "the commission's first test of a new strategy to make management decisions with the entire ecosystem in mind, rather than based upon impacts to individual fish species." Pew's Paul Shively said, "It's really a visionary move."

Existing fisheries, such as that for sardines, will not be directly impacted. But sardines provide a useful example of what sometimes can occur when harvests deepen the "boom and bust" cycles of forage species. Now rather carefully regulated, in the early 20th century sardine boats operating out of Northern California netted unbelievable quantities of sardines. In the mid-20th century, sardine runs collapsed, taking a human way of life with them. After recovering, sardine populations again collapsed last year, a drop of 72 percent since 2006.

It may be that such crashes are natural and inevitable. But it is highly worrisome to know so little about the underlying reasons for these occurrences. The PFMC's action will permit careful consideration in the future before fisheries are legally authorized, studying how baitfish influence overall ocean health.

It is impossible for large ocean fish to thrive — or for the economy dependent on them to prosper — if the little fish they eat are seriously depleted. When biologists speak of "ocean conditions" playing a huge role in the success of salmon runs, they are largely referring to the abundance of forage fish.

Making certain there are ample schools of tiny fish will help ensure the continuing viability of important local economic sectors like charter boats and commercial fish processing. Over time, the lessons learned may permit sustainable fisheries for sardines.

We are part of the ocean food chain. It behooves us to take good care of these little fish that mean so much to ocean health.

Now it's pearls before Congress

By GAIL COLLINS New York Times News Service

Telcome to a whole new

In Congress, that is. Not in the actual world. Control your expectations, for heaven's sake.

You may have noticed that in an orgy of bipartisan cooperation, Congress passed a bill this week funding the Department of Homeland Security until the fall. Then, on Wednesday, the House passed a bipartisan bill funding the Amtrak system.

And then everybody went away because it was, you know, going to snow.

But, still, bipartisan cooperation. It all started with the Senate. Republicans have been horrified to discover that whenever the now-minority Senate Democrats don't like something, they can simply filibuster, requiring



Collins

60 votes to move the bill forward. The Democrats always complained bitterly when the Republicans pulled that trick on them, but now they say the circumstances are totally different.

The Democrats demanded that the homeland security funding bill be passed without any side assaults on President Barack Obama's immigration program. And Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, eventually had to give in.

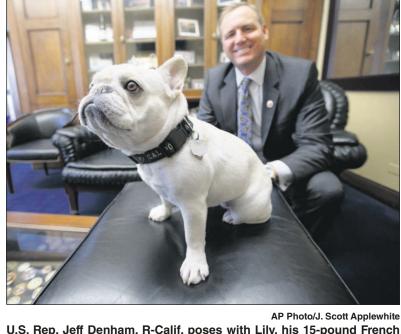
In a way, you could look at last week's homeland security crisis as similar to the reported theft of a \$150,000 gown, covered entirely in pearls, which actress Lupita Nyong'o wore to the Academy Awards. Later, the disgruntled thief called TMZ and said he had left the dress in a hotel restroom out of disgust after he had two of the pearls appraised and discovered they were fake.

So, good news is that the Department of Homeland Security is going to be funded. Also, that very attractive gown is back. The bad news is that we've now hit the point where keeping the government running sounds like a big victory. And the pearls weren't

Irony abounds. Who expected the Senate Republicans to be surprised when the Democrats started filibustering? Who knew dress thieves had such principled standards?

The Senate Democrats' success really ticked off the Republicans in the House, which nurtures a long and glorious tradition of hating the Senate, no matter who's in charge. (The ignores the House completely.)

"If we're going to allow seven



U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Calif. poses with Lily, his 15-pound French bulldog in his office on Capitol Hill in Washington. It all began with Lily, a 15-pound snowball of a French bulldog with dark mahogany eyes, a wrinkly nose and a penchant for jumping on furniture and laps so that she can get closer to her many human visitors. She and her owner, take the occasional coast-to-coast plane ride together. But when he tried to take her on Amtrak a couple years back, he learned that only service dogs were allowed aboard. It's a policy he's been trying to change ever since, and he appears to be gaining momentum.

'If ands and

day would be

Christmas.

Democratic senators to decide what the agenda is ... then we might as well just give them the chairmanships, give them the leadership of the Senate," groused Rep. Raúl Labrador.

Labrador is a leading member of a superconservative Republican caucus, which was created recently, with the apparent goal of bossing House Speaker John Boehner

around. In its debut performance, the caucus managed to kill a bill to buts were fund the Department of Homeland Security for candy and just three weeks.

It is true that Labrador *nuts*, *every* is the only member of Congress with the same name as a large, friendly retriever, but he can be really strict.

Pop Quiz: After conservative Republicans killed Boehner's bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security for three weeks, Boehner realized that:

A) Homeland security isn't actually all that big a deal.

B) His own right wing was completely crazy, and, if he wanted to get through the year, he was going to have to work with the Democrats.

C) "If ands and buts were candy and nuts, every day would be Christ-

Yes! Boehner seems to have realized that he's going to have to work with the Democrats. Also, he said that thing about the candy and nuts, but nobody really knew what he was talking

Both the homeland security bill and the Amtrak funding were passed with

unanimous Democratic support and huge Republican defections. The Amtrak bill, by the way, is more ambitious than your normal kicking-of-the-candown-the-road legislation. There's money to actually improve the infrastructure, which is more than Congress has managed to come up with lately for highways and bridges. It also opens

up the wonderful world of rail transit to pet dogs and cats, which I have to say is something most of us were not anticipating.

The last bit seems to be the inspiration of a California Republican who owns a French bulldog that likes to travel. It is possible the program may be limited to small animals, but we will refrain

making any jokes about aggrieved Labradors.

So this appears to be the path to the future: Senate Democrats will block anything they don't like, forcing the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, to compromise. In the House, the Labradorians won't vote for any Senate compromises, so Boehner will need the Democrats to pass any legislation that could actually make it into law.

Here we go — four fiscal cliffs in the offing, and if the Republican majority wants to avoid falling off any of them, they'll have to join hands with the Democrats and tango. We won't get any big, dramatic reforms, but we might avoid any big dramatic disas-

Plus poodles on Amtrak. Who

Examining Hillary's messy habits

By FRANK BRUNI New York Times News Service

Hillary and Bill Clinton have one home in Washington,

D.C., another in Chappaqua, N.Y., and a whole wide world that opens its arms and wallets to them.

But their permanent address is on the fault line where defiance meets self-destruction.

They know what the caricature of them is and they play right into it. They're familiar with the rap against them and generously feed it. And they tune out their critics, at least the ones they're not savaging.

Is that

Or hubris?

Although they've long been derided for a surrender of principle when they're on the hunt for donations, their foundation has raked in money in a manner that opens them up to fresh, predictable accusations of that.

Although they've long been cast as greedy - remember the china, flatware and furniture carted out of the White House? - they hit the speaking circuit in a way that only strengthened that impression. Audiences of Wall Street bankers, fees in the hundreds of thousands, extra coddling: They have demanded, received and inevitably been blasted for all of that. from Michael

And now, Schmidt's story in The Times, we learn that Hillary's response to her reputation for flouting rules and operating in secrecy was to put what could be construed as a cloak over her communications as secretary of state by using only a private email

There's pushback from her defenders over how rare this really

was. There are explanations and information still to come. But this was reckless, given the

questions that would surely be asked

if it came to light, the likelihood that it would, and how she'd wind up look-

Does she have a politi-

cal death wish? Until a month ago, one of the arguments I frequently heard in favor of her presumed candidacy for the presidency was that she'd been vetted like nobody's ever been vetted, with no surprises left. All

the skeletons had been tugged from the Clintons' labyrinthine closets. All the mud had been dug up and

But that assessment shortchanged the couple's ability to make new messes. It ignored the "Groundhog

Day" in which they star. Republicans are having a field day. The domentitlement? inant figure at the Conservative Political Action Conference last week wasn't Jeb Bush, Rand Paul or Scott Walker. It

was Hillary Clinton, in absentia. Referring to the controversial sources of funds raised by the Clinton Foundation in recent years, Ted Cruz joked that she wasn't present because the conference's organizers

"couldn't find a foreign nation to foot the bill." Reince Priebus added: "Hillary barely comes out in public these days. If there's not a private luxury jet and a quarter-million-dollar speaking fee waiting for her, you can

forget about it." That gibe was over the top. But it touched on a worry that many Democrats have: Can Hillary, of all Dem-

ocrats, persuasively style herself as a champion of the struggling middle class? It also demonstrates how much

ammunition she's needlessly giving a future Republican rival. That is, if she runs and if she gets her party's nomination. Demo-



Bruni

crats should look closely at the revelations of recent weeks and think hard about finding a primary opponent for her, one more fearsome than those who have stepped forward so far.

get the practice she may need in answering the latest charges against her. Only then would Democratic voters see how well

Only then would she

she handles that. Only then would they be forced to reckon fully with her habit of clinging to her ways.

She and Bill have lived their entire political lives under fire, some of it deserved, some of it not. It's as if they decided at a certain point that they'd never get a fair shake and should cut the corners that they could and behave as they wished. Their foes would storm the gates re-

But there are times when the Clintons are their own worst enemies.

Insistent that his persecutors would find sexual misdeeds even where none existed, Bill gave them a blue dress and Monica Lewinsky.

Aggrieved by the way her detractors saw her as haughtily above it all, Hillary decided on an approach to emails as secretary of state that has made her look haughtily above it all.

Is that entitlement? Or hubris? An inability to change? Or a refusal to?

I approached someone who knows the Clintons well, asked how to make sense of this and got an answer that echoed observations about them from the past: "They'd rather seek forgiveness than permission."

Because they have passion and talent, forgiveness has routinely come. But the longer they live on that fault line, the greater the chance of an irredeemable misstep, and the taller the odds that they'll reclaim a temporary address: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.