

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Independent media survives in your back yard

The website Deadspin created a video last week, which creepily showed dozens of Sinclair news anchors around the country saying the same words, in sort of a toneless monologue.

Here is part of the script, transcribed from the Seattle-based Sinclair station: “Hi, I’m (A) _____, and I’m (B) _____.”

(B) Our greatest responsibility is to serve our Northwest communities. We are extremely proud of the quality, balanced journalism that KOMO News produces.

(A) But we’re concerned about the troubling trend of irresponsible, one sided news stories plaguing our country. The sharing of biased and false news has become all too common on social media.

(B) More alarming, some media outlets publish these same fake stories ... stories that just aren’t true, without checking facts first.

(A) Unfortunately, some members of the media use their platforms to push their own personal bias and agenda to control ‘exactly what people think’ ... This is extremely dangerous to a democracy.”

It’s mostly anti-media malarkey, quite en vogue these days thanks to a president who is much more

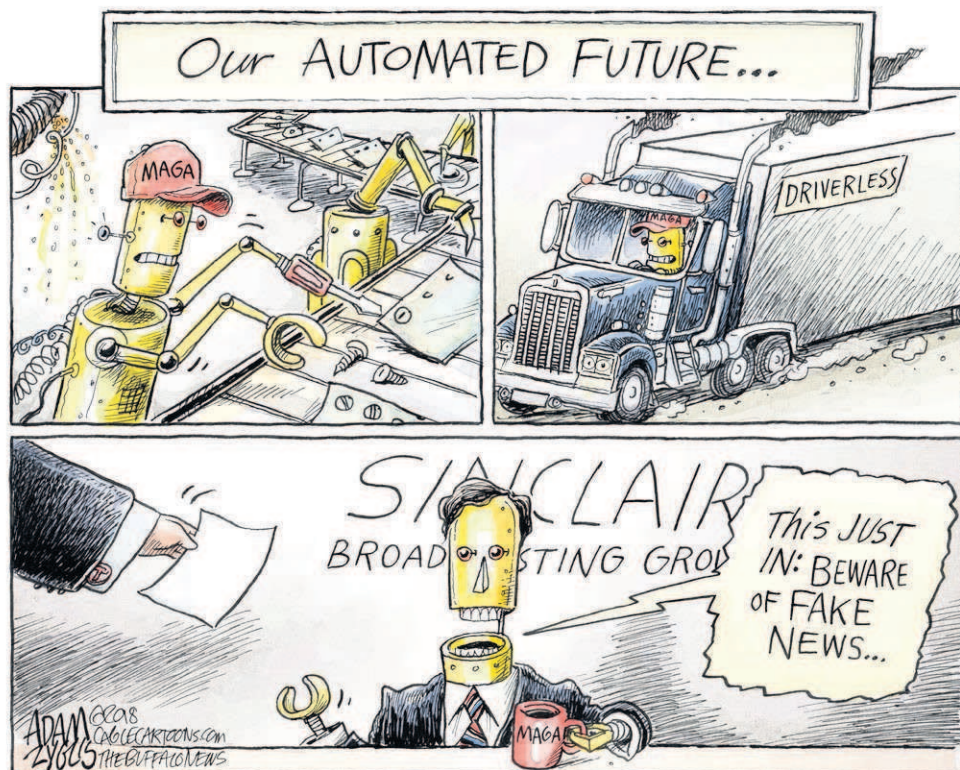
media-obsessed and media-savvy than his predecessors. Unsurprisingly, he expressed his support for Sinclair’s mission because they have expressed their support for his.

We do think the response to the video has been a bit overblown as the influence of TV news is on the wane, but the irony of 100 voices sharing a choreographed message chiding irresponsible media isn’t lost on us.

And it’s understandable not to want a single large corporation to reach its corporate tentacles into local newscasts across the country. It’s doubly dangerous when that group is motivated so transparently by political bias, which is certainly the case with Sinclair. State-run media is a sign of autocracy, not democracy.

At the *East Oregonian*, we’re proud to be an independent, community-centered media voice. Every word that appears in our local pages is attributed to a named source, and all of our local content is written by people living right here. Decisions about what runs and where and how are made by people in your communities, too, whose names and phone numbers appear in every edition of the paper.

There are no “must-run” dictations from on high. We run what we think



our community needs and wants to know. And if you have an issue with our decisions or a dissenting opinion, our doors are always open, and our phone lines are too. We’re actually people, unlike the Facebook algorithm that tells you what you want to read and accepts no feedback.

Of course we are also members of the Associated Press, which allows us access to journalists and editors the world over. The AP provides nuts-and-bolts reporting for every kind of outlet, from Fox News to the *New York Times*. Times are strange for media the

world over. The news cycle has been hijacked by online pressures, fake news and Twitter partisans of every ilk. It can seem sometimes that the media is just a giant, headless enterprise that barrels forward, gobbling up time and energy.

But we hope it’s calming for readers that their news comes from down the street — printed in Pendleton, reported throughout the area where the news is happening, delivered by your postman. It’s one less thing to worry about in an era where truth is becoming harder to find.

OTHER VIEWS

The art of the flail

If you’ve been watching stock markets, you’re probably feeling seasick. The Dow is crashing! No, it’s bouncing back! Wait, it’s crashing again!

In general, trying to explain stock fluctuations is a mug’s game. But in this case it’s pretty clear what’s going on. Whenever investors suspect that Donald Trump will really go through with his threats of big tariff increases, provoking retaliation abroad, stocks plunge. Every time they decide it’s just theater, stocks recover. Markets really, really don’t like the idea of a trade war.

So is a trade war coming? Nobody knows — even, or perhaps especially, Trump himself. For while trade is one of Trump’s two signature issues — animus toward dark-skinned people being the other — when it comes to making actual demands on other countries, the tweeter in chief and his aides either don’t know what they want or want things that our trading partners can’t deliver. Not won’t — can’t.

As a result, incoherence rules: The administration lashes out, then tries to calm markets by saying that it might not carry through on its threats, then makes a new round of threats.

Let’s talk in particular about the will-he-or-won’t-he confrontation with China.

In some ways, China really is a bad actor in the global economy. In particular, it has pretty much thumbed its nose at international rules on intellectual property rights, grabbing foreign technology without proper payment. And to be fair, Trump officials do sometimes raise the intellectual property issue as a justification for getting tough.

But if getting China to pay what it owes for technology were the goal, you’d expect the U.S. both to make specific demands on that front and to adopt a strategy aimed at inducing China to meet those demands.

In fact, the U.S. has given little indication of what China should do about intellectual property. Meanwhile, if getting better protection of patent rights and so on were the goal, America should be trying to build a coalition with other advanced countries to pressure the Chinese; instead, we’ve been alienating everyone in sight.

Anyway, what seems to really bother Trump aren’t China’s genuine policy sins but its trade surplus with the United States, which he has repeatedly said is \$500 billion a year. (It’s actually less than \$340 billion, but who’s counting?) This trade surplus, he insists, means that China is winning — in effect stealing \$500 billion a year from America.

As many people have pointed out, this is junk economics. Except at times of mass unemployment, trade deficits aren’t a subtraction from the economies that run them, nor are trade surpluses an addition to



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

the economies on the other side of the imbalance. Overall, the U.S. trade deficit is just the flip side of the fact that America attracts more inward investment from foreigners than the amount Americans invest abroad. Trade policy has nothing to do with it.

Beyond this conceptual confusion, there’s a raw fact few people — and, as far as I can tell, nobody in the Trump administration — seem to appreciate: China no longer runs big trade surpluses.

This wasn’t always true. A decade ago, China’s current account surplus — a broad measure that includes trade in services and income from investments abroad — was more than 9 percent of GDP, a very big number. In 2017, however, its surplus was only 1.4 percent of GDP, which isn’t much. Meanwhile, the U.S. ran a current account deficit of 2.4 percent of GDP, a bit bigger but also much smaller than the imbalances of the mid-2000s.

But in that case, why is “bilateral” trade between the U.S. and China so unbalanced? The answer is that it’s largely a kind of statistical illusion. China is the Great Assembler: It’s where components from other countries, like Japan and South Korea, are put together into consumer products for the U.S. market. So a lot of what we import from China is really produced elsewhere.

It’s not clear why we should demand that China stop playing that role. Indeed, it’s not clear that China could even do much to reduce its bilateral surplus with the U.S.: To do so, it would basically have to have a completely different economy. And this just isn’t going to happen unless we have a full-blown trade war that shuts down much of the global economy as we know it.

Now, Trump himself might be OK with large-scale deglobalization. But as we’ve seen, his beloved stock market hates the idea, and with good reason: Businesses have invested heavily on the assumption that a closely integrated global economy is here to stay, and a trade war would leave many of those investments stranded.

Oh, and a trade war would also devastate much of pro-Trump rural America, since a large share of our agricultural production — including almost two-thirds of food grains — is exported.

And that’s why things seem so incoherent. One day Trump talks tough on trade; then stocks fall, and his advisers scramble to say that the trade war won’t really happen; then he worries that he’s looking weak and tweets out more threats; and so on. Call it the art of the flail.

Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999.



YOUR VIEWS

Voters should oppose new livestock district

Please vote no on formation of the Salmon Point Livestock District. The residents of Salmon Point have known since they bought their properties that this was open range.

We have put up our own electric fence for the last 20 years, which is only a minor inconvenience. One rancher runs 25-35 cows for 4-6 weeks a year on the land adjacent to us. All of Hat Rock is fenced and the petitioners had to include Wanaket Game Preserve to make the minimum acreage requirements, which will never allow grazing.

Only a 1,100-foot stretch of land is not fenced by residents and only one home has been built on Salmon Point in the last 10 years.

As residents, we should have been able to reach an agreement and built our own fence a long time ago. Forming the district would force the rancher to bear the brunt of construction costs to protect our properties. Once again, please vote no on formation of the livestock district.

Floyd Turnbull
Hermiston

McLeod-Skinner has background to succeed

I’ve listened to Jamie McLeod-Skinner participate in several candidate forums and am always impressed with her high regard for education and how she has

used her education. Jamie has a degree in civil engineering and a law degree. She put her civil engineering degree and watershed management experience to work improving water supply and sanitation in rural communities in Kosovo.

That work required that she coordinate with local governments and non-government officials to successfully (on time and under budget) complete her projects.

After obtaining her doctorate in environmental and natural resource law from the University of Oregon, she worked for the Corps of Engineers and later the Klamath County Circuit Court, assisting with the Klamath Basin water rights case.

We have a candidate with experience in water rights and watershed management. When has there been a more qualified candidate to serve our rural needs?

One of the many things McLeod-Skinner will work to do as our Congressional District 2 representative is improve the basic infrastructure for housing and community development in our rural community. She has the technical background to know what infrastructure we need in our rural district, and the collaborative working experience in a political environment to get it done. I can’t wait to vote for her in the primary on May 15 and again in November to send her to Washington, D.C., to represent our local interests rural Oregon.

Miriam Gilmer
Adams

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