

O EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
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WYATT HAUPT JR.
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OUR VIEW

Tip of the Hat,
kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to the Heppner Mustangs and Nixyaawii Golden Eagles, our newest state champions.

The Heppner girls peaked at the right time, as they say, knocking off higher-ranked teams each step of the way through the tournament to bring home their first title since 1986.

The Nixyaawii boys were early favorites this year, outrunning and outgunning opponents all season long. But nothing is a given at the

state tournament, and the Golden Eagles rose to the big stage without hesitation.

We're proud of any athletic team that puts in a hard season of work, but seeing that work result in a state title deserves a special place of honor.

A kick in the pants to Facebook for its repeated failures to protect users' privacy, and now its attempts to position itself as a company that cares.

We've learned by now that wher-

ever we go on the internet, especially on social media, will be tracked, downloaded, dissected and turned into market research for somebody. It's no surprise anymore to go shopping on Amazon for a set of golf clubs and suddenly find ads for golf clubs in our Facebook feed.

But revelations that Facebook shared the messages of its users with Netflix, Spotify and other big vendors show it's not really serious about keeping personal communications of customers private. Everything has a price tag.

It's a good reminder that if you're not paying for a service, then you're the product.

A tip of the hat to the effort to require tobacco licenses for retailers in Umatilla County, and to Pilot Rock for being the first city council to

endorse the rule.

There are times when government oversight of business is unfairly detrimental to that business. This is not one of those cases.

Much like the health inspector's role in making sure restaurants are storing food at safe temperatures and pools are maintaining healthy levels of chemicals, the county should be able to make sure the serious health hazard that are cigarettes are staying out of the hands of minors.

About a quarter of retailers in Umatilla County sold to minors in 2017-18, proving that there is a problem. And studies show most adult smokers started as teenagers.

Oregon's decision to raise the smoking age to 21 was a good one. Now we need to make sure that rule is followed.

YOUR VIEWS

City expenses adding up

As Pendleton's mayor recently put it, running the city is very expensive and costs just keep going up. Besides the required costs for public safety (police and fire protection), and maintenance of our infrastructure (streets, public buildings and water/sewer systems), our city management team has decided that "being everything to everyone" is the proper approach to effective management.

Well, something has got to give since this concept of "robbing Peter to pay Paul" management style has left our city infrastructure in pretty sorry shape with the city borrowing money at a record pace, and current operations have proven unsustainable.

Although it's been common knowledge for quite some time there were major problems with our streets, city management has been slow to act, citing the lack of adequate funding while simultaneously redirecting their energy to such essential projects as relocating the Eighth Street Bridge to Main Street, renovation of the Rivoli Theater, the unnecessary donation of \$150,000 to the Farm II project, providing financial support to the Pendleton Downtown Association, the purchase of the riverbank property out in Riverside, and supporting a program to block even minimal private housing development along the north bank of the Umatilla River. The unnecessary property giveaway to the Pendleton Heights developer is the latest example of bad decisions from City Hall.

The airport asks for a new hangar, and the city wastes no time in giving the thumbs-up. The residents ask for better streets. The response? We'll try to get you a proposal, not a solution, in a couple months when the budget is ready for approval, already admitting the \$1.2 million proposal will not be nearly enough.

Two of the biggest losers the city has are the Vert Auditorium and the Olney Cemetery. Is it time to get rid of one or both? These are the kinds of tough decisions City Hall has to make since effective management of either has been nonexistent.

**Rick Rohde
Pendleton**

OTHER VIEWS

Ilhan Omar knows exactly what she is doing

There's an old joke about upper-class British anti-Semitism: It means someone who hates Jews more than is strictly necessary. Ilhan Omar, the freshman representative from Minnesota, more than meets the progressive American version of that standard.

Like many self-described progressives, Omar does not like Israel. That's a shame, not least because Israel is the only country in its region that embraces the sorts of values the Democratic Party claims to champion. When was the last time there was a gay-pride parade in Ramallah, a women's rights march in Gaza, or an opposition press in Tehran? In what Middle Eastern country other than Israel can an attorney general indict a popular and powerful prime minister on corruption charges?

But America is a free country, and Omar is within her rights to think what she will about Israel or any other state. Contrary to a self-serving myth among Israel's detractors, there's rarely a social or reputational penalty for publicly criticizing Israeli policies today. It's ubiquitous on college campuses and commonplace in editorial pages. And contrary to some recent comments from Sen. Elizabeth Warren, no serious person claims criticism of Israel is ipso facto anti-Semitic. My last column called on Benjamin Netanyahu to resign. Last I checked, the Anti-Defamation League has not denounced me.

Omar, however, isn't just a critic of Israel. As the joke has it, her objections to the Jewish state go well beyond what's strictly necessary.

"Israel has hypnotized the world," she tweeted in 2012. "May Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel." Last month, she wrote that U.S. support for Israel was "all about the Benjamins baby." A few weeks after that, she told an audience in D.C. that "I want to talk about the political influence in this country that says it is OK to push for allegiance to a foreign country." Confronted with criticism about the remark from her fellow Democrat



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Nita Lowey, she replied: "I should not be expected to have allegiance/pledge support to a foreign country in order to serve my country in Congress or serve on committee."

Under intense pressure, Omar recanted those first two tweets. But she's standing her ground on her more recent comments. It's a case study in the ease with which strident criticism of Israel shades into anti-Semitism.

For those who don't get it, claims that Israel "hypnotizes" the world, or that it uses money to bend others to its will, or that its American supporters "push for allegiance to a foreign country," repackaged falsehoods commonly used against Jews for centuries. People can debate the case for Israel on the merits, but those who support the state should not have to face allegations that their sympathies have been purchased, or their brain hijacked, or their loyalties divided.

It's also a case study in the insidious cunning and latent power of anti-Jewish bigotry — proof that anti-Semitism is not, after all, merely the socialism of fools. Omar, I suspect, knows exactly what she is doing. She pleads ignorance when it suits her, saying she was unaware that her references to hypnosis and "Benjamins" might be considered offensive. Or she wraps herself in the flag, sounding almost like Pat Buchanan when he called Congress "Israeli-occupied" territory. Or she invokes free speech, telling Lowey "our democracy is built on debate" — as if the debate she wants to force is as innocuous as a dispute over a spending bill.

As the criticism of Omar mounts, it becomes that much easier for her to seem like the victim of a smear campaign, rather than the instigator of a smear. The secret of anti-Semitism has always rested, in part, on creating the perception that the anti-Semite is, in fact, the victim of the Jews and their allies. Just which powers-that-be are orchestrating that campaign? Why are they afraid of open debate? And what about all the bigotry on

their side?

The goal is not to win the argument, at least not anytime soon. Yet merely by refusing to fold, Omar stands to shift the range of acceptable discussion — the so-called Overton window — sharply in her direction. Ideas once thought of as intellectually uncouth and morally repulsive have suddenly become merely controversial. It's how anti-Zionism has abruptly become an acceptable point of view in reputable circles. It's why anti-Semitism is just outside the frame, bidding to get in.

House Democrats are now wrangling over the text of a resolution that was initially intended as a condemnation of anti-Semitism, with Omar as its implicit target. At this writing it is mired in predictable controversy, as members of the party's progressive wing and black caucus rally to Omar's side in the first open challenge to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's leadership. In the Senate, the presidential hopefuls Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders and Warren have weighed in with statements that painted Omar as a victim of Islamophobia — which she is — without mentioning that she's also a purveyor of anti-Semitic bigotry — which she surely is as well.

It says something about the progressive movement today that it has no trouble denouncing Republican racism, real and alleged, every day of the week but has so much trouble calling out naked anti-Semitism in its own ranks. This is how progressivism becomes Corbyнизм. It's how the left finds its own path toward legitimizing hate. It's how self-declared anti-fascists develop their own forms of fascism.

If Pelosi can't muster a powerful and unequivocal resolution condemning anti-Semitism, then Omar will have secured her political future and won a critical battle for the soul of the Democratic Party. At that point, the days when American Jews can live comfortably within the Democratic fold will be numbered.

Bret Stephens is a columnist for the New York Times.