

# Bangor Daily News

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## MAINE’S ‘CURSE OF NATURAL RESOURCES’

The state’s lack of economic development leadership and vision was on open display Tuesday as Republicans and Democrats sparred over who had done the least for the workers at the Madison Paper Industries mill, which will close in May.

There is plenty of blame to go around, but focusing on insults and simplistic solutions detracts from what Maine has been lacking for years — a clear, ambitious and sustained plan for growing the state’s economy. Instead of debating and developing economic growth strategies, time is spent arguing over reforming welfare and reducing taxes, neither of which will lead Maine to prosperity.

Gov. Paul LePage has long touted lowering taxes, energy prices and government regulation as the key to improving Maine’s economy. In a Tuesday letter to House Majority Leader Jeff McCabe, the governor also said more wood needs to be cut. These weren’t the driving factors behind the closure of five Maine pulp and paper mills over the last three years. With declining demand for paper in the United States (many of you are reading this on a screen, not a printed page) and the growth of lower-cost production in other countries, it didn’t make economic sense for corporate owners to keep these Maine mills open.

Despite the obvious downward trend in papermaking, Maine leaders have done little to transition the state to a new, less natural resource-dependent economic future. There have been numerous reports on the need for a larger, better-educated workforce. Voters have backed bonds to fund research and development. Maine public schools are revamping their curriculum to ensure a high school diploma means a student is ready for college or work.

The problem is sustaining interest in — and funding for — these efforts. R&D bonds, for example, have become smaller and less frequent, and the money has been spread over too many projects to make a noticeable difference. LePage has championed early college programs and career training, but hasn’t put forth a focused plan to help these programs grow. Lawmakers are considering a delay in requirements for proficiency-based high school diplomas.

In addition to making too little investment in preparing workers for and easing them through this transition, the state has devoted tens of millions of dollars each year to business tax incentives,

forgoing significant tax revenues to prop up declining industries.

Researchers have dubbed this the curse of natural resources. Economic growth in countries with abundant natural resources lagged that of countries without them between 1970 and 1990. One reason cited by the researchers credited with the curse theory, Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner, is that an abundance of jobs in the natural resource sector discourages workers from seeking education to improve their skills and opportunities. The opposite is true in the manufacturing sector, where highly skilled workers are more valuable than those with less education and skill. In their 1997 paper, the authors also warn of the power of special interests to maintain the status quo.

Further, heavy reliance on natural resource-based industries leads to a sense of complacency and even a hostility to competing industries, says Jim Damicis, senior vice president of Camoin Associates, a consulting company. As an example of what he terms “false polarity,” Damicis cites the resistance to developing the state’s tourism industry for fear of diminishing the forest products industry.

Like Maine, North Carolina had a 20th century economy based on natural resources and textile and furniture manufacturing. Decades ago, the state invested heavily in its universities and research and development, and sought new, large businesses using economic incentives. Its transition to an economy that focused on technology, health care and small-scale manufacturing was hailed nationwide.

Even before the recession, however, North Carolina’s hot economy had cooled down. A major concern is that population growth is outpacing job growth. North Carolina Vision 2030, created by the North Carolina Chamber, offers an economic roadmap for the state’s future. Its first priority is a highly educated workforce to win “the race for talent.”

This week, voters in North Carolina approved a \$2 billion bond, backed by the chamber and Republican Gov. Pat McCrory, that directs nearly \$1 billion to the University of North Carolina System and \$330 million to the state’s community colleges to grow the number of highly skilled graduates and workers.

Maine doesn’t have North Carolina’s financial resources, but it can follow its lead by developing a focused and ambitious plan to invest in its people.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Ill not criminal

A bill, LD 1577, proposed by Gov. Paul LePage presents the possibility of transitioning forensic patients from the River-view Psychiatric Recovery Center to a mental health unit in the state prison. At first, the bill sounds like a wonderful solution to increase mental health services. However, after delving into its language, it seems to be completing the opposite.

As a social work student, it’s important to advocate for social justice for oppressed populations. This bill decreases social justice for individuals who are found to be incompetent to stand trial or not criminally responsible by reducing their rights to receive proper mental health services. If a judge deems someone incompetent to stand trial or not criminally responsible, then he or she is legally not guilty and should be given the proper services required for treatment.

This bill proposes the proper treatment is to house people who are legally innocent in a unit connected to the state prison. This would not create the therapeutic atmosphere necessary for treatment. It creates the perception that all people with chronic mental illness are criminals, and that is completely untrue.

Any bill dealing with people with chronic mental illness should increase access to mental health services that already exist. People who struggle with chronic mental illness have the constitutional right to receive treatment and mental health services, which will empower them to take control of their lives and achieve self-determination. To move forward in the future, we need to promote a culture of restoration rather than incarceration.

**Kaitlyn Huff**  
Portland

### Lyme a silent epidemic

The Huffington Post had an intriguing article in January that told the story of David Geraghty of Cumberland, Rhode Island, who died of Lyme disease last December.

Several years earlier, Geraghty had been diagnosed as having Lou Gehrig’s disease. But his wife believed he was actually suffering from Lyme. Her husband’s doctor, however, did not entertain the idea that Lyme was the cause of his health problems.

They had decided it would be prudent for Geraghty to be independently tested for Lyme, which was not covered by their insurance. The results confirmed he had Lyme. But by then the disease had already ravaged Geraghty, and he died shortly after the diagnosis.

There ought to be more awareness about Lyme disease. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that after two weeks of antibiotic therapy, patients may be symptom free, although a chronic case could last for months. But the International Lyme and Associated Disease Society states it takes months, sometimes years, of antibiotic therapy to finally be symptom free of the insidious disease.

**Jack Bristow**  
Bangor

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

**Letters** may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. **OpEds** may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### .COMMENTS

**OpEd contributor Fritz Spencer, “Donald Trump for president? There can be no greater folly”:**

I’m not a big Donald Trump fan, although I agree with a lot of what he says. But Hillary Clinton for president would be the worst possible outcome of the election. I’ll vote for the devil himself before her.

— *Leeroy Ten*

My father fought against the fascists in World War II, and my uncle spent 2½ years in one of their prisoner of war camps. I will not vote for a fascist for president. I am no fan of Hillary Clinton, but she has my vote in a heartbeat over Donald Trump.

— *credibility1*

This OpEd could have been

rewritten replacing Donald Trump with Hillary Clinton, and it would have been just as accurate.

— *John Dokes*

I find Donald Trump as president no funnier than either Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders as president.

— *homemaine*

If Donald Trump becomes president, then maybe he will privatize the National Park Service.

— *bear run*

The greatest folly is to elect someone who has never held a job, never run anything remotely resembling a business, with absolutely no practical experience at anything. But we survived all that and more for the last seven

### Thanks, Maine police

I have always loved living in the country and have always felt very safe, but I was recently made uneasy after prowlers lurked around my home in the early morning hours while my family slept. So I contacted the Penobscot County Sheriff’s Office. To be honest, I was somewhat apprehensive about contacting the police because I didn’t have much evidence and wasn’t sure they could help. I was wrong.

The sheriff’s office recorded the incident and sent notifications out to patrol units and Maine State Police. I received a call from a trooper who took all my information and detailed what actions he would take.

The following evening, when my wife and I returned home, still shaken by the prowlers, I was alarmed to see vehicle headlights moving slowly toward us as we approached our driveway. When the headlights turned to follow us down our to our home, I was relieved when I noticed the sheriff’s office insignia.

The deputy introduced himself to us. We chatted, discussed what I had reported and he assured us he would be on the lookout for anything suspicious. We slept soundly knowing that a team of highly trained and professional police officers were protecting us.

It is indeed a blessing to have people willing to place themselves at risk to protect me and my family. We’re just one family from the middle of nowhere, but I know there are thousands more just like us all over America who fully support and appreciate what the police do.

**Michael Kamorski**  
Levant

## OTHER VOICES

### GOVERNMENT SNOOPING GONE TOO FAR

American citizens’ eyes were opened by the awesome power, reach and constitutional violations of the surveillance activities carried out by the National Security Agency and other government agencies, as revealed by the documents leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013. Lately, we have discovered that the Obama administration is drawing up rules that will allow the NSA to share raw surveillance data with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other intelligence agencies without first applying any privacy protections.

The NSA is supposed to focus bulk collection of phone calls, emails, text messages and other correspondences on international communications, but Americans may be swept up if an international call or message is to, from or about them. When such information is shared with other agencies, the NSA is supposed to first strip out Americans’ identifying information. Allowing agencies such as

the FBI access to “pre-screened” data thus provides them a “backdoor” to search information without obtaining a warrant.

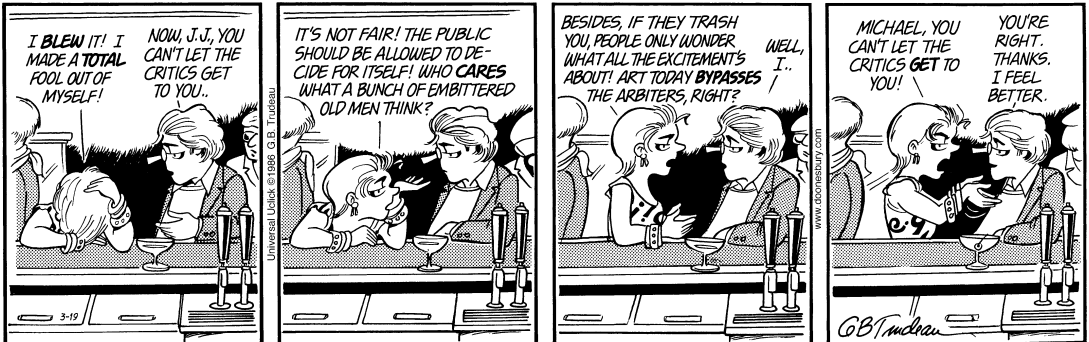
“FBI agents don’t need to have any ‘national security’ related reason to plug your name, email address, phone number or other ‘selector’ into the NSA’s gargantuan data trove,” the ACLU of Massachusetts notes in a post on its PrivacySOS blog.

“It’s all another sobering reminder that any powers we grant to the federal government for the purpose of national security will inevitably be used just about everywhere else,” writes Radley Balko for the Washington Post.

Government agencies have repeatedly proven that they cannot be trusted with our personal information. Congress must immediately put a halt to this government snooping, particularly domestic surveillance, to preserve what privacy we have left.

*The Orange County Register*  
(March 15)

### DOONESBURY



### GARRY TRUDEAU