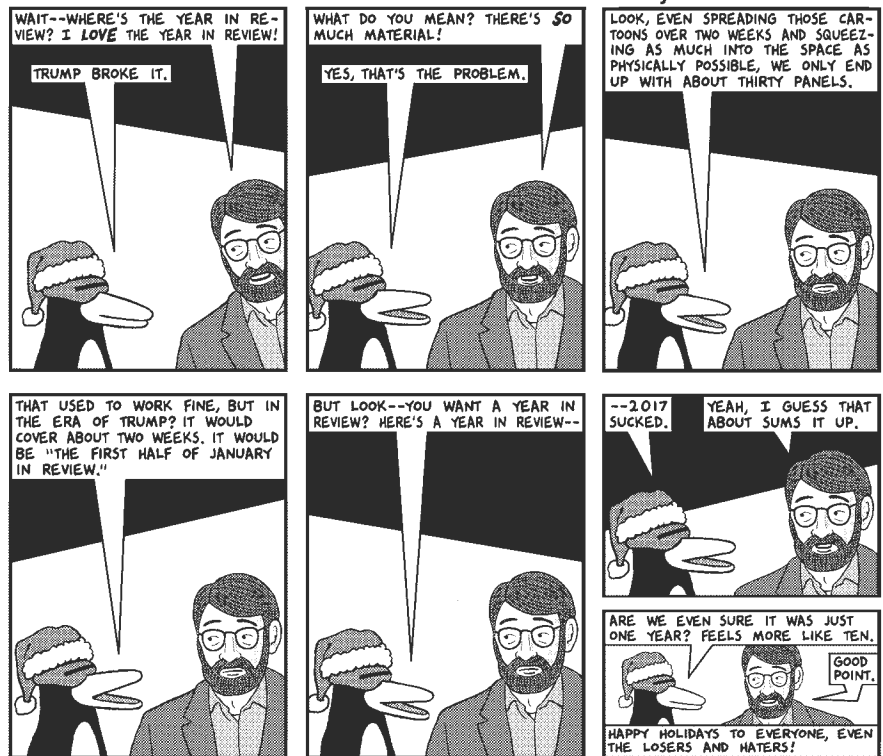


## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



that is downtown W. 11th Avenue? The city staffers I talked to seemed to suggest that “freedom of speech” required the city to allow any messaging anyone cared to pay for.

Really? There are other rights and prohibitions to be found in the Oregon and U.S. constitutions. One prohibition prohibits government from promoting a “state religion.”

Do you see other religions hanging promotions over our public rights-of-way? The city is complicit in this promotion of a single religion to the exclusion of others. Maybe other religious or irreligious people in our community have more common sense or decency or grace than those who chose to proselytize in the “public square”. Maybe some of them are afraid.

Humans are as irrational as they are rational. The farther they are from oppression or neediness, the more complacent they are. I talked to a number of people who were complacent about this little issue. And bless their hearts! They were mostly gracious to me, and I’m glad they aren’t oppressed or needy. But many people in our diverse community are oppressed and needy, and afraid of responding — especially in the holiday season.

More generally, one of the reasons so many of us get upset with each other right along is because we in this country have the wit and the wealth and the opportunity to do so much better for each other than we ever seem to manage to do.

If we are a “Christian” enclave, then bring back the giant backlit Skinner’s Butte cross. If we are a diverse, welcoming community, then the city must cease offering partisan messaging on public property.

At our best, we are so much better than this situation suggests.

John Parrott  
Eugene

*Editor’s note: See EW’s story about the banner 1/5 “Religious Banner Downtown Raises Ire.”*

### MERKLEY LISTENS

Last August, at his Eugene town hall, I asked Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley why he refused to oppose the Pacific Connector fracked gas pipeline and export terminal.

I mentioned that the project included

harm to 32 endangered species, crossed 400 waterways and rivers, threatened 300 rural Oregonians with eminent domain for private profits, and that the planned terminal, in a tsunami and earthquake subduction zone, would become the largest air polluter of greenhouse gases in Oregon.

Merkley’s response rang hollow. He stated he’d made a commitment to remain neutral/open to the project 10 years ago, and even though he had learned “a lot” about the harms of methane (liquid natural gas), he felt he should honor his previous stance. I was very disappointed.

I knew Merkley opposed the Keystone XL pipeline and that he’d introduced the “Keep It In The Ground” bill in the Senate.

Last week, Merkley published a guest opinion in the Medford paper (*Mail Tribune*, 12/7) where he stated his opposition to the project. His reasoning included reality! Even though it would bring temporary jobs to Coos County, the environmental impacts were too big to be ignored!

I applaud an elected representative who listens to the concerns of his constituents and learns from them. I applaud an elected official who is paying attention to science, especially as it relates to our survival.

Merkley is well on his way to becoming a climate champion of the people. The environmental community and activists committed to stopping this pipeline and export project have Merkley’s back, and we encourage him to lead boldly.

Debra McGee  
Eugene

### LIBERAL MANDATES

Re: “Mr. Jones Goes To Washington,” (*Slant*, 12/14): Doug Jones’ Alabama win was not a “stunning defeat of Trumpism.” It was a narrow liberal victory over a despicable lout who still managed to get nearly 50 percent of the vote.

If Jones interprets this as a mandate to push his far left agenda in the U.S. Senate, he is sadly mistaken and will not see a second term.

Jerry Ritter  
Springfield

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| 1.25 David Grisman Quintet                                | 2.21 Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton                             |
| 2.1-11 The Jazz Kings: A Pocketful of Dreams: Bing Crosby | 2.23 Honey Whiskey Trio                                     |
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