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OUR VIEW

U.S. wheat industry listens to its customers around the globe

It is a fundamental of business that it is important — make that crucial — to talk with your customers. And listen.

Our sister paper the *Capital Press* recently took a close look at how the U.S. wheat industry does just that. Breeders, farmers, elevators and exporters are all plugged into the needs of overseas customers, constantly communicating with them.

It is an impressive and ongoing effort.

From the time a breeder first begins work on a new wheat variety until that grain is ultimately delivered to customers in Asia or elsewhere, the needs of the customers are foremost in the minds of everyone along the supply chain.

In the Pacific Northwest, that is illustrated by the actions of the Washington, Oregon and Idaho commodity commissions. They work hand-in-glove with U.S. Wheat Associates, the export market development organization for the nation's wheat industry, and others to stay in constant communication with overseas customers to make sure they are getting exactly what they want.

For the region's wheat growers, that is crucial. Between 80 and 90 percent of the crop they grow each year is sold overseas.

That did not happen by accident. It happened by talking with customers.

From its offices in Portland and Arlington, Va., U.S. Wheat

Associates has established a network of foreign offices in such far-flung locations as Japan, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Russia, the Netherlands, Egypt, China, Taiwan, Mexico, Morocco and Chile.

In the Pacific Northwest, most of the wheat grown is soft white and club wheat, a subclass of soft white wheat.

In nations such as Japan, that wheat is milled into the flour that goes into cakes, pastries and Asian-style noodles.

In the Middle East, soft white wheat is ideally suited for flat breads. No other wheat works as well in those products.

It comes down to "understanding what our customers want, what is best-suited for their products, and then using our knowledge and experience to translate that into discrete, technical, well-defined criteria we can measure and communicate with wheat breeders," said Craig Morris, director of the USDA Agricultural Research Service Western Wheat Quality Laboratory. The quality — and suitability — of U.S. wheat is unquestioned by customers around the world.

Hats off to Pacific Northwest wheat growers — and all the others up and down the supply line who work so hard to provide their customers with exactly the wheat they want.

It is a business model that can be held up as an example to all segments of agriculture.

The needs of the customers are foremost in the minds of everyone along the supply chain.

OTHER VIEWS



The know-nothing tide

On the evidence, ethnocentrism is a pretty basic human instinct. Band together with your own. Keep the outsider down or out. In the 1850s, at another moment of American unease, the Know-Nothings swept Massachusetts and won mayoral elections in Philadelphia and Washington on a nativist platform to "purify" national politics by stopping the influx of Irish and German Catholics.



ROGER COHEN
Comment

Papist influence was then the perceived scourge through which the Know-Nothing movement, as the Native American Party (later the American Party) was commonly known, built its following. Today the supposed threat is Muslim and Mexican infiltration. Or so Donald Trump, the de facto Republican presidential candidate, would have us believe in his "America First" program.

A know-nothing tide is upon us. Tribal politics, anchored in tribal media, has made knowing nothing a badge of honor. Ignorance, loudly declaimed, is an attribute, especially if allied to celebrity. Facts are dispensable baggage. To display knowledge, the acquisition of which takes time, is tantamount to showing too much respect for the opposition tribe, who know nothing anyway.

Any slogan can be reworked, I guess. America First has a long, unhappy history, the America First Committee having pressed the view that the United States should stay out of the war to defeat Fascism in World War II. Its most famous advocate was Charles Lindbergh, the aviator, who undermined the movement when he revealed that he blamed Jews for prodding America toward war. That was in 1941, not a good year for Jews anywhere, particularly in Europe, where, while Lindbergh opined, the annihilation of Jewry had begun.

Well, America First is back, tweaked as Trump's we-won't-be-suckers-anymore ideology. In his favor, it cannot be said that Trump has a stranglehold on political stupidity. Britain is seriously debating leaving the European Union, the greatest force for peace and stability in Europe since the carnage of the 1940s.

One is put in mind of the remark of James L. Petigru, a prominent jurist and politician, upon the secession of South Carolina from the Union in 1860: "South Carolina is too small for a republic and too large for an insane asylum."

Britain's pathologies resemble South Carolina's.

Now where was I? Ah, yes, Trump, naturally. Trump, who has declared — or perhaps it was only a suggestion — that "Our moments of greatest strength came when politics ended at water's edge." Totally, he said that. Absolutely, he said that. Really,

really, he said that. To deny it would be "absolutely a total lie."

I suppose Trump was thinking of the Normandy landings, or perhaps the Marshall Plan, or Ronald Reagan's "tear down this wall," or the freeing of hundreds of millions of people from the totalitarian Soviet imperium, or the opening to China.

American isolationism is an oxymoron because America is a universal idea. That does not change however far short of its ideals the nation may fall.

On China, Trump has said: "We can both benefit or we can both go our separate ways." Go our separate ways! Let's unpack that.

The know-nothings are on the march. But of course they must know something: Celebrity matters.

Right now America buys everything that China makes, and China buys the U.S. debt incurred for all the spending sprees on stuff from Guangzhou. Just because there may be separate ways into the gutter does not make the gutter any more alluring. Chinese-American symbiosis is an existential issue.

As for Egypt, Trump believes America ousted "a friendly regime" (of the former dictator, Hosni Mubarak) "that had a longstanding peace treaty with Israel." No, Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel. Mubarak did not.

Speaking of Israel, Trump says, "President Obama has not been a friend to Israel." Right, he has not been a friend to the tune of more than \$20.5 billion in foreign military financing since 2009. He has not been a friend by providing more than \$1.3 billion for the Iron Dome defense system alone since 2011. He has not been a friend by, in 2014, opposing 18 resolutions in the U.N. General Assembly that were biased against Israel; by helping to organize in 2015 the first U.N. General Assembly session on anti-Semitism in the history of the body; and by working tirelessly on a two-state peace, not least on the security arrangements for Israel that are among its preconditions. He has not been a friend by turning the other cheek in the face of what Nancy Pelosi once called "the insult to the intelligence of the United States" from Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

The know-nothings are on the march. But of course they must know something. Millions of people who vote for Trump cannot be wrong. Perhaps their core idea, along with the unchanging appeal of ethnocentrism, is that politics no longer really matter. Celebrity matters.

Power centers are elsewhere — in financial systems, corporations, technology, networks — that long since dispensed with borders. That being the case, loudmouthed, isolationist trumpetry may just be a sideshow, an American exercise in après-moi-le-déluge escapism.

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



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

Making sense of new minimum wage rules

The (Bend) Bulletin

Oregon's new three-tier minimum wage law is nothing if not confusing. If all goes well, however, rules on how the law will work, which are being created by the Bureau of Labor and Industry, should make things clearer.

While the law raises the minimum wage across the state, it's a tiered raise that changes depending on location, and it will take six years to be fully realized.

That makes sense.

If a person lives in Crook County, he's living in the region where the minimum wage increase will eventually reach \$12.50 in 2022. The increase will be higher in Deschutes County, \$13.50 in 2022, and higher still in the Portland metropolitan area, \$14.75 in 2022.

It's reasonable to pay according to where someone works. Otherwise, it could create odd situations of minimum wage pay disparity in a region.

The rules are a bit trickier when a

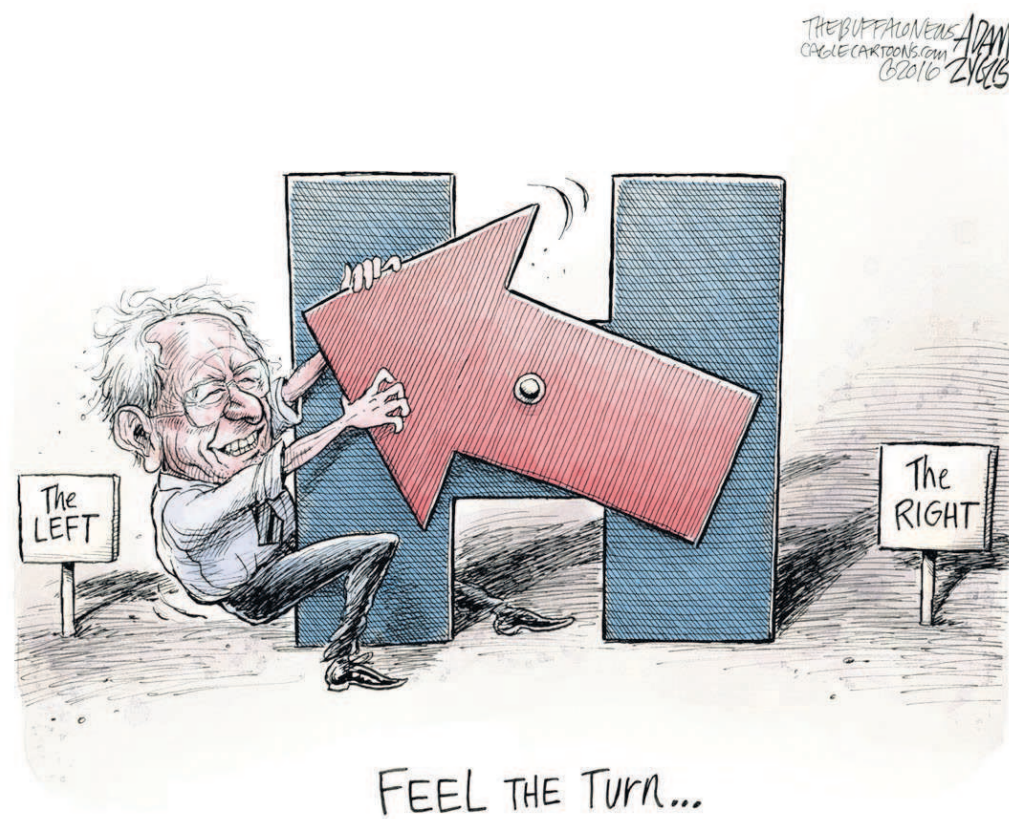
person actually spends time working in two different regions.

Thus, if a person works for a single employer but spends part of his or her time in Deschutes County and part of it in Jefferson County, with its lower minimum wage, the employer has two choices. Without extra record keeping, wages can be paid at the rate set for the higher wage region. If the employer wants to pay based on where the employee is actually working, he or she must keep records on time spent in each region.

In the end, the law might not bring the prosperity some expect. Only about 5 percent of the workforce makes the minimum, mostly women 25 or younger and working part time. Too, Oregon's minimum wage today has the same buying power as 1980's \$3.10 per hour minimum did.

While small increases apparently have a relatively small impact on the economy, no one knows for certain what happens with bigger increases. We're about to find out.

Only about 5 percent of the workforce makes minimum wage.



LETTERS POLICY

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