

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Agriculture’s ‘youth movement’

Finding enough workers for the busy season is a challenge for many farms, which try everything from recruiting local workers to hiring H-2A visa workers from overseas.

A blueberry farm near Roseburg reminds us of the not-so-distant past, when farmers relied more on teenagers during the busiest times of the year. Paul and Sandy Norris, owners of Norris Blueberry Farms, hire 180 high school and college students each summer to work in the fields and the packing and shipping facility. They’ve relied on their home-grown “youth movement” for 20 years, and see it as a win-win for them for their employees.

“The youth who work here are absolutely amazing and resourceful,” Paul Norris told EO Media Group reporter Craig Reed. “They stay with the job until it is done. They learn responsibility. We have orders and we have to get them out. They have to stay with the job until it is done. The young adults know that and they respond very well.”

They pay the students based on their hard work. They start at minimum wage, but can receive more — retroactively — based on how hard they work and their attitude. The young

workers quickly come to understand how capitalism operates — hard work and a good attitude are handsomely rewarded.

It is a lesson many adults would also do well to learn.

The Norrises chose to rely on student workers when they started their farm two decades ago. Their first recruits were their three daughters — Amy, Carrie and Ellie — and their friends and acquaintances. From there they built a tradition of hiring local students.

As a result, the Norrises have a ready-made corps of reliable workers that return year after year. They hire itinerant crews for the picking, but all of the weighing, sorting, packing and shipping are done by their youth crews.

The low unemployment rate — 3.9 percent nationally — has put added pressure on many agricultural employers. Workers who previously did farm work are being drawn to construction and other year-round jobs, leaving many farms struggling to find enough workers.

With the unemployment rate for teenagers at 8.4 percent, farmers such as the Norrises have tapped into a ready labor market.

But there’s more to the job for the students than a healthy paycheck.



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

From left, Sterling Colley, Anthony Buck and Easton Thompson wait at Norris Blueberry Farms with electric pallet jacks to load a semi-truck trailer with blueberries. The farm has been hiring local young people to work in the packing barn for the last 20 years.

There’s the life lesson that hard word impresses on young people.

“You learn how to work hard here, you get an idea of what it takes to work in any company,” said Kristen Beebe, 22, who is in her fifth year at the farm and leads a crew of 15 youth in moving pallets. “You have to get along with people, to be able to talk with both superiors and people below you in efficient ways.”

To their credit, other farms and packing houses also hire young workers. Grass seed growers and other farmers hire students to drive swathers and combines to harvest their crops — and have for decades.

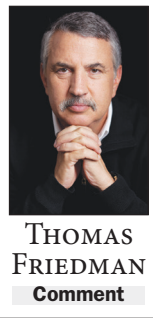
They know what the Norrises know. Treated and trained well, young workers will do a great job, spread the word to their friends and keep the ranks filled year after year.

OTHER VIEWS

What if Trump did actually shoot someone on Fifth Avenue?

President Donald Trump stopped his motorcade in Manhattan today, jumped out of his limousine and shot a man on Fifth Avenue who was shouting anti-Trump epithets. The shooting was recorded by the White House press pool as well as by dozens of bystanders with cellphones and by security cameras in the area. When asked for his reaction, House Speaker Paul Ryan said, “We will need more information than is available at this point.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said through pursed lips that he “was not going to comment on every up and down with this president.” House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes said he already had information indicating that the man whom Trump shot “worked for the Clinton Foundation and may have been a relative of former Hillary Clinton aide Huma Abedin.”



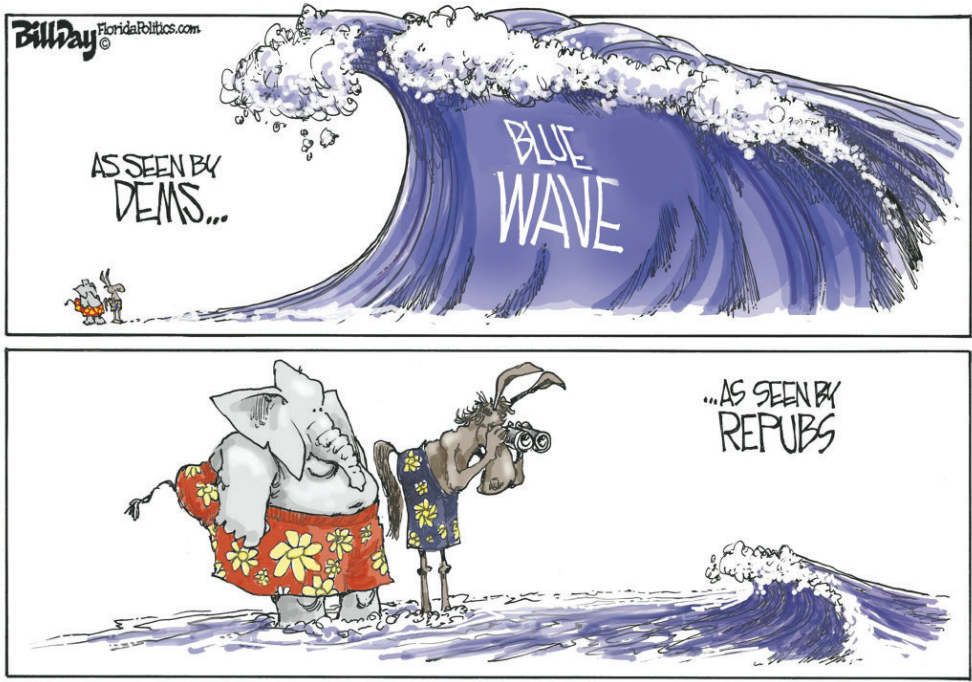
THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

Fox News did not cover Trump’s shooting at the top of its broadcast, which focused instead on the killing of an Iowa woman by an undocumented immigrant. Fox’s only reference to the fact that the president shot a man on Fifth Avenue was that “a New York City man died today when he ran right into a bullet fired by the president.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham quipped that “Trump shoots as well as he puts” and that this incident would not cause the South Carolina senator to cancel his coming golf round with the president at his Bedminster, New Jersey, course.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters that she was looking the other way when the shooting happened so she had no comment, adding: “I haven’t had a chance to discuss it with the president. I’ll get back to you if I have something. But the president has stated many times that he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and get away with it. So he’s just keeping a campaign promise. He did nothing wrong. There are no charges against him. And even though I have no comment, and he has no comment, we’ve commented on this extensively.”

Hours later, though, the president tweeted: “Actually, some people are saying that a man who looked a lot like Barack Obama did the shooting. I’m not saying that — but some people are. It also could have been somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds who fired that



PERSPECTIVES

shot. Like Rudy said: Truth is not truth — unless I say so.”

Jerry Falwell Jr., a top evangelical leader, announced that his movement would be holding a vigil this evening, praying that the president had not stressed himself too much by having to shoot a man on Fifth Avenue.

Falwell added, “This would never have happened if Jeff Sessions were doing his job.”

The day ended with Education Secretary Betsy DeVos declaring that the fact that the president could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue in broad daylight “only proves again why we need to arm all our schoolteachers.”

My biggest challenge in writing all of the above? Worrying that readers wouldn’t realize it was made up.

That’s because we all now know that Trump was right when he said he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and his supporters would stick with him. We’ve seen him get away with too much by now. No restraint on Trump will ever come from his party or his base — especially after the passing of John McCain. So save your breath. Trump will be restrained only if his party loses the

House or the Senate. That’s what is at stake in the midterm elections — so vote accordingly.

And for those Republican moderates, independents and suburban white women who voted for Trump in 2016 and are considering voting against GOP House and Senate candidates in November to put some limits on the president and show their disapproval at GOP lawmakers’ failure to act as an independent branch of government, let me describe the stakes in another way:

America, we all know, won the Cold War. Our values and economic system proved superior to Russia’s. But what is at stake in the 2018 midterms is who is going to win the post-Cold War.

Yes, that question is back on the table. Because what we are seeing in the behavior of Trump and his toadies in the GOP is the beginnings of the Russification of American politics. Vladimir Putin could still win the post-Cold War.

At the Cold War’s height, noted Marina Gorbis, executive director of the Institute for the Future and an immigrant from the Soviet Union, Americans took seriously

the notion that we had to serve “as a contrast” to the Russians.

Because the Soviets claimed to have built a worker’s paradise, it was important that we had strong unions, a strong middle class, less inequality and an adequate social safety net. The Soviets did not have the rule of law. So we had to have it more than ever.

“I came here from Russia in ’75,” Gorbis added, “and it was remarkable to me that in this society there were laws and norms and principles, and people abided by them. The idea that people actually paid their taxes was kind of remarkable to me.” In the Russia she grew up in, said Gorbis, “we did not have that; if there was a law, there was always a way to bribe and get around it.”

But with the Cold War now far back in our rearview mirror, Trump has not only insisted on bringing America closer to Putin’s Russia geopolitically, but also politically. This, despite the fact that our intelligence agencies and biggest internet companies have confirmed multiple times that Russia interfered in our 2016 election and continues to meddle.

Trump still refuses to show us his tax returns long after his “audit,” which can only mean he is hiding something. His campaign chairman Paul Manafort is a convicted tax cheat who was trying to keep Putin’s stooge in power in Ukraine. Trump’s lawyer Michael Cohen is another confessed tax cheat.

And the first two House Republicans to endorse Trump in 2016 — Duncan Hunter and Chris Collins — were both just indicted on corruption charges. They are hardly the first government officials to be arrested; Democrats have not been immune to fittings for handcuffs. But one has a stronger feeling than ever that with a moral vacuum at the heart of the Trump White House — and with the president assaulting the media and the judiciary on a regular basis, not unlike Putin — everything goes, so grab what you can, because no one’s looking. The cat’s away.

“The Russification of America under Trump, it’s not just about collusion, corruption and money laundering,” said Gorbis. “It is about his behavior” — crass language, simplistic slogans reminiscent of the Soviet rhetoric, use of terms such as “enemy of the people,” and his insistence on personal loyalty over loyalty to the Constitution or institutions.

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Thomas L. Friedman became the New York Times’ foreign affairs columnist in 1995 and has been awarded three Pulitzer prizes.

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