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Time to allow pot to join real world

Federal regulations are less and less tenable

Legal marijuana is big business in the Pacific Northwest, quickly achieving a scale that belies its continuing image as a commodity coaxed into life by aging hippies and Millennial stoners. In fact, 21st century marijuana has about as much in common with its cottage-industry antecedents as Napa Valley vineyards have with French villagers stomping grapes.

The realities of rapid industrialization of marijuana are constantly being driven home by news reports.

As EO Media Group's Capital Bureau reported last week, newly available state data based on tax receipts soon may prove the old contention that marijuana is Oregon's most valuable crop. With a value approaching \$1 billion last year, legal pot will surpass cattle and calves (\$922 million in 2014) as Oregon's top agricultural product.

And this strength in the pot business is before the Oregon Liquor Control Commission implements new recreational production and retail licensing, which will spur creation of even more pot stores and sales.

In Washington state, law enforcement this week will cease turning a blind eye to a system of growers and dispensaries that developed when medical marijuana was legal but recreation marijuana wasn't. As of July 1, the state is folding the medical and recreational markets into one regulatory system, but there were 10 times more license applicants than there were licenses. Beginning Friday, the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board will begin seizing marijuana from unlicensed businesses, with owners facing civil penalties and additional actions from local law enforcement.

In December 2015, a report put the size of Washington's marijuana market at \$1.3 billion a year, with medical dispensaries providing 37 percent of the total.

With both states imposing hefty tax rates on marijuana,

all this money flocking to the product might seem to invite the possibility of a continuing regulatory struggle with pot produced off the legal grid. However, legal marijuana's ability to avoid tangling with cops, its production economies of scale and other factors have been driving retail prices down. Particularly in Oregon where it now is legal for grownups to grow their own, the days of black market dealers are rapidly winding down. This assumes, however, that a new president continues the current administration's lack of interest in rehashing this lost fight.

At the same time marijuana increasingly becomes a major cash crop for legitimate business, continuing inconsistencies with federal regulations become less and less tenable. This results in silly and inefficient results, such as the state being unable to list marijuana in its annual crop statistics due to federal policy. Water from federal projects can't be used to irrigate marijuana, nor are Natural Resources Conservation Service programs available for pot crops.

Looking all this, it should be obvious even to Congress that this isn't Old McDonald's Marijuana Farm anymore. It is time to normalize marijuana's connection with banking, environmental, labor and other laws. At the same time, it becomes increasingly important to monitor the pot industry's efforts to influence elections and government decisions.

This is a big industry with plentiful money; it must be held to at least the same legal standards as the rest of corporate America.

FYI: Clippings from the press of the Pacific Northwest and the nation

NATO is the antidote to Brexit

The United States can best support Britain, and Europe, by becoming a more active and vocal leader of the NATO alliance, which will retain Britain as a member. If the European Union is weakening or even in danger of crumbling, to the

delight of Vladimir Putin, Mr. Xi and other adversaries, then one antidote is a reinforced transatlantic military partnership that bridges the incipient gap between London and the continent.

— *The Washington Post*

Facts win out on abortion

Although nearly one-third of American women will have an abortion in their lifetime, a goal of abortion opponents has been to carve out abortion practice from ordinary health care, to ghettoize and delegitimize it. Those days are now over,

too. Singling out abortion for regulation that can't be justified on medical grounds is unacceptable, as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg emphasized in a concurring opinion.

— Linda Greenhouse in *The New York Times*

Britain's Brexit leap in the dark

By ROGER COHEN
New York Times News Service

LONDON — The British have given the world's political, financial and business establishment a massive kick in the teeth by voting to leave the European Union, a historic decision that will plunge Britain into uncertainty for years to come and reverses the integration on which the continent's stability has been based.

Warnings by President Barack Obama, Britain's political leaders and the International Monetary Fund about the dire consequences of a British exit proved useless.

If anything, they goaded a mood of defiant anger against these very elites.

This resentment has its roots in many things but may be summed up as a revolt against global capitalism. To heck with the experts and political correctness was the predominant mood in the end. A majority of Britons had no time for the politicians that brought the world a disastrous war in Iraq, the 2008 financial meltdown, European austerity, stagnant working-class wages, high immigration and tax havens for the super-rich.

That some of these issues have no direct link to the European Union or its much-maligned Brussels bureaucrats did not matter. It was a convenient target in this restive moment that has also made Donald Trump the presumptive Republican nominee — and may now take him further still on a similar wave of nativism and anti-establishment rage.

David Cameron, the British prime minister prodded into holding the referendum by the right of his Conservative Party, said he would resign, staying on in a caretaker capacity for a few months. This was the right call, and an inevitable one. He has led the country into a debacle.

The pound duly plunged some 10 percent to its lowest level since 1985. Global markets were rattled. Mainstream European politicians lamented a sad day for Europe and Britain; rightists like Marine Le Pen in France exulted. The world has entered a period of grave volatility.

Ever-greater unity was a foundation stone since the 1950s not only of peace in Europe, putting an end to the repetitive wars that had ravaged generations of Europeans, but also of the global political order. Now all bets are off. A process of European unraveling may have begun. A core assumption of American foreign policy — that a united Europe had overcome its divisions — has been undermined.

Geert Wilders, the right-wing anti-immigrant Dutch politician, promptly tweeted: "Hurrah for the British! Now it is our turn. Time for



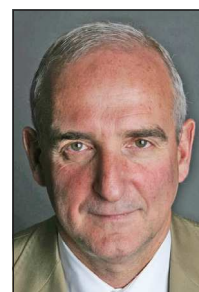
Daniel Leal-Olivas/PA via AP

A woman on a bicycle leaves a polling station near to the Royal Chelsea Hospital, London Thursday. Voters in Britain decide Thursday the country should leave the European Union.

a Dutch referendum!" The European Union is more vulnerable than at any point since its inception. The sacred images of old — like French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl hand-in-hand at Verdun — have lost their resonance. The travails of the euro, the tide of immigration (both within the European Union from poorer to richer members and from outside), and high unemployment have led to an eerie collective loss of patience, prudence and memory. Anything but this has become a widespread sentiment; irrationality is in the air.

The colossal leap in the dark that a traditionally cautious people — the British — were prepared to take has to be taken seriously. It suggests that other such leaps could occur elsewhere, perhaps in Trump's America. A Trump victory in November is more plausible now because it has an immediate precedent in a developed democracy ready to trash the status quo for the high-risk unknown.

Fifty-two percent of the British population was ready to face higher unemployment, a weaker currency, possible recession, political turbulence, the loss of access to a market of a half-billion people, a messy divorce that may take as long as two years to complete, a very long subsequent negotiation of Britain's relationship with Europe, and the tortuous redrafting of laws and trade treaties and environmental regulations — all for what the right-wing leader Nigel Farage daftly called "Independence Day." Britain was a sovereign nation before this vote in every significant sense. It remains so. Estrangement Day would be more apt.



Roger Cohen

The European Union is more vulnerable than at any point since its inception.

The English were also prepared to risk something else: the breakup of the United Kingdom. Scotland voted to remain in the European Union by a margin of 62 percent to 38 percent. Northern Ireland voted to remain by 56 percent to 44 percent. The Scots will now likely seek a second referendum on independence.

Divisions were not only national. London voted overwhelmingly to remain. But the countryside, small towns and hard-hit industrial provincial centers voted overwhelmingly to leave and carried the day. A Britain fissured between a liberal, metropolitan class centered in London and the rest was revealed.

Europe's failings — and they have been

conspicuous over the past decade — are simply not sufficient to explain what Britain has done to itself. This was a vote against the global economic and social order that the first 16 years of the 21st century have produced. Where it leads is unclear. The worst is not inevitable but it is plausible. Britain will remain an important power. But it will punch beneath its weight. It faces serious, long-term political and economic risk.

Anger was most focused on the hundreds of thousands of immigrants coming into Britain each year, most from other European Union nations like Poland. Farage's U.K. Independence Party, abetted by much of the press, was able to whip up a storm that conflated EU immigration with the trickle from the Middle East. Wild myths, like imminent Turkish membership of the European Union, were cultivated. Violence entered the campaign on a wave of xenophobia and take-our-country back rhetoric.

A look at tax dodging on the high seas

By GAIL COLLINS
New York Times News Service

Let's criticize cruise ships.

I know, I know. Things are bad enough without going negative about your summer vacation.

But we've got some problems here. Plus, I promise there will be a penguin.

The cruise industry seems to be exploding — the newest generation of ships can carry more than 5,000 passengers. They make a great deal of profit from the sale of alcohol, so imagine the equivalent of a small city whose inhabitants are perpetually drunk.

Really, these things are so huge, it's amazing they can stay afloat without toppling over. And when one is parked outside, say, Venice, the effect is like one of those alien-invasion movies, when people wake up and find that a spaceship the size of Toledo has landed downtown. (Venetians also claim the ships are causing waves in their canals.) Environmentalists wring their hands over the air pollution and sewage — a 3,000-passenger ship, which today would rank as medium-size, produces 21,000 gallons of sewage a day, sometimes treated and sometimes not so much. But always pumped into the sea.

And, as long as we're complaining, let's point out that noise from the ships is messing with the whales. Michael Jasny of the Natural Resources Defense Council says cruises en route to Alaska "routinely drown out the calls of the endangered orcas" trying to communicate. The NRDC has a new film, "Sonic Sea," that features audio of a whale conversation being obliterated by an approaching cruise ship. The effect is sort of like what you'd experience if you were having a meaningful chat with friends on the patio and a trailer-tractor full of disco dancers suddenly drove into the backyard.

Thanks to global warming, cruise lines will soon be able to sail the North-

west Passage, so the Arctic will have both more melting ice and more 13-deck ships. Antarctica hosted 30,000 visitors last year. Doesn't that seem like a lot for such a fragile place? Also, an opera singer who was entertaining passengers on one cruise went ashore to sing "O Sole Mio" and caused a penguin stampede. This is not really a problem you need to worry about, but it was a pretty interesting moment.

While many of the biggest cruise lines appear to be headquartered in Florida, they are, for tax purposes, actually proud residents of ... elsewhere. "Carnival is a Panamanian corporation; Royal Caribbean is Liberian," said Ross Klein, who tracks the industry through his Cruise Junkie website.

Although, of course, if one of the ships needs help, it will often be the U.S. taxpayer-funded Coast Guard that comes to the rescue. The Coast Guard doesn't charge for its services, a spokesman said, because "we don't want people to hesitate" to summon help when passengers are in danger. This attitude is commendable. But the no-taxes part is not.

"Cruise lines do pay taxes," protested a spokesman for the industry, counting off a number of levies for things like customs and examination of animals and plants being brought into the country. Not the same thing.

We're constantly hearing complaints in Congress about U.S. companies that relocate their headquarters overseas for tax avoidance. But when do you hear anybody mentioning the cruise industry's Panamanian connection? The cruise companies may not really live here, but they certainly can lobby here.

"Powerful is an understatement," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.



Gail Collins

Stop scaring the penguins.

He's the sponsor of a bill that would increase consumer protection for cruise passengers. The bill, which can't even get a committee hearing, would also require the ships to have up-to-date technology that detects when passengers fall overboard. Now this would seem like something you'd expect them to have around.

An average of about 20 people fall off cruise ships every year, which the industry points out is only about one in a million travelers. But still, I suspect that passengers work under the assumption that if they do somehow wind up in the water, some-

one will notice. This spring, a 33-year-old U.S. woman disappeared during a cruise in the Gulf of Mexico. No one realized she was gone for 10 hours, and by the time searchers could start looking for her, the area they needed to cover was more than 4,000 square miles. While it's the least thing anyone worries about when a person is missing at sea, let us point out once again that it was the taxpayer-funded Coast Guard doing the searching.

The cruise industry says the overboard technology hasn't been perfected. Blumenthal says it's been well tested. Seems like the sort of disagreement that would be easy to resolve with ... a committee hearing.

Most cruise vacationers seem to enjoy their experience — the industry says nearly 90 percent declare themselves satisfied. It's not our business to get in between anybody and an ocean breeze. Our requests are modest, really: Make the cruise ship companies that are, for all practical purposes, American pay American taxes. Leave the whales alone. Give that bill a committee hearing. And stop scaring the penguins.