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OUR VIEW

BPA a public project that actually works

Those of us lucky enough to live in the Pacific Northwest rely on the Bonneville Power Administration as the backbone of our energy system.

But like our own spines, we often don't notice it until something goes out of whack and the pain throbs and we wonder how-oh-how did we ever take such painlessness for granted.

But the BPA and its complex vertebrae of energy production and transmission is once again under threat. A dollop of Bengay is needed after reading a budget proposal released last month by the Trump administration that recommends "divestiture of

Bonneville's transmission assets," which would raise \$4.9 billion for the government over the next decade, according to a short and incomplete explanation in the Energy Department's budget. Similar privatization ideas for the system were floated in the 1980s and mid 2000s.

In case you need a refresher, the BPA runs each of the dams along the Columbia River as well as 15,000 miles of transmission lines that stretch from Washington into California. It runs about 75 percent of the high-voltage power lines in the region, according to reporting by the *Seattle Times*. In short: it's the major player that keeps the lights on every day throughout the region, keeps our AC kicking every summer, and helps make our power bills cheaper than in most of the country.

That's mostly because the BPA is a public entity — its shareholders are the taxpayers and its customers.

It does not require a perpetually-climbing profit margin that would certainly be part of privatization. As it is, the BPA is a self-sustaining enterprise that provides a public good and requires no federal appropriation.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.),

is not a fan of dismantling a service that is working just fine.

"Public power customers in the Pacific Northwest have paid for the system and their investment should not be put up for sale," he said, before later summarizing Trump's entire budget as a "cynical assault on American ideas" and

that he's "putting this budget where it belongs — in the trash can."

The budget document is a bit of political showmanship from our reality TV president: Promise the world then blame others when reality rears its head. And it's not worth getting too worked up about selling off the BPA for scraps, as most of Trump's budget (like most presidential budgets) is a pipe dream that will never come to pass.

There are some places privatization is worth exploring — air traffic control and Amtrak come to mind — but selling off functioning and self-sustaining pieces of public infrastructure is not a wise path.

It is, however, worth keeping an eye on and stretching that spine, reminding ourselves that it's there and that it keeps us upright. Trump's targeting of it, at the very least, reminds us of something we must protect.

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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

Oregon needs way to impeach its head of state

The (Bend) Bulletin

Say what you will about Oregon's last governor, John Kitzhaber, he did one thing right: In the face of a clear loss of support from leaders of his party in 2015, he stepped down.

But what if he hadn't? Oregonians have no option short of recall to rid themselves of a governor who may be crooked or otherwise disgracing his office.

Impeachment would give them that option. Yet, thanks to Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, and Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, the power to impeach the governor likely is to remain a tool available to be used everywhere in the United States but Oregon. Both oppose House Joint Resolution 10, which would give voters the option to amend the Oregon Constitution, giving lawmakers the right to impeach not only the governor, but the state treasurer, secretary of state, attorney general and labor commissioner.

We'll agree with Burdick and Courtney on one thing.

Oregon is a recall state, and that tool could have been used to force the governor out.

But recall efforts have their problems: An elected official, other than a member of the state Legislature, is safe from recall for the first six months he or she is in office, no matter what they have done.

Kitzhaber took office Jan. 12, and a recall effort could not have gotten underway until mid-July. Only then could recall supporters have begun circulating petitions to gather the signatures needed to force a recall election. They'd have about 90 days to gather signatures, and elections officials would have about 10 days to verify the signatures.

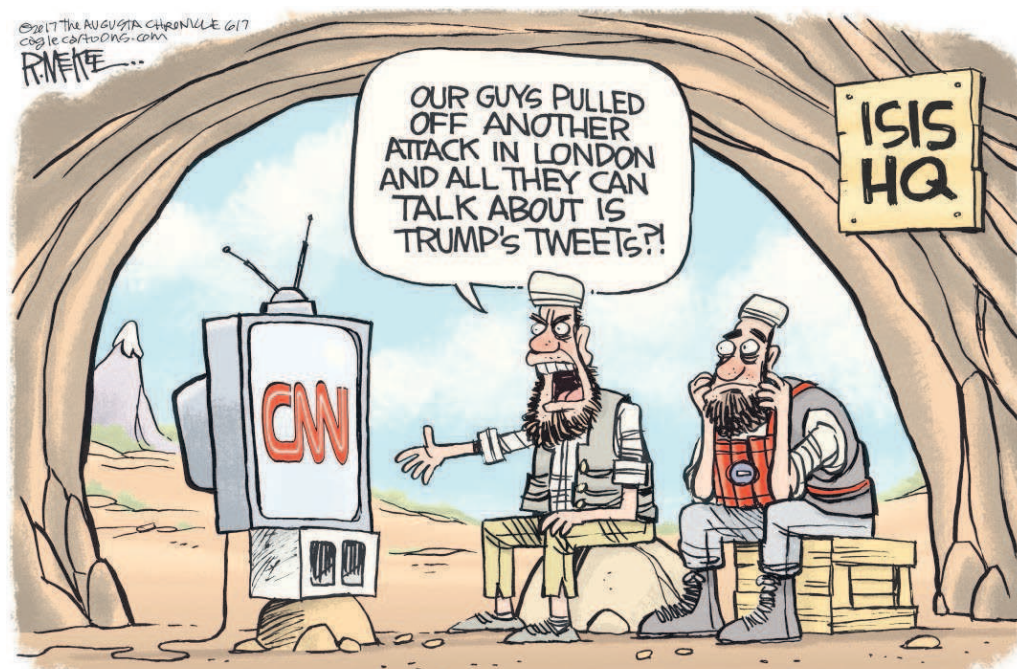
Then, if the governor had refused to resign, a vote to remove him from office would be held within 35 days, and, had the governor lost, he would have another 30 days to leave office. The process could have taken nearly a year.

That leaves Oregon essentially leaderless for far too long. An impeachment likely would avoid the delays built into the recall system.

Burdick and Courtney each can kill HJR 10 by doing nothing. That's unfortunate. Impeachment is better than the prospect of a stubborn but badly flawed governor holing up in Mahonia Hall for months as a recall effort plays out.

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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

Trump lies. China thrives.

One of the many dangers posed to our society by having a president who's a serial liar — and who doesn't behave like an adult, let alone a president — is that we more easily ignore him even if he happens to say something true.

Yes, some things are true even if Donald Trump believes them. I explored one of them in China last week — Trump's charge that China is playing unfair on trade.

My visit to Beijing left me with two very strong responses. The first is that we underestimate China — and attribute all of its surge in growth to unfair trade practices — at our peril. The country has been fast and smart at adopting new technologies, particularly the mobile internet. For instance, China has moved so fast into a cashless society, where everyone pays for everything with a mobile phone, that Chinese newspapers report beggars in major cities have started to place a printout of a QR code in their begging bowls so any passer-by can scan it and use mobile payment apps like Alibaba's Alipay or Tencent's WeChat Wallet to contribute to the beggar's mobile payment account.

Chinese men and women friends tell me they don't carry purses or wallets anymore, only a mobile phone, which they use for everything — including for buying vegetables from street vendors.

"America has been dreaming of becoming a cashless society," Ya-Qin Zhang, president of Baidu, China's main search engine, remarked to me, "but China is already there." It has "leapfrogged the rest of world" and is now going mobile-first in everything.

Wang Xing, the founder of Meituan.com — a Chinese mobile website that is a combination of Fandango, Yelp, OpenTable, Grubhub, TripAdvisor, Booking.com and Angie's List — told me that he has around 300,000 people on electric bicycles who deliver takeout food and groceries to 10 million Chinese mobile internet users daily. "We are the largest food delivery company in the world," said Xing.

And in an age when raw data from the internet of people and the internet of things is the new oil, the fact that China has 700 million people doing so many transactions daily on the mobile internet means it's piling up massive amounts of information that can be harvested to identify trends and spur new artificial intelligence applications.

Moreover, while Trump is pulling out of the Paris climate deal, China is steadily pulling out of coal. Xin Guo, CEO of Career International, told me two of his hottest job openings in China are in "software and new energy" — everyone is looking for engineers for electric cars, solar and wind. Walter Fang, a top executive at iSoftStone, which helps design China's smart, sustainable cities, told me that "just two weeks ago I brought in about a dozen green energy startup companies from Massachusetts" to show them opportunities in China.

And yet, as smart as China has been in adopting new technologies, Trump's broad complaint that China is not playing fair on trade and has grown in some areas at the expense of U.S. and European workers has merit and needs to be addressed — now. Before going to Beijing I emailed the smartest person I know inside China on trade (who will have to go nameless) and asked if Trump had a point.

He answered: "Your note has arrived as I slide across the Chinese countryside at 300 kilometers per hour from Beijing to Shanghai. There are nearly 60 trains going from Beijing

to Shanghai every day, typically with 16 cars able to carry nearly 1,300 people. ... We glide past endless brand-new factories and immaculate apartment buildings in practically every city along the way, with many more still under construction. As you suspect, I have been sympathetic to many of Trump's trade and industrial policy ideas. But if anything, Trump may be too late."

Ouch.

The core problem, U.S. and European business leaders based in China explained, is that when the U.S. allowed China to join the World Trade Organization in 2001 and gain much less restricted access to our markets, we gave China the right to keep protecting parts of its market — because it was a "developing economy." The assumption was that as China reformed and become more of our equal, its trade barriers and government aid to Chinese companies would melt away.

They did not. China grew in strength, became America's equal in many fields and continued to protect its own companies from foreign competition, either by limiting access or demanding that foreign companies take on a Chinese partner and transfer their intellectual property to China as the price of access, or by funneling Chinese firms low-interest loans to grow and buy foreign competitors.

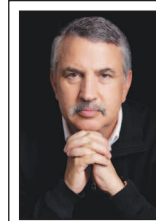
Once those companies got big enough, they were unleashed on the world. China plans to use this strategy to implement its new plan — "Made in China 2025" — to make itself the world leader in electric vehicles, new materials, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, bio-pharmacy, 5G mobile communications and other industries.

The latest annual survey of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, released in January, found that 81 percent of its members felt "less welcome" in China than in the past and had little confidence any longer that China would carry through on promises to open its markets. APCO Worldwide's James McGregor, one of the keenest observers of China trade, recently noted that China tells the world that its policy is "reform and opening," but on the ground its policy "more resembles reform and closing."

Today, Alibaba can set up its own cloud server in America, but Amazon or Microsoft can't do the same in China. China just agreed to allow U.S. credit card giants, like Visa and MasterCard, access to its huge market — something it was required to do under WTO rules but just dragged its feet on for years — but now domestic Chinese financial services companies, like UnionPay, so dominate the Chinese market that U.S. companies will be left to fight over the scraps. The world leader in industrial robots, the German company Kuka Robotics, was just bought by the Chinese company Midea; Beijing would never allow the U.S. to buy one of China's industrial gems like that.

This is not fair. China needs to know that some people who disagree with everything else Trump stands for — and who value a strong U.S.-China relationship — might just support Trump's idea for a border-adjustment tax on imports to level the playing field. Because our economic relationship with China is out of whack — and not just because China makes great products, but because we do, too, and it's high time they are all allowed through China's front door.

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist, was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting in Beirut and Israel and one for commentary.



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

This is not fair. China needs to know that.

YOUR VIEWS

Dear world: We're sorry for our dope of a president

To the people of the world, I know this may not mean much to you and you may never get a chance to hear it, but please know that on behalf of the people of the United States of America, let me offer my deepest and sincerest apologies for all the madness coming from my nation at this time.

As you know, due to an archaic and dysfunctional aberration of our political election system, the current occupier of the White House was granted leadership of the U.S. despite losing the popular will of the majority of U.S. citizens (and with likely assistance from Vladimir Putin). All of which is to say, his insanity, bombast, uber-narcissism and general lack of good manners,

tact, diplomacy and adult maturity are holding all of us in the world hostage at the moment.

So please do not think the vast majority of U.S. citizens are for the rapacious destruction of the global environment or the build-up of yet more nuclear weapons or the elimination of social services for the poor. Please do not believe that we are by nature xenophobic or misogynistic or bullies; we are taught to be that way by many of our elected officials, especially by the current resident of the White House.

Please give us a chance and join us in holding our collective breath for the next four years or less until we can get this madness past us. Thanks for your global patience and grace as we go through our quadrennial paroxysm.

Matt Henry
Pendleton