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OUR VIEW

Yesterday or tomorrow?

Will the 2016 presidential election be a referendum on the past five decades?

The great collisions in history are between the past and the future. Among other things, that's what the American Civil War was about.

You could see it in last week's

news about the multi-nation Iran accord. When the remainder of Senate Democrats declared their positions on the treaty, two things became apparent. President Obama had sufficient support to defeat the opposition. And a majority of Jewish senators, including Oregon's Ron Wyden, supported the deal.

A high-profile subtext of the Iran debate has been pressure from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee to defeat the treaty in Congress. Last week's news betrayed a decline in AIPAC's influence. AIPAC's historically high visibility and reputed clout masked a split within the American Jewish population on the Iran deal.

The newer Jewish lobby, J Street, represents a younger population, and it favored the Iran accord. According to Pew Research, a majority of Jewish Americans also favored the deal.

A similar generational split is apparent in Cuban-Americans' response to President Obama's restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba. For many younger Cuban-Americans, there is a desire

to move on and away from what has been a fundamental assumption of Florida politics for five decades.

In American domestic politics, one sees the generational divide

Generations are split on the president's actions — with Republican ideas embraced by older people.

clearly in the profound shift in public attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Polling shows support for the rights of gays and lesbians varies inversely with the voter's age. It's the same with marijuana, and to a lesser extent immigration.

It is not yet clear what the Democratic side of the 2016 presidential race will be. But whoever emerges from a crowded Republican field will almost assuredly be focused on a return to the past.

It doesn't take much to warp Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan into "Make America Like It Used To Be." That backward perspective is a hallmark of the current crop of conservatives.

Recently, columnist Andrew Rosenthal noted within the Republican base "an article of faith that the advancement of women and minorities somehow harms white men."

The advancement of women and minorities kind of sums up the past 50 years in America. If that indeed becomes our choice next November, it will be a fascinating referendum for our country.

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.

OTHER VIEWS

Expanding Clean Water Act may doom Oregon agriculture

The Baker City Herald

The saddest part of the following question is that we even need to ask it.

Does Oregon's state government care more about empowering federal bureaucrats than it does about the ranchers and farmers whose operations contribute billions of dollars annually to the state economy?

We don't blame the Oregon Cattlemen's Association for posing that query.

The issue revolves around which waterways the federal government has the authority to regulate under the 1972 Clean Water Act.

The U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in late June opined that its

authority under the Clean Water Act extends to "waters of the United States" rather than only to major rivers and lakes defined as "navigable."

This is a significant change.

Waters of the United States, based on the EPA's proposed definition, could include tributaries to navigable waterways.

The definition is sufficiently murky, moreover, that it's not implausible to believe the EPA could claim jurisdiction over seasonal waters such as irrigation ditches.

Ranchers and farmers, naturally, worry that the EPA's potentially expanded authority could threaten their access to water, a commodity every bit as vital to a ranch or farm as it is to a person.

Thirteen states, most in the West, are challenging the EPA's definition in court. In late August a federal court in North Dakota (one of the 13 plaintiff states)

granted an injunction preventing the EPA from using its definition of waters of the United States to enforce the Clean Water Act in those states.

We're disappointed that Oregon is not among those 13 states.

But that's hardly the worst of it.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum didn't merely decline to join those states in defending a vital industry against an overzealous executive branch, which insists on redefining its jurisdiction even though the U.S. House of Representatives both this year and last passed a resolution calling for the EPA to withdraw such a proposal.

Instead, Rosenblum went along with six other states and the District of Columbia in filing a legal motion supporting the EPA's definition and its expanded authority to regulate water.

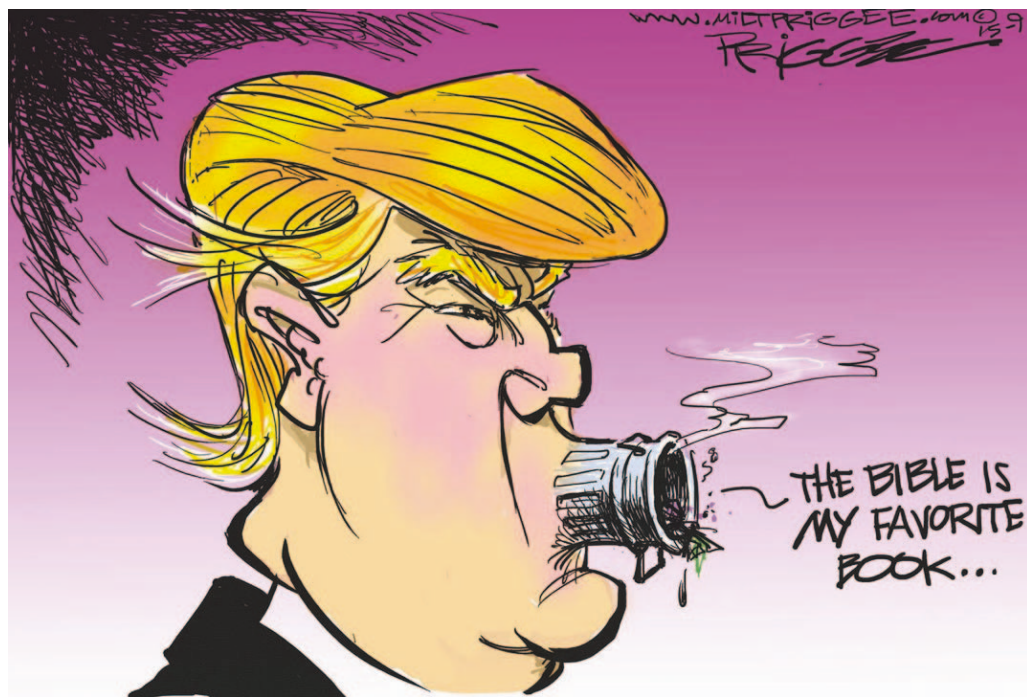
Rosenblum did so with the support of Gov. Kate Brown and officials from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Division of State Lands, said Ellen Klem, a spokeswoman in the Attorney General's office.

We're not suggesting that Rosenblum is obligated to side with the agriculture industry on every legal matter.

But neither did she have to use state resources to bolster the EPA's case.

By doing so Rosenblum, whether intentionally or not, implies either that ranchers' and farmers' concerns about the EPA's broadened authority are exaggerated, or worse, that such fears are legitimate but that giving the EPA more regulatory power is worthwhile even if one of Oregon's most important industries suffers as a result.

OTHER VIEWS



America is already great

Given all the talk, courtesy of Donald Trump, of making America great again, I've been thinking about European greatness. One state, Great Britain, does of course have its greatness built in, but still the idea sits strangely.

Europe is done with greatness. It thinks greatness leads to trouble. It's been great — and suffered. The Great War (1914-18) killed about 8.5 million combatants and as many as 13 million civilians — not so great, really. Before that, a million people or so died in Ireland's Great Famine.

Great European empires unraveled, often in bloodshed. Several hundred thousand were killed before France left Algeria. Not so great, either. No wonder Great Britain is thinking of breaking itself up.

From Sweden to Sicily, greatness is looked at askance. It feels like a code word for bellicosity, self-delusion and shoot-from-the-hip hubris. It has a whiff of danger: far better to curtail ambition and embrace ordinariness. Better to be the face in the crowd than the face on the cover of Time magazine.

Still, here's a possible slogan for the 2017 French presidential election: "Make France Great Again!" (I can hear the seismic rumble of dissent on the Rive Gauche already.)

How? By believing in God, to begin with. Belief in God leads to belief in God-given missions, which must be good by definition. Anti-clericalism was the start of the unraveling of French greatness.

Or perhaps by sending a neo-Napoleonic army out across the Continent (even as far as Moscow but without that painful retreat); by instilling an entrepreneurial spirit; by banning moroseness through decree; by restoring the scandal-tainted presidency to the monarchical splendor envisaged by De Gaulle; by scrapping the 35-hour workweek; by getting tough on something (possibly immigration); by manufacturing multicolored campaign hats that say, "La France, Terre Éternelle de Grandeur" — "France, Eternal Land of Greatness."

That should do it! Would be great.

Or how about, "Let's Make Italy Great Again!" It's hard to know where to begin, really. Italian interest in greatness is about as deep as its interest in swapping its cuisine for neighboring Albania's. Greatness: Been there, done that, a couple of millennia ago.

A first step might be reviving gladiatorial combat at Rome's Colosseum, or making the trains run on time (again), or abandoning the consolations of style and beauty for the thrill of shock and awe, or, of course, manufacturing chic "La Grandeza Italiana" ("Italian Greatness") campaign caps.

"Make Italy Great" is going to be a tough



ROGER COHEN
Comment

sell. Then, of course, there's Luxembourg.

No, greatness is America's thing now, the recurrent frisson of a still-frisky power not deflated even by two wars without victory. Ronald Reagan, who also had striking hair, declared more than three decades ago, "Let's Make America Great Again." Trump is more peremptory, as befits a man of bullying inclination. "Make America Great Again."

He's doing great with it. He's identified a genuine need. There's work to do on American greatness.

I'm not sure, but I think it was while sitting on the Seventh Avenue express of the New

York City subway looking at a map that helpfully showed stops for the Lexington Avenue line, when water started dripping on my head from the subway car ceiling and an inaudible announcement was made, that I realized I was back in the greatest nation on earth.

Or was it as I gazed at a man channeling his bristling defiance into the occupation of three subway seats rather than one, or as I listened to voices much louder and more assertive than they needed to be, or as I struggled to identify a station with no visible sign naming it, or as the

temperature in the subway elevator hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit, that the thought hit me that America was indeed the greatest nation on earth?

I cannot say when America being the greatest nation on earth really sunk in. It might have been as I walked along a garbage-strewn street in Queens beneath a bridge so corroded it seemed not of the last century but of the one before that. Or as I peeled small stickers off fruit and vegetables (I'd forgotten in Europe about those pesky little charmers) while listening to Trump confuse Iran's Quds force with the Kurds. Every foreign war — and plenty loom if there's a Trump presidency — is an American geography lesson.

America may be great, in fact I would argue it is, but it sure doesn't look great right now. Europe looks better but is shrunken within.

Europe's divisions, endlessly pored over, amount in the end to what Sigmund Freud called "the narcissism of minor differences." The Continent is united in the rejection of greatness, while the United States cannot picture itself without it.

The most dangerous point in the arc of a nation's power is when the apogee of its greatness is passed but it is not yet resigned to decline. That's where Trump's America is. Which is really, really great.

Roger Cohen joined *The New York Times* in 1990.

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YOUR VIEWS

Distracted driving is killing unfocused Oregonians

Oregon now has the ignoble distinction of being the state with the highest increase in traffic fatalities in the nation for the first half of this year. Why? The devil is in the details.

What would you do if there was a 59 percent increase in the homicide rate in your city? What would you do if there was a 59 percent increase in infant deaths in your community due to some local condition? Would you be moved to action?

What would you do if there was a 59 percent increase in traffic fatalities on Oregon streets and roads for the first half of 2015 over the same period in 2014? Would it make you a more defensive driver? Would you watch your speed more carefully? Would you keep your eyes off that most recent text you received while driving?

While the full analysis has not been done on the "why," there may be a recurring theme. Let's ask a personal question: How often do you text, eat, check GPS, insert a CD, smoke, text/talk on your cell, etc. while you are driving? How often have you seen others doing the same? Distracted driving — and

walking or biking — is taking your mind off the immediate and demanding task of navigating the roadway ahead of you. This navigation is likely the most dangerous activity we do on a regular basis. Why don't we give it our absolute and utmost attention?

Wake up Oregon. Our choices are killing us. Choosing to drive distracted; choosing to drive too fast for conditions; to drive/ride unbelted; to drive impaired or drowsy, to follow too closely and on and on. These tragically fatal traffic crashes are not accidents. In a quote from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "the vast majority of all fatal and non-fatal injuries in America, including traffic injuries, are not acts of fate but are predictable and preventable." In a NHTSA publication from February of this year, 85 percent of traffic crashes were attributed to driver recognition, decision and performance errors.

You have control over your driving choices, but you do not have control over the consequences. Don't make a deadly choice. Drive smart — drive un-distracted.

Larry Christianson
U-TURN180 LLC Traffic Safety Education
Merlin, Ore.

LETTERS POLICY

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