

Criminalizing dissent

I'm starting to research a measure developed somewhere in the U.S. Senate, that would criminalize — make a major felony of — Americans peacefully dissenting against the government of Israel. Anyone who is supportive of the current Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, for instance, would be targeted. Anyone found guilty of violating the prohibitions would be vulnerable to a “minimum civil penalty of \$250,000 and a criminal penalty of \$1 million and 20 years in prison” (S. 720). That’s a punch in the gut, huh?

Irrespective of your feelings about the crisis in Israel/Palestine, please consider what such a law would mean. This measure is anti-democratic, to say the least, and gives the U.S. government free reign to destroy the lives of those who peacefully protest the government of Israel’s actions. The law would also certainly be applied to other points of disagreement, regarding other problems — as if this isn’t big enough. The law would very effectively criminalize political dissent, and thus very effectively destroys any remnant of democracy and constitutional rights we may still be hugging onto. The U.S. is at risk of becoming a true totalitarian country.

Please find out more about S. 720, and contact your U.S. senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley. Perhaps your telephone calls will help remind the senators that this measure, apparently soon to be a bill, must be fully understood as the atrocity it is, before the majority who hasn’t even read it makes it into law.

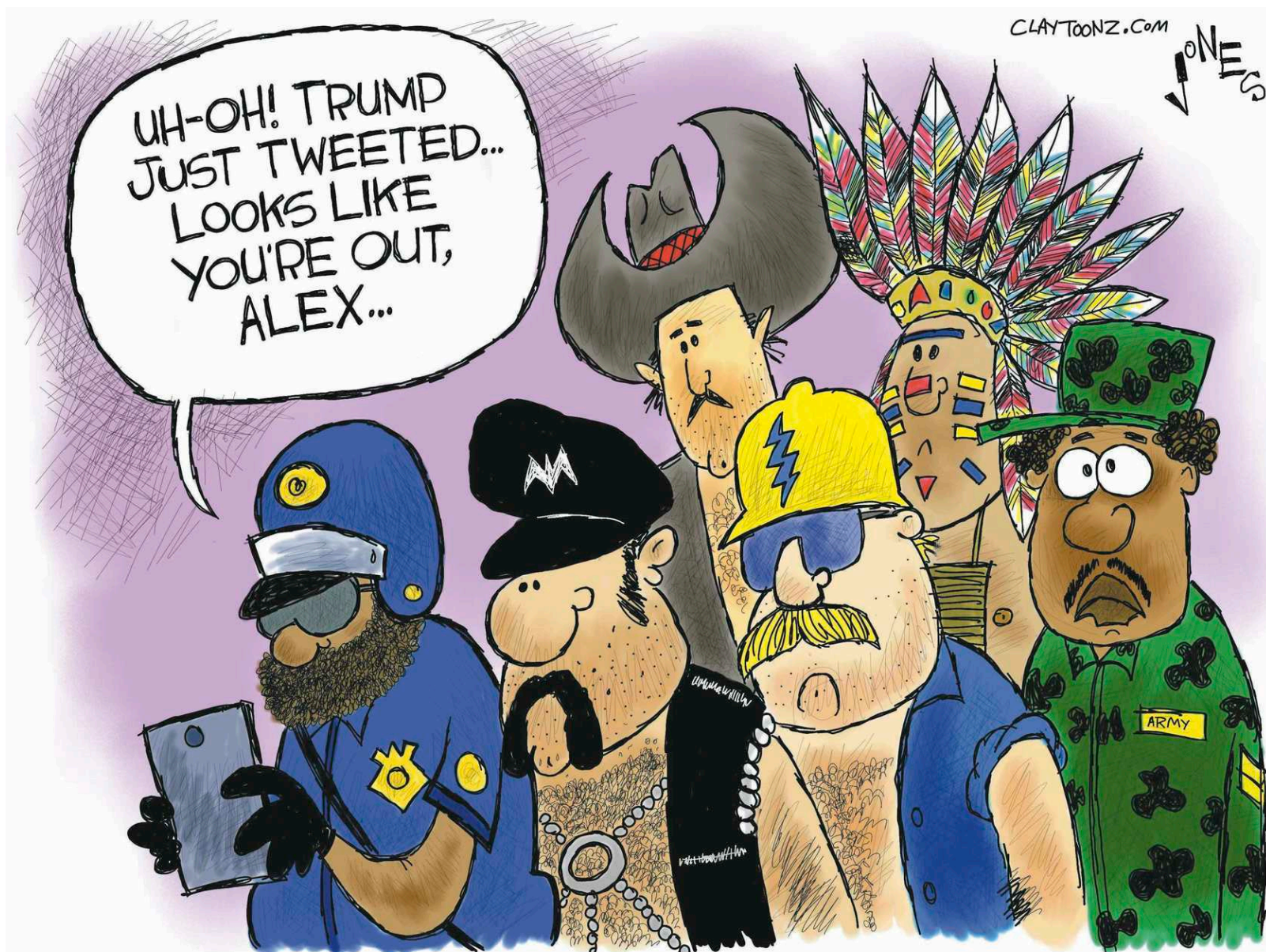
How have our constitutional-ly-protected rights become so terribly vulnerable? This is a vital First Amendment issue. We must not allow S. 720 to keep moving.

SUSAN SKINNER
Astoria

Check out ham radio

Amateur ham radio is an important part of our emergency preparedness on the North Coast. Already, during the storm of 2007, when wind gusts reached hurricane levels along the coast, emergency ham radio networks proved their value when cell and ground phone services were interrupted.

Presently, there is a robust and always-improving ham radio system on the North Coast, integrated with other emergency responders. Ham radio is also a fun, and very interesting hobby. Recent technology has made the activity very affordable — hand-held devices sell for less than \$40, though the sky’s the limit if you want all the bells and whistles.



There are local ham groups, such as the Sunset Empire Amateur Radio Club (SEARC, <https://w7bu.club>), meeting in Astoria, and the Seaside Tsunami Amateur Radio Society (STARS, <http://wa7ve.org>), meeting in Seaside. New members or just interested citizens are always welcome at monthly meetings.

Classes to obtain the ham license are periodically provided in both Astoria and Seaside for free, although there is a nominal charge for the license issued after completing the short course.

DAVID SKARRA
Hammond

Zoned for residents

I’d like to introduce some history and logic to the current rental housing crisis in Seaside. For the past 30 years or so, many of us tried to convince the Planning Commission and City Council that allowing vacation rentals in residential zoning would destroy the purpose of such zoning, creating motel zones, instead. No one in either entity was interested in the opinions of locals. Creating housing for tourists became their priority. Many City Council and

Planning Commission members conveniently owned vacation rentals, or sold them for a living.

Now there are 398 vacation rentals here. Of that number, no less than 200 were formerly long-term rentals that provided housing for the people who lived and worked here. Where is the logic in claiming that vacation rentals and the housing shortage are two completely separate issues (“Wanted: Long-term rentals in Seaside,” The Daily Astorian, July 19)? Those 200-plus vacation rentals used to be housing that is no longer available to anyone. And now they are talking of ending all restrictions/licensing of these properties.

Think of this: At approximately 16 residential lots per block, Seaside has managed to divest us of residential housing, and replace it with 25 blocks of vacation rentals in a town of only 7,000 or so people. Wouldn’t it be nice to have 25 full blocks of housing available for rent? The council and planning commission are not working for the residents. They are working for anyone who comes from out-of-town, and couldn’t care less about those of us who live or work here. Creating tiny increments of

housing by allowing over-retail apartments will not address the tremendous need these people have created via their thoughtlessness.

How about using some common sense, and stop the proliferation of commercial-use housing in residential zoning? How about encouraging use of residential zoning for residential use? What a concept, eh?

I’m so sick of their excuses.
SANDY REA
Seaside

Bypass needed

Open letter to the city of Seaside: You have a heart problem. Your arteries are clogged, and you need a “bypass.” I know this issue has come up in the past, and the consensus was that if Seaside had a bypass, that people may not stop to shop.

Well people are stopped, for sure. In fact, they are dead stopped on U.S. Highway 101 going both directions most days, and certainly on weekends. They are able to pick up an order of Grizzly Tuna, or a coffee from the Human Bean, or shop at Nike outlet — that is how

slow the traffic moves. There are more travelers on the road than in previous years, and it is only going to get worse; not just here, but everywhere.

The local businesses are the losers, because local residents stay home to avoid the traffic, and it is becoming increasingly difficult just to go to the grocery store. Those vehicles that are waiting to move through Seaside are not going to veer off and lose their place in line, and most are wondering if there has been an accident, as there is no signage that tells them why traffic is congested.

Travel time from Gearhart to the U.S. Highway 26 junction can take up to 45 minutes. As a business owner, it has made it almost impossible for me to accommodate my customers with deliveries of wedding cakes from my shop in Cannon Beach, traveling north, and it is affecting my bottom line. I now have been forced to redesign my business plan and re-evaluate my customer service.

The issue of a bypass around Seaside needs to be made a priority sooner, rather than later.

JAE YOUNG
Gearhart

Trump tweets, therefore he is

By CHARLES
KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — Transparency, thy name is Trump, Donald Trump.

No filter, no governor, no editor lies between his impulses and his public actions. He tweets, therefore he is.

Ronald Reagan was so self-contained and impenetrable that his official biographer was practically driven mad trying to figure him out. Donald Trump is penetrable, hourly.

Never more so than during his ongoing war on his own attorney general, Jeff Sessions. Trump has been privately blaming Sessions for the Russia cloud. But rather than calling him in to either work it out or demand his resignation, Trump has engaged in a series of deliberate public humiliations.

Day by day, he taunts Sessions, attacking him for everything from not firing the acting FBI director (which Trump could do himself in an instant) to not pursuing criminal charges against Hillary Clinton.

What makes the spectacle so excruciating is that the wounded Sessions plods on, refusing the obvious invitation to resign his dream job, the capstone of his career.

Trump relishes such a cat-and-mouse game and, by playing it so openly, reveals a deeply repellent vindictiveness in the service of a pathological need to display dominance.

Dominance is his game. Doesn’t matter if you backed him, as did Chris Christie, cast out months ago. Or if you opposed him, as did



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

Attorney General Jeff Sessions speaks on Capitol Hill in June as he testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing about his role in the firing of James Comey, his Russian contacts during the campaign and his decision to recuse himself from an investigation into possible ties between Moscow and associates of President Donald Trump.

Mitt Romney, before whom Trump ostentatiously dangled the State Department, only to snatch it away, leaving Romney looking the foolish supplicant.

Yet the Sessions affair is more than just a study in character. It carries political implications. It has caused the first crack in Trump’s base. Not yet a split, mind you. The base is simply too solid for that. But amid his 35 to 40 percent core support, some are peeling off, both in Congress and in the pro-Trump commentary.

The issue is less characterological than philosophical. As Stephen

Hayes of The Weekly Standard put it, Sessions was the original Trumpist — before Trump. Sessions championed hard-line trade, law enforcement and immigration policy long before Trump rode these ideas to the White House.

For many conservatives, Sessions’ early endorsement of Trump served as an ideological touchstone. And Sessions has remained stalwart in carrying out Trumpist policies at Justice. That Trump could, out of personal pique, treat him so rudely now suggests to those conservatives how cynically expedient was Trump’s adoption of

Sessions’ ideas in the first place.

But beyond character and beyond ideology lies the most appalling aspect of the Sessions affair — reviving the idea of prosecuting Clinton.

In the 2016 campaign, there was nothing more disturbing than crowds chanting “lock her up,” often encouraged by Trump and his surrogates. After the election, however, Trump reconsidered, saying he would not pursue Clinton who “went through a lot and suffered greatly.”

Now under siege, Trump has jettisoned magnanimity. Maybe she

should be locked up after all.

This is pure misdirection. Even if every charge against Clinton were true and she got 20 years in the clink, it would change not one iota of the truth — or falsity — of the charges of collusion being made against the Trump campaign.

Moreover, in America we don’t lock up political adversaries. They do that in Turkey. They do it (and worse) in Russia. Part of American greatness is that we don’t criminalize our politics.

Last week, Trump spoke at the commissioning of the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier. Ford was no giant. Nor did he leave a great policy legacy. But he is justly revered for his decency and honor. His great gesture was pardoning Richard Nixon, an act for which he was excoriated at the time and which cost him the 1976 election.

It was an act of political self-sacrifice, done for precisely the right reason. Nixon might indeed have committed crimes. But the spectacle of an ex-president on trial and perhaps even in jail was something Ford would not allow the country to go through.

In doing so, he vindicated the very purpose of the presidential pardon. On its face, it’s perverse. It allows one person to overturn equal justice. But the Founders understood that there are times, rare but vital, when social peace and national reconciliation require contravening ordinary justice. Ulysses S. Grant amnestied (technically: paroled) Confederate soldiers and officers at Appomattox, even allowing them to keep a horse for the planting.

In Trump World, the better angels are not in evidence.

To be sure, Trump is indeed examining the pardon power. For himself and his cronies.