

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Follow the FFA into the light

If you follow the news, it's easy to feel a bit dispirited — the pandemic, inflation, political discord.

But, sometimes there's an item that provides a bit of much-needed light.

The National FFA Convention and Expo returned to Indianapolis this week as a live event, having been conducted virtually last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. What could be more uplifting than thousands of positive young people gathering to celebrate their achievements and affirm their future?

When EO Media Group editorialized on the FFA convention in 2011, it was the height of the "Occupy Wall Street" protests. Occupy movement protesters believed large banks, corporations and the wealthiest 1% of Americans are working in concert against the economic interests of the remaining 99%. Protests in a number of cities devolved into criminality.

A lot has happened since the FFA last met in person. We are struck by the similarities between 2011 and the year just past. Actors of all stripes have participated in "peaceful protests" that have strained comity and have run counter to the country's founding principles.

We find that what we said comparing FFA'ers and protesters in 2011 also applies today.

"The conventioners have not encamped in the public square. They have not disrupted the flow of traffic or commerce. They have not defecated on police cars. They have not defaced any public or private property.

"They have made no demands on the government, or on any other person or institution. Their creed places the onus for their own happiness and success on themselves. They are self-reliant and self-determined.

"They understand that success is not a zero-sum game, that one person's prosperity does not come at the expense of another's. They understand that their success is proportionate to the sweat and toil they themselves exert.

"They do not dwell on that which they cannot do, or on those things that they do not have. They seek to always better themselves.

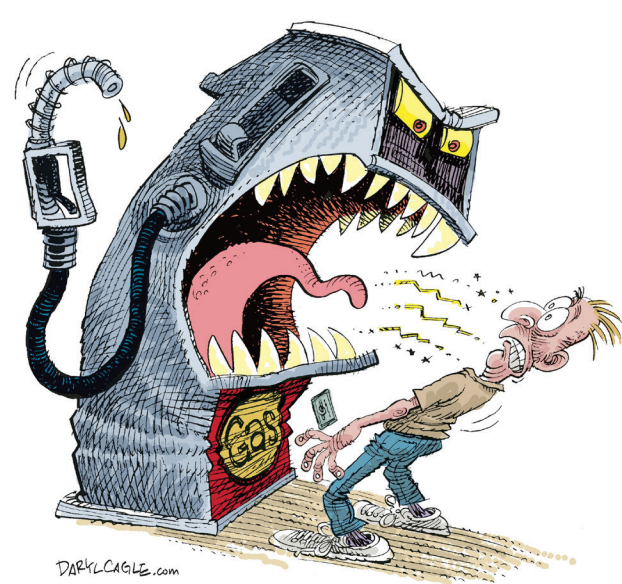
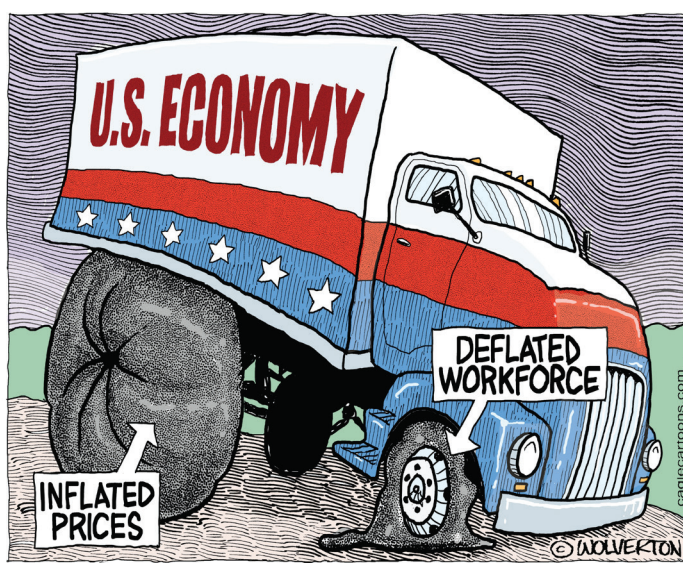
"They know that the American dream is alive, and is born by one's deeds not by one's demands on others."

Follow their lead and your faith will be restored.

EDITORIALS: Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Wallowa County Chieftain editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Wallowa County Chieftain.

LETTERS: The Wallowa County Chieftain welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

SEND LETTERS TO: editor@wallowa.com, or via mail to Wallowa County Chieftain, 209 NW 1st St. Enterprise, OR 97828



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Action, not wishes, are the solution to climate change

I wish the climate was not changing. I wish there was no drought causing gigantic wildfires to burn forests, rangelands, houses and towns. I wish the polar ice was not melting, causing wildlife to be decimated and raising the ocean levels endangering our coastlines. I wish the ocean temperatures were not becoming too warm to sustain fish and sea creatures. I wish the hurricanes and tornadoes along the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf of Mexico were not becoming worse, causing almost total destruction across huge areas. I wish we did not need to be concerned about snowpack in the Wallawas. I wish millions of refugees around the world were not desperately trying to escape starvation and the ruin of their homelands.

In a conversation last week, I expressed concern about the changing climate and was met with the typical put-down: "Oh, well, the climate has always changed ... there was the ice age ..." and "it doesn't mean that humans are responsible for the changing climate."

Being a former teacher, I started to explain the scientific facts involved and that the preponderance of scientists say that the changing climate is due to human behavior. But I stopped and went on about my business because I was obviously being ignored.

So I am sad, not because someone will not listen to me, but because too many people refuse to pay attention to scientists. Last week, three scientists in their 80s and 90s were awarded the Nobel Prize in physics. They had spent their lives studying and observing climate change and a variety of scientific disciplines and related their observations to human behavior.

Almost all credible scientists understand and share their knowledge about climate change and that because some of those issues are caused by human behavior, some can be changed by humans. There are some changes we can make so that the planet can sustain life beyond

2050. I have made some changes in my personal lifestyle and I am willing to continue to accept more changes. But it would take everyone to be willing to make changes in their lives, not just a few, for our great-grandchildren to have air to breathe, clean water to drink and agriculture to sustain life.

Wishing it were not true is not a solution. An unsubstantiated belief that climate change is unreal does not keep it from happening. It is late, but we can save our planet if we get to work. Please do not take my word for it. Read and find out for yourselves.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

River Democracy Act is another government land grab

Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley have cosponsored this bill which has the potential to add 4,700 miles of Oregon waterways to the Wild and Scenic Rivers list. This would be the length of the Mighty Mississippi and Missouri combined. Yes, this would be quite a remarkable achievement, but it needs to be asked, "Is this necessary?"

What more protection is needed? Our public lands, which include these waterways are protected by numerous government agencies that are aided by countless NGOs (nongovernment organizations). No project moves forward without an approval stamp from the NGOs (to name just a few — Nature Conservancy, Wild Earth Guardians, Oregon Natural Desert Association or Center for Biological Diversity). Just recently, the Center for Biological Diversity used its weapon of relentless lawsuits to halt a project in the Ochoco National Forest. These extremist NGOs use litigation as a very effective "tool of intimidation."

Access and utilization of the natural resources our public lands provide has decreased with the Wilderness Act and

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We have ridden a wave of continued land grabs under the guise of preserving natural conditions.

The River Democracy Act is one of the most abusive overrides we have witnessed, plus it's an insult to what "wild and scenic" was intended, "protection and enhancement of outstanding remarkable values." Protections exist presently.

D.M. Ballard
Baker City

Heartbroken by unwelcome feeling

My family lives in Wallowa County, has for 100-plus years. It's always been home. I loved the small town feel. People were kind and welcoming. Even if I hadn't been in the county in years I always felt welcome.

In the last few years I have not felt welcome. I don't want to visit. Going into businesses I get dirty looks and sassy attitudes. I always shop local. It's hard when you are not welcome. Your lack of recognition doesn't mean I am not a local; that I don't belong.

Everyone seems to hate the tourists. Without them businesses would die. I used to invite my friends to visit. I no longer do. I don't want them treated poorly.

Recently in Joseph, I ordered pizza, went to pick it up. My nieces were with me. It was busy. No big deal, we were not in a hurry, just happy we didn't have to cook. We patiently waited, wearing masks. Everyone in there was giving us dirty looks. We clearly didn't "belong." The server was rude. We got our pizzas and left. In the car my niece asked, "why were those people looking at us like that?"

That broke my heart. This isn't an isolated experience. I have sisters who would live in the county, but hate the way local people treat them. It's awful to see the way things are going. Maybe it's too late, but I can hope for change.

Deb Kale
Pasco, Washington