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Warrenton has a good opportunity

Digital books were supposed to diminish the importance of libraries. Some skeptics even say that libraries no longer are essential.

But evidence doesn't support that. Even within the confines of our region, something quite different is happening. Libraries in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Warrenton and Astoria are community hubs, buzzing with activity. Across the Columbia, in Pacific County, the Timberland Regional Library is a well-utilized marvel.

As Erick Bengel described in last Thursday's edition, Warrenton faces the challenge of replacing its library, which is housed in a historic building that was once Hammond's town hall. The flip side of Warrenton's challenge is an opportunity.

Astoria faces a similar need to enhance the library it has or build new. But Astoria's matrix of prospective solutions has not led to an easy solution. Warrenton, however, might have a much

easier time fashioning a way forward.

Seaside presents a useful example. Its new library, opened in 2008, was built from scratch. Situated near City Hall, the library became part of Seaside's remarkable set of civic furniture, which includes the Bob Chisholm Community Center and the recreation center and indoor swimming pool. The library contains cozy reading areas, as well as rooms for meetings and author appearances.

The advantage a small town enjoys — as opposed to cities like Portland or Seattle — is building intimacy into its library. That is especially apparent in Cannon Beach's library, but also in Seaside.

These places become magnets and what architects call activity nodes. We wish Warrenton well. This could be a very good thing.

Don't let technology get in way of safety

In rural areas like ours, it's "all hands on deck" for law enforcement when a life-threatening incident arises. City police, county sheriff's deputies and state officers rely on radios to let them know when a fellow officer needs a hand.

In what authorities hope will be a short-term transitional issue, Washington State Patrol's switch to a new communications system recently resulted in a delay obtaining help for a trooper who was trying to make a difficult arrest on a remote roadside.

The problem arose because the Federal Communications Commission freed up valuable communications frequencies by squeezing law enforcement dispatch into a smaller part of the finite wavelength spectrum. If all goes well, this change from the old analog "wideband" system to a digital "narrowband" system has the potential to be more reliable, and make it easier for dispatchers to locate officers.

State agencies in Oregon and Washington have largely completed the switch to narrowband, but local implementation is more of

a challenge. Purchasing and installing narrowband-compatible systems is complicated and expensive — about \$3,000 per radio for officers and \$4,500 for dispatchers.

Flaws in the new system are only now becoming fully apparent as state agencies endeavor to mesh with local departments. State cops can hear locals, but locals can't hear them.

The picture that emerges is one of policing agencies all doing their best to find workarounds for their now-incompatible communication systems. Local law-enforcement leaders struggle with how to pay for an under-funded mandate to upgrade in parallel with the states.

A technological upgrade that damages the ability of public-safety personnel to talk to one another is ridiculous, unacceptable and in need of a fast and thorough solution.

The FCC, which drove this change, and the large corporations that will profit from the bandwidth formerly used by law enforcement, should be tasked with helping make sure this transition is fully funded and well-engineered.

Humane revolution has some wins

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF
New York Times News Service

In 1903, New Yorkers executed an elephant on Coney Island, effectively torturing her to death.

Accounts vary a bit, but it seems Topsy was a circus elephant who had been abused for years and then killed a man who had burned her on the trunk with a cigar.

After her owners had no more use for her, Topsy was fed cyanide, electrocuted and then strangled with a winch. The Edison motion picture company made a film of it, "Electrocuting an Elephant."

So maybe there is an arc of moral progress. After many allegations of mistreatment of animals, Ringling Bros. this month retired its circus elephants, sending them off to a life of leisure in Florida. SeaWorld said this spring that it would stop breeding orcas and would invest millions of dollars in rescuing and rehabilitating marine animals.

Meanwhile, Wal-Mart responded to concerns for animal welfare by saying last month that it would shift toward cage-free eggs, following similar announcements by Costco, Denny's, Wendy's, Safeway, Starbucks and McDonald's in the U.S. and Canada.

This is a humane revolution, and Wayne Pacelle, president of the Humane Society of the United States, has been at the forefront of it. Alternately bullying companies to do better and cooperating with those that do so, he outlines his approach in an excellent new book, *The Humane Economy*. These corporate changes have vast impact: Wal-Mart or McDonald's shapes the living conditions of more animals in a day than an animal shelter does in a decade.

There is also a lesson, I think, for many other causes, from the environment to women's empowerment to global health: The best way for nonprofits to get large-scale results is sometimes to work with corporations to change behavior and supply lines — while whacking them when they resist.

The Environmental Defense Fund and Conservation International do something similar in the environmental space, CARE works with corporations to fight global poverty, and the Human Rights Campaign partners with companies on LGBT issues.

Critics sometimes see this as moral compromise, negotiating with evil rather than defeating it; I see it as pragmatism. Likewise, Pacelle has been a



Nicholas Kristof



James Estrin/The New York Times

Elephants perform for the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus in Uniondale, N.Y., in 2009. Ringling's retirement of its elephants is just one example of how animal rights activists are winning gains by working with corporations to change behavior and supply lines.

vegan for 31 years but cooperates with fast-food companies to improve conditions in which animals are raised for meat.

"Animals jammed into cages and crates cannot wait for the world to go vegan," Pacelle told me. "I'm quite sure they want out of this unyielding life of privation right now, and once that question is settled, then sensible people can debate whether they should be raised for the plate at all."

At a time when the world is a mess, Pacelle outlines a hopeful vision. The public has always had some impact with charitable donations, and there have always been occasional boycotts, but sometimes its greatest influence comes by leveraging daily consumer purchasing power.

"As the humane economy asserts its own power, its own logic and its essential decency, an older order is passing away," Pacelle writes in his book. "By every measure, life will be better when human satisfaction and need are no longer built upon the foundation of animal cruelty. Indefensible practices will no longer need defending."

It's true that atrocities continue and that the slaughter of animals like elephants persists. There were some 130,000 elephants in Sudan 25 years ago, while now there may be only 5,000 in Sudan and the country that broke off from it, South Sudan, Pacelle writes.

Yet there is a business model for keeping grand animals like elephants alive. One analysis suggests that a dead elephant's tusks are worth \$21,000, while the tourism value of a single living elephant over its lifetime is \$1.6

million. Countries follow their enlightened self-interest when they protect elephants, just as McDonald's pursues its self-interest when it shifts toward cage-free eggs.

It's also astonishing how sensitive companies are becoming to public opinion about animals. After Cecil the lion was shot dead in Zimbabwe, animal protection groups lobbied airlines to ban the shipment of such trophies. Delta, American, United, Air Canada and other companies promptly obliged.

In the pet store business, two chains — PetSmart and Petco — have prospered without accepting the industry's norm of selling dogs and cats from puppy mills and other mass breeders. Instead, since the 1990s they have made space available to rescue groups offering animals for adoption. PetSmart and Petco don't make money off

these adoptions, but they win customer loyalty forever, and they have helped transfer 11 million dogs and cats to new homes.

I believe that mistreatment of animals, particularly in agriculture, remains a moral blind spot for us humans, yet it's heartening to see the consumer-driven revolution that is underway.

"Just about every enterprise built on harming animals today is ripe for disruption," Pacelle writes. In a world of grim tidings, that's a welcome reminder that there is progress as well. We've gone in a bit more than a century from making a movie about torturing an elephant to sending circus elephants off to a Florida retirement home. But, boy, there's so much more work to do.

It takes a policy and a village

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

U.S. politicians love to pose as defenders of family values. Unfortunately, this pose is often, perhaps usually, one of remarkable hypocrisy.

And no, I'm not talking about the contrast between public posturing and personal behavior, although this contrast can be extreme.

Which is more amazing: the fact that a long-serving Republican speaker of the House sexually abused teenage boys, or how little attention this revelation has received?

Instead, I'm talking about policy. Judged by what we actually do — or, more accurately, don't do — to help small children and their parents, America is unique among advanced countries in its utter indifference to the lives of its youngest citizens.

For example, almost all advanced countries provide paid leave from work for new parents. We don't. Our public expenditure on child care and early education, as a share of income, is near the bottom in international rankings (although if it makes you feel better, we do slightly edge out Estonia.)

In other words, if you judge us by what we do, not what we say, we place very little value on the lives of our children, unless they happen to come from affluent families. Did I mention that parents in the top fifth of U.S. households spend seven times as much on their children as parents in the bottom fifth?

But can our neglect of children be ended?

In January, both Democratic candidates declared their support for a program that would provide 12 weeks of paid leave to care for newborns and other family members. And

last week, while the news media was focused on Donald Trump's imaginary friend, I mean imaginary spokesman, Hillary Clinton announced an ambitious plan to improve both the affordability and quality of U.S. child care.

This was an important announcement, even if it was drowned out by the ugliness and nonsense of a campaign that is even uglier and more nonsensical than usual. For child-care reform is the kind of medium-size, incremental, potentially politically doable — but nonetheless extremely important — initiative that could well be the centerpiece of a Clinton administration. So what's the plan?

OK, we don't have all the details yet, but the outline seems pretty clear. On the affordability front, Clinton would use subsidies and tax credits to limit family spending on child care — which can be more than a third of income — to a maximum of 10 percent. Meanwhile, there would be aid to states and communities that raise child-care workers' pay, and a variety of other measures to help young children and their parents. All of this would still leave America less generous than many other countries, but it would be a big step toward international norms.

Is this doable? Yes. Is it desirable? Very much so.

When we talk about doing more for children, it's important to realize that it costs money, but not all that much money. Why? Because there aren't that many young children at any given time, and it doesn't take a lot of spending to make a huge difference to their lives. Our threadbare system of public support for child care and early education costs 0.4 percent of the GDP; France's famously



Paul Krugman

generous system costs 1.2 percent of the GDP. So we could move a long way up the scale with a fairly modest investment.

And it would indeed be an investment — every bit as much of an investment as spending money to repair and improve our transportation infrastructure. After all, today's children are tomorrow's

workers and taxpayers. So it's an incredible waste, not just for families but for the nation as a whole, that so many children's futures are stunted because their parents don't have the resources to take care of them as well as they should. And affordable child care would also have the immediate benefit of making it easier for parents to work productively.

Are there any reasons not to spend a bit more on children? The usual suspects will, of course, go on about the evils of big government, the sacred nature of individual choice, the wonders of free markets, and so on. But the market for child care, like the market for health care, works very badly in practice.

And when someone starts talking about choice, bear in mind that we're talking about children, who are not in a position to choose whether they're born into affluent households with plenty of resources or less wealthy families desperately trying to juggle work and child care.

So can we stop talking, just for a moment, about who won the news cycle or came up with the most effective insult, and talk about policy substance here?

The state of child care in America is cruel and shameful — and even more shameful because we could make things much better without radical change or huge spending. And one candidate has a reasonable, feasible plan to do something about this shame, while the other couldn't care less.

Can our neglect of children be ended?