

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Activists, who are revamping the idea of connecting rail service between Portland and Boise. It would include stops in Pendleton, Hinkle, La Grande and Baker City as it traveled between the growing metropolises to the east and west of us.

The group is not making promises at this point of the game. They know it will be a long, hard slog to get train service up and running once again in Eastern Oregon — a smaller version of the Amtrak Pioneer rail of yore. But it's good to know someone is working on the project, and organizing people with a shared interest in restoring train service.

As driverless cars become the norm, and as car ownership percentages begin to dip in coming generations, trains may once again prove to be a preferred mode of travel.

It's worth thinking about that, planning for future changes, and keeping our options open. We only wish previous generations would have kept the infrastructure that allowed passenger train travel to be a viable option for traveling across our region for more than a century.

A tip of the hat to the decision by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality to revoke the waste management permit for Lost



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A Union Pacific freight train passes the Heritage Station Museum, which was originally constructed as Pendleton's train depot in 1909.

Valley Farm outside Boardman.

This decision was a long time coming and the right one to make. The public had lost faith in Lost Valley, and the large dairy was putting the environment and human health at risk.

"Over the last year we have used every regulatory tool available including civil penalties to gain compliance," said ODA Director Alexis Taylor in a

statement. "We believe the owner is not willing or unable to meet the conditions of his permit that helps protect human health and the environment."

Owner Greg Te Velde may yet appeal the decision, but in our opinion what's done is done. Let's pack out the ownership structure associated with Lost Valley, and start again from scratch with what is best for Oregon.

LIMEY PASTOR

The wars of the laws

This has been a painful and fearful time when we have seen terrible things happen to families in the name of the law — a new variant of immigration law demanding the separation of parent and child, perhaps even permanently, as if the law must be obeyed mindlessly, heartlessly and soullessly by people acting as automatons and agents of a devilish operation — and used to terrorize God's smallest citizens in his world, and their parents. The shocking sound of children crying and alone, bereft of human touch, echoes in our ears leading to nightmares.

My friend Dennis reminded me that this is not new. Our native born children are also being taken from families, gone never to return from Oregon households too — at a rate that is twice the national average, I understand.

Dumped in state facilities and deprived of loving contact with their own. It is obvious that this also is cruel for the child who is extracted from an Oregon family and kept apart permanently from their parents. We have heard no squeaks of dispute about these, mostly lower class children of the poor, from the media folk. We ignore this because it is uncomfortable to know. They are the invisibles.

Both of these cruelties must end.

A month ago I spent time consoling a young American woman who had three children pulled from her care, her eldest son being given psychotropic drugs to subdue him, creating permanent damage. She isn't getting them back. A legal kidnapping has taken place for this family.

So let us not forget the horrible treatment also given to offspring of our own land, which I notice the press does not include in the focus of this week's show of horrors.

Jesus said these things to us:

Matthew 18:1-10: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you

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Faith

to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."

This week, the President's wife and daughter felt compelled to launch their own campaign of persuasion on their family politician, which did affect the president, for which I give thanks,

for it means that his heart is softened by compassion. That is very good. I am actually feeling quite sorry for him as I don't think he had this on his radar.

And things have changed, and I expect they will continue to change. Nothing is

more powerful than a child in need of rescue and many of us will come running seeing a child in danger. That is also a very good thing. It is a hopeful thing.

In regard to the rising anger of the people, the Attorney General felt moved to quote the Apostle Paul and he misquoted Romans 13, using a version with a modern idiom that used the word "law" for the term "governing authorities." As if to rise up against injustice is against God's will. The consequence of this is that the Attorney General Jeff Sessions is being called before the ecclesiastic court of his own Methodist church for teaching false things. (Don't worry, he is not being burned at the stake).

Romans: 13 "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

This language of Paul was given by him to prevent an early bloodshed of his own flock by the Romans and local rulers. He was a political man as well as a devout man. You know things are getting messed up when the Roman political arena is affecting our own modern day situation.

Martin Luther promulgated the doctrine of "Two Kingdoms" to create some semblance of order between religious authorities and political authorities, between religious law and civil law: compulsion being the hallmark of civil law, and voluntary obedience being the hallmark of the Gospel kingdom. It reflects Paul's thinking.

But even in Luther's 16th century world, the barbarism of removing children from their parents was not conceived of.

I have been thinking very hard of what needs to be preached for the safety of the people and out children. I will speak of these things next. May you all be the protectors of God's loving law.

Amen.

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OTHER VIEWS

America is guilty of neglecting children: our own

It's not just the kids at the border.

America systematically shortchanges tens of millions of children, including homegrown kids. The upshot is that American kids are more likely to be poor, to drop out of high school and even to die young than in other advanced countries.

We tear apart homegrown families, too, through mass incarceration, excessive juvenile detention and overuse of foster care. One black child in 10 spends time in foster care — and 61,000 foster kids have simply gone missing since 2000.

Like immigration, the mistreatment of children is an old problem that President Donald Trump is exacerbating. Here's a rule of thumb in America for any shortage of resources or conflict over priorities: Kids get screwed.

"A shockingly high number of children in the U.S. live in poverty," the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, declared in a scathing report. Almost one-fifth of American children live in poverty, he noted, and they account for more than one-fifth of homeless people.

Alston told me that "there's a very direct link" between the mistreatment of immigrant children at the border and the indifference toward low-income children all across the country. The core reason, he suggested, is a lack of compassion.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, protested the U.N. report, saying, "It is patently ridiculous for the United Nations to examine poverty in America."

Really, Ambassador Haley? Yes, it's weird that a U.N. official tasked with poverty investigates the most powerful country in the world — and finds that kids here have worms. I'm glad that the U.N. speaks up not only for impoverished children in Congo, but also for those in, say, South Carolina (where a newborn black child has a shorter life expectancy than a child born in China).

Two researchers, Kathryn Edin and Luke Shafer, have found that some 3 million American children live in "extreme poverty," with a cash income of less than \$2 per person per day, the global metric for extreme poverty.

That's not to say that poverty in America is comparable to that in poor countries. American kids may go to bed hungry, but very few are stunted from malnutrition, compared with 38 percent of children in India.

The paradox is that the United States historically was a safe and nurturing place for children. America helped lead the world in mass education, and in 1960 children here died at lower rates than in most other

advanced countries.

Since about 1970, however, as other countries provided universal health care and built up social safety nets, American kids have been dying at higher rates. A child is 57 percent more likely to die by the age of 19 in the U.S. than in our peer countries, according to a study published this year in Health Affairs.

Half a million American kids still suffer from lead poisoning each year. And Dr. Peter Hotez, a tropical disease specialist at Baylor's College of Medicine, warns that here in the United States, "Millions of children living in poverty may be affected by toxocarasis, a parasitic roundworm infection."

Why do we provide universal health care for senior citizens, but not for children?

Why do we stiff kids? Why do we provide universal health care for senior citizens (which is expensive) but not for children (which would be cheap)?

The simple answer: Kids don't vote. They depend on us, and we

fail them.

If we can broaden the current outrage to the plight of all children in America, we could transform lives.

In Arkansas, I once dropped in on the home of a struggling 13-year-old boy. It was a filthy flophouse for drug users in a gang-ridden area. There were no books in the house, and no food; the only reason the power wasn't cut off for nonpayment was the pit bull kept to scare off the utility crew.

These are difficult problems but not hopeless ones, and we know what works. Early childhood programs in particular make a huge difference: parent coaching, high-quality prekindergarten, lead poisoning interventions, social worker visits, and mentoring.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim cites a study indicating that if the U.S. invested in effective early childhood programs, the lifelong benefits would be so transformative that American inequality could be reduced to Canadian levels.

We already have a model: When Tony Blair was the British prime minister he undertook a major campaign against child poverty and cut it nearly in half.

Unfortunately, Trump is moving in the opposite direction, cutting benefit programs in ways that will hurt poor kids. Trump's tax cuts add to the deficit — meaning that we are partying and sticking children with the bill.

A national, bipartisan outcry forced Trump to back down from tearing immigrant children from their parents' arms at the border; that was a shared outpouring of compassion that represented our country's best. Now we need a similar outcry on behalf of all of America's children.

Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times*