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OUR VIEW

Workplaces change, but labor makes world go 'round

Labor is what makes the world go around.

Our grandparents might not recognize our workplace, because it has been transformed in the past 50 years.

Many Americans still do work on assembly lines, in offices and in fields. But many do not. The office is an ever-evolving concept.

When Labor Day was born in 1883, the holiday was a big deal for workers. And that was an America rife with large factories and their assembly lines. In ways we can hardly imagine, industrialists including Henry Ford and Thomas Edison introduced innovations and new techniques that transformed an essentially agrarian society into an urban one.

Compare old photographs of workers from a century ago with people today and it becomes apparent that Americans ourselves have changed in amazing ways, growing both upward and in circumference. Today, even the poorest among us are better fed and far more advantaged than average citizens were at the start of modern labor movement.

Positive changes don't occur spontaneously. Individual men and women, working with intelligence and tenacity, deserve our gratitude for incrementally making the USA a nation that, for all its flaws, is still the wonder of our age.

While all manner of things have changed, the idea of honoring labor remains a noble aspect of this nation. Ultimately, those toiling in anonymity are far more worthy of our thanks than the famous captains of industry. Our families exist because of the labor of our parents and grandparents.

Our economy has been transformed in recent decades. Economic recovery has been uneven, delivering far

more wealth to a few, while most Americans work within the context of a globalized labor market that tends to keep wages down. Even so, working conditions and job fairness are a quantum leap better than they were in our grandparents' time. All Americans living today still benefit from the transformations in labor laws and attitudes that came to permeate 20th-century society.

Although you don't have to look far to uncover derogatory attitudes toward unions, the fair-employment initiatives that were led by organized labor groups are key to everything from minimum wages, bars on child labor, safe working conditions, employer-provided health insurance and a host of other things we take for granted.

In good times, some Americans consider labor rights and organizations to be sort of expensive extravagances. But even as the overall economy continues to improve, it still behooves Americans and our leaders to empower labor in ways that ensure future economic health, and a balance of power between corporations and everyday citizens.

Families struggle to pay for the education children require for the technologically demanding jobs of the future. Health care, once one of the near-certainties of middle-class employment, remains a source of worry even after implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Personal wealth still is far from recovered to what it was before the Great Recession. For all these reasons and more, it's important we always pay attention to the details of working life. The victories of the past can leak away when we're not watching.

The idea of honoring labor remains an honorable aspect of this nation.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

Forest preservation should work better than this

One of the many excuses to restrict use of our public lands by the Willowa-Whitman and Malheur National Forests is that we need to "preserve" our forest for the next generation. The only problem is, the Forest Service isn't doing that. The Forest Service, with assistance from their partners in the local environmental community, allow our forest to degenerate into fuel dense stands waiting to take our homes and property with it.

To preserve has many definitions: "To save from decomposition"; "To keep safe from injury"; or "To reserve for personal or special use."

The only preserving I see is the third, to reserve for personal or special use, to which those special uses seem to be geared only to those that mean to use public lands for their personal enjoyment of "recreational use" that comes from the local environmental groups. That preservation comes at the expense of our friends' and families' homes and future generations' needs of the natural resources that are now gone forever.

I'm not sure who, or if anyone reads these letters, but in the West we are well schooled in preserving our summer fruits and vegetables. Would anyone that takes part in canning to preserve those resources go through that work and then open up the cupboard doors and bust every jar with a hammer, and then close the doors and let the mess sit?

But yet this is the mentality we are watching unfold in our mountains.

It's time it ends, and I hope that this summer brings the people of Eastern Oregon and the West together to call for sane, active, vegetative management to both the Forest Service and elected county officials who are responsible for protecting the safety, health, and welfare of our local rural communities.

John D. George
Bates

Independent party needs candidates

The Independent Party of Oregon is now the third "major party" in Oregon. We want to offer voters more choices on their ballots.

Anyone possibly interested in running for office as the candidate of the Independent Party needs to change his or her voter registration to "Independent Party" by September 10. It takes about two minutes, here: <http://indparty.com/register>. Or just search "Oregon voter register" online.

Potential candidates need not decide whether to run until the primary election filing deadline, March 8, 2016. But, thanks to the Democrats and Republicans, current law requires signing up for the Independent Party by September 10, more than 8 months before the May 2016 primary election.

Dan Meek, co-chairman
Independent Party of Oregon
Portland

Close, but no cigar

I found myself almost agreeing with something Sarah Palin said. After having a good cry and then making sure I did not need an immediate intervention, I analyzed what you had to say. The words were, "Immigrants should learn to speak American."

First, young lady, most of the people who have come to us from south of the border already speak American, only they do it in Spanish. Second, you did correct yourself and say English, but that's not enough. I believe it was Oscar Wilde who said England and the United States are two countries separated by a common language. One of the things I've noticed about you is that on those few occasions when you are able to complete a thought, it usually has an element of uncertainty and imprecision in it.

But, I agree that if someone wants to live in the United States, they should learn English. If I moved to France, I would be an "Ugly American" if I did not learn French.

There is, however, a flip side to this coin. You and Mr. Trump seem to be saying there's something wrong with Jeb Bush speaking Spanish. I am not a big fan of his, but I don't see that his being bilingual should be the subject of criticism. In this one thing at least, he's ahead of me because I can only speak English.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston



OTHER VIEWS

Trump is right on the economy

So Jeb Bush is finally going after Donald Trump. Over the past couple of weeks the man who was supposed to be the front-runner has made a series of attacks on the man who is. Strange to say, however, Bush hasn't focused on what's truly vicious and absurd — viciously absurd? — about Trump's platform, his implicit racism and his insistence that he would somehow round up 11 million immigrants in the country illegally and remove them from our soil.

Instead, Bush has chosen to attack Trump as a false conservative, a proposition that is supposedly demonstrated by his deviations from current Republican economic orthodoxy: his willingness to raise taxes on the rich, his positive words about universal health care. And that tells you a lot about the dire state of the GOP. For the issues the Bush campaign is using to attack its unexpected nemesis are precisely the issues on which Trump happens to be right, and the Republican establishment has been proved utterly wrong.

To see what I mean, consider what was at stake in the last presidential election, and how things turned out after Mitt Romney lost.

During the campaign, Romney accused President Barack Obama of favoring redistribution of income from the rich to the poor, and the truth is that Obama's re-election did mean a significant move in that direction. Taxes on the top 1 percent went up substantially in 2013, both because some of the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire and because new taxes associated with Obamacare kicked in. And Obamacare itself, which provides a lot of aid to lower-income families, went into full effect at the beginning of 2014.

Conservatives were very clear about what would happen as a result. Raising taxes on "job creators," they insisted, would destroy incentives. And they were absolutely certain that the Affordable Care Act would be a "job killer."

So what actually happened? As of last month, the U.S. unemployment rate, which was 7.8 percent when Obama took office, had fallen to 5.1 percent. For the record, Romney promised during the campaign that he would get unemployment down to 6 percent by the end of 2016. Also for the record, the current unemployment rate is lower than it ever got under Ronald Reagan. And the main reason unemployment has fallen so much is job growth in the private sector, which has added more than 7 million workers since the end of 2012.

I'm not saying that everything is great in the U.S. economy, because it isn't. There's



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

good reason to believe that we're still a substantial distance from full employment, and while the number of jobs has grown a lot, wages haven't. But the economy has nonetheless done far better than should have been possible if conservative orthodoxy had any truth to it. And now Trump is being accused of heresy for not accepting that failed orthodoxy?

So am I saying that Trump is better and more serious than he's given credit for being? Not at all — he is exactly the ignorant blowhard he seems to be. It's when it comes to his rivals that appearances can be deceiving. Some of them may come across as reasonable and thoughtful, but in reality they are anything but.

Bush, in particular, may pose as a reasonable, thoughtful type — credulous reporters even describe him as a policy wonk — but his actual economic platform, which relies on the magic of tax cuts to deliver a doubling of America's growth rate, is pure supply-side voodoo.

And here's what's interesting: All indications are that Bush's attacks on Trump are falling flat, because the Republican base doesn't actually share the Republican establishment's economic delusions.

The thing is, we didn't really know that until Trump came along. The influence of big-money donors meant that nobody could make a serious play for the GOP nomination without pledging allegiance to supply-side doctrine, and this allowed the establishment to imagine that ordinary voters shared its anti-populist creed. Indeed, Bush's hapless attempt at a takedown suggests that his political team still doesn't get it, and thinks that pointing out The Donald's heresies will be enough to doom his campaign.

But Trump, who is self-financing, didn't need to genuflect to the big money, and it turns out that the base doesn't mind his heresies. This is a real revelation, which may have a lasting impact on our politics.

Again, I'm not making a case for Trump. There are lots of other politicians out there who also refuse to buy into right-wing economic nonsense, but who do so without proposing to scour the countryside in search of immigrants to deport, or to rip up our international economic agreements and start a trade war. The point, however, is that none of these reasonable politicians is seeking the Republican presidential nomination.

Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999 as a columnist on the *Op-Ed Page* and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.



LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.