



Why Google really fired that guy, Newark's Whole Foods horror & other comments

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August 9, 2017

Security desk: Why US Kept Bluffing on NoKo Threats

President Trump “has inherited a mess” on North Korea, largely caused by the failure of his three immediate predecessors to take out Pyongyang’s nuclear facilities when they had the chance, says Eli Lake at Bloomberg. Why the hesitation to strike? Because “the North has enough artillery pieces within range of” Seoul, South Korea’s thriving capital, “to kill hundreds of thousands of people, which could very well begin a world war.” And while past presidents “have understandably feared” such retaliation, “for some today, this fear is fading.” Trump may be “counting on his reputation as an impetuous novice — one who Kim Jong-Un just might fear would roll the dice.” But the latest US ultimatum also “allows the boy-tyrant in Pyongyang to test the president’s mettle.”

Libertarian: Google Memo Drama Is Nothing New

Google’s firing of a software engineer for questioning the company’s “ideological echo chamber” is part of old battle, says Walter Olson at USA Today: “The application of hostile-work-environment law to workplace speech — including basically political or ideological discussions, not just vulgar jokes or unwanted personal talk — goes back decades.” Legal or HR departments advise that allowing such speech “to go undisciplined might be an offense under the Title VII anti-discrimination law.” So companies will “expend significant effort” to avoid or reduce “costly and hazardous” litigation. But “hostile-environment law is not content-neutral. It plays favorites on topics and it takes sides in debates.” Indeed, “there is a real legal hazard in letting Side B in this debate express its opinion, but no corresponding legal hazard in letting Side A speak as forcefully as it likes.”

From the right: Why Whole Foods Has Terrorized Newark

Kyle Smith at National Review reports that “after half a century of urban disorder, yet another disaster has befallen New Jersey’s largest city”: Its first Whole Foods store has opened. Residents are complaining to The New York Times that the store is “not for us.” Given that Newark is only 25 percent white, “the sentiment being expressed here, as well as the use of the word ‘gentrification,’ are what in other contexts might be called ‘racial dog whistles.’ ” So it seems that “when large corporations don’t invest in urban communities, that’s shameful.

Investment? Also shameful. White flight by people moving to suburbs in the 1960s? Racist. Their grandchildren's return? Also racist." Yet "let's improve things, but not too fast is a peculiar mantra for a down-at-the-heels city."

Political scribe: The GOP's Tax Code Dilemma

There's a reason why tax reform doesn't happen more often — and is difficult to enact when it does, suggests Walter Shapiro at Roll Call. As Sen. John Thune (R-SD) explained: "Any deduction you look at in the tax code has a constituency behind it." In other words, "Who is going to pay for the rate reductions that have been the unifying Republican gospel since the days when Ronald Reagan was a Democrat?" House Republicans "once believed that entitlement cuts, especially in Medicaid, would provide the revenue needed to finance tax cuts" — but after the latest health-care debacle, no one wants to even hear the word "entitlement." And everyone agrees that "the numbers have to add up in the end."

Conservative: Dems Resent Having to Make an Argument

Democrats "are consumed by in-fighting, though this is masked by endless expressions of anxiety over their opponents' policies," says Noah Rothman at Commentary. Some argue for the need to "appeal to the labor voter who couldn't care less about the American left's addiction to identity politics." But "Bernie Sanders and his semi-socialist wing is trying to excise centrism from the party." While both sides agree that their "core message" must be anti-Trump, "there is confusion . . . as to how they should go about making themselves an anti-Trump vehicle." It sometimes seems "they resent even having to make an effort." Because "liberals have grown more convinced of the singular legitimacy of their beliefs, even as they watch their works crumbling around them at an accelerating pace."