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OUR VIEW

Corporatism comes for the internet

It has been an incredibly newsy week — and it's not over yet. Tax reform is ramping up in the U.S. Senate, President Trump had another Twitter meltdown, an aggressive North Korea fired another missile, and a continuous stream of men are losing their jobs because of their harassment of women. As important as those issues are, history may show the end of internet neutrality in the United States outranks them all.

Consider that the internet has been the bastion of much of the country's economic growth of the last two decades. Sure, there were bubbles and dead ends along the road. But the Amazons, Facebooks and Googles — now some of the most powerful and richest companies in the world, were little more than gleams in their founders' eyes just 20 years ago. Much of what is now one of the richest and most powerful regions of the country — Silicon Valley — was little more than a suburban academic setting that few people had ever heard of.

Granted, much of the economic muscle created by the new online behemoths came at the expense of the brick-and-mortars, the analogs and the manufacturers. But there is no doubting the fact that much of this country's economic fortunes have been dependent on the enormous growth of many internet entrepreneurs and startup companies, which have made our world both better and worse.

So that is what is at stake: The last, great libertarian frontier of entrepreneurship free from government intervention and the constraints of our physical world. The threat is net neutrality. Although that term and the issue can seem like a rather complicated concept, it doesn't have to be. Picture it this way: Right now, you access the internet to view websites or stream video at pretty much the same speed as everyone else. The companies that built the internet must treat all traffic exactly

the same, no matter where it is headed or how it got there. From many internet service providers' perspective, net neutrality is an unfair burden that limits their ability to recoup the cost of development. These ISPs have made significant investments in the online infrastructure, and they believe they should be able to monetize their investment into more revenue and higher returns for their shareholders. For instance, if the government allowed it, ISPs could soon be able to sell a faster connection to certain destinations for certain customers. For Facebook, that could be a good thing. You could load their site faster and at lower cost than you could

the next social network that comes along, which does not have the financial wherewithal to pay AT&T or Comcast or whoever to fast-track traffic to their site. It's the same on the consumer side. If you rely solely on the big boys — the entrenched interests with the biggest pockets — perhaps you will be content with a slightly cheaper internet that restricts and throttles your traffic elsewhere. But if you wish to go somewhere on the internet where your provider has little financial stake in you visiting, prepare for it to be slower and more expensive.

Ending net neutrality is bad for entrepreneurship. It's bad for the next new thing. It's bad for consumers, too, who want fair competition for their time and their traffic and their dollars. Current corporate giants stand to benefit greatly if net neutrality comes to an end. Their power to restrict competition and promote their own interests is increased considerably. The internet will become just another shopping mall that shuffles its customers to the sites it approves, and where it stands to make a bigger buck. A lifeless mall would be a sad way for the most important and dynamic economic innovation in the last century to end up.

The libertarian utopia of a free and unregulated Internet may come to an end.

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

Having issues out in open, Round-Up can now unify

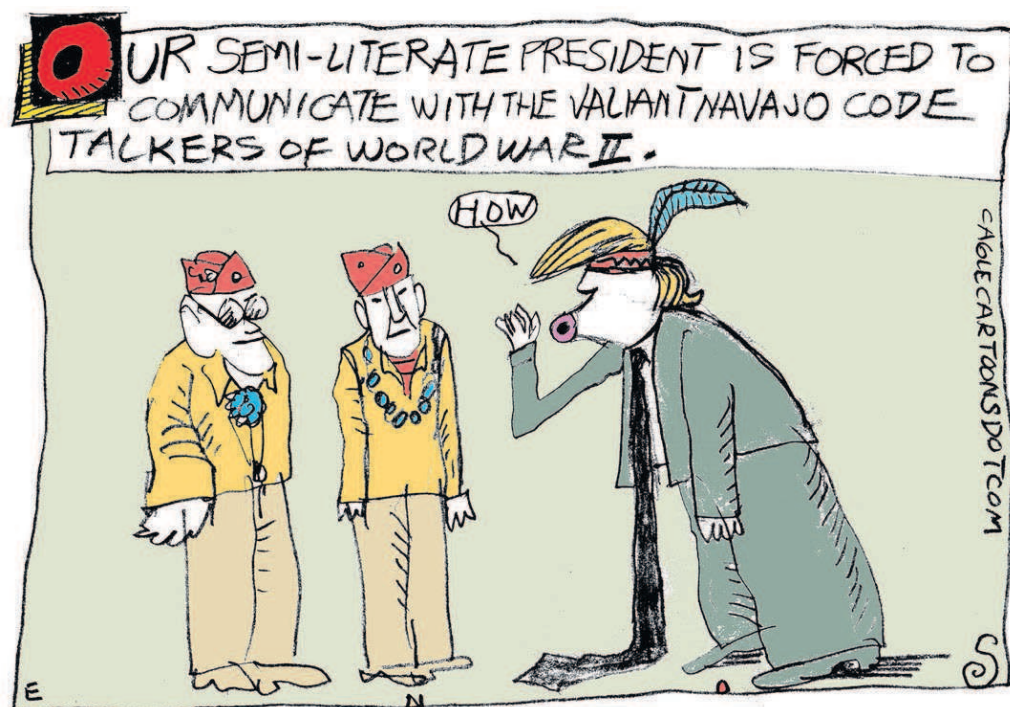
First let me state that there are few, if any times that I have ever even come close to agreeing with the editorial board's comments in the *East Oregonian*. The *EO* appears to have taken upon themselves to touch the surface of issues between the Pendleton Round-Up board, the stockholders and many of the vast number of volunteers who are the real reason the Round-Up survived for years — especially before the large payments received from the sales of Pendleton Whisky. Any time someone starts off with a statement such as that of a past president — "Trust us" — I immediately think: Here comes the spin and cover-ups. "Trust us" was the same statement made by the head of Pendleton Grain Growers (Tim Hawkins), followed by its collapse. Years ago the Round-Up was completely run by volunteers, mostly behind the scenes. But over time some of the board members and presidents have decided the hard-working volunteers were no longer needed. Many were replaced by commercial vendors, paid friends or family members. Many volunteers lost their job simply because some on the board, or past presidents,

had personal issues with the volunteers totally unrelated to the operations of the Round-Up. Surely many, including myself, are upset with no financial openness in the last few years. But that is not the only issue facing the Round-Up situation. Many times there has been a belief by many of the vast number of volunteers, both current and past, that they are only given lip service and that they are not truly appreciated for the years they have taken time to make the Round-Up a success. The current board has stated that all the budgets and financial issues will be made available to all very soon. That is a good step forward. Director Rob Collins said: "Come talk to us and tell us what we are doing wrong or what you think will improve relations." I say give the current board a chance and if they fail the stockholders or volunteers, hold them accountable at the proper time. The Round-Up is growing, and an important part of the success of the local area. I hope that with the elections over, issues exposed and all having a say, that unlike in the political world everyone can put aside their anger and accept that we all need to work together to make it continue as a big success.

John Harvey Stanfield

LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEWS

What really happened with the GOP platform and Russia

It's one of the enduring misconceptions of the Trump-Russia affair. During the 2016 Republican convention, the story goes, the Trump campaign weakened a critical passage in the GOP platform to go easy on Russia. The Trump team acted, according to this narrative, as part of an ongoing conspiracy with Vladimir Putin to help Donald Trump win the White House.

But that is not what happened. In fact, an already-tough portion of the Republican platform dealing with Russia was strengthened, not weakened, at the GOP convention. Here is what took place:

The original draft of the platform — it has never been released publicly, but an insider shared the relevant passages with me — had strong language on Russia, and in particular on Russian aggression in Ukraine. Warning of "a resurgent Russia occupying parts of Ukraine and threatening neighbors from the Baltic to the Caucasus," the platform vowed to increase U.S. pressure on a "reckless" Russia.

"We will meet the return of Russian belligerence with the same resolve that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union," the platform said. "We will not accept any territorial change in Eastern Europe imposed by force, in Ukraine or elsewhere, and will use all appropriate measures to bring to justice the practitioners of aggression and assassination."

It would be hard to call that a pro-Putin statement. Every word of it stayed in the final platform.

When the platform committee met before the GOP convention in Cleveland, one delegate out of the 100 on the committee, a Texas political activist named Diana Denman, proposed an amendment. Denman, who came to the convention as a Ted Cruz delegate but later switched her support to Trump, was interested because she had traveled to Ukraine as an international election observer in 1998 and has ever since "kept an eye on the emerging democracies," she told me in a conversation last March.

Denman's amendment praised the Ukrainian people and said they deserved the greatest U.S. assistance. "We therefore support maintaining (and, if warranted, increasing) sanctions against Russia until Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are fully restored," Denman's proposed amendment read. "We also support providing lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine's armed forces and greater coordination with NATO on defense planning. Simultaneously, we call for increased financial aid for Ukraine, as well as greater assistance in the economic and humanitarian spheres, including government reform and anti-corruption."

Denman's amendment also contained an introductory paragraph filled with a lot of generic rhetoric. When she proposed the amendment, a Trump national security aide named J.D. Gordon, who was in the room with the platform committee, wanted to edit it. According to Denman, Gordon got on the phone, saying he was calling "New York" to discuss possible changes.

At the behest of the Trump campaign, the platform committee took out the throat-clearing introduction and changed Denman's reference to "lethal defensive weapons" for Ukraine to a pledge to provide "appropriate assistance to the armed forces of Ukraine."



BYRON YORK
Comment

They left in Denman's language on NATO and on continued and possibly tougher sanctions on Russia.

The final, Trump-approved passage read: "We support maintaining and, if warranted, increasing sanctions, together with our allies, against Russia unless and until Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are fully restored. We also support providing appropriate assistance to the armed forces of Ukraine and greater coordination with NATO defense planning." That was the amendment the committee approved.

In the end, the platform was strengthened with language pledging ongoing and possibly increased sanctions. It was also made tougher with Denman's reference to "NATO defense planning," which had not been in the original draft.

Finally, Denman's lethal aid suggestion was changed to "appropriate assistance to the armed forces" — a change that put the specific promise of U.S. aid to Ukraine's armed forces in the platform where it had not been originally.

"The platform ended up tougher than it started, compared from the beginning to the end," Denman told me, although she added she still believes her lethal aid provision should have been included in the final document.

So how did the "Trump weakened the GOP platform" meme get started? Seizing on the Trump campaign's entirely defensible change of Denman's "lethal defensive weapons" to "appropriate assistance" — neither of which was in the original GOP draft platform — some Democrats, Republican NeverTrumpers and their allies in the press portrayed the platform meeting in Cleveland as Donald Trump selling out the GOP to Vladimir Putin. They were helped in their efforts by a July 18, 2016 story in the *Washington Post* with the headline, "Trump campaign guts GOP's anti-Russia stance on Ukraine" — a blatantly false description of events.

The narrative spread. "The same month that Trump denied Putin's role in Ukraine, his team weakened the party platform on Ukraine," Democratic Rep. Andre Carson said during a House Intelligence Committee hearing in March. "This was the same month that several individuals in the Trump orbit held secret meetings with Russian officials, some of which may have been on the topic of sanctions against Russia or their intervention in Ukraine. Now, this is no coincidence, in my opinion."

In addition to being factually wrong, that storyline seems particularly out of place coming from Democrats, because the 2016 Democratic platform, while pledging to "stand up to Russian aggression," said nothing about U.S. sanctions against Russia or about U.S. aid to Ukraine's armed forces, both of which were in the Trump-approved Republican platform. Needless to say, the Democratic platform said not a word about lethal aid to Ukraine.

Yet Democrats, along with GOP NeverTrumpers, press on — and it appears the platform narrative, wrong as it is, will not die. That won't change until people begin to look at what actually happened at that Republican platform meeting in Cleveland.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

"The platform ended up tougher than it started."

— Diana Denman, Texas political activist

