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OUR VIEW

Perdue offers help for farmers caught up in trade wars

Farmers who are anxious over growing trade disputes between the United States and some of its major trading partners got some encouraging words recently from Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue.

Last month the Trump administration applied tariffs on Chinese goods in an attempt to reduce the number of finished goods coming into the country. China promptly made good on its threat to retaliate, placing tariffs on pork, poultry, beef, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, soybeans and grains.

The administration placed tariffs on Mexican aluminum and steel. Mexico is retaliating with duties on apples, cranberries and other farm products.

Separately, the U.S. is in the process of renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico — our second- and third-largest trading partners. NAFTA is vital to U.S. agriculture.

Making good on his promise to drop out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, President Trump has not yet negotiated a bilateral deal with Japan, an important market for farmers in the Pacific Northwest.

Agriculture has been generally supportive of Trump. He's earned



Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue talks last month with Alan Von Borstel, vice president of the Oregon Wheat Growers League, and Clint Carlson, secretary-treasurer of the League. Perdue promised to offset farmers' losses caused by trade wars.

praise for rolling back regulations — particularly Waters of the U.S. — and for generally more ag-friendly forest policies.

But, farmers and ranchers export \$135 billion in products each year. They have a lot riding on trade and are feeling more than a little nervous.

So Perdue got an earful when he

toured farms in Washington and Oregon recently.

Perdue says he's pushing for government help for farmers hurt by the spreading trade wars.

"The president says he won't allow ag producers to bear the brunt of trade disputes," he said last week on a tour in Washington state. "I'm laying down

a marker that we need to resolve it by Labor Day or we need some sort of mitigation."

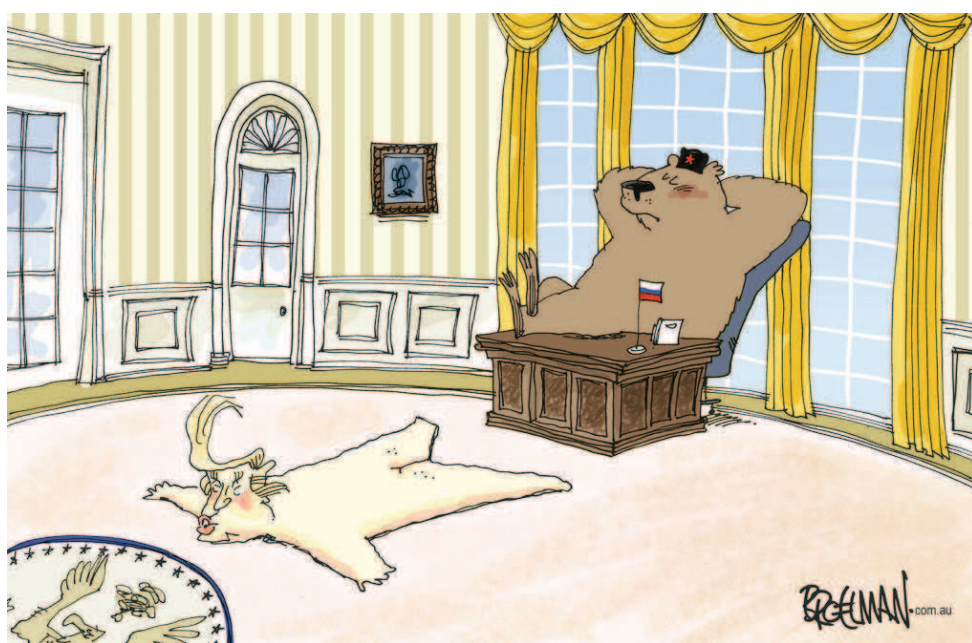
That's all encouraging, even though it's short on specifics.

While they'll take the help, farmers would rather sell to trading partners than receive cash assistance checks. And we would be remiss if we did not again remind the administration that this is not what was promised during the campaign.

But, unfolding events can be complicated and rarely conspire with sitting presidents. The plans that come together so well in a stump speech don't always survive their first contact with real world politics, foreign or domestic.

As the president works to fulfill his promise to negotiate better trade deals with our partners, we are at least encouraged that the administration says it's not going to hang farmers and ranchers out to dry. We look forward to seeing the details of the "mitigation" Perdue alluded to during his tour.

We hope it doesn't become necessary. It certainly isn't a long-term solution for producers in the Northwest. Without trade and the money it generates, many of them will quickly be doing something else for a living.



YOUR VIEWS

Independent Party should be included in governor debates

A few months back I wrote how non-affiliated voters were on track to become the major voting block in Columbia County before the general election. Well, the latest Secretary of State report for June shows 9,998 Republicans, 12,300 Democrats and 12,403 non-affiliated voters. It's rather ironic that only 13 percent of us non-affiliated voters accepted the Independent Party of Oregon's offer to vote in their primary election, but I would like to publicly thank them for allowing us the opportunity.

The problem now is that Oregon has three viable candidates on the ballot, but the Republicans and Democrats are not allowing the Independent Party of Oregon, Oregon's third major political party, to participate in the governors' debates. What gives them the constitutional right to limit anyone's political participation? If any legally recognized party candidate is not allowed to participate in any statewide debate for any office, then the entire election process should be considered corrupt, illegitimate and thereby be invalid.

In today's extremely toxic partisan political climate, I feel it is irreprehensible to maintain and/or restore trust in our local, state and national election processes.

Joe Turner
Columbia City, Ore.

U.S. House must pass palliative health care bill

As a caretaker who watched a loved one battle cancer, I know how devastating cancer can be on physical and emotional well being. Congressman Greg Walden recently helped advance legislation in Congress to improve patient quality of life by expanding access to palliative care.

Palliative care is given alongside curative treatment to help people with serious illnesses get better faster and easier. A team of doctors and specialists provide an extra layer of support for patients and their families to help manage difficult symptoms, lessen negative side effects and improve overall outcomes.

The federal legislation is widely supported by lawmakers in both political parties. It would increase the number of health care providers trained in palliative care and pain management, expand federal pain research and educate the public. It would also help combat opioid misuse in a balanced way so cancer patients and survivors can access necessary and appropriate pain care.

As an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network advocate in Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, I thank Rep. Walden for marking up this legislation and I'm grateful to his Energy and Commerce Committee for passing it. Now the House of Representatives needs to pass it, too.

Karen Malcolm
Pendleton

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OTHER VIEWS

Why Trump doesn't admit Russian election interference

Was Russia's effort to interfere in the 2016 election the most important issue on the table at President Trump's Helsinki summit with Vladimir Putin? No. But it's not an unimportant issue, either, and Trump knew the American press is obsessed with it. So he knew it would play a big role in the Trump-Putin post-summit news conference.

There are all sorts of aspects of the Trump-Russia affair, but in light of special counsel Robert Mueller's decision to indict 12 Russian intelligence agents on the Friday before the Monday summit, the president also knew reporters would want to hear him specifically affirm Mueller's allegation that the Russian agents hacked the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton.

It wouldn't be hard for the president to do. After all, the House Intelligence Committee, chaired by Trump supporter Rep. Devin Nunes, along with the Senate Intelligence Committee, the intelligence community and Mueller have all concluded that Russia attempted to disrupt the election. None of them has proved, or even alleged, that the Russian effort affected a single vote. But there is a consensus that there was a Russian effort.

So to put it in crass terms, Trump could easily have given the press what it wanted, which would probably have given him room to pay attention to issues like arms control, Syria, trade and Crimea.

But no. That's not how Trump handles the Trump-Russia affair. And so, when he was asked a simple, straightforward question — U.S. intelligence agencies say Russia interfered. Putin denies it. Who do you believe? — Trump would not give a simple, straightforward answer.

Then Trump said his top intelligence officials came to him and "said they think it's Russia," meaning they believe Russia was behind the hacks. On the other hand, Trump said, "I have President Putin; he just said it's not Russia." Trump then cast doubt on the U.S. agencies' conclusion.

The bottom line was that Trump, the president of the United States, would not accept the U.S. government's assessment of the Russian effort and hinted that he had at least as much or more faith in Putin's version of events.

Predictably, all hell broke out, with anti-Trump commentators talking treason and Trump supporters in Congress declining to defend the president. The controversy consumed America and was sure to last



BYRON YORK
Comment

until the next controversy. And Trump could have avoided it all.

So why did he do what he did? The answer has to do with the peculiar nature of the Russia investigation, and the peculiar nature of Donald Trump.

There have always been two parts to the Trump-Russia probe: the what-Russia-did part, which is the investigation into Russia's actions during the campaign, and

the get-Trump part, which is the effort to remove him from office.

Trump's problem is that he has always refused, or been unable, to separate the two. One is about national security and international relations, while the other is about Donald Trump.

The president clearly believes if he gives an inch on the what-Russia-did part — if he concedes that Russia made an effort to disrupt the election — his adversaries, who want to discredit his election, undermine him and force him from office, will take a mile on the get-Trump part. But Trump's approach doesn't work for the Trump-Russia probe. There's no reason he could not accept that Russia tried to interfere in the election.

At the same time, there is nothing wrong with Trump fighting back hard against the get-Trump part of the investigation. Voters know that Democrats, Resistance and NeverTrump activists have accused Trump of collusion for two years and never proven their case. Mueller has charged lots of people with crimes, but none has involved collusion. That could still change, but Trump is currently justified in repeating the "no collusion" and "witch hunt" mantras.

So in response to the "Who do you believe?" question, Trump could simply have said: "I believe the verdict of U.S. agencies. Russia did it. We've retaliated, and we'll do more. But my adversaries at home have turned this into a politically motivated crusade to cripple the president of the United States, and it's time to stop it. Now, let's talk about issues that are vital for the future of America and the world."

Trump has gotten himself into similar messes before. In the past, he escaped by expressing (belated) faith in the intel agencies' Russia verdict. And on the Tuesday he did it again, telling the press that "I accept" the Russia conclusion.

Will it work? We'll see. But how many more times will Trump do this?

Byron York, *The Washington Examiner*