

Workers: Trump ‘says what a lot of people would like to say’

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as the Switzerland of Ohio for its forested, rolling hills. In tiny Hannibal (population: 411), stately two-story homes overlook lawns that roll toward the banks of the Ohio.

But the misery is real. Monroe County’s unemployment rate is Ohio’s highest at 10.2 percent. Families have moved out to find work.

“You’re going to have to travel to find a job,” says Fran Poole, whose husband, Cecil, worked at the Ormet plant here for 37 years before being laid off when it closed.

Some laid-off workers chose to retire early. Others found work in the energy business, only to see those jobs melt away, too, as oil and gas prices fell. Some are doing odd jobs — cutting grass, hauling gravel.

Much of the damage to this region can be traced to China’s decision to become self-sufficient in aluminum production. Aluminum is used in construction and auto manufacturing, aerospace and consumer-product packaging. The surge in its production reflected a broader Chinese strategy: pour money into manufacturing to add jobs and accelerate economic growth.

China on overdrive

Fueled by government subsidies and cheap loans from state-owned banks, Chinese aluminum producers went into overdrive: In 2000, the United States had produced a world-beating 15 percent of all aluminum, China just 11 percent. By 2015, China had escalated its output nearly 1,200 percent — and held 55 percent of the world’s share.

As Chinese aluminum flooded the world, prices collapsed. U.S. production has tumbled 56 percent since 2000, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. And America’s share of world aluminum is below 3 percent.

Since 2011, U.S. alumi-

num companies have closed or idled nine of the 14 U.S. smelters. Two surviving plants are running at half capacity or less.

Longtime residents recall how vital the Ormet plant here was for the area’s economy and for supporting middle-class lifestyles. Workers regularly vacationed and bought houses and boats and all-terrain vehicles to tear up the Ohio countryside.

“If you didn’t go to college or the military, you went to the coal mines or Ormet,” says Bill Long, a former Ormet laborer who is a supervisor at the county’s Department of Job and Family Services.

The factory drew workers from the hills of West Virginia and eastern Ohio, paying them about \$40,000 a year before overtime. Overtime was “sporadic,” recalls Carl Davis, a former Ormet worker who is now a Monroe County commissioner. “But a few were known to gross around \$100,000.”

“Even though the work was hard back then, it was best job I had ever had, and the most money I’d ever had my hands on,” says Francis Blackstone, a 70-year-old Ormet retiree. “And the benefits were just unheard of” — including free health care.

Aluminum prices plunged

Through most of the 2000s — aside from a sharp drop during the Great Recession — world aluminum prices had withstood the surge in supply from China. China’s own economy was growing so fast its demand for aluminum was nearly insatiable. Then its economy decelerated after 2010, and aluminum prices plunged.

Desperate, Ormet and the Steelworkers union sought to renegotiate electricity prices from the local utility, AEP Ohio. In 2012 and 2013, they urged Gov. John Kasich to lean on the state



AP Photo/Paul Vernon

A dust collector for a carbon storage room of the former Ormet plant in Hannibal, Ohio. The plant closed in 2014 due to stiff price competition from China.

utility commission to help. Kasich wouldn’t intervene, leaving the decision to the commission.

The plant went out of business.

Aluminum prices were so low the plant might not have survived anyway. But Kasich’s refusal to intervene helps explain why animosity for the governor runs high in these parts. In the March Republican presidential primary, Monroe County overwhelmingly backed Trump and rejected Kasich, who otherwise won his home state handily.

Trump is viewed as a champion to many here who say America’s political leaders have stood by while competition from China and other countries has wrecked communities like Hannibal.

“He says what a lot of people would like to say,” says Cecil Poole.



AP Photo/Paul Vernon

Cecil Poole, a former Ormet employee who became a truck driver after he lost his job, but is now retired, poses for a photo in downtown Woodsfield, Ohio. As a truck driver, Poole earned about what he made at Ormet, though he had to work twice as many hours for it. He retired in June.

Ranchers: Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition has 8,100 members

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Membership at 8,100

Membership now stands at 8,100 and the coalition has also started producing videos that feature people who live near where the monument would be located explaining in their own words why it would be a bad idea.

Malheur County rancher

and coalition board member Elias Eiguren said putting a face on the coalition’s message makes it more personal and allows people to understand that what would happen would affect real people.

“I think as more people see those videos ... it will bring more awareness to what’s going on,” he said.

As he prepares to com-

plete his presidency, Obama has made frequent use of the authorities granted under the Antiquities Act, much to the delight of environmental groups but to the consternation of some lawmakers and industry groups.

On Thursday, the president will establish the first national marine monument in the Atlantic, a move that’s

designed to permanently protect nearly 5,000 square miles of underwater canyons and mountains off the coast of New England.

The White House said the designation will lead to a ban on commercial fishing, mining and drilling, though a seven-year exception will occur for the lobster and red crab industries. Recreational fish-

ing will be allowed within the monument.

The designation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument marks the 27th time Obama has acted to create or expand a national monument.

If the proposed national monument is created in Oregon, it won’t be because

people didn’t know about the local opposition to it, said Malheur County Farm Bureau President Jeana Hall.

“The Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition has done a great job of voicing Malheur County’s opinion on this and making sure (people) know where we stand,” she said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Economy: ‘Right now, Oregon’s economy is holding steady’

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U.S. personal income growth is slowing from 6 percent at the beginning of 2015 to half of that now, he said.

Weakness in manufacturing has spread beyond energy production to more industries, and investment spending continues to stay flat. Other states are starting to see their sales and income tax revenues stagger at amounts below projections, McMullen said.

General fund revenue is on track to reach \$18.334 billion, down \$2.2 million from the June forecast of \$18.336.5 billion, according to the revenue forecast.

The economic and revenue

forecasts didn’t address what the state’s revenue would look like if Measure 97 passes in November. The corporate sales tax measure would add an estimated \$3 billion more per year to state coffers. If the tax measure passes, the Office of Economic Analysis will adjust state revenue numbers for the December forecast.

“Today’s economic and revenue forecast shows that our efforts and economic policies are moving Oregon’s economy forward,” said Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland. Burdick said Senate Democrats would continue to push for policies to boost the state’s economy and quality of life.

Meanwhile, Republicans

asked lawmakers to proceed with caution in passing new policy.

“Right now, Oregon’s economy is holding steady,” said House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte. “However, there are some indications that things are beginning to slow down in other states around the country. Because our state is so interconnected with national and international markets, our government should proceed with caution. Now is not the time for significant policy changes that would not only produce uncertainty but could have a chilling impact on our private sector.”

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Signs: Another 2,500 could be ordered soon

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places are running out of signs. Another 2,500 signs could be ordered soon.

The program is a simple way to empower the community in an emergency situation, Brown said.

“The OK/HELP sign program is part of our broader message that every citizen plays a role in emergency response and preparedness,” Brown said. “Immediately following a widespread event like an earthquake or severe winter storm, first responders will be in high

demand and short supply. The signs can effectively mitigate injuries and loss of life by helping local agencies use what relatively few resources they have in an efficient manner.”

Clatsop County residents can find the signs at the following locations:

- **Clatsop County offices** — County manager’s office, child support office, public health, clerk and elections, assessment and taxation, animal shelter;
- **Astoria** — City Hall, Astoria Library, fire/police station, KMUN radio, Salon

Verve and Hauer’s Lawn Care & Equipment;

- **Warrenton/Hammond** — City Hall, Warrenton Community Library, Costco, Medix, Les Schwab;
- **Gearhart** — City Hall, Gearhart Grocery;
- **Seaside** — City Hall, police department, Seaside Library, visitor center;
- **Cannon Beach/Arch Cape** — City Hall, police station, Cannon Beach Library, Cannon Beach fire station, Mariner Market;
- **Knappa/Svensen** — Knappa fire station.

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