

Refugee crisis: Care and caution

Numerous people have posted pictures on Facebook this week showing a re-enactment of the first Thanksgiving. They point out the Wampanoag Indians shared their harvest when the Puritans' stores ran low. From this, they draw an analogy to today's refugees seeking safety.

It is a fair comparison. Several Republican presidential contenders have gone overboard, straying from our party's history of support for legal immigration. President Ronald Reagan enriched the imagery of America as the City Upon a Hill, with doors open to "anyone with the will and heart to get here." The late Fred Thompson — the most clear-headed candidate of the 2008 GOP field — spoke of a nation with "high fences and wide gates."



MICHAEL CIANCHETTE

While being generous, we can have valid concerns about our security and those entering our lands

Now we have Gov. Chris Christie stating he would not accept young orphan refugees. Other candidates have made similar remarks. Their supporters reflexively point out Democrats once encouraged the deportation of a young refugee: Elian Gonzalez. The GOP supported those who fled totalitarian regimes in search of freedom, leading many Republicans to oppose the child's return to Cuba.

Janet Reno and other Democrats were wrong back in 2000, while candidates today are overstating the dangers presented by refugees. The hype has led to an overreaction from those on the left. President Barack Obama resorts to insults while defending his course of action, denigrating Republicans as scared of "widows and orphans." This from someone who infamously called ISIS a "JV squad."

This heated rhetoric on both sides has overshadowed the reasonable concerns of Republicans such as Gov. Paul LePage and Rep. Bruce Poliquin and Democrats such as Sens. Chuck Schumer and Dianne Feinstein. Our intelligence in Syria is severely limited; the ongoing war has exiled our diplomatic mission, while we have not put a significant military presence on the ground.

The concern about the refugee screening process isn't whether it is rigorous enough; it is the lack of information. All the rigor and background checks are for naught if you do not have information to query against. And while Sen. Angus King has pointed out we have other security challenges, such as visa waiver programs, and others have expressed concern about our porous borders, we can be concerned about more than one thing at a time.

The fact is Americans can be generous to those who seek a better life by supporting them as refugees and helping defeat the evil that has metastasized in their homeland. But while being generous, we can simultaneously have valid concerns about our security and those entering our lands. After all, Squanto helped vouch for the Pilgrims. Would the Wampanoag have participated in the first Thanksgiving without such information?

Meanwhile, although the Thanksgiving dinner table political debates are behind us, the chaos of Black Friday and the shopping season is here. It is coupled with new commercials from Sen. Bernie Sanders, warning Americans about dangers of income inequality. Juxtaposing Black Friday footage — with its attendant orgy of consumerism — with Bernie's message is, at

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GEORGE DANBY | BDN

Cracking the Asian market Getting more Maine lobsters to Japan

BY CHRISTOPHER BURNS
BDN STAFF

After five years of double-secret negotiations, the world has had its first look at the text of the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact. All together, the 12 nations comprise nearly 40 percent of the global economy, and Maine lobster exporters are just one group that hopes this will crack open new markets.

If the trade pact is accepted, more than 18,000 tariffs would be reduced or eliminated, including those Pacific rim nations levy on Maine lobsters.

And Maine lobster exporters see the elimination of tariffs to prized agricultural markets in Asia, especially Japan, as an opportunity to export more of the valuable commodity.

Already, Maine lobster exports have soared in value to \$366 million in 2014 from \$185 million in 2010, according to data from the Maine International Trade Center.

For Calendar Island Lobster Co. in Portland, exports of frozen and processed lobster are big business, accounting for nearly 60 percent of sales, with the lion's share shipped to consumers in Asia, said Emily Lane, vice president of export sales and marketing. The trade pact has benefits for lobstermen and suppliers, Lane said.

"I think it's going to open a lot of markets in an area of the world where there is one of the largest consumer populations," she said.

Eyeing Japan

Already Maine lobsters are appearing more frequently on menus in Asia. Much of this growth has been in China, South Korea and Hong Kong, none of which took part in the recent trade negotiations.

With trade barriers expected to come down in other Asian emerging markets, Lane hopes to see growth in exports to that

part of the world, Japan in particular.

The U.S. and other countries have eyed Japan's consumer market, which relies heavily on agricultural imports — about 60 percent of all calories consumed in Japan come from overseas. The Japanese also are huge consumers of seafood, and on average ate about 59.5 pounds of seafood last year. While this is down from 88.6 pounds a decade earlier, it is well above the international average of 44 pounds per person. The Japanese government has been actively trying to reverse the decline in fish consumption.

But over the last two decades, agricultural exports from Trans-Pacific Partnership nations to Japan have grown slowly. One reason for this is that Japan places lower tariffs on exports from developing nations, giving those countries an edge over the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Elimination of tariffs will level the playing field," Lane said. "It makes us much more competitive."

Among those tariffs in line to be eliminated with the enactment of the trade pact is Japan's 5 percent tariff on lobster products. Within 15 years, all seafood Japan imports from Trans-Pacific Partnership nations will come in duty-free.

In 2014, Japan was the second most lucrative export destination for Maine seafood exports after Canada. Maine exported \$25 million in seafood that year to Japan, compared with \$360 million to Canada. Seafood exports to Japan totaled \$27 million in 2012.

Of Maine's seafood exports to Japan, lobsters make up only a sliver, albeit a growing sliver. Sea urchin exports to Japan in 2014 totaled nearly \$24 million. Exports of the crustacean, on the other hand, totaled \$874,212 last year, up from just \$49,066 in 2010. To put that in perspective, Maine in 2014 exported more than \$21 million in lobster to China.

Lane said that the Trans-Pacific Partnership could transform Japan into a

larger lobster destination.

"We've already seen this with the free trade agreement with South Korea. That caused a significant increase in lobster consumption over the last couple years," she said.

After the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement took effect in March 2012, tariffs on lobster exports fell from 16 percent in 2012 to 4 percent in 2015. Next year, Korean tariffs on lobster will be eliminated completely.

Between 2012 and 2014, Maine lobster exports to South Korea climbed 450 percent — from \$2 million to \$11 million.

"We would expect with eliminated tariff rates and lower costs of entry that we'd see increases, like with Korea," said Jeffrey Bennett, a trade specialist at the Maine International Trade Center.

Small markets

While open access to markets in Japan and elsewhere across the Pacific rim looks promising to Maine lobster exporters, the Trans-Pacific Partnership may provide only a marginal bump in lobster exports.

Only one of the nations involved with the trade pact is among the top five importers of Maine lobsters: Canada, with which the U.S. already has a free trade pact, NAFTA.

Last year, Maine sent 82 percent of its lobster exports to Canada — \$300 million worth. Other significant export destinations in 2014 for lobster included China (\$21 million), South Korea (\$11 million), Hong Kong (\$8 million) and the United Kingdom (\$6 million).

As for the other Trans-Pacific Partnership nations, Maine exported \$3 million worth of lobster to Vietnam, \$1 million to Singapore, \$874,212 to Japan, \$177,804 to Malaysia and \$9,500 to Chile. The combined exports to these nations amount to less than that shipped to the U.K. alone.

As for the other Trans-Pacific Partnership nations — Australia, Brunei, Mexico and Peru — Maine has not exported lobsters to them in the last five years, according to the Maine International Trade Center.

"These are small markets," Bennett said.

Watch this Maine woman soar

BY ERIN RHODA
BDN STAFF

Allyson Strachan of Vinalhaven is in the top 5 percent of her class at the U.S. Naval Academy where she studies weapons and systems engineering. The 21-year-old is captain of the school's ice hockey team. She dreams of being a Navy pilot and one day creating a business that makes medical devices.

And she just won a national scholarship for graduate study in Ireland next year that only four other Mainers have ever received.

Currently, the Hebron Academy graduate is working on a project to modernize a 3-D printed prosthetic hand for children, so it's touchscreen compatible. (Current plastic prosthetics don't engage with touchscreens, which are used not just on iPads but ATMs, airport check-in counters and some refrigerators. It's like trying to use your smartphone while wearing gloves.)

She's backpacked for a month



Strachan

"Being tolerant and having an understanding of the world around you makes you a better community member, which in turn makes your life and Maine a better place to live."

ALLYSSON STRACHAN

in Alaska to learn survival skills, and traveled to Turkey to learn about the culture and climb Mt. Ararat. She's overseen 1,000 campers and 100 midshipmen at the academy's STEM Camp.

Strachan also has synesthesia, a rare condition where her senses overlap in a way where she feels colors. When she sees people, their personality and movement lend them different hues.

Her accomplishments helped her win the George J. Mitchell Scholarship, which is awarded by the U.S.-Ireland Alliance to 12 people every year from across the country. (I also received it, in 2008-2009.) She plans to study signal processing at the Dublin Institute of Technology, with an aim to one day create better medical devices based on an understanding of the electrical signals that drive a person's movement.

The scholarship, which is sometimes described as an "Irish Rhodes Scholarship," is named in honor of the former U.S. senator from Maine who served as chair-

man of the peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. It has an acceptance rate of 4 percent.

We wanted to know more about Strachan, her ties to Maine and what motivates her. Here is a condensed Q&A:

Q: How did growing up on Vinalhaven, and in Maine shape you, do you think?

A: I think that being a Mainer has been what has really defined me at my time at the academy and set me apart from the other people that I've studied with. I have felt very tolerant of other people, which is something that I think I get from Maine, and very at peace with myself, which I think comes from living in a place that has a lot of nature, spending a lot of time outdoors. I know how to be at peace with myself, and I know how to separate myself from my situation, and not be so obsessed with success and the race that life can be, but appreciating the little things, staying grounded and knowing who I

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Making Bangor age-friendly is a priority

There's more to do, but we are on our way

BY BEN SPRAGUE
SPECIAL TO THE BDN

Commentators and observers around the state seem to agree on one thing: Bangor is on the move! With the development of the Bangor Waterfront into an entertainment and cultural destination, the opening of the Cross Insurance Center, and continued growth in the city's historic downtown area, Bangor is attracting interest and accolades from near and far.

Bangor has the youngest median age of any city in Maine. With all of the excitement, it would be easy for civic leaders to focus entirely on the younger generation when formulating public policy, but this has not been the case. In fact, a pointed effort has been made to highlight that many of

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