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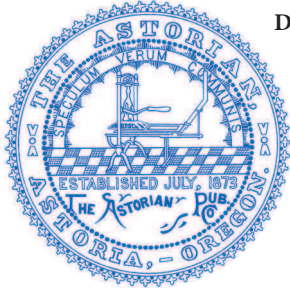
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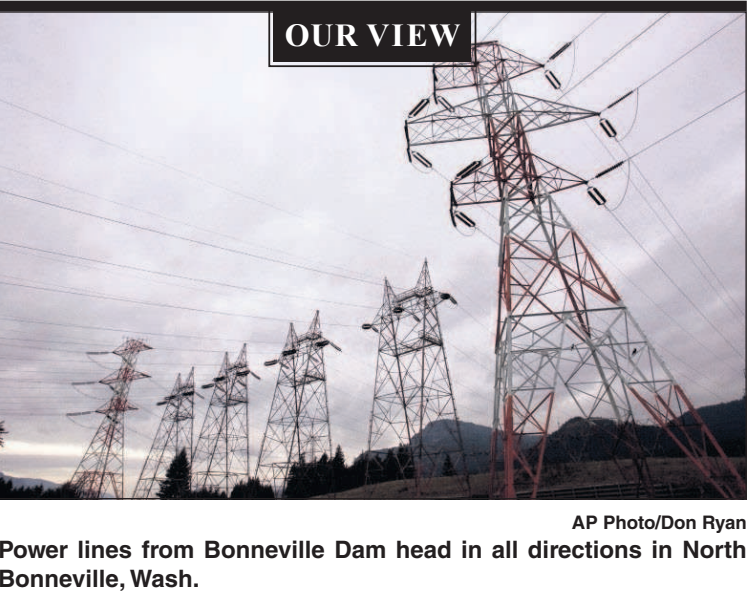
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Trump wants to steal Northwest energy resources

As predictable as summer’s heat, another president tries to appropriate the Pacific Northwest’s largest built asset. As The New York Times reported some two weeks ago, the Trump administration aims to sell the transmission lines of the Bonneville Power Administration to the private sector. That would assuredly raise energy bills throughout Oregon, Washington state, Idaho and western Montana.

President Donald Trump follows George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan in his quest to steal an asset whose value Northwest ratepayers have paid for, at market rates.

This new scheme would penalize residents of the Pacific Northwest in more than one way.

The Columbia River is our region’s most valuable natural resource. The river’s dams and their electricity are the region’s most valuable man-made resource. The Bonneville Power Administration is the overarching authority that sets the operation of the dams and transmits the electricity. The BPA generates more than \$4 billion in annual revenue through sales of the system’s electricity.

During the 1980s, President Reagan proposed to sell the entire BPA system. Trump’s proposal is clever, because it avoids the emotional alarm of selling the dams.

What is tactically more serious about the Trump idea is that if you sell off the transmission of power from the dams, you directly affect the way the river is managed. BPA’s management of the dams recognizes there is a trade-off for how much water is saved for fish, how cold and how deep that water is. Few people realize that the BPA runs the largest fish conservation program in the world.

In other words, when you sell the transmission side of the dams, more than power rates is at stake.

Oregon U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and Washington state U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell are the best positioned to fight the Trump proposal. They are the most senior Democrats on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

“This is vintage highway robbery,” Wyden says. “The people Trump says he cares about would be whacked around. It would raise their utility bills. This is a transfer of values from people of the Northwest to the U.S. Treasury.”

Congressman Greg Walden is a very senior Republican, but he has not said much about the Trump proposal. It would, of course, penalize Walden’s constituents. But Walden also thought the House’s health care bill was a good deal for Eastern Oregon, even though it would have eviscerated that region’s hospitals and taken insurance away from thousands of his constituents.

Wyden says that Northwest Republicans cannot stand idly by. “This will be a test of Republicans,” he says. “President Trump shouldn’t be allowed to siphon assets paid for by Northwest ratepayers.”

An excellent longterm solution would be for Bonneville to buy itself, using bonds. Then it could become truly a regional agency.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer’s name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than

mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner.

Submissions may be sent in any of these ways:

E-mail to editor@dailyastorian.com; online at www.dailyastorian.com; delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.



Google’s war over the sexes

By ROSS DOUTHAT
New York Times News Service

Men and women are different. On this, almost everyone acquainted with reality agrees. How different is the more controversial question, to which there is one particularly interesting answer: A little more different than they used to be.

This growing difference seems to be a striking aspect of modern Western life. In societies where both sexes have greater freedom — and women have more educational and professional opportunities relative to men than in the past — the sexes’ academic interests tend to diverge relative to more traditional societies. And not only their interests but their personalities as well: The more officially egalitarian a society, a credible body of research suggests, the stronger the differences in stereotypically male and female personality traits.

Conservatives sometimes worry that our society features an unhealthy blurring of sexual identities, an androgyne confusion. The left tends to be more optimistic about such blurring, seeing it as a liberation from the rule of patriarchy and the prison of heteronormativity.

But the opposite trend, the divergence of the sexes, might be more important. Some of our present difficulties may flow from an excess of feminine and masculine differentiation, from the sexes growing apart and losing common ground, from the decline of marriage’s male-female partnership and the rise of a singlehood that’s often more sex-segregated than family life.

Certainly the frontiers of sexual license often feature strong male-female differentiation rather than androgyny or gender-neutrality. Think of the clichés that prevail in internet pornography, or the gendered kinks of “Fifty Shades of Grey.” Even our culture’s highest-profile gender transition had a highly sex-specific presentation — Bruce Jenner was the ultimate male Olympian; Caitlyn Jenner, a busty, hyper-feminized Vanity Fair cover model.

So too with political trends. The idea of a “Mommy Party” and a “Daddy Party” goes way back, but the Trump-Clinton election made the increasingly gendered nature of the parties seem ridiculously stark. As Ed West, a columnist for The Week, pointed out last week, the social justice left and the alt-right are among the most gendered movements imaginable — “the political equivalent of the Lego Friends Heartlake Cupcake Cafe and the Lego Nexo Knight’s Clay’s Falcon Fighter Blaster, examples of where greater freedom of association and self-actualization has led men and women.”

Consider it this way: If you asked a right-wing misogynist to craft a sexist parody of his political opponents, you might get something like the highly neurotic, fainting-couch politics of recent campus and online progressivism, whose acolytes oscillate between soft therapeutic language and mae-nad-like frenzy.

If you then asked a left-wing misandrist to do the same sort of parody in reverse, you’d end up with something like the online far-right — nerds and autodidacts obsessed with cuckoldry, fascist



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Google’s headquarters in Mountain View, Calif. Google fired an employee who suggested women don’t get ahead in tech jobs because of biological differences.

cosplayers eager for evidence of their own racial superiority, would-be lotharios furious at feminism, libertarians with a ten-point case for despotism.

The divergence of the sexes also provides a useful context for thinking about this week’s culture-war controversy, the high-profile firing of a Google software engineer, James Damore, for a memo he wrote criticizing the company’s diversity policies.

Damore’s memo argued, roughly, that the tech world’s conspicuous dearth of women is quite possibly a consequence of the trend I’ve just described — that more men than women are attracted to the kind of work that’s done by programmers and software engineers, and that it’s a mistake to assume discrimination when self-selection might be at work. He also questioned why Google’s official rhetoric and internal propaganda focus on the diversity of sex and race while ignoring the value of political or ideological diversity.

The memo was sometimes tone deaf, clinical, insensitive (in, well, a stereotypically male sort of way), understating the ways in which self-selection and sexism can shape an industry. Even if more men than women are attracted to a particular field, a male-dominated profession can be distinctly unpleasant for the women who work in it, in ways that can justify special scrutiny, recruitment and redress.

But Damore also made reasonable points about different ways to pursue diversity and the costs and benefits thereof, in an earnest and dialogic style that a healthy corporate culture would have found a way to answer without swiftly giving him the ax.

At the same time, there was a sense in which Damore had to be fired, precisely because of the intertwined realities that he described. Silicon Valley is a very male environment, a land of nerd kings and programmers whose deepest beliefs tend to be the sort that men come up with when they don’t have very many women around — arch-libertarian, irreligious, utopian in a mechanistic style.

But the internet industry is also part of a wider elite culture that is trending in the opposite direction, becoming more feminized and feminist, and inclined to view male-dominated enclaves with great suspicion. So Silicon Valley’s leaders use corporate wokeness, diversity initiatives and progressive virtue signaling as a kind of self-protection, a way of promising that they’re mostly men but they’re the good kind of men, so that discrimination lawsuits and antitrust actions and other forms

of regulation are less attractive to their critics.

I strongly suspect that more than a few Silicon Valley higher-ups agreed with the broad themes of Damore’s memo. But just as tech titans accept some censorship and oppression as the price of doing business in China, they accept performative progressivism as the price of having nice campuses in the most liberal state in the union and recruiting their employees from its most elite and liberal schools. And for questioning that political performance while defending the disproportionate maleness that makes it necessary, the Google memo-writer simply had to go.

This is not a healthy dynamic, obviously. Indeed, part of why the alt-right has such a strong (if sub rosa) presence in Northern California is because it’s a predictable kind of male response to professional life under the rule of political correctness — a response that the Damore firing will only make more attractive.

Meanwhile, the real truth — which the memo at its most sensible almost grasped — is that Silicon Valley might benefit from having a more female-friendly culture because of the differences between men and women, not because those differences are all somehow a misogynist invention. The fact that the brave new online world of social media may be particularly psychologically unhealthy for young women, for instance, seems like a telling indicator of what can go wrong with a virtual architecture built by brilliant and obtuse males.

But since the usual way to reintegrate the sexes is to have them marry one another and raise kids, what Silicon Valley probably needs right now more than either workplace anti-microaggression training or an alt-right underground is a basic friendliness to family, pregnancy and child rearing.

This is why the new Apple headquarters, which has a 100,000-square-foot fitness and wellness center but no child care center, is a more telling indicator of what really matters to Silicon Valley than all the professions of gender-egalitarianism that have followed James Damore’s heretical comments about sex differences.

Those differences, the real ones, have one common root: Women bear children; men do not. Figuring out how to respect that essential fact and all its implications, while also respecting the equality of the sexes, is one of the great challenges of our age. And it’s because we are failing at it that the sexes have begun to go their separate ways.