

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Trade tactics a mystery

We admit that President Donald Trump’s latest comments on the United States rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership have left us scratching our heads. And by most accounts we aren’t alone.

Trump’s 2016 campaign focused in large part on how existing trade pacts, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the yet-to-be ratified TPP in particular, were woefully lopsided in favor of our trading partners. He pledged to renegotiate NAFTA and to pull out of TPP.

A few days after assuming office, Trump withdrew from TPP and promised to negotiate stronger bilateral deals with Pacific Rim trading partners. Last July the administration released a list of proposed changes to NAFTA. Negotiations on the pact are ongoing.

Both of these deals are vitally important to U.S. farmers. In Eastern Oregon wheat country, the TPP is by far the most important, as much of our region’s non-irrigated crops are exported to Asian nations. Leaving TPP handed our major competitors — Australia, Canada and Mexico — more favorable access to Japan.

And you cannot overlook the effect of NAFTA on American farmers either. Canada and Mexico are the U.S.’s

second- and third-largest markets, respectively, for farm exports. If we walk away from that deal, hundreds of millions in exports will be in jeopardy.

Last month Trump announced tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, aimed mostly at China. The Chinese, the largest importer of U.S. agricultural goods, responded with tariffs on billions of dollars worth of U.S. goods, hitting farmers hard with duties on fruit, pork and soybeans. Additional tariffs on other commodities have been threatened as tensions escalated.

And perhaps that has changed the TPP calculus.

During a meeting with farm state legislators recently, Trump said he was interested in the United States rejoining TTP. He asked Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and his new chief economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, to look into it. The seemingly impromptu directive took legislators and administration officials by surprise.

Lest they be too hopeful, a few hours later Trump added the caveat that the pact would have to be more beneficial to the U.S. before he’d agree to rejoin.

Does Donald Trump want the United States back in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or is it a feint to gain the upper hand in his trade row with the



President Donald Trump, right, chats with Chinese President Xi Jinping last November during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Trump’s recent changes in his trade tactics may be aimed at gaining the upper hand in the ongoing trade dispute with China, or not.

Chinese? Is he trying to gain some advantage in the ongoing NAFTA renegotiations? Is he trying to pacify grassroots opposition to his trade policies from 2016 supporters in rural America?

Trump has long touted his ability to negotiate great deals. We suspect he’s finding multi-lateral trade pacts to be a bigger challenge than haggling over luxury hotels and posh golf courses.

The stakes are much higher and affect many more people. The deals are more complex.

Rejoining TPP would be no small trick. U.S. can’t join until the pact is ratified by the 11 remaining partners. It’s unclear what they would have to gain by opening the deal to further negotiations.

Is this all part of an elaborate plan? Is there a plan? We can only hope.



OTHER VIEWS

Diversity is a great strength

Fatima Preciado is a first-generation college student in Oregon — driven and determined knowing she will be the first in her family to earn a college degree.

Her parents brought her to the United States from Mexico when she was young in search of a better life for her and her siblings. Growing up in Salem, Oregon, she went to McKay High School where she was an honor student.

Fatima works on her school campus to help pay for her college education, and volunteers in the community. Her work was so exemplary she was recognized as the Boys & Girls Clubs Oregon’s Youth of the Year in 2016.

Fatima is also one of 12,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients in Oregon, fighting every day for their American dream. Her future is at risk since President Trump chose to cancel the five-year-old DACA program that successfully allowed 800,000 young immigrants to legally work and go to school in this country.

While the program’s repeal is pending legal challenges in the courts, Oregon’s legislature passed HB 4111 with bipartisan support to give Fatima and thousands of other Oregonians the ability to continue working and going to school by maintaining their driving privileges.

In the April 20 edition of the *East Oregonian*, Oregonians for Immigration Reform suggested that Oregon voters would not support HB 4111, despite the fact there is overwhelming public support to give Dreamers like Fatima a path to citizenship.

It is important to note that Oregonians for Immigration Reform does not work on reforming our broken immigration system. Far from it. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, OFIR is one of 18 hate groups operating in our state. They earned this designation because they receive thousands of dollars in support from white supremacist leaders across the country, have strong ties to extremist groups, and use misleading and racist rhetoric.

Now, OFIR wants to repeal Oregon’s 30-year-old sanctuary law, which passed our



SELENE TORRES-MEDRANO
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state legislature nearly unanimously in 1987. It passed because legislators recognized that local police officers were being pressured to enforce federal immigration policies instead of focusing their limited time and resources on community safety.

Oregon’s law enforcement is already strapped for resources — 911 calls in rural counties are routinely going unanswered. If passed, Initiative Petition 22 would shift our limited public safety resources from community safety to enforce federal immigration laws without new dollars, the necessary training, equipment or tools.

Legislators also passed our sanctuary law because Oregonians were being unlawfully targeted by federal immigration agents. Immigrants are part of our families, communities, workplaces, and places of worship and deserve to feel safe from harassment and profiling just like any other Oregonian.

Simply put, repealing Oregon’s sanctuary law would open the doors to rampant racial profiling, and make our communities less safe. Instead, we should focus our collective will to fix our broken immigration system.

Our immigration system has historically enabled many generations to legally immigrate to the U.S. in search of a better life — that simply does not exist anymore. The system is outdated, and is not built for today’s world and migration patterns.

We need to stop punishing Dreamers like Fatima and other undocumented Oregonians. They are our neighbors and friends, and Oregon is their home. Let us work together to create a reasonable process that is fair, efficient, and allows undocumented immigrants to meet eligibility criteria for authorized status.

Diversity is one of the United States’ greatest strengths — it is part of what defines us as a nation. Let us ensure that our country continues to strive to be a beacon of hope and freedom for people all over the world.

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Selene Torres-Medrano is a city councilor in Umatilla and a One Oregon member.

OTHER VIEWS

The place that assumes beauty

COMO, Italy — Some of the people who do the most good have a willingness to be radically changed. They are sensitive to the problems around them, which a lot of us are, but they are also willing to transform their lives to address them, which a lot of us don’t consider. I met many such people at a place here in northern Italy called Cometa.

Thirty-five years ago, the two Fignini brothers, Erasmo and Innocente, were living in Como with their wives, Serena and Marina. Erasmo was a famous fabric designer. Innocente was a prominent eye surgeon. They were successful, but along with their wives, spiritually unfulfilled, unable to understand the meaning of the suffering they saw and felt.

Erasmo went to see a renowned priest, Father Luigi Giussani, who saw faith not as an intellectual system but as an encounter with beauty, a love story. Erasmo returned to his wife and reported: “God exists. I have met someone who is a witness to his reality.” Serena was intrigued: Erasmo was the last person you’d call religious. But eventually both couples met with Giussani and all found faith.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

were evident, and the Cometa philosophy is to say yes after yes. The CEO, Alessandro Mele, left his life as a tax consultant and now lives on campus amid hundreds of children. The man who runs the cafe, Marcello, left his old life and now mentors disabled apprentices. “I’m the 100 percent real Marcello here. I’m talking about my life, not my job,” he said.

If you or I had hundreds of kids running around there’d be general chaos. But Cometa is beautiful. The gardens are immaculate and meticulously designed. The family homes are modest but look like they came out of *Architectural Digest*. Every piece of furniture in the high school is colorful, elegant and unusual.

“Beauty educates,” said Serena, quoting Giussani. The children who come here often feel tossed aside. One used to be awakened by her mother with the words, “Get up, you piece of (expletive). Breakfast is ready, you piece of (expletive).” But beautiful surroundings make the children who come here feel important, welcomed and cherished. If a toy breaks at Cometa, it is fixed right away. Likewise, every child is recoverable.

The people in Cometa don’t only treasure beauty, they assume it. In a world of distrust and betrayal, they assume there is beauty in each person and in every situation, so they lead with an almost unnerving level of hospitality.

The vocational high school curriculum is built around the idea that machines will soon be doing most physical tasks, but no machine will be able to create the feeling of a loving home. Whether they are being trained as waiters, carpenters, fabric designers or pastry chefs, students are taught to understand and create hospitable experiences. “Everything is a home,” said Mele. “Everything says, ‘Welcome to my home.’”

The idea is to give students the power to welcome others, born out of a sense that they have been welcomed. One of Giussani’s mottos resonates through Cometa: “Reality will not let you down.” You can take the radical leap, because life ultimately is beautiful.

This takes stubborn determination. Imagine looking after hundreds of children across 30 years, 24/7. By dinnertime, the adults around the table look exhausted. There are children seeking attention every second. Their daily lives are tied down to this place, even while some of the adults also work full-time jobs in the world outside. The sacrifices are real.

But this village-size family is like an embodied philosophy, a belief in beauty expressed in every personal and practical way.

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David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in 2003.

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