EAST OREGONIAN
OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Farmers must erase lines dividing agriculture

It's part of human nature to want to draw lines. We all use lines to create imaginary "communities."

It's us versus them. It's urban versus rural, and it's big versus small. We gravitate toward the communities with which we most identify. Conversely, we stay away from and criticize the communities we don't understand.

Ironically, social media, such as Facebook, was first seen as a way to erase those lines. We would all become "Facebook friends" and decide to get along.

In reality, the rants and misinformation that can be seen on social media and elsewhere online have done more to divide people than anything else. Pick a topic and social media and the internet are filled with vitriol about it.

Instead of unifying us, Facebook most often divides us.

It happens in agriculture, too, and we must reject it. We must reject the notion of drawing lines and splitting agriculture. It's not a matter of holding hands and singing "Kumbaya." It's a matter of survival.

EO file photo
Bins of fresh, organic peppers beckon shoppers at the Safeway store in Pendleton.

Large or small, organic or conventional, most farms face similar issues.

The web of regulations that hangs over farmers and ranchers is rarely specific to a large or small farm. Nor are water issues specific to a conventional or organic farm. Finding adequate labor is an issue common to any farms that need it.

When it comes down to it, all farms share far more issues than they don't.

David Granatstein recently retired from Washington State University as a sustainable agriculture specialist.

He remembers decades ago, when organic was viewed by many in agriculture as a "fringe" movement. Stereotypes proliferated of what an organic or conventional farmer was like.

Now, organic practices have been adopted by thousands of farmers, many of whom also grow conventional crops, depending on the market. Organic is one of many options farmers have as they follow market trends.

"My goal has always been to build bridges and help people see there are things they can learn from each other," Granatstein told *Capital Press* reporter Dan Wheat. "The world isn't black and white, but gray."

We agree.

The only thing drawing lines does is diminish the voice of agriculture. Politicians and regulators use the lack of a single voice to push rules and laws that might make sense in Portland or Seattle but not in rural areas.

Time and again, we see those who take advantage of the lines that have been drawn to work against all farmers. They know that if agriculture's house is divided they can push through regulations, such as high fees for water or reducing access to public land, that will impact all farmers and ranchers.

Ultimately, everyone involved in agriculture should be proud to be a part of a single group: "farmer."

OTHER VIEWS

The sycophant and the sociopath

MAUREEN DOWD
COMMENT

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump specializes in spectacular breakups.

First there was Ivana. Then there was Marla. Now comes trouble in paradise with Kim.

Last fall, Trump cooed that the North Korean dictator wrote him "beautiful letters" and "we fell in love," but then the president canceled their lunch date following their disappointing rendezvous in Hanoi.

Yet all the crazy tabloid splits and international spats seem pallid in comparison to the pathetic spectacle in Congress on Wednesday: a heartbroken ex publicly and bitterly processing his relationship with Trump.

This time, it wasn't just lust, betrayal and secrets splayed across Page Six.

This time, it was in Congress, part of an investigation that could lead to legal jeopardy for the Trumps or impeachment for the president.

In his testimony, Michael Cohen called himself a "fool" when it came to Trump.

"I ignored my conscience and acted loyal to a man when I should not have," Cohen said. A fool for love, held in thrall by Trump. How could anyone be held in thrall by such a sleazy goofball, much less offer to take a bullet for him or make 500 threats on his behalf?

"It seems unbelievable that I was so mesmerized by Donald Trump that I was willing to do things for him that I knew were absolutely wrong," said Cohen in his "Goodfellas" accent, adding that being around the "icon" was "intoxicating."

"Mr. Trump is an enigma," Cohen said. "He is complicated, as am I."

Actually, Trump is simple, grasping for money, attention and fame.

The enigma about Trump is why he cut off his lap dog so brutally that Cohen fell into the embrace of Robert Mueller and New York federal prosecutors. Trump is often compared to a mob boss, but Michael Corleone would never turn on a loyal capo, only on one who had crossed him.

The portrait Cohen drew of Trump was not surprising. It has been apparent for some time that the president is a con man, racist, cheat and liar. (See: Jared Kushner security clearance.)

What was most compelling about the congressional hearing was the portrait of the sadistic relationship between the sycophant and the sociopath.

Cohen told the House Oversight Committee that working for Trump had made him feel that he was "involved in something greater than yourself — that you were somehow changing the world."

Threatening to sue people and take away their livelihoods or ruin their reputations isn't exactly Greenpeace or Doctors Without Borders.

But Cohen was chugging Trump Kool-Aid. He saw himself as Trump's protector, the thug's thug.

In late 2017, he appeared to get misty while talking to Vanity Fair's Emily Jane Fox about Trump: "One man who wants to do so much good with so many detractors against him needs support."

He vowed he would never walk away from Trump, no matter what.

A year ago, he even shopped around a book that was meant to be a rebuttal to Michael Wolff's "Fire and Fury," pitched as the "family fix-it guy" and titled "Trump Revolution: From the Tower to the White House, Understanding Donald J. Trump."

He understands Trump now.

A stung Trump went on a tweet storm Friday morning, bringing up that book proposal, calling it a "'love letter to Trump' manuscript," and noting: "Written and submitted long after Charlottesville and Helsinki, his phony reasons for going rogue. Book is exact opposite of his fake testimony, which now is a lie!"

Unlike many Republican TV commentators who can wash away past sins about Sarah Palin and the Iraq War — and get a big payday and liberal love — by trashing Trump, Cohen is not destined for reputation rehab.

The problem in a nutshell, as Trump biographer Timothy O'Brien once told *The Times*, was that Michael Cohen wasn't Roy Cohn. The latter Trump lawyer was the one who helped shape Trump's character or lack thereof, drumming in the win-at-all-costs mentality Donald had learned at his father's knee.

Trump, who once bleated "Where's my Roy Cohn?" in his anger about Jeff Sessions recusing himself, wanted a lawyer who was whip-smart, amoral, ruthless and predatory.

Cohen was merely Renfield to Trump's Dracula, gratefully eating insects and doing the fiend's bidding.

Trump used Cohen for dirty deeds done dirt cheap, as AC/DC sang.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Trump showed up late to Cohen's son's bar mitzvah and then made a belittling speech about how he had come only because Cohen had begged him and everyone around him.

The Times revealed last April that Trump had regularly threatened to fire Cohen and quoted Roger Stone saying that Trump mocked Cohen for overpaying for Trump real estate.

With a few exceptions in his inner circle and with family, Trump doesn't give loyalty or deserve it. That's why Republicans on the Hill who so obsequiously stand by him will eventually learn it wasn't worth it, just as Cohen warned them.

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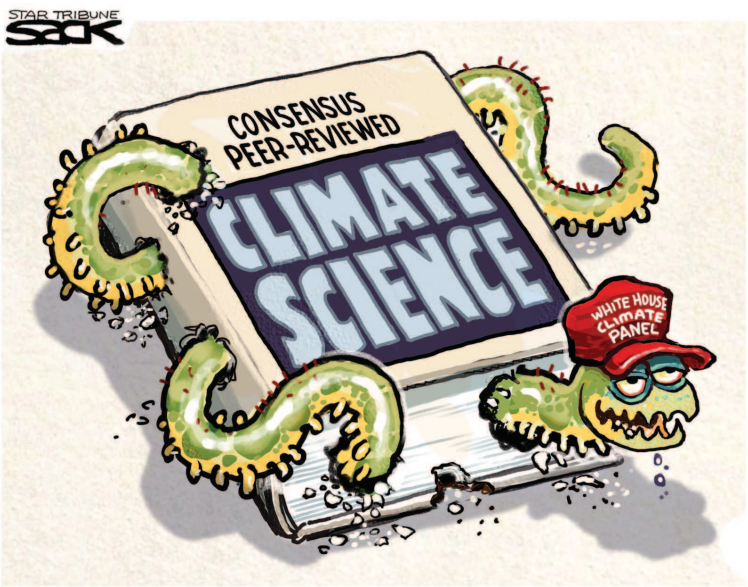
Maureen Dowd is a columnist for the New York Times.



YOUR VIEWS

Former Gov. McCall foresaw downfall of Republican Party

There are a few of us who were around when Republican Tom McCall was governor of Oregon. You will remember he was instrumental in the passage of the bottle bill and other important Oregon laws.

What I liked was his passionate support of land, water, wildlife and other important environmental measures.

As early as the 1950s, McCall was encouraging Oregonians to care for their "beautiful state." We have a governor in Kate Brown who also cherishes Oregon and its beautiful landscape.

It's unfortunate we have a president who sees little beauty, but much profit, in the monuments, national parks, coal mining, cutting of the forests, and taking the wildlife habitat. He denies climate change and appears ignorant of our laws and constitutional freedoms.

I think of a remark Governor McCall made when speaking at the Republican Governors Association meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1976, after the elections: "The Republican party has made so many fatal mistakes that it finds itself an endangered species at graveside."

If the Republicans were in that shape in 1976, where would most people find them today? Be honest.

Dr. Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

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