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OUR VIEW



TPP has positives for ag, but questions remain

The Trans-Pacific Partnership, a big multi-nation trade pact, has been negotiated and within the month will begin a long process of ratification by member countries.

The agreement — known by its initials TPP — is designed to improve trade relations between the 12 participating countries, including the United States, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Vietnam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam.

We are for trade. It's the lifeblood of American farmers and ranchers, particularly those in the Northwest. Anything that facilitates the opening of markets abroad is probably good.

In a teleconference with reporters, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack touted these among the benefits of the pact:

- TPP eliminates or reduces tariffs or taxes assessed by other countries on U.S. agricultural products, including beef, pork, poultry, dairy, horticulture, rice, grains, soybeans, wheat, cotton and processed products.
- The agreement includes safeguards to protect U.S. markets from other countries essentially dumping product into the country.
- TPP gives the United States an additional opportunity to contest sanitary and phytosanitary standards that are not based on risk or science.
- Beef and pork producers will see reductions in taxes levied by Japan on their products. The deal expands the market for dairy products such as cheese and yogurt in Japan and Canada.

So, painted with a broad brush the deal sounds good for American agriculture. That said, this is a complex treaty with a lot of moving parts. The devil may well be hiding in the details that have yet to be

made public. Critics are concerned with portions of the pact that deal with intellectual property, the Internet and dispute resolution.

Opponents worry that one common component of recent trade agreements, known as "investor-state dispute settlement," will allow big, multi-national corporations at odds with American laws to bypass U.S. courts in favor of an expert panel of arbitrators.

Where once such a provision made sense when companies didn't want to risk the third-world judicial system, opponents point out that most if not all participants of the TPP have stable, established legal systems.

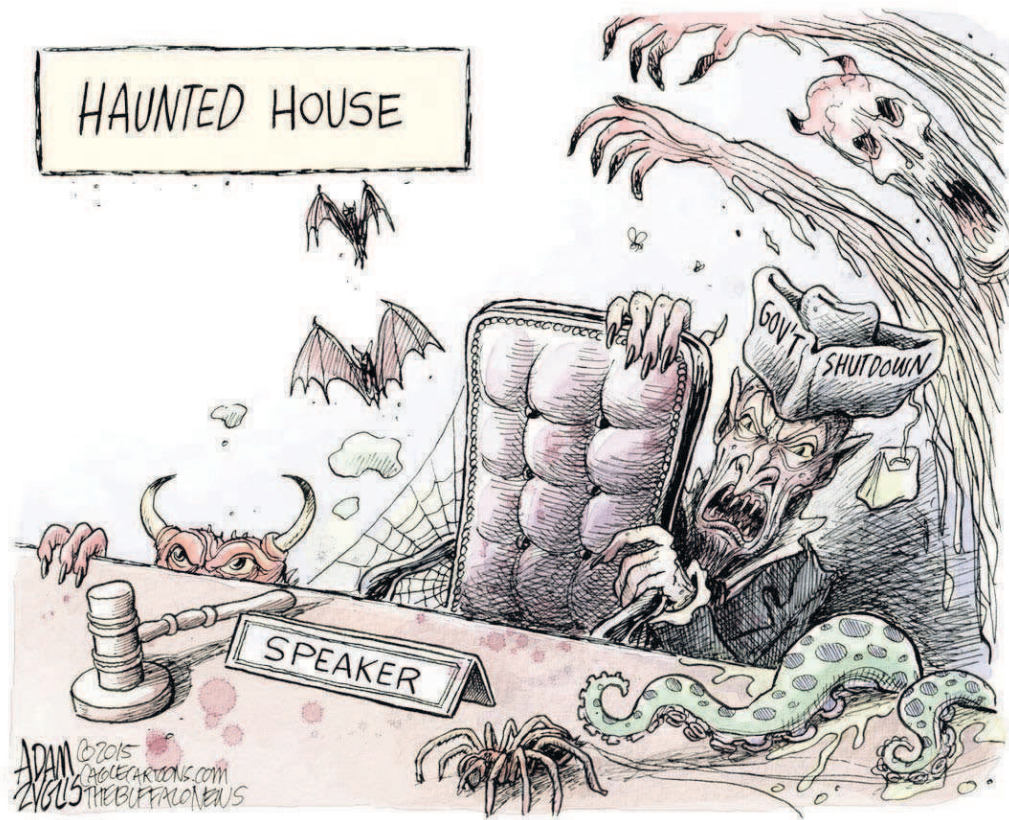
Critics say the deal includes provisions that could severely restrict the Internet and remove "fair use" protections for use of copyrighted material. Labor unions oppose the deal because they say it will move more American jobs overseas.

Although alleged drafts of the deal have been posted to Wikileaks, we probably won't get official copies for another 30 days, after Congress has reviewed the pact. The public will then get 60 days to pore over the terms.

Congress gave President Obama "fast track" authority in negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. As such, it can only give the deal an up or down vote, and it can't amend it. So, weighing the relative benefits and potential harms of those details is all the more important.

Without benefit of a complete text, the deal appears to us to be positive for U.S. farmers and ranchers. We are for trade, but not for a deal for a deal's sake. We await a vigorous debate.

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

This column is gluten-free

LONDON — I was in Venice a few weeks ago and friends reported seeing a restaurant menu with the following important message emblazoned it: "We do NOT serve gluten-free food."

It was easy to imagine an exasperated Italian proprietor, driven to frenzy by repeated requests from Americans for gluten-free pasta, finally deciding to cut short such exchanges with this blunt pre-emptive blow.

Rough translation: My way or the highway. If you don't like my pasta the way la Mamma has always made it, try someplace else.

Gluten is the main protein component of wheat, rye and barley. Wheat was first cultivated about 12,000 years ago and it's safe to say gluten has never had as hard a time as in recent years. The hunter-gatherer turned cultivator would be appalled at what he has wrought. Free associate from the word "gluten" these days and you'll probably come up with poison.

This column, by the way, is gluten-free. Please feel at liberty to read on.

There has been a huge and mysterious rise in celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder that results in damage to the small intestine when gluten is ingested. According to the Mayo Clinic web site, four times as many people suffer from celiac disease as 60 years ago, and roughly one in 100 people are now affected. Why is unclear. Perhaps it's the way gluten products are prepared today, or even, some have suggested, the result of a bored immune system looking for new targets.

But of course the gluten-free trend is not just about multiplying celiac sufferers. People decide gluten must be bad for them because they see shelves full of gluten-free food at supermarkets. Forms of food intolerance, whether to wheat or dairy products or something else, have reached near epidemic levels among the global middle class.

Special dietary needs are all the rage. Allergies, real or imagined, multiply. One in five Britons now claim some form of intolerance, yet a 2010 Portsmouth University study found the claims were often unfounded. The narcissism of minor differences finds expression in the food-intolerance explosion: Having a special dietary requirement is one way to feel special in the prevailing "me" culture.

But I don't want to show the intolerance of the omnivore for faddish food particularism, however overblown it may be. There's a lot that's good in food fetishes.

People are more aware of what they eat and how they want to feel as a result of what they eat. They are more demanding, with instant access to the information they need to make



ROGER COHEN
Comment

shrewd dietary choices; and they are surely not wrong to blame processed food and manipulated food and greater pollution and stress for certain allergies.

The political, it often seems, has become personal. Where people wanted to change the world, now they want to change their bodies. Wellness is a political pursuit because it involves choices about food that will impact the planet. Eating local or eating organic or both are lifestyle statements that have become engaged political acts. The pursuit of wellness, increasingly tied

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to the pursuit of beauty and agelessness, stands at the heart of the current zeitgeist. I eat well therefore I am.

People, if they have a choice (and it's worth recalling that much of humanity still does not), are eating better. That's good. But there is also a downside that has to do with self-indulgence, commercial manipulation, the rampant anxiety associated with "affluenza" and narcissistic

fussiness. Some years ago I was told about the experience of a London caterer who had provided the food for a birthday party for Lord Carrington, who is now 96. The caterer asked if any of the aged crowd had special dietary requirements. There were none among the many octogenarian and nonagenarian guests. They were happy to eat anything.

More recently, another friend told me of her sister's experience with a large house party in Scotland last summer. When the sister inquired about any special dietary needs, many requests came in, particularly from the younger crowd. Hardly anyone aged between 18 and 25 was up for eating anything. One young woman wrote: "I can't eat shellfish but I do eat lobster."

Right. If people over 80 will eat anything, yet people under 25 are riddled with allergies, something unhealthy is going on — and it's going on most conspicuously in the most aggressive, competitive, unequal, individualistic, anxiety-ridden and narcissistic societies, where enlightenment about food has been offset by the sort of compulsive anxiety about it that can give rise to imagined intolerances and allergies.

Overall, I'm with the Venetian restaurant owner making his stand for tradition, la Mamma and eating the food that's put on your plate. Gluten has done O.K. by humanity for upward of 10 millennia. It's bad for some people, but the epidemic of food intolerance has gone way over the top.

Roger Cohen joined The New York Times in 1990.

YOUR VIEWS

Rising tourist numbers can help pay for streets

Tourism numbers are increasing in Pendleton. Our visitor industry helps to support our many unique shops, restaurants and tourism attractions. I don't know of any other town of 17,000 people that has the number of first class tourism attractions that Pendleton has. That is why our visitor numbers are up.

The local hotel/motel industry provides the city of Pendleton with the Transient Room Tax and the Travel Promotion Assessment Charge so that Pendleton can continue to promote, market and sell Pendleton. Ask any of our local retailers what tourism means to the area and you will find that the impact is huge.

How do the tourist get here? They drive. They need to drive home so they buy gas. The tourists that don't spend nights here but are driving to Boise, Portland, Spokane or Seattle need to buy gas. That is good for Pendleton. That is good for the economy.

It is a no-brainer. Let these visitors help us pay for our street maintenance. We help pay for maintenance in Portland, Eugene

or Bend when we gas up in those towns. Are we so self-sufficient that we will walk away from visitor's assistance? Let them help. Vote yes for a nickel a gallon gas increase. Time to let others invest in our future.

Jill Thorne
Pendleton

Spend coffee, beer money on city streets

How simple is it to fix our streets? If a cup of coffee or a glass of beer costs \$2 or more, what does it cost to save a street? About \$2 a month of city fuel tax.

Let's skip that drink.

John Brenne
Pendleton city councilor

Excessive taxes will put Pendleton at risk

I just wanted to make a few remarks about the infrastructure tax hikes and fees. First, you should know that more taxes means a slowed economy. Second, these fees are so high it's ridiculous. Our seniors and disabled don't make enough money to keep up. Isn't Al Plute's solution for the poor to put a lien on their homes outrageous?

Businesses and residents thinking of moving to Pendleton will think twice, while Pendleton residents will move out.

Over time this plan will backfire because of loss of residents and lack of business means less taxes to collect. If a household makes over \$50,000 a year these taxes don't seem so dramatic. If you make under \$15,000 it seems impossible. How do you justify making people that make under \$15,000 pay the same taxes and fees as someone that has a median income? Putting a lien on the poor because they can't afford their bills is criminal. Taxes should never be the first solution to fix any problem.

Where are Pendleton's problem solvers? Where are our compassionate leaders in Pendleton who wouldn't dream of potentially putting our most vulnerable at risk? How do you really expect this to work? I pay all my taxes. Where is that money going? Why all of a sudden do we need all this money right now when the problems have been manifesting for the last 25 years? You never thought of saving back or cutting out some pet projects?

I know some city councilors are nice people, but I don't believe any

of you are in touch with the reality of this for many citizens. I believe true leaders understand all of their citizens' needs and limitations and are farsighted in their thinking.

Going through with all these taxes without considering the consequences seems so narrow-minded. I could be a city council member, mayor, or commissioner if all I had to do is say: "We will fix all problems by taxing the citizens with unrealistic taxes to pay for everything." Wow, that sounds easy — where do I sign up?

I am in communications with several governors, senators, representatives of Oregon, secretary of the state, attorneys and others because I think this is beyond your capabilities. I guess we will see.

Chris Hallos
Pendleton

Scary part of gas tax is if it doesn't pass

"Enough is enough!" screams the headline. Two dollars a month is going to hurt small businesses and families. This horrendous increase is too much to bear to fix our streets. This brouhaha is really the boondoggle that should concern

any citizen of Pendleton.

What really should concern us is the Rex Morehouse fix. In order to fix the streets he would have us shut down all nonessential services. You would then be just funding fire, police and streets according to his plan. All other services that are unfunded but paid out of the general fund would cease to exist. I guess he will never need an ambulance.

If you don't want the non-resident visitor to help pay for the streets then vote no. If you think the non-essential services are not important then vote no.

If you would rather help your neighbor and keep what is classified as non-essential it will cost you approximately \$2 a month and you will be on the road to having your city streets fixed, vote yes on November 3

Ron Gavette
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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