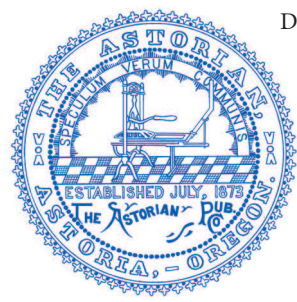


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# So long, SeaPort. Hello, light rail?

*Better bus service, other travel options are better fit for coast*

Full-scale bankruptcy liquidation of SeaPort Airlines is the least-surprising news all month.

The company was the latest to try to bring air service between Astoria and Portland and Newport between 2008 and 2010, and has continued trying to make its business profitable since then, for example in Pendleton. Its name alludes to an original plan of connecting smaller markets to national airlines in Seattle and Portland.

Like previous attempts to expand rural air service in Oregon and Washington, SeaPort relied to a large extent on government subsidies, most recently under the federal Essential Air Service program. EAS and state-funded subsidies are well-intentioned efforts to jump start economic development, while boosting the ability of rural Americans to reach needed healthcare and other urban conveniences.

But legislative and congressional patience with these subsidies eventually fades. Air service must stand on its own two feet — or to use a less hackneyed metaphor, fly on its own

two wings. It is very difficult to make a success of a small regional airline. Commenting to USA Today about the airline he co-founded, Kent Crafort said regarding SeaPort skeptics, “I don’t think people are intentionally being mean. . . . They’re just realistic about the history of this industry and the likelihood (a) new start-up will not survive. For every group of guys like myself and my partners, there’re 10 groups that have tried the same thing and failed.”

Dissecting the various failed efforts to provide air service out of Astoria Regional Airport in Warrenton would make an interesting subject for a business school dissertation. But the fundamental challenges are obvious. No matter how imperfect highway connections are between here and Portland, you can get in your car anytime and be to the Portland airport in under two hours. Even counting in the expense and inconvenience of parking, a person’s time has to be precious indeed to justify flying rather than driving to make an air connection at PDX. It is time to consider this issue dead and buried.

There is, however, a larger discussion still to be had about enhancing transportation options between the North Coast and the I-5 corridor. Any similar route in Europe, or even in many economically disadvantaged regions of the world, would be served by a passenger rail line and likely by several competing bus systems.

Particularly as driverless technology matures, it’s possible to imagine a time when buses circulate between the coast and city much more frequently than the three Astoria departure times now available at 8:30 a.m., 2:45 and 6 p.m. Even now, it’s conceivable that additional service might hook the coast into the TriMet MAX system’s western terminus in Hillsboro.

Extending light rail to the coast may remain a pipe dream for decades to come, but the success of the ride-sharing service Uber demonstrates that when government gets out of the way and allows private industry to succeed, everyone can benefit.



Musashi1600/wikimedia

While air service between the North Coast and Portland has proven economically unsustainable, it’s possible to imagine designing more convenient ways for local residents to gain access to Portland MAX system.



# The age of distrust

By **ROGER COHEN**  
*New York Times News Service*

ATHENS, Greece — I have a profound respect for the intelligence of the voter. Winston Churchill is often quoted as saying that the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter, but more important is what he actually said in the House of Commons on Oct. 31, 1944: “At the bottom of all the tributes paid to democracy is the little man, walking into the little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper — no amount of rhetoric or voluminous discussion can possibly palliate the overwhelming importance of that point.”

Nobody, looking back at the first 16 years of this century, can suggest that the political and financial elites who brought you the euro crisis, the war in Iraq, the Great Recession of 2008, growing inequality and (at least until last year in the United States) middle-class income stagnation have not made some very serious mistakes, of very enduring consequences, with very startling impunity.

No wonder experts are increasingly viewed as being in the business of bamboozling for their own ends. Ordinary folk reckon the system is rigged, that elites are not in it for the people but for money. This is the Age of Distrust. No two presidential candidates have ever been as distrusted as Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

## Technology

The mistakes that I mentioned occurred in the midst of a technological whirlwind that moved factories offshore and migrants onshore, and offered huge opportunity for the initiated at the hubs of globalization’s churn while stripping many outlying places and outcast people of their *raison d’être*.

Technology is a wonderful thing if you are putting it to use, less so if it is putting an end to

your usefulness.

Many people in liberal democracies feel they are being tossed hither and thither by forces beyond their control — nowhere more so than in Greece, where national elections in recent years — and there have been a lot of them — have revealed an almost complete disconnect between the vote itself and any tangible effect.

What then is democracy, a mere game?

The unease has been compounded by the sense of insecurity instilled by jihadist terrorism and other violence. Bombings in New York and New Jersey and a stabbing attack at a Minnesota mall are still under investigation, but fear often begets intolerance and the quest for a ruthless leader.

All this is the backdrop to Trump, to Marine Le Pen in France, to Brexit, to the nationalist governments dominating Central Europe, to the rise in Germany of the rightist Alternative für Deutschland, to the vogue for authoritarian models — in short, to the challenges facing liberal democracies.

## The answer is not to build walls. Western societies need to build education and opportunity.

Marx noted that history repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce. The British decision to exit the European Union was the exception — simultaneous tragedy and farce, a disaster abetted by lies, energized by a buffoon and consummated in mayhem.

This was the moment when it became irrefutable that some of the very foundations of the postwar world and the spread of liberal democracy — free trade, free markets, more open borders, fact-based debate, ever greater integration — had collapsed.

## Trust of the people

I am pessimistic in the short term, optimistic in the long term.

The problems cannot be righted in short order. Politicians are going to have to work very hard to earn back the trust of the people. A serious issue exists with what Stephen Walt of Harvard University has called the “ruling elites in many liberal societies and especially the United States, where money and special interests have created a corrupt political class that is out of touch with ordinary people, interested mostly in enriching themselves, and immune to accountability.” This has to end.

Democracy has to deliver — not just to the rich but also to the most vulnerable. When democracy creates wealth on a broad scale there is no tension between it and capitalism. But when that is not the case, the value of democracy becomes less clear to some. There are tensions between national sovereignty, open global markets and mass migration.

The answer is not to build walls. Western societies need to build education and innovation and opportunity. I believe in the resilience of liberal democracy, in the little woman in the little booth. Greece knows that the democratic idea is stubborn.

Technology has prized the world open. Nobody — not Vladimir Putin, not Xi Jinping, not Trump — can shatter that interconnectedness. Nor can anybody quash forever the human desire to be free and to live under the only form of government consistent with that desire — representative government installed with the consent of the people.

Liberalism demands acceptance of our human differences and the ability to mediate them through democratic institutions. Dictatorships fear broad challenge because it may cause them to buckle. But challenge in democracies is also rebirth.

Respect the intelligence of voters. Sooner or later they come to their senses. Churchill was kicked out of office in an election in 1945, just months after defeating Hitler. Talk about gratitude. He was re-elected in 1951.

# Dignity, sadness in the working class

By **DAVID BROOKS**  
*New York Times News Service*

A few weeks ago I met a guy in Kentucky who’d lived through every trend of deindustrializing America.

He grew up about 65 years ago on a tobacco and cattle farm, but he always liked engines, so even while in high school he worked 40 hours a week in a garage. Then he went to work in a series of factories — making airplane parts, car seats, sheet metal and casings for those big air-conditioning fans you see on the top of buildings.

Every few years as the economy would shift, or jobs would go to Mexico, he’d get hit with a layoff. But the periods of unemployment were never longer than six months and he pieced together a career.

He’s in semiretirement now, but he hasn’t been able to take a vacation for four years because he and his wife take care of her elderly

mother, who has trouble swallowing. He’s saved her life 10 times so far with the Heimlich maneuver, and they have to be nearby, in case she needs it again.

His best job came in the middle of his career, when he was a supervisor at the sheet metal plant. But when the technology changed, he was no longer qualified to supervise the new workers, so they let him go.

He thought he’d just come in quietly on his final day, clean out his desk and sneak away.

But word got out, and when he emerged from his office, box in hand, there was a double line of guys stretching all the way from his office in back, across the factory floor and out to his car in the lot. He walked down that whole double line with tears flowing, with the guys clapping and cheering as he went.

## Honorable dignity

We hear a lot about angry white men, but there is an honorable dignity to this guy.

Some of that dignity comes from the fact that he knows how to fix

things. One of the undermining conditions of the modern factory is that the workers no longer directly build the products, they just service the machines and software that do.

As the sociologist Richard Sennett once put it, “As a result of working in this way, the bakers now no longer actually know how to bake bread.” But this guy in Kentucky can take care of himself — redo the plumbing at home or replace the brake pads.

He also had a narrative about his own life. It’s not the agency narrative you often find in the professional segments of society: I found my passion and steered my own ship. It’s more of a reactive, coping narrative: A lot of the big forces were outside my control, but I adjusted, made the best of what was possible within my constraints and lived up to my responsibilities.

There’s honor to that, too. Still, over the past many months speaking with people in these situations, I can’t help feeling that society is failing them in some major way, and not just economically.

There is often a sad, noncumulative pattern to working-class lives. In some professions as you get older, you rise to more responsible positions. And that was true under the old seniority-based work rules in factories.

But now there is a stochastic, episodic nature to many careers. As workers get older, potential employers become more suspicious of their skills, not more confident in them. As a result, you often meet people who had been happiest at work in middle age, and then moved down to a series of positions they were overqualified for and felt diminished in.

Furthermore, I often run across people who have gone back to menial work in their 60s and 70s because they just want to get out of the house. When you ask them more questions, you find that they are devoted to home and work, but that they often don’t have rich connections outside these spheres.

Many of their friends came through work, but those friendships tend to fade away when the job ends. There are older people who

feel unneeded. There are younger people who feel lost. Somehow these longing souls never find each other.

## Suburbia

Suburbia isn’t working. During the baby boom, the suburbs gave families safe places to raise their kids. But now we are in an era of an aging population, telecommuting workers and single-person households.

The culture and geography of suburbia are failing to nurture webs of mutual dependence.

We are animals who can’t flourish unless we can’t get along without one another. Yet one finds too many people thrust into lives of semi-independence.

These are not the victims of postindustrial blight I’m talking about; they are successful people who worked hard and built good lives but who are left nonetheless strangely isolated, in attenuated communities, and who are left radiating the residual sadness of the lonely heart.