

## GUEST EDITORIAL

Carbon tax  
post-mortem

## Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

What's frustrating for some about the failure of a Democratic supermajority to pass a cap and trade bill in Oregon is the belief that they were right and the public was misled and undermined.

"Hours from passing bold climate action, it all went to hell in Oregon. What happened? What's next?" wrote Renew Oregon, a coalition of groups that backed passage of failed House Bill 2020.

They blamed the failure on the walkout of Senate Republicans.

They blamed businesses for having the gall to challenge the bill.

They blamed "Senate leadership." The Senate is led by Peter Courtney, D-Salem.

As was reported before, though, and expanded on Monday in the Salem Reporter, Democrats themselves had major doubts about the legislation. There would not have been enough majority party votes to pass the bill even if Senate Republicans had declined to walk out.

There were legitimate concerns about the bill. HB 2020 was packed with social engineering. It would have extracted hundreds of millions of dollars from people and businesses and given it to government to decide how to restructure Oregon. That could be a way to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices caused by the carbon bill on low-income people. That could be a way to use revenues to incentivize people to buy more electric cars.

But the state's performance has been a poor advertisement for its capacity for social engineering, let alone more basic functions. The failure of the state's Business Energy Tax Credit is not something the public will forget quickly. Then add on the state's blunders in launching a health care marketplace and the heart-wrenching mistakes the state has made in caring for its most vulnerable children. There are very good reasons that the public questions the state's ability to accomplish difficult tasks.

Legislative leaders could have designed HB 2020 to be revenue neutral, so all the revenue raised by the tax would have been automatically returned as cuts in other taxes or just given back to Oregonians. Of course, that would suffer opposition, too. It's a better option, though, than Gov. Kate Brown's plan to perhaps use her executive power to install a carbon tax regime without support from the Legislature.



## Trump has let down farmers

By Anthony Pahnke

Some two-thirds of the nation's farmers cast their votes for Donald Trump in 2016, as did a similar percentage of non-farmers in rural, small-town America. They entrusted him to confront burdensome regulation, lower taxes, and improve trade.

But Trump has fallen far short of their expectations, offering piecemeal solutions to matters that require bold leadership and creativity.

At the time of the election, farm incomes were already in decline. Now, while forecasts for 2019 show an improvement over 2018's 12-year low, this increase still places farmers at approximately half of what they received in 2014. Meanwhile, in Wisconsin and elsewhere, dairy farmers continue to exit the industry in record numbers due to low prices and overproduction, and trade disputes that have depressed corn and soy prices.

Trump did not create the crisis in farm country, but his administration's policies are woefully inadequate to address it. Looking closer at the data on farm income helps illustrate the underlying crisis in rural America.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's figures are divided between on- and off-farm sources of income. Concerning

on-farm sources, average incomes have remained stagnant since 2014.

Yes, that's right — income from activities directly related to farming did not increase at all during the past five years, across all sectors. The USDA says this has resulted in more than half of farms having to rely on off-farm sources of income to continue.

Furthermore, of the approximately 2 million farms that remain in operation, 105,453 of these account for a whopping 75% of all sales, according to the 2017 agricultural census. That farmers need to get a second or even a third job to keep working should strike Americans as unacceptable.

This dismal reality in rural America calls for innovative leadership. That has not come from Trump. Instead, he has, on two occasions, provided bailouts to farmers, mostly to make up for losses that he caused.

Many small and medium-sized farms have received one-time payments of \$10,000, which do little to offset the years of declining income and increasing debt. Meanwhile, four large national operators have each received handouts in excess of \$1 million.

During a fundraising appearance in Milwaukee in mid-July, Trump

proclaimed that his prowess at utilizing tariffs and cutting trade deals had pushed the nation's farmers "over the hump." But his glowing report was soundly contradicted two weeks later by Wisconsin's senior U.S. senator, Ron Johnson, a conservative Republican and usual Trump ally.

"No, they're suffering," Johnson said of the state's farmers. "The trade wars are not helping that whatsoever."

The situation is not hopeless. An emergency floor price of \$20 per 100 pounds of milk could be established for family-scale dairy farmers. Similarly, the proposal for parity pricing would offset the costs that grain farmers are experiencing.

Some farmers' advocates are calling for congressional hearings on the state of rural America, to highlight the negative effects of corporate concentration in most farm sectors and the need for anti-trust law enforcement.

Considering proposals like these, not periodically cutting checks, is the real way to address rural America's current crisis.

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## 'Yesterday' makes Beatles' music even better

Never had I sat in a movie theater as the end credits rolled and felt the need — except the sensation was in fact much closer to a compulsion — to call somebody and try to explain why the film I had just watched affected me so profoundly.

Then I went and saw "Yesterday."

And as soon as I got home from the Eltrym — before I had even washed the popcorn grease from my fingers or relieved the inevitable pressure after sucking down soda from a container big enough to slop pigs — I dialed my dad.

He introduced me to The Beatles, is the thing.

There is no one else I would have considered phoning first.

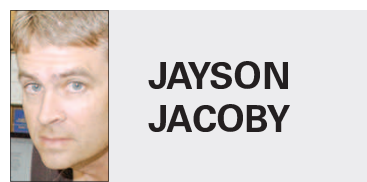
Had I grown up in a home where Haggard and Jennings were revered, or Bach and Chopin, rather than Lennon and McCartney, things might well have turned out another way.

My dad had acquired a considerable number of vinyl albums during the 1960s, and when I was a boy I whiled away hours sitting in front of the piece of antique wooden furniture — I have no idea what to call it, except hulking — where he stored the LPs.

It's an eclectic collection, ranging from girl groups such as The Shirelles to garage rock (The Kingsmen) to psychedelia (The Doors) to folk rock (The Mamas & Papas).

But from my earliest memory of examining these artifacts — as indeed they always seemed to me, born in 1970 — I fixated on The Beatles.

I memorized every facet of their



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records — the iconic cover photo of "Meet The Beatles," with the right side of all four lads' faces in shadow, the strangely elongated picture on "Rubber Soul," the inexplicable, to my innocent eyes, conglomeration of images on "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band."

(My dad, alas, was saddled with the inferior American albums put out by Capitol, which plucked tracks from multiple original British releases to create concoctions such as "Yesterday... and Today" and "Beatles '65." Not until Sgt. Pepper's, release in June 1967, the month my parents were married, was the band able to exert its control and mandate that its records would henceforth be identical on both sides of the Atlantic.)

But of course it is the music that matters most.

Those songs — all those songs. No repertoire is so known or so beloved.

Like many millions of others — many of whom didn't share my experience of growing up in a home where The Beatles were ubiquitous — these tunes are so familiar to my ears, so ingrained, that it is all but impossible to imagine things were ever different.

I would not have believed that a movie could heighten my appreciation of, and love for, the music that John, Paul, George and Ringo

created during a period — 1962 to 1970 — that today seems inconceivably brief.

Then I went and saw the film "Yesterday."

Its conceit is so simple, and so compelling, that it surprises me, in retrospect, that the film debuted in 2019.

Jack Malik, an English musician of decidedly modest talent, is hit by a bus while riding his bicycle during a brief power outage that, inexplicably, affects the entire Earth.

After recovering in a hospital, Malik joins a group of friends who give him a guitar to replace the instrument smashed in the crash.

They ask him to play a song. He begins to pluck the chords to McCartney's most famous composition, "Yesterday" from 1965.

Malik's friends are impressed, but not for the expected reason, which is that he has competently reproduced somebody else's tune.

So far as they know he wrote it, and it far surpasses the quality of his previous work that they've all heard.

When he responds to their praise by pointing out what he knows but they don't — that he didn't write the song — Malik's friends are nonplussed by his mention of McCartney and The Beatles.

Malik assumes, as surely anybody would in his place, that his friends are playing a prank.

But when he gets home, having pondered the matter, he also does what anybody would do who is nagged by a question.

He Googles it. And no matter how many times

Malik types "The Beatles" into the search bar his computer, obstinate as only an inanimate object can be, insists on showing him a photograph of an insect.

Malik comes to realize that he alone remembers The Beatles — that as far as the rest of the world is concerned, the band never existed.

Malik, though, not only remembers The Beatles, but as a musician he can perform most of their songs. (In one of the film's amusing recurring bits, Malik struggles mightily with another McCartney masterpiece, "Eleanor Rigby" from 1966's "Revolver" album.)

Malik's unique access to the greatest songbook of the 20th century has predictably beneficial effects on his career. Much of the rest of the film follows this trajectory.

There's also a relatively rote romantic comedy plot revolving around Malik's relationship with his friend and former manager, Ellie.

Since watching the movie I have read multiple reviews of "Yesterday" and listened to several podcast reviews that give the film a poor rating.

Several commentators complained that "Yesterday" leaves too many questions unanswered, such as the cause of the worldwide power outage, and that the plot skims over the issue of whether The Beatles' music, performed by an individual, would have a similarly profound effect on the culture.

I'm not nearly well-acquainted enough with the art of filmmaking to comment on such matters.

And I feel fortunate to be so ignorant.

Because "Yesterday" struck me as purely an homage to The Beatles — an unabashed celebration of this music and the joy it continues to bring to so many people, half a century and more after it was recorded.

To parse the movie's production elements seems to me a pitiful exercise, a willful refusal to accept the simplicity of its purpose.

I was entranced. The film reminded me of something I already knew — that The Beatles are a singular band, a phenomenon that is unlikely to ever be repeated and thus, like other irreplaceable things, precious beyond measure.

What I didn't expect is how deeply this would affect me.

I had, before those two hours in the cool, shady theater, time that passed as effortlessly as a dandelion seed slips across your palm in a breeze, believed that my feelings about The Beatles were fixed. I figured I would continue to listen to their music, always with appreciation and frequently with something like bliss, for the rest of my days.

What I didn't anticipate was watching a film that elevated this accumulation of art beyond its previous plateau — that made me understand, as if for the first time, what an incredible gift music can be, not just to the individual listener but to the world.

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