

OPINION

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Vance is the wrong man for the job



CRAIG WALLACE
OPINION

Leading up to Sunday, July 21, the presidential race in the United States looked over.

It appeared clear that former Republican (GOP) president Donald Trump would return to office. And then it changed. President Joe Biden announced at 1:46 p.m. eastern time he would not seek his party's nomination for another term as president. He then endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris as his replacement.

Since then, the Democratic party has rallied around Harris uniformly. Donations to the Democrats have skyrocketed, along with the number of volunteers to serve on her campaign. This has left the GOP reeling in shock.

One area the GOP must be now deeply regretting is the selection of Ohio senator JD Vance as Trump's vice-presidential running mate. Vance was selected when the GOP was convinced they had the election "in the bag" and were pandering to their far-right base. Now, the election is very much in doubt and Vance will prove to be a disaster for their campaign.

Why do I say this? First, a vice-presidential nominee is selected to assist the presidential nominee in gaining votes with constituencies they require aid with. For example, John F. Kennedy, a senator from Massachusetts, selected Lyndon B. Johnson, the senate majority leader from Texas as his running mate in 1960, feeling Johnson would help him gain southern votes. That is exactly what happened.

As well, a vice-president is selected as someone who can instantly step in and replace the president in case of a president's death or disability. Johnson did that when President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.

How will Vance help the GOP in these areas? The answer is he won't.

On Tuesday, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Vance argued against renaming Wayne National Forest in Ohio (named after U.S. Army general Anthony Wayne, who was involved in the violent displacement of Native Americans

in this area, to Buckeye National Forest.) Vance argued "(Wayne) fought wars and won peace for our government, the government you now serve, and hewed Ohio out of rugged wilderness and occupied enemy territory."

So, Vance feels Indigenous people are the enemy. In October 2021 he mocked the renaming of Columbus Day to "Indigenous Day," showing that he and the GOP by their very action of nominating him are hostile to Native Americans.

Vance publicly condemned Harris for never giving birth to children, stating that by not having children, she has no stake in the future of the United States. He expressed support for a national abortion ban and has argued against abortion in almost every possible circumstance. Clearly by nominating Vance, the GOP has no interest in gaining votes from women.

He has also expressed hostility to gay marriage.

How many votes will Vance swing to the GOP now? Can you imagine any visible minority who may be undecided voting Republican after his comments about Indigenous peoples? Or how about women, after he clearly expressed his contempt/anger for women who choose not to have children and female reproductive rights? What woman or member of the LGBTQ community would vote for such a candidate or party who is so hostile to them?

The GOP can't distance itself from him. Its members nominated Vance knowing where he stood on these issues. By nominating him, they showed America and indeed the world that they agree with Vance. The fact that they haven't condemned these views indicates they support them — and that is terrifying.

Vance also has no track record of leadership or legislative accomplishment. What exactly are his qualifications to be vice-president and possibly even president if Trump were to die in office?

The GOP appears to have snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. For the sake of democracy, let's hope they turn that defeat into a deep reflection of what their party has become — and that is racist, anti-woman and anti-LGBTQ.

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What we can still learn from hobbits



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Today let's talk about friendship. And hobbits.

You know hobbits. Short. Stout. Big, hairy feet. Colourfully-dressed, fun-loving, pipe-smoking lovers of food and drink. Living in the shire in homes with round doors. And courageous, they are, beyond measure.

Consider Frodo Baggins and his dangerous journey. He told his hobbit friend Samwise Gamgee that he's leaving to go on it alone. "Of course, you are," Samwise replied. "And I'm coming with you!" If only we all had such friends. If only we could be one.

It's good to consider because Monday "The Lord of the Rings" turns 70. It was July 29, 1954, when J.R.R. Tolkien's "Fellowship of the Ring" published. Soon after, Tolkien published two more in the series and the trilogy eventually became among the best-loved stories of modern times.

For the uninitiated, it involves a sort of anti-quest. It's a journey, to be sure, but rather than a quest to find or capture much, it involves relinquishing. Giving up. Laying down.

Frodo, an imperfect, innocent

hobbit, leaves home and travels through various places and dangers with both friends and monstrous enemies toward Mount Doom to destroy the magical ring he's carrying to save, well, everything.

Frodo journeys like any of us, really, while the story unwinds and explores good and evil and death and immortality and suffering and so much to chew on. Then there's addiction to power, which, considering today's political headlines, is as relevant as ever. But the underpinning that sets Tolkien's absorbing work apart is friendship, the simplicity and sincerity and honesty in various friendships among different characters.

When Frodo finally nears Mount Doom but can't go on, Samwise says while he can't carry the ring for Frodo, he can carry Frodo. So he does. He picks up his friend and carries him. That's hobbit friendship.

We know it's always easier to kiss the ring of power — did I mention today's political headlines? — than destroy that ring.

It's tempting to also view friendship as just a form of constant validation. But hobbit friends think differently. They think like the ancient proverb, "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend."

They're dedicated to each other's greatness. They'll show a friend's blind spots in a way that makes that friend a better ver-

sion of themselves, like a good gardener prunes a plant. They neither let it go wild, nor over-cut it. They allow room for natural growth.

Which, it seems to me, fits hand-in-glove with family life. In fact, funny-enough, the children's mother and I share the July 29 "Lord of the Rings" anniversary as our wedding anniversary. Gosh.

The "Lord of the Rings" books, not including the 1937 prequel, "The Hobbit," have sold about 150 million copies. It's extraordinary for a hefty read of some 500,000 words. Peter Jackson's movies of the trilogy, meanwhile, have grossed almost \$3 billion. And won 17 Oscars.

Locally, at the Albert M. Wolters Centre for Christian Scholarship at Redeemer University, a two-day conference on Tolkien is coming in September.

Which is to say good stories, like good friends, are always in fashion. The best ones challenge and nourish us, both, in this case through the counter-cultural notion of relinquishing control. In literature and life both, this is a reflection of Tolkien's deep Christian faith.

Tolkien had his own close friends. He often met with the so-called Inklings — fellow writers and Oxford professors that included C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams — to nourish his own life and spirit. There's a lesson here, also.

We don't have to be a venture-some hobbit way off in Middle Earth somewhere to be on a sacred journey. Even a little person (especially a little person) can do that right here.

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THE FUTURE WE CHOOSE

Why Earth Overshoot Day matters

JANE JENNER

Have you ever wondered why there are so many self-storage facilities nowadays?

While defensible as a short-term solution, maybe these facilities are a sign of a society that just has too much "stuff." In fact, "first world" countries have become huge consumer nations in a global economy driven by a consumption-dependent growth imperative. But what is the impact of this on our world and our future?

The Global Footprint Network, an organization comprised of more than 70 member organizations that share the vision of living within the means of the planet, has attempted to calibrate how sustainable our

collective consumer behaviour is. Experts measure the planet's biocapacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to generate in a year), divide that by humanity's ecological footprint (humanity's demand for that year), then multiply this figure by the number of days in a year.

The resultant number, calculated each year since 1971, is the number of days we are living "within our budget;" after that we are overconsuming resources. The date by which we have used up a year's worth of our planet's resources is called "Earth Overshoot Day." After that, humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that

year. Until the mid-'80s we managed to last until November/December. But since 2005, we've only made it as far as August. This year, the global date is Aug. 1, meaning we'll "spend" 17 Earths in 2024.

The date is also calculated for each country, based on its consumption record. Unsurprisingly, the wealthiest countries have the worst standing: Canada's overshoot day is — wait for it — March 15! Only four other countries, including the United States, have a worse standing. We Canadians are using up our annual "budget" of resources in less than three months.

But beyond taking well above a reasonable share of humanity's common global resources, rich countries' voracious appe-

tite for bigger houses and cars (like SUVs and pickup trucks), travel to exotic locations, fancy appliances and tech gadgets, and closets bursting with the latest "throwaway" fashions, means we are emitting more carbon than ever to transport ourselves and all this "stuff" around (as well as make it). Not to mention the depredation by extractive industries of valuable forests, wetlands and wild areas, with the resultant loss of biodiversity and carbon-absorption capacity.

In an update to "The Limits to Growth" — a 1972 report by a group of scientists warning that surges in population and economic activity would eventually outstrip the carrying capacity of the planet — Herman Daly,

an ecological economist, suggested three simple rules for sustainable limits:

- For a renewable resource like soil, water, forests or fish, the sustainable limit can be no greater than the rate of regeneration.
- For a non-renewable resource such as fossil fuels and minerals, the sustainable rate can be no greater than that which a renewable resource can be substituted for it.
- For a pollutant, the sustainable rate of emission can be no greater than the rate at which the pollutant can be recycled, absorbed or rendered harmless.

Without such boundaries, our mindless consumerism threatens our long-term survival. In short, we are a society that has lost sight of where it's going, and in the process, we are putting at risk our very future. What are you prepared to do to save it?

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