

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Wishful thinking hurts recycling efforts

When it comes to recycling, Oregonians have been fooling themselves for years.

We've been placing all sorts of items in curbside recycling bins, assuming that was appropriate because, well, it seems as if they should be recyclable — garden hoses, diapers, pots and pans, plastic bags, wire hangers, clamshell food containers ... even bowling balls.

However, such "wishful recycling" continues to undermine the recycling process by gumming up the sorting machines and creating more work for crews, who had to get rid of the items. Meanwhile, some non-recyclables still made it through the recycling stream, ending up in bales of cardboard, paper or sorted plastics.

That contamination no longer is acceptable to the world's largest market for recycling paper and plastics: China.

As of this year, China is rejecting imports of sorted paper and post-consumer plastics that exceed 0.5 percent contamination. That's almost impossible for most countries to meet. Despite Oregonians' passion for recycling, their "wishful recycling" has resulted in a contamination rate that averages from 8 percent to 13 percent, according to the state Department of Environmental Quality.



A recycling bin full of glass products sits among several for public use at the Astoria Transfer Station.

The DEQ said that with the Chinese market now closed, more than 10,000 tons of comingled materials have wound up in Oregon landfills this year.

That is less than 2 percent of all material collected for recycling. Still, Oregonians have to change their ways.

Jurisdictions that offer curbside recycling are now looking at raising collection fees, because they must pay companies to accept certain recyclables.

Plastic is a prime concern because different plastics must be recycled differently — if there even is a market for them. For example, plastic bags are recyclable, but not in curbside bins because they snarl the sorting machinery.

So what can we do?

- Pay attention to packaging and lifespan when making purchases. Strive to reuse whenever possible, instead of

discarding.

- Carry our own containers for water, coffee and other beverages instead of using disposable cups.

- Learn which materials can be recycled at curbside. Instead of assuming something is recyclable, we need to be realistic.

- Remember that some items can be taken to recycling depots that pop up around Eastern Oregon. These include plastic bags, shredded paper and certain metals.

- Make sure all recyclables, whether put on the curb or taken to a depot, are clean. For example, shredded paper taken to a recycling depot should not include shredded plastic credit cards. Neither should food scraps be put in with recycling.

Meanwhile, as individuals and as organizations, we must do all we can to encourage expansion of local, regional and U.S. markets for recycled materials. That means we should purchase more products made with recycled materials, and support corporations who are working to reduce waste.

That is a long-term process but ultimately a better solution than relying on other countries to welcome our garbage with open arms.

OTHER VIEWS

Why is Mueller handing off key cases?

Something has been going on with Robert Mueller's investigation of people thought to have played significant roles in the Trump-Russia affair. The special counsel, assigned to investigate "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump," has been farming out seemingly important parts of the investigation to offices outside his own.

In April, Mueller referred an investigation of close Trump associate Michael Cohen to federal prosecutors in New York. This month, the U.S. attorney in Washington — not Mueller — indicted Maria Butina on charges of being an unregistered Russian agent. And also this month, when Mueller charged 12 Russian intelligence officers with hacking Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton campaign offices, he immediately turned the case over to the Justice Department's National Security Division for prosecution.

Cohen is a key figure in theories of Trump-Russia collusion. In former British spy Christopher Steele's notorious dossier, Cohen was accused of holding secret talks with Russian officials in August 2016 to discuss "how deniable cash payments were to be made to hackers who had worked in Europe under Kremlin direction against the CLINTON campaign and various contingencies for covering up these operations and Moscow's secret liaison with the TRUMP team more generally."

If that's not collusion, nothing is. Such activities, if they occurred, would be at the center of Mueller's jurisdiction. And yet Mueller handed Cohen off to the Southern District of New York.

Butina figures in theories that a wealthy Russian banker "illegally funneled money to the National Rifle Association to help Donald Trump win the presidency," in the words of a McClatchy report from January.

Again, such activities would clearly be in Mueller's bailiwick.

Finally, the indictment of the 12 Russian intelligence agents goes to the very heart of Russian attempts to interfere with the U.S. presidential campaign, the investigation of which is Mueller's responsibility. Yet once Mueller indicted them, he handed the case over to the Justice Department.

What is going on? I asked a few former federal prosecutors if they saw any messages in Mueller's moves. The takeaway: These aren't encouraging



BYRON YORK
Comment

developments for those longing for a big collusion/conspiracy/coordination indictment from Mueller.

"I think it proves that little, if any, of what Mueller's team has generated so far is linked to the special counsel's mandate," said Former Prosecutor 1.

Some former prosecutors drew a distinction between the Cohen and Butina cases, in which Mueller handed off the investigation to others, and the 12 Russians case, in which Mueller made the indictment himself and then handed off the prosecution. That could be because Mueller realized that his team, staffed with investigators, could not manage a complex prosecution in the courtroom.

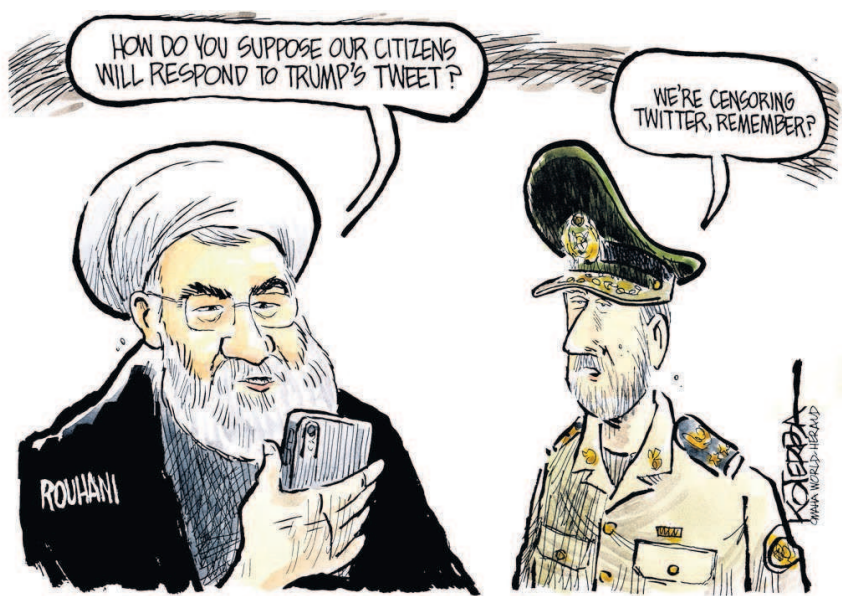
It has been widely observed that there is no way the 12 Russians — government intelligence officers located in Russia — will ever come to the United States for trial. "There is absolutely no chance any of the Russian officials charged will ever see the inside of an American courtroom," Andrew McCarthy, another former federal prosecutor, wrote in National Review. "The indictment is a strictly political document by which the special counsel seeks to justify the existence of his superfluous investigation."

Other legal types, including yet another Justice Department veteran, said moving the 12 Russians' case to a highly secretive part of the department is a good way to make the case disappear.

Taken together, none of that points to the big collusion/conspiracy/coordination indictment of Resistance dreams. Such an indictment might still be on the way, of course — no one on the outside has a full picture of what is going on inside Mueller's office — but the signs don't seem to be pointing toward it.

Finally, all the handed-off cases raise questions about whether a special prosecutor was needed at all. Mueller clearly felt there was no need for a special prosecutor to pursue Cohen or Butina — and one could argue that the Butina case, at least, was closer to Mueller's core mission than the Paul Manafort prosecution. And if the 12 Russians matter, a case that goes to the heart of the Trump-Russia affair, can be fairly tried by DOJ prosecutors, it's reasonable to ask: Why was a special counsel appointed in the first place?

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



YOUR VIEWS

Unites States is in peril, keeps turning back on allies

Every week at least two or more days I open my newspaper to more bad news related to my country and the interaction with our long-time allied nations. Our top executive is so often at verbal war with our allies. What is his problem? Is it his goal to cut us off from our free world allies?

Before the election he was touting Putin's fine qualities to the American citizens. Since then his interactions have gone back and forth to where I cannot keep up. Early on in his administration he sent his son-in-law to China. North Korea is another of his contacts which seemed to me to research possible ways he could expand his "empire," seeking a new frontier for his real estate holdings. All are Communist countries.

Our allies — democracies — have been of far less importance apparently. I'm sure the majority of Americans see it differently. We honor and appreciate our allies. Our southern allied neighbor, Mexico, has been treated with great disrespect. A wall on our shared border has been an insult from its first mention, as far as I'm concerned. If the wall is continued and completed, how soon will we hear the calls to tear it down? It will be a repeat of the legacy of the Berlin wall.

From the day the president announced his intention to run for president he didn't care which party he ran for — if necessary, I think I recall a new party would be considered. From the beginning of his campaign I've thought he viewed seeking the presidency as one of his reality shows, not true reality. I fear he sees himself as the writer, the producer, the director and the lead actor. The only role he does not take is regarding the financing. The U.S. Treasury/taxpayers get that part. I fear he

thinks if he doesn't like the script, he can tear it up and start over.

I'm truly frightened about the fate of my beloved country. Never have I been this way in all the previous terms of the president over my lifetime, which goes back to President Roosevelt's first term. Every week, or two or three, I wake up in the middle of the night because of the situation. Our country is in peril. I'm thinking we have a dictator, not a leader as a president is pledged to be.

We have three branches to our government for many very good reasons. The most crucial reason is there is no one-man rule. Our forefathers were very wise.

Darlene Abney
Pendleton

Loss of Larry O'Rourke will be felt in Pendleton

Larry O'Rourke left us with a smile. He did that during a life filled with service for his students at Blue Mountain Community College, his dedication to fellow citizens in Pendleton, and through his unwavering love of his family.

I met Larry through his daughter, who happens to live with her family across the street in our neighborhood. We instantly hit it off — Larry always had a smile and made me smile with his stories about Pendleton, flying, kids, and *The Newspaper* (the only paper in his mind, the *East Oregonian*). Oh, he could make fun of the paper where I worked, but I knew he was kidding. He loved reading about his beloved town and residents.

He truly cared about Pendleton and that, along with his smile, will be a loss felt by many folks, including me.

Skip Nichols
Walla Walla