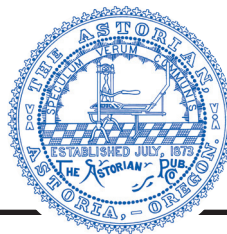


OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

Trade war exposes Port's vulnerability

International trade can be complex.

But it is pretty clear what's happening at the Port of Astoria as the United States and China engage in a trade war.

Astoria Forest Products, a log exporter, scaled back operations. The last ship bound for China, the African Raven, left in October. The Port trimmed staff through attrition to save money and moved out of its nicer offices on Pier 1 to the older Gateway Building.

As Edward Stratton reported in October, the Chinese imposed tariffs on hemlock, the most common type of lumber exported from Astoria, along with Douglas fir and spruce. Log exports total 50 to 55 million board feet per year and make up between 20% and 25% of the Port's revenue.

A decade ago, there was some skepticism when the Port granted Westerlund Log Handlers a lease for a log export venture. Several prominent city and business leaders worried log handling at the Port would undermine seafood processors and emerging cruise ship traffic. Local mills, like Hampton Lumber in Warrenton, complained the Chinese paid more and undercut the domestic log market.

But log exports to China still looked like a smart bet in 2014



A seagull sits on top of a pile of logs at the Port of Astoria.

when Astoria Forest Products — which took over from Westerlund amid a messy legal fight with the Chinese — acquired the long-term lease for Pier 1 as a log export dock and Pier 3 for a log yard.

Some suspected the Port didn't fight harder to create a modern boatyard on Pier 3 because it gave Astoria Forest Products more room to operate. The shift was a blow to the idea of a marine cluster at the Port and tilted the emphasis toward logs.

Over the past year, the trade war with China provided a vivid example of how relying too much on any one sector can make a port vulnerable.

The Port's new strategic plan rightly places the focus of the next two to four years on restoring financial sustainability, addressing aging infrastructure and fostering public trust. Longer term, the Port hopes to maintain deep-draft terminal capabilities, support commercial fishing and cruise ships and market the air-

port industrial property.

In the risk analysis portion of the strategic plan, the Port recognizes the danger of depending on logs. The long-term health of log exports is expected to remain stable, the plan notes, but commodity markets are prone to short-term shocks.

Given the Port's "significant exposure to any decrease in demand from China, long-term strategies should include a consideration of alternate export markets as well as wood product innovation which would allow swift and flexible options to alternate between log exports and value-added wood production," the plan concludes.

We are hopeful the Port Commission's selection of Will Isom as the Port's executive director signals a new era of level-headed leadership.

Isom, the finance director appointed interim director after Jim Knight resigned in June, has had to deal with the shock of the trade war with China up close. His background in finance and his experience at the Port over the past few years should provide insight.

"Sometimes the long-term health of the Port was sacrificed for short-term gain," Isom told the Columbia Press. "In order to survive and to thrive, you really have to make decisions on a longer horizon."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proper preparation

Surgeon: I asked my friend Alan how such an ugly fish could taste so good.

"It takes a good cook and proper preparation," was his reply.

A good cook and proper preparation!

JIM HALLAUX
Astoria

Three questions

Three questions for President Donald Trump or any of his local supporters:

The Internal Revenue Service will allow anyone filing a federal tax form to share their return with anyone, even if they are being audited, for one simple reason. The IRS already has the original. The taxpayer would not incur any new financial or legal problems by sharing. (bit.ly/37BzL1b)

Thanks to President Trump's father, who rented office space to a doctor, Donald Trump was given deferments during the Vietnam War due to bone spurs in his feet. This debilitating medical problem does not seem to keep him from playing 18 holes of golf on a regular basis 50 years later? (bit.ly/2r1JyS6)

President Trump has proclaimed for many years that he is a multibillionaire, so why is he asking the National Rifle Association to pay to help defend him? (nyti.ms/2Rk8R1X)

I would think that a billionaire could pay his own bills?

I will appreciate getting answers to these questions.

CHUCK MEYER
Astoria

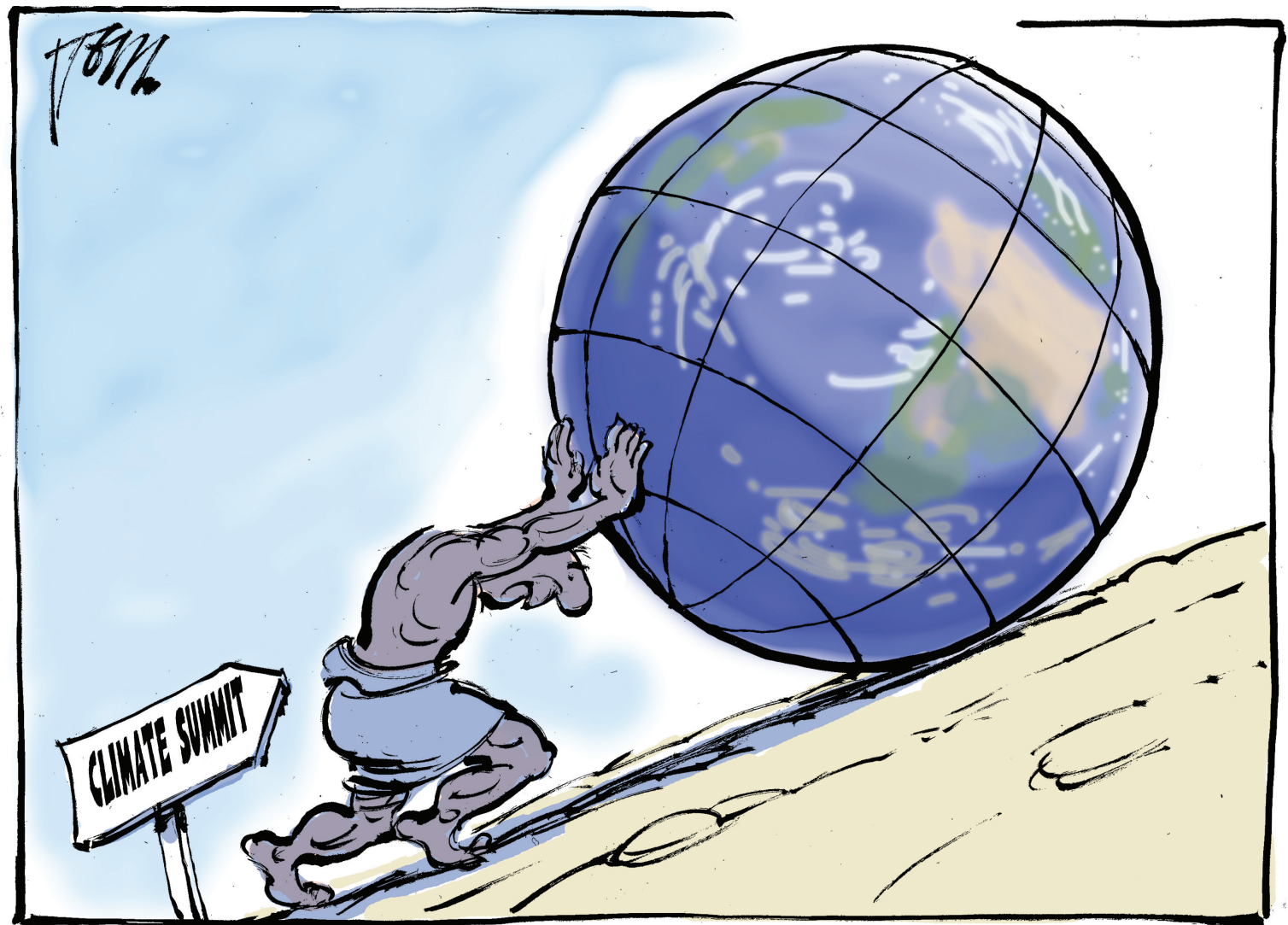
A felon at heart

Decades ago, I set out to commit a felony, and failed, despite multiple attempts.

True, Multnomah County might have convicted me of felony distribution of marijuana if Michael Schrank, Multnomah's district attorney at the time, hadn't paused on his way to work. He laughed at my "Marijuana for Sale" sign, as he patted my shoulder, which made him a material witness.

I looked forward to hearing him explain, in court, his response to my felony. The felony was dropped.

The law has long been a tool of bad actors, often based on deception, prejudices and false conceptions, and it never gives equal footing to rich and poor alike. It's another person's religion to me, a faith that, commonly enough, protects the most harmful practices, organizations and people, while punishing the transgenerational victims of socioeconomic injustice.



I will not abide in falsehoods and the reinjury of victims ... knowingly.

Being forthright, I'm attempting an action which is deemed a felony. I see psilocybin mushrooms as a possible way to transform the remnant legacy of severe childhood trauma and adult cultural injuries. I also see their use as part my search in consciousness and conscience. This isn't an advocacy of any drug use.

One day there may yet be again adults in the room, who take upon themselves the endless burden of steering people toward what may benefit them, and away from what is likely to injure or way-lay them; knowing these are very individualistic circumstances, but a communal responsibility. Until then ... a felon at heart?

MICHAEL "SASHA" MILLER
Astoria

Worst thing

My family went to the Christmas lighting in Astoria last weekend, and in of itself, it was great. But the worst thing about the evening was dodging human and dog waste on the sidewalks we had to walk on to the event.

It is disgusting and appalling that Astoria does nothing to clean it up. The city fathers do everything in the world to encourage people to come shop down-

town, and tourists to come, yet you allow human and animal waste to accumulate on the sidewalks of what was beautiful Astoria.

If I owned a business in downtown Astoria, and had to clean that up every day before I opened my business, I would shut that business in a heartbeat and move it out of Astoria.

If I were a tourist and had to walk through human and dog waste on the sidewalks of Astoria, I would never come to Astoria again.

This is Astoria's living room. Would you allow human and dog waste on your living room floor? Astoria is becoming the armpit of the north Oregon Coast. What a disgrace.

SHARON DAVIS-ROBINSON
Gearhart

Sad heart

Dear Founding Fathers: With a sad heart I write to you that after three tries, I think I've found loopholes in the Constitution you so brilliantly created.

Individuals wanting their leg of the three-legged government stool to be longer (i.e. controlling) than the other two has been a recurring theme. But today it seems especially dangerous. Possible exploitable loopholes:

- 50% voter turnout means minority

rules. Do the math. Yet, we profess the majority rules.

- One vote doesn't matter. Whose vote? Mine? Yours? Historically, two presidential impeachments and two presidential elections were decided by the number one.

- Accepting illegal election results. Kindergartners in the sandbox know you "do over" what wasn't fair (legal).

- Why vote? It's hopeless. No. But it will be, if we don't exercise our constitutional privilege.

In my opinion, publicly saying things that are easily proved false endangers a basic principle of democracy — the truth shall make you free.

A wiser person than me said democracy will only last if enough people care to defend it. I say dang true. How about you?

President John F. Kennedy challenged Americans when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."

So, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin, it turns out the mess we're in today isn't your fault. The good news is all these loopholes are closable by "we the people."

So whether you march, call, write or cheer "USA, USA," let's all vote. It's our country.

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria