

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to the idea of a "Made in Pendleton" store on the city's Main Street.

Many Pendletonians have had the pleasure of showing off the town to visiting family and friends who immediately become smitten with the town (Because who wouldn't be?). Yet when those visitors ask you where they can pick up a little trinket to remember the town by, we're often left scratching

our heads.

Sure, we've got the woolen mills, and the Pendleton Center for the Arts has plenty of locally-made and influenced products, as does Tamásstlikt. And Blue Mountain Creations or Stapleman Boots can create something from scratch if you've got the time.

But the city is crying out for a tourist-friendly outlet on Main Street that offers an array of goods produced

in the town — and others that show Pendleton's signature style. The store then would have the ability to not just support itself, but other local businesses and makers, too.

A tip of the hat to the open, useful discussion we have had about gun violence in the wake of last week's school shooting in Florida.

Much of the credit goes to the remarkable Marjory Stoneman Douglas students and teachers who witnessed and were forever changed by this horrific event. They have led this movement, and forced this painful discussion into the open.

But politicians, including President Donald Trump and U.S. Sens. Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson deserve credit,

too, for listening to the victim's unvarnished pain as well as their policy prescriptions.

The problem of gun violence and school shootings is vast and complicated, and there is no easy fix.

But an open debate, free from overwhelming interest of lobbyists and extremists, is a long-overdue step forward.

A tip of the hat to the loss of some titans of Pendleton in the last few days and weeks.

Richard Courson, Virginia Lindberg and Gene Ann McLean — just to name three — each made a remarkable impact in the community in their long and illustrious lives.

They will be missed.

OTHER VIEWS

The trolling of the American Mind

There are two Russian scandals connected to the 2016 campaign. One deserves the attention that it's getting. The other is closer to — what's the term I'm looking for? — fake news.

The real scandal involves the Russian hacking operation against the Democratic National Committee. This was a genuine crime — a meaningful theft, which led to a series of leaks that were touted by the Republican nominee for president often enough that we can assume that Donald Trump, at least, thought they contributed something to his victory.

The fact that members of his family and inner circle were willing and eager to meet with Russians promising hacked emails, the pattern of lies and obfuscation from the president and his team thereafter, and the general miasma of Russian corruption hanging around Trump campaign staff — all of this more than justifies special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, and depending on what his team ultimately reports it might even justify impeachment.

But alongside and around this real scandal you have the other Russian efforts to influence the election and its aftermath, the outlines of which have been apparent for some time, but which have earned a new wave of agitated attention thanks to Mueller's battery of indictments against a Russian troll farm and the various goblins, kobolds and boggarts it employed.

Their efforts added up to a lot of social media activity and a few events in meatspace, in which the Russians had the clever idea to organize demonstrators on both sides of our great American divide. Memes were distributed, millions of dollars spent, fake accounts employed — all to encourage not just the specific political goal of elevating Trump (and Bernie Sanders) and discrediting both party establishments, but the broader ambition of widening our internal fissures, inflaming our debates, and making our imperium more ungovernable at home and thus weaker on the global stage.

Such conduct is certainly worthy of indictment, legal and rhetorical. What it is not worth is paranoia and hysteria, analogies to Pearl Harbor and the Sept. 11 attacks, and an "America under attack"/"hacking our democracy" panic that give the Russian trolls far too much credit for cleverness and influence and practical success.

Because on the evidence we have, nothing they did particularly mattered. The DNC hack was genuinely important because it involved a real theft and introduced a variable into the campaign that would not otherwise have been present. But the rest of the Russian effort did not introduce anything to the American system that isn't already present; it just reproduced, often in lousy or ludicrous counterfeits, the arguments and images and rhetorical tropes that we already hurl at one another every day.

And the scale of the effort — set against the scale of campaign spending and online activity and political frenzy from domestic partisans — meant that any real influence was necessarily negligible, swamped by the all-too-American sources of our national derangement.

A scan through *The New York Times'* accounting of some of the Russian operations should serve to illustrate the point. The pro-Trump ads the trolls sponsored during the campaign were just clumsy variations on ubiquitous right-wing themes ("Hillary is a Satan, and her crimes and lies had proved just how evil she is"). The protests and counterprotests they ginned up after the election were marginal imitations of the all-American crowds that showed up for Trump rallies and later for the Women's Marches.



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And the operatives' surprise at American credulity — "I created all these pictures and posts, and the Americans believed that it was written by their people" — was itself a testament to the essentially imitative quality of their work: People believed the trolls were real Americans because so many totally real, born-in-the-USA counterparts were saying exactly the same things.

And the people who believed them, by and large, were probably not the nearly 78,000 Midwestern swing voters who officially determined the election's Electoral College outcome, since on the evidence we have most fake news is political pornography for hyperpartisans — toxic in its own way and deserving of concern, but something driven more by panting, already-polarized demand than by nefarious, median-voter-manipulating suppliers.

In this landscape, the people obsessing about how Russian influence is supposedly driving polarization and mistrust risk becoming like J. Edgar Hoover-era G-men convinced that communist subversives were the root cause of civil-rights era protest and unrest. There were Soviet agents bent on encouraging racial conflict, just as there are Russian trolls today. But then as now obsessing over Russian influence can become a way to deny or minimize American realities that are far more important than some provocateur's Hillary-for-prison meme.

And that is the danger for a liberalism (or an anti-Trump centrism or conservatism) that's forever wringing its hands over how surely, surely Russian interference might have been enough to shift those crucial 78,000 votes and make Trump the president. Because even if you believe that the interaction between the FBI investigation of Hillary Clinton, the hacking and the WikiLeaks drip-drip did swing those votes — I'm quite sure the memes and fake accounts did not — the proper question should still be: How was it that close to begin with?

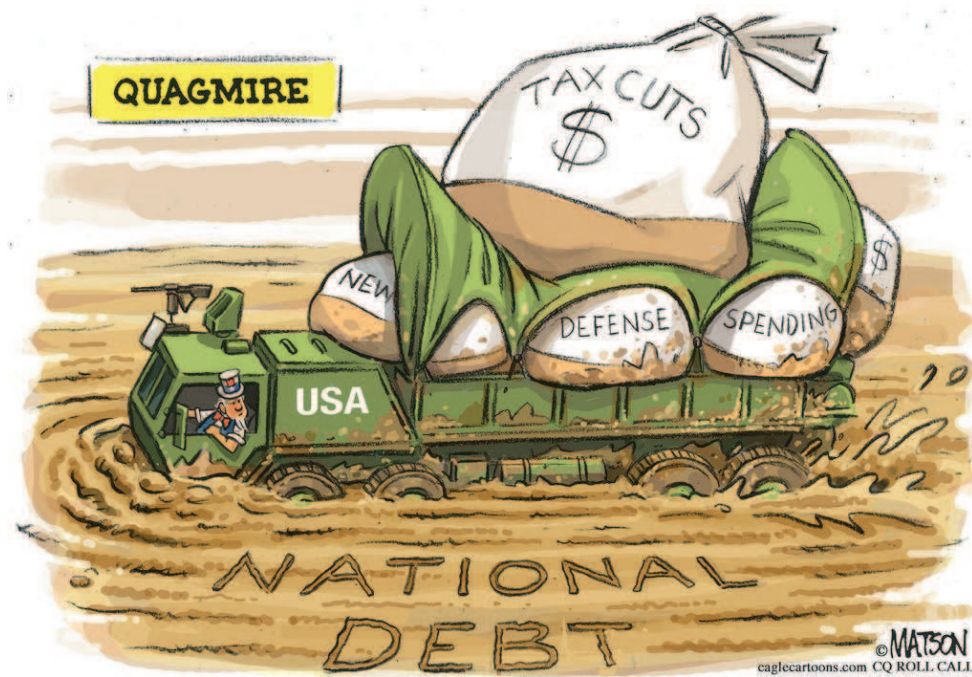
A new Cold War is not an answer to that question. (Especially since, for all the talk of Trump-the-traitor, he has moved our military posture somewhat closer to the policies the Russia hawks demand.) Neither is a theory that obsesses over tens of thousands of voters when the Americans who switched from Obama to Trump, in the Midwest and elsewhere, probably number in the millions.

The bottom line is that liberal mandarins in the West — not just in the United States — face a hard choice when it comes to the populism that gave us Trump, Brexit and right-wing parties and governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Should this re-emergent nationalism be conciliated and co-opted, its economic grievances answered and some compromises made to address its cultural and moral claims? Or is it sufficiently noxious and racist and destructive that it can be only crushed, through gradual demographic weight or ruthless polarized mobilization?

The Russia fixation, at its worst, is a way to make the second choice without admitting that you're making it — to pretend that in trying to crush your fellow countrymen you're really fighting traitors and subversives and foreign adversaries, to further otherize the domestic out-group by associating them with far-off Muscovy.

Trump's election was, indeed, a sudden shock in a long-running conflict. But it does us no good to pretend the real blow came from outside our borders, when it was clearly a uniquely hot moment in our own cold civil war.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009.



YOUR VIEWS

Local boy Bounds deserving of a Circuit Court seat

I appreciated the thoughtful editorial comment provided by a group of highly-successful graduates who grew up with Ryan Bounds in Eastern Oregon. Bounds, as we know, was nominated for a position on the Ninth District Court of Appeals and is being opposed by Oregon's two U. S. senators based upon comments he wrote for a student publication almost three decades ago.

As a longtime educator, I am sorely disappointed that two individuals, who must surely be aware of the value of education, have such a misguided view of the benefits that come from molding and shaping young minds and the growth that takes place when we stimulate those minds. What is the purpose of encountering new, different, and divergent views and ideas if not to continue growing intellectually and shaping our beliefs and actions as we mature?

If they keep digging in their politically-motivated effort to deny a seat on the court to a highly qualified potential jurist from Eastern Oregon, perhaps they might also find he may have called someone a name on the playground when he was a student at West Park Elementary School.

Oregon deserves more thoughtful and enlightened performance from its highest elected officials.

George Murdock
Umatilla County Commissioner, Pendleton

Rise of school shootings linked to loss of faith

The latest mass murder of our youth in a school in Florida is an indictment upon current American culture, relative morals and humanistic values.

Our youth and citizens are not safe in the womb, in our schools, in our churches, or even in our homes. There is plenty of blame to go around and part of it is valid. We can blame the assault rifle. We can blame the NRA. We can blame the FBI that we no longer trust to investigate anything. We can blame Hollywood that glorifies violence. We can blame rap music that glorifies death, rape and murder. We can blame the national media and press that no longer represent journalistic integrity or reports truth and exposes wickedness. We can blame our self-serving lawmakers that protect special interests, pursue an anti-God and anti-America agenda by taking advantage of our most vulnerable, our broken youth, to advance their global cause. We can blame our courts that no longer honor the sanctity of life, our constitutional freedoms, or our historical Christian heritage.

The blame game will never resolve our present crisis until we deal with the root cause of the demise of our culture and way of life. There have been assault rifles in America since WWII, yet mass school

murders didn't begin until nearly 50 years later. What changed? Culture changed. American values changed. Our youth are now growing up in an America ruled by a disregard for human life, fueled by the violence of Hollywood and video games, and confused with gender misidentification and sexual promiscuity. Is it any wonder that some of our youth do not value human life when our culture promotes the death of babies in the womb and then encourages the merchandising their precious body parts for profit?

The root cause of our national demise can be found in no other place than the human heart. This present assault on our children, our nation and our way of life has unfolded under the watch of the current Christian church in America. The Bible teaches judgment begins at the house of God.

Stuart Dick, Irrigon

Complaints about EOTEC are off the mark

Chris Wayne's recent letter to the editor is off the mark. He claims that the Umatilla County Commissioners, city of Hermiston and EOTEC board have conflicts of interest on EOTEC and the county is "bailing out" of the project. These boards all saved the county around \$5 million by the county not spending the \$8 million it would have cost to simply bring the old fairgrounds up to code. Furthermore, the Umatilla County Fair has been given a wonderful, new, state-of-the-art home at EOTEC. Nothing has been lost. Much has been gained.

While the county may not be an owner any more in EOTEC, it does not matter as its ownership has simply passed from one public entity to another — each of them working for the best interests of the public.

Mr. Wayne also complains about noise in the Airport Road area due to EOTEC. Again, he misses the mark. The city of Hermiston acquired the present EOTEC property more than 30 years ago specifically as a new fair site. In 1986 the city, county and fair board tried hard to get the fair moved to this site through a rejected sale of the old fairgrounds and then a countywide bond issue, which failed. For more than 30 years everyone in this community has known that the present EOTEC site was going to be the new fairgrounds. Mr. Wayne moved to his residence near EOTEC around four years ago.

Mr. Wayne says he represents all the people living along Airport Road. I count 10 to 14 residences. While EOTEC adversely impacts them, and that is unfortunate, 17,250 residents of the city of Hermiston are tickled pink the fair and rodeo moved out of the middle of town and the dangerous traffic and parking problems and noise it caused are gone.

George Anderson
Hermiston

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