

A time for reasoned minds

October is upon us — the release of summer's long grip on our operations, leaves rapidly changing into a wonder of colors, crisp mornings and celebrations of Columbus Day and Canadian Thanksgiving.

It is difficult not to write about all the tumult happening around our great nation. It is not the first time nor the last that anger has surfaced, and reason seems far away.

Our great industry is blessed with diversity of opinion and circumstances. We have seen tremendous highs and endured in a valley of tough times. I am proud every day that Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry is solution oriented. The association works hard every day to ensure that the industry is in the best possible position to grow and succeed in the marketplace.

But fear is a real thing. It clouds the best of intentions and it is critical that reasoned minds prevail.

Fear itself

The first inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as the **32nd President of the United States** was held on Saturday, March 4, 1933. It was the last inauguration to be held on the **constitutionally** prescribed date of March 4; the **20th Amendment, ratified** in January 1933, moved Inauguration Day to January 20.

The inauguration took place in the wake of **Democrat** Roosevelt's landslide victory over **Republican** incumbent **Herbert Hoover** in the **1932 presidential election**. With the nation in the grip of the **Great Depression**, the anticipation of the new president's inaugural speech was high. Confidence was in short supply.

Many sweep under the rug the fact that wide unemployment was blamed on an influx of Italian and Irish immigrants. The deep resentments following the Roaring

Twenties had given way to widespread fear and discontent. FDR hit that issue head on.

"So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance," he said. "In every dark hour of our national life, a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory."

In other words: when things seem to be coming apart, the nation steps up. But there's a significant difference between then and now.

In the 1930s, people were detached from information sources. There was no television, and forget about smart phones; one needed a radio or newspaper to keep up with the news of the day.

Today, by contrast, we're the opposite of detached from the news. We're saturated with information. But paradoxically, that doesn't make us better informed.

Curiously, with all this technology at our ready command, we've seen an explosion of half-truths by so-called "news sources." In this day of clickbait news cycles, we are being overwhelmed by a storm surge of information.

Disenfranchisement is not new

In Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, there's a famous passage describing the French Revolution as vividly as a painting. It was an era of passionate change, and the description may well ring true for all of us experiencing the current events of our great nation.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the



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other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."

Dickens was saying that tumultuous times provide insight into the best and worst of our nature. I certainly agree.

Understanding will prevail

Sailing into such fear-based headwinds can be a struggle, but we have tools to aid us in our journey.

We can utilize reason. We can focus on solutions. We can realize that not all perspectives different from our own are horribly misguided or evil — in fact, most are not.

By doing these things, we'll turn headwinds of fear into tailwinds of making a difference. Or, we can use our differences as a gateway to vitriol. It's our choice.

The responsibility rests with all of us not to abandon the formal rules of discourse. The first requirement is keeping a basic respect for others in the conversation. These rules are embedded in our social fabric to keep as much emotion out of an argument as possible.

I must admit that in this era of instant messaging and chatspeak, I see fractures in our societal bond. We've opened the door to getting our chain yanked. We react when we should reflect.

It is our responsibility to haul that impulse in and hit the reset button.

The OAN is a place for all voices to be heard. We work together to resolve the issues that are in front of us. We welcome your voice — and we can use your help setting an example for others. ☺