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The worm turns

Suddenly, LNG sees red lights at both ends of the Oregon Coast

What a difference a decade makes. Not that long ago, the proposed Jordan Cove LNG terminal and pipeline in Coos County was considered the most likely to go the distance. But last Friday the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission said no to the project. FERC said the project's benefits did not outweigh the adverse effects on landowners on its pipeline route.

This stunner follows the recent reversal thrown at Oregon LNG. On March 4, a hearings officer for the Warrenton City Commission rejected land use permits for the Skipanon LNG terminal, saying it would likely disrupt fishing and potentially harm the ecology of the Lower Columbia River Estuary.

Oregon LNG is already in court with the Army Corps of Engineers, which has easements on the Skipanon Peninsula. The project's third red light is the Clatsop County Board of Commissioner's 2013 decision to deny a portion of the pipeline. It has been upheld by the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

In the face of these obstacles, the persistence of Oregon LNG is akin to the puzzle of why some presidential candi-

dates stay in the race so long, which is all about the plentiful supply of campaign money. Oregon LNG's quest is a law firm's full employment act.

The economics of the fossil fuel sector have changed dramatically since the 2010 demise of the Bradwood Landing LNG terminal. And that makes a certain point about the new prospect that Oregon may avoid the LNG boomlet altogether.

One can feel sympathy for out-of-work coal miners in Appalachia or North Dakota business people feeling the reversal of the oil industry. But the bruising life in the coal belt or an oil county is not something to wish or plan for. Boom and bust is typical of the energy world, and if Oregon can avoid that hazard, that's a good thing.

Shed more light on gambling addiction

We live in an era when gambling in all its forms is more prevalent than our grandparents could have imagined. In the span of about a generation, the U.S. has gone from regarding betting as something slightly immoral to a major form of entertainment and source of public revenue.

A story in Friday's *Daily Astorian* focused on gambling addiction in Clatsop County, the low rate of treatment for it and the fact that it is an unacknowledged problem that largely remains hidden.

Based on statistical modeling, there are about 800 problem gamblers in the county, with only about a dozen in active treatment.

Authorities define problem gambling as having "many difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community," or "being unable to resist impulses to gamble, which can lead to severe personal or social consequences."

Local residents and their families are largely left to their own devices to decide whether they meet these standards. Buying a lottery ticket now and then pretty clearly isn't a problem. Spending so much on gambling, that there isn't

enough money left to pay bills and save for emergencies or retirement is a problem.

A portion of the state's gambling income is allocated for a problem gambling hotline and counseling. If you believe you or a loved one has a problem, call 1-877-MY-LIMIT.

Clatsop County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, who serves on the county's Human Services Advisory Council, raises excellent points about the underlying concept of funding government with an activity that takes advantage of a psychological flaw.

"I'm very concerned about it," Nebeker said. "We have a whole generation of young people coming up that could be a whole new crop of addicts for gambling as these machines become more enticing and we depend on it for revenue."

We must talk about this problem, get it into the light and develop better ways to help vulnerable residents resist damaging levels of gambling. Beyond this, we should re-examine our dependence on betting as a primary funding mechanism for government.

Oregon state government has a gambling problem. State leaders are sponsoring an activity with adverse community consequences. What's wrong with this picture?

Carson endorses the demagogue

By CHARLES M. BLOW
New York Times News Service

On Friday, I watched yet another bizarre scene from an already bizarre election cycle: The affable but hopelessly vacant Ben Carson endorsing the demagogic real estate developer who once said of Carson that he had a "pathological temper" as a child and compared him to a child molester.

Carson said in his endorsement speech that there are actually "two different" sides to the front-runner.

What does this mean? Which one is real? Are they both? Is there a Jekyll to this Hyde? It was an exceedingly strange and feeble attempt to diminish the danger that this man poses, but in a way, if anyone could understand this duality, it would be Carson.

This is the same Ben Carson who has inveighed against the "purveyors of division," who played a video at his presidential campaign announcement in Detroit in which the narrator said in part:

"If America is to survive the challenges of the modern world, we need to heal, we need to be inspired, and we need to revive the exceptional spirit that built America. Never before have we been so closely connected to each other, but more divided as a country."

This is the same Ben Carson who used this closing statement at the sixth Republican presidential debate in North Charleston, South Carolina, by imploring Americans to join him "in truth and honesty and integrity."

And yet, on Friday, Carson endorsed one of the most dangerous and divisive demagogues in recent presidential election history, a man for whom "truth and honesty and integrity" are infinitely malleable, and easily discarded, concepts, and whose rallies have been plagued by vileness and violence.

Carson, like so many conservatives, isn't truly interested in unity as much as silent submission, a quiet in which one can pretend that hostility has been quashed, all evidence to the contrary.

These are folks who view discussions about reducing racial inequity and increasing queer equality as divisive. They are people who see efforts to protect women's health, in



Charles Blow



Lynne Sladky/AP Photo

Former Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson, left, speaks with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump after a news conference at the Mar-A-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Fla., March 11.

particular their full range of reproductive options, including abortion, and to reverse our staggering income inequality as divisive. Indeed, the very words white supremacy, privilege, racism, bias, sexism, misogyny, patriarchy, homophobia, and poverty are seen as divisive.

Somehow, they think, these very real oppressive forces will simply die if only deprived of conversational oxygen. In fact, the opposite is true. By not naming these forces and continuously confronting them, they strengthen and spread.

Carson's endorsement further tarnished his already tarnished reputation. He validated and rubber-stamped a grandiloquent fascist who is supported by a former grand wizard.

All Carson's calls for civility were in that moment proven hollow.

No wonder so many Americans despise politicians and see them as soulless and without principle. And although both these men pride themselves on being political outsiders who've never held political office, they are undoubtedly political animals and relentless personal brand promoters who chase a check over a cliff.

But the more I thought about it, the more sense it began to make. Carson and the real estate developer are not so different from one another in this predilection for outrageous utterances, it's just that one smiles and the other scowls.

This is the same Ben Carson who called President Barack Obama a psychopath who is possibly guilty of treason and was, oh my, "raised white." He has accused Obama of working to "destroy this nation" and compared Obama's supporters to Nazi sympathizers.

All Carson's calls for civility were proven hollow.

This is the same Ben Carson who on a radio show in 2013 said of white liberals:

"Well, they're the most racist people there are because, you know, they put you in a little category, a little box — you have to think this way. How could you dare come off the plantation?"

This is the same Ben Carson who has compared women who have abortions to slave owners, who said Obamacare is the worst thing since slavery — yes, he's obsessed with slavery — and that being gay is a choice because people go to prison straight and leave gay. On the issue of whether a Muslim should be allowed to be president, he said:

"I would not advocate that we put a Muslim in charge of this nation. I absolutely would not agree with that."

Carson isn't the only one. Chris Christie's endorsement of the front-runner is just as baffling and unprincipled. As The Los Angeles Times put it:

"Christie had spent years curating an image as a policy-focused administrator who reached out to Muslims and Latinos, and he was rewarded with rock star status in the national Republican Party. Now he's backing a candidate who has insulted minorities, shown a casual disregard for policy discussions and is reviled by the party's establishment."

And yet it is Carson's endorsement that I find more interesting, not because it will have a greater impact, but because he and the front-runner are two sides of the same coin: they are both dangerous, but one is a narcissist who just might win the nomination and the other is a near-narcoptic who never had a chance.

The Republican Party still decides

By ROSS DOUTHAT
New York Times News Service

Political parties are mentioned nowhere in the Constitution, and the party nominating process offers few of the protections associated with the ideal of "one man one vote."

Voters in early states have far more influence than voters in later ones.

Votes in hard-to-attend caucuses effectively count more than votes in high-turnout primaries. Some primaries are open to party loyalists; others to all comers. The rules that assign convention delegates are Byzantine, the delegate selection process is various, and a few states rely on conventions and cut the voters out entirely.

As Donald Trump attempts to clamber to the Republican nomination over a still-divided opposition, there will be a lot of talk about how all these rules and quirks and complexities are just a way for insiders to steal the nomination away from him, in a kind of establishment coup against his otherwise inevitable victory.

We can expect to hear this case from Trump's growing host of thralls and acolytes. (Ben Carson, come on down!) But we will also hear it from the officially neutral press, where there will be much brow-furrowed concern over the perils of party resistance to Trump's progress, the "bad optics" of denying him the nomination if he arrives at the convention with the most delegates, the backlash sure to come if his uprising is somehow, well, trumped by the party apparatus.

Americans speak and think in the language of democracy, and so these arguments will find an audience, including among party leaders and delegates themselves.

But they cut against the deeper wisdom of the American political tradition. The less-than-democratic side of party nominations is a virtue of our system, not a flaw, and it has often been a necessary check on the passions (Trump-

pian or otherwise) that mass democracy constantly threatens to unleash.

That check has weakened with the decline of machines, bosses and smoke-filled rooms. But in many ways it remains very much in force — confronting would-be demagogues with complicated ballot requirements, insisting that a potential Coriolanus or a Sulla count delegates in Guam and South Dakota, asking men who aspire to awesome power to submit to the veto of state chairmen and local newspapers, the town meeting and the caucus hall.

The weird rigors of this process have not always protected the parties from politically disastrous nominees, like Barry Goldwater or George McGovern. But Goldwater and McGovern were both men of principle and experience and civic virtue, leading factions that had not yet come to full maturity. This made them political losers; it did not make them demagogues.

Denying Trump the nomination would indeed be an ugly exercise.

Trump, though, is cut from a very different cloth. He's an authoritarian, not an ideologue, and his antecedents aren't Goldwater or McGovern; they're figures like George Wallace and Huey Long, with a side of the fictional Buzz Windrip from Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here." No modern political party has nominated a candidate like this; no serious political party ever should.

Because such figures speak — as Wallace did, and Long, and Ross Perot, and others — to real grievances, the process of dealing with them is necessarily painful, and often involves a third-party



Ross Douthat

bid and a difficult reckoning thereafter. Trump would be no exception: Denying him the nomination would indeed be an ugly exercise, one that would weaken or crush the party's general election chances, and leave the Republican Party with a long hard climb back up to unity and health.

But if that exercise is painful, it's also the correct path to choose. A man so transparently unfit for office should not be placed before the American people as a candidate for president under any kind of imprimatur save his own. And there is no point in even having a party apparatus, no point in all those chairmen and state conventions and delegate rosters, if they cannot be mobilized to prevent 35 percent of the Republican primary electorate from imposing a Trump nomination on the party.

What Trump has demonstrated is that in our present cultural environment, and in the Republican Party's present state of bankruptcy, the first lines of defense against a demagogue no longer hold. Because he's loud and rich and famous, because he's run his campaign like a reality TV show, because he's horribly compelling and, yes, sometimes even right, Trump has come this far without many endorsements or institutional support, without much in the way of a normal organization, clearing hurdle after hurdle where people expected him to fall.

But the party's convention rules, in all their anachronistic, undemocratic and highly-negotiable intricacy, are also a line of defense, also a hurdle, also a place where a man unfit for office can be turned aside.

So in Cleveland this summer, the men and women of the Republican Party may face a straightforward choice: Betray the large minority of Republicans who cast their votes for Trump, or betray their obligations to their country.

For a party proud of its patriotism, the choice should not be hard.