

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Countries want our business, does Congress want them to have it?

Farm groups are lauding a new agricultural trade deal the administration has reached with Japan.

During the 2016 election President Donald Trump campaigned against trade deals that he said put U.S. producers at a disadvantage. Once elected he made good on his promise to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was the pact regulating trading among 12 Pacific Rim nations.

Trump said he would replace TPP with bilateral trade deals.

The new deal is good news for U.S. farmers and ranchers. Japan represents a \$14 billion market for U.S. farm products. Without this deal, American agriculture would face significantly higher tariffs than competitors that are a part of the 11-party successor agreement to TPP.

According to the deal, Japan will reduce tariffs on products valued at \$2.9 billion in stages. Among the products benefiting from this



President Donald Trump meets with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Inter-Continental Barclay New York hotel during the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 25, 2019, in New York. They announced a new agricultural trade agreement.

Evan Vucci/IMC Image Credit

enhanced access will be fresh and frozen beef and pork.

Tariffs will be eliminated immediately on more than \$1.3 billion of U.S. farm products including, for example, almonds, blueberries, cranberries, walnuts, sweet corn, grain sorghum, food supplements, broccoli and prunes.

Other products valued at \$3.0 billion will benefit from staged tariff elimination. This group of products includes, for example, wine, cheese and whey, ethanol, frozen poultry, processed pork, fresh cherries, beef offal, frozen potatoes, oranges, egg products and tomato paste.

This deal with Japan underscores

two obvious points that make bilateral agreements possible. Our trading partners want our goods. The Japanese, for example, have sought out wheat produced in the Pacific Northwest. More importantly, our partners are anxious to get their goods into the United States, the largest economy in the world.

While we don't pretend to understand the Trump negotiating strategy, and aren't sure there is a strategy, new trade deals are being hammered out.

The administration says its deal with Japan doesn't substantially change U.S. law, so it doesn't require congressional approval.

That's good news, if it's true. Congress hasn't done anything to ratify the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement announced a year ago.

While it's clear other countries want our business, it's not clear Congress is interested in giving it to them.

OTHER VIEWS



Flu season looms, so get a shot

Albany Democrat-Herald

We've turned the calendar into October, which means it's time to fully confront the rites of autumn: raking leaves, loading up on pumpkin spice (to include, apparently, in everything edible for the next two months) and making your appointment for an influenza vaccination.

Experts said last week that, while it's too early to know for sure what the prospects are for this year's flu season, the best way to boost your odds is to get a flu shot, and it's not too early to do that. The good news is that this year's flu season doesn't appear to be off to an early start, said Dr. Daniel Jernigan, flu chief at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nevertheless, a review of the last two flu seasons may well increase your desire to get vaccinated: We've been through a pair of rough ones. Last year, as you might recall, a new strain of the influenza virus started up at about the same time as the first wave of illnesses was winding down. The result was one of the longest influenza seasons on record. The year before wasn't exactly a picnic, either: That season marked the highest death toll from the flu in decades, according to an Associated Press story.

Part of the problem the last couple of seasons was that the flu vaccine those years turned out not to be a particularly good match for the viruses in circulation. To some extent, this is because concocting each year's vaccine is a bit of educated guess: Scientists need to be able to predict, some six months in advance, which particular strains of the virus will be in circulation. Some year's guesses are better than others.

But another issue is at work as well: Most of today's vaccine is produced by growing flu virus in chicken eggs, a 70-year-old technology. One big downside of the technology is that it takes too long to whip up a different

vaccine to battle a surprise strain. Last week, in a bit of news that might have been overshadowed by other news out of Washington, the Trump administration urged a renewed effort to modernize production. Assuming that the administration follows through, there's no doubt that researchers would welcome a bump in federal funding.

It might even help with work that's taking place here in Oregon. A fascinating recent story in The Oregonian outlined efforts by Jonah Sacha, a vaccine expert at Oregon Health & Science University, to create a universal flu vaccine — a one-time shot that would successfully guard against all versions of the flu. It's a remarkably difficult goal, since the influenza virus is notorious for its ability to constantly change, but Sacha's work is showing enough promise that his lab recently collected a \$1.7 million grant.

But even if everything goes perfectly, Sacha's vaccine won't be ready for at least another five years.

In the meantime, your best defense this influenza season is to get vaccinated. Even if this year's vaccine turns out to be not a particularly good match for this year's flu strain, the vaccination can be helpful: Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University and the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases said that people who get vaccinated and still get sick can expect a milder illness, and a lower risk of pneumonia, hospitalization or death. (The latter isn't an idle concern: The flu kills about 24,000 Americans on average every year, the CDC says.)

As for the rest of the season's precautions against the flu, you know the drill: Cover your coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands frequently during flu season. (A recent study showed washing is more effective than hand sanitizers.) And, if you do get sick, stay home: It's not true that misery loves company, and it's especially true during flu season.

Climate teen Greta Thunberg is a political pawn

Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who has become the face of the climate wars, reminds me of another child I saw dominate international debate: Elian Gonzalez.

Years ago, I watched as that little boy got sucked into political posturing. On one side, which initially included me, were the people who thought this child who had almost drowned in a desperate attempt to come to America should be reunited with his father, a Castro loyalist. On the other side, to which I ultimately gravitated, there were those who wanted this child to live in freedom.

As we all know, Gonzalez was sent back to his home country, and he is still well-known today. He also joined the Communist Party as a teenager. It's hard to say how that would look in the eyes of his mother, who gave her life so he could escape the regime he now supports.

Regardless of where you thought Gonzalez should have ended up, it's clear he was used by forces greater than himself. The 5-year-old became hostage to political interests that had stewed for generations. Those who said they cared for his welfare might have even been sincere. But there's no question they were also motivated by more selfish, diametrically opposed purposes: to duel over communism. Elian Gonzalez was not the first child to be used by adults, and he won't be the last.

In fact, we now we have another famous child whose value rests in her ability to be manipulated: Greta Thunberg. Over the past year, she has captivated the attention of the Pope, diplomats, and even Twitter-crazy presidents. Last week, Thunberg addressed the United Nations where she launched an angry attack against the delegates: "People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are at the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

President Trump was not impressed, and observed, tongue in twit: "She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future."

Others were not quite as coy, refer-

ring to Thunberg's Asperberg's diagnosis as a "mental illness" and mocking her passion as misplaced. On the other hand, she's being considered for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Like Gonzalez, Thunberg is being used by people with an agenda — also like the children of Parkland who have allowed themselves to become go-to spokespersons for gun control. Don't get me wrong, I strongly support any methods to reduce the bloodshed of mass shootings. I was also very vocal in my desire to keep Gonzalez in a democratic society, after initially sympathizing with his father. We cannot divorce politics from our personal emotions — they are as intertwined as the double helix of our DNA.

But I am ashamed to see how often we force children to the front lines in these culture wars, using them as human shields — analogous to the

way terrorists use babies to absorb and deflect injuries intended for them alone. You might be outraged that I would put gun control activists, anti-communists, or climate activists in the same sentence as terrorists, but the principle of using children to make our points is an old and effective one, regardless of the underlying agenda.

Adults may think that by putting children front and center, they are either shaming their opponents into silence, or underlining the urgency of their crusades by exposing how grown-ups are ruining the future for the next generation. Greta Thunberg said as much when she accused the UN delegates of stealing "my dreams and my childhood with your empty words." It's hard to look at a child and not feel that there are some burdens they should be spared.

Another child who became the face of a movement almost lost her life, education activist Malala Yousafzai. While I praise her engagement and honor her courage, I have come to the conclusion that she, too, is a victim of adult crusades. Society should fight battles for our children, not on their backs.

It is not the adults at the UN who stole Greta Thunberg's childhood. It's all of us.

Christine Flowers is a syndicated freelance columnist.



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