

Thinning in watershed

The front page article about thinning activities in the Astoria watershed reads like a press release submitted by a stenographer (“Astoria keeps close eye on timber in Bear Creek watershed,” The Daily Astorian, Aug. 29). The best part was the segment describing log truckers braking for the corners while heading out from the logging areas. One wonders if they used their turn signals once they reached the highway.

Since the article touches on the troubles experienced by the city of Rockaway Beach after the hills to the east were cut over, a brief discussion of fog drip seems timely. Conifers are very efficient at harvesting water from the moisture-laden marine air that we who live west of the coast range summits are blessed to enjoy. We are perched on the western edge of what was once a vast rain forest.

A forest by any name, public or privately held, industrial tree farms included, are all watersheds. Conifers take the moisture from the air and return the surplus to the soil to form the rivulets and streams from which most coastal towns get water. The older the trees, the greater the crown height, and the more efficient the forest will be in harvesting moisture. Plantation forestry surely must diminish water production. I know this, and I am not a plumber.

The article describes the Astoria watershed as 3,700 acres of dense forest where routine annual harvests are conducted, while stating less than 25 percent of the growth is harvested annually. What is meant by “growth”? If a full 25 percent of growth were harvested annually, would all merchantable timber be gone in four years?

If public lands are to be managed as a tree farm, then make public the forest acreage inventory by specie and more importantly, age class. These are facts that will never, ever, see the light of day on the industrial forest holdings which surround us. It is far likelier we will be charged for their water that runs from their hills.

The article implied the city of Astoria wasn’t in it for the money, but some things just don’t add up, and by coincidence the operation made just enough to buy a new fire truck and salt away the extra into a capital improvement fund. This affirms why all trees must fall: We do it for the money.

GARY DURHEIM
Cannon Beach

Greed is the villain

In response to the two letters from Sandy Nielson (“Humane options needed”) and Patricia Wood (“Taxes but no benefits”) in the Aug. 23 edition of the Chinook Observer, I would like to reiterate that what happened to this family and many other families is very sad. My opinion remains the same as to the illegals who enter the U.S.

Both these woman don’t seem to care about the laws of our country. The companies that knowingly hire illegals do so for two reasons — first is lower wages are paid to these workers, and second it’s supply and demand. A recent report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office stated the supply of illegals is creating a new crisis where companies fire the illegals working for them who are demanding to be represented by a labor union. and replacing them with new illegals who are paid even lower wages. Greed is the culprit here.

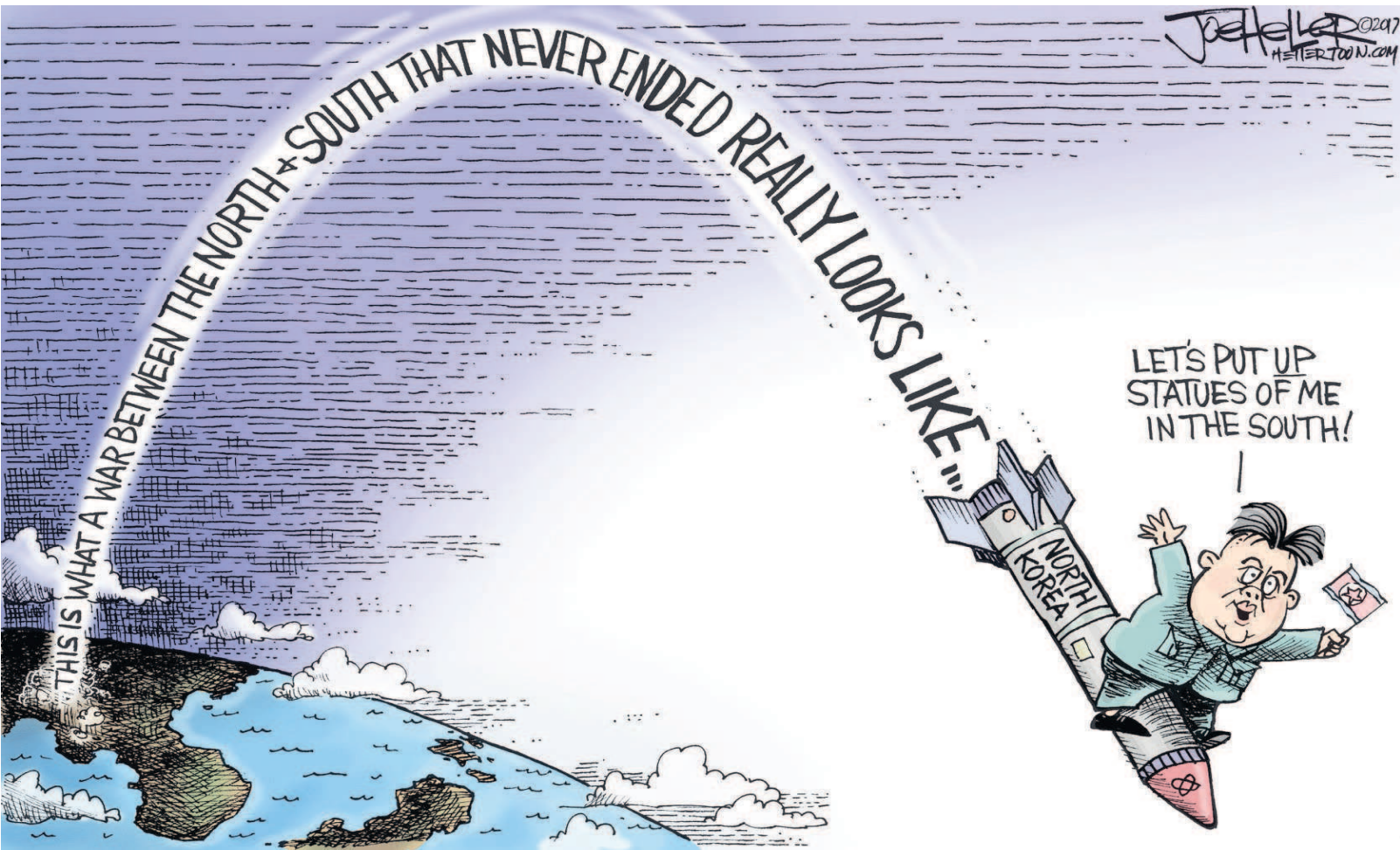
By BRET STEPHENS
New York Times News Service

Texans will find few consolations in the wake of a hurricane as terrifying as Harvey. But here, at least, is one: A biblical storm has hit them, and the death toll —more than 30 as of this writing — is mercifully low, given its intensity.

This is not how it plays out in much of the world. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch ripped through Central America and killed anywhere between 11,000 and 19,000 people, mostly in Honduras and Nicaragua. Nearly a decade later Cyclone Nargis slammed into Myanmar, and a staggering 138,000 people perished.

Nature’s furies — hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, droughts, infectious diseases, you name it — may strike unpredictably. But their effects are not distributed at random.

Rich countries tend to experience, and measure, the costs of such disasters primarily in terms of



There are over 4.4 million applicants from all over the world who have been waiting to be allowed to legally immigrate to the U.S. As for the less fortunate people from Mexico and that region who want to enter our country, there is a streamlined process in place which makes it easy to apply for either the H-2A or H-2B visas.

In the last eight months, the U.S. State Department has funded a program in those countries where they have set up local offices in hundreds of rural locations to help the local people apply for the visas. To date, they report over 65,000 workers have used the new system to successfully attain the work visas and are here working legally.

Both Ms. Nelson and Ms. Wood don’t mention the fact that these companies only have to prove that after 60 days of advertising to try to hire from the local labor force they can then hire workers from other countries using the H-2A and H-2B program.

We are talking about our local problem, but nationally the problem is much worse. Illegals now have flooded the construction trades and truck driving sectors and have driven the wages down to stagnate levels. Once again, greed by the companies is the villain. Building trades were once a great way to make a living, but those days are gone. I can only say it again — we must obey the laws of our great country.

RICHARD CICERELLE
Ocean Park, Washington

Pot tourism insanity

I’m 71, and have been smoking marijuana since 1966, and still smoke it daily. I think anybody who really thinks cannabis tourism will happen is insane. First, nobody cares. Anybody unfortunate enough to need pot habitually already has a lifestyle.

I’ve read Stoner Magazine, and I think, notwithstanding pages and pages of self-serving beautiful advertising, people aren’t just going to start smoking weed and following the String Cheese Incident band, or other Grateful Dead clones. Only people in search of extreme highness (escape) want super-strong pot, much less products like “shatter,” all

designed to get you extremely high. Even more escape.

I have smoked “shatter” — it’s really strong and concentrated. I guess I don’t need to escape that badly.

ALEXANDER P. HANDS
Seaside

Put down the phones

We, as a people, have had more even highly published examples of why we should not be on our cellphones while driving, or even walking.

On Aug. 29, while waiting on the highway to pull into McDonald’s, a truck came up behind me, stopping quickly. I noticed he was on his phone, so I hand gestured to hang up, and he angrily gave me the finger, like I was wrong.

As he aggressively pulled away, I noticed he was the owner of a prominent local business, and my jaw dropped. Having been a local contractor myself, I do know how important communication is, and have been guilty of answering my phone while driving.

This year my eyes have been opened. In the last three months, I have had two close calls in the Safeway parking lot, and even coming out of the store; now two at McDonald’s and three at Home Depot. In every instance the other driver — woman or man, old and young — have been on their cellphones. Cars can do a lot of damage to anything not going very fast, let alone walking and bumping into someone with your eyes down.

In my way of thinking, we the citizens, have a major safety issue caused by the disrespect being shown to all others in public when you’re on your cellphone while driving or walking.

TROY J. HASKELL
Astoria

Appreciate diversity

Recently we lost a great American, someone whose example calls on each of us to be a better citizen and ask more from our country and ourselves. I waited, checking the newspaper every day, to see two articles and a cartoon referring to Jerry Lewis’s contributions, with

no mention of the passing of Dick Gregory.

This is the problem with my “liberal” community, and “liberal” ideals as a whole. The media is telling us how we must denounce white-supremacists — not white supremacy as an ideology, but the people who dare speak the dark tribal nature of their hearts — while white “liberals” are patting themselves on the back for being so much better than these “others.”

Mr. Gregory himself said, “For a black man, there’s no difference between the North and the South. In the South, they don’t mind how close I get, as long as I don’t get too big. In the North, they don’t mind how big I get, as long as I don’t get too close.”

Our nation is like a drunkard who numbs himself, avoiding some darkness in his past that he is unwilling to face, thereby destroying his future. As long as we continue to commit atrocities against those we allow ourselves to see as fundamentally different from us, we will never be truly strong as a nation, able to take on whatever our future holds.

Our diversity should be what makes us strong. I would ask my fellow Americans to step out of their routine this week and make an effort to have a conversation with someone you see as different from you, someone whose cultural influences may be different from yours, who may be educated or uneducated, older or younger, well-off or poor, who is more feminine or masculine, but who is very much your equal and has something to offer by their different perspective.

You will better know your neighbor, and better know yourself when you are done. You may find that rather than tolerating those who are different, you appreciate them.

SARAH JENSEN
Astoria

Two sides to every story

Once upon a time, years ago, news sources tried to keep their news unbiased. Those days are gone. There was not a constant stream of bashing a person who actually won an election. Once the election was won people got

on with life, without all the negative stuff. An article that starts about the eclipse then changes to negative bashing — enough already.

There are reasons why so many people voted Donald Trump in. What are they? You don’t hear anything about that. That in itself is another series in the making. There are two sides to every story. Just to be clear, I did not vote for him, but do understand why a lot of people did. I did not vote for her, either.

On another note, we have all heard and read about the plight of the illegal immigrant. Talking about it over and over does nothing to change it. If you don’t like the law or the results of enforcing the law, work at changing it. Start a fund to help with legal costs, get petitions going.

LENORE MOODY
Ocean Park, Washington

Oppose upriver mine

I don’t want mining pollution in my drinking water. Kelso’s water comes from the Cowlitz River, downstream from the Toutle and Green rivers. The U.S. Forest Service just issued a draft decision to allow Ascot Resources to begin exploratory drilling right along the headwaters of the Green River. The proposed mine for copper, gold and molybdenum is at Goat Mountain, on the northeastern border of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

Once prospecting is finished, it will be difficult to stop a mine itself. But small mines in the area from the early 1900s leak some acid mine drainage — a large modern mine could produce much more. Also, the crater is only 12 miles away. Periodically swarms of small tremors occur, and stronger activity is likely over the life of a mine and its tailing pond. A mining accident would be disastrous for our water supply, as the Kelso City Council recognized in a March 2016 resolution.

Join me in asking the Forest Service to protect this precious natural resource by withdrawing the draft decision. Email Charlie Sharp, Cowlitz Ranger District, charlesmsharp@fs.fed.us

GLORIA NICHOLS
Kelso, Washington

Hurricanes, climate and the capitalist offset

money. Poor countries experience them primarily in terms of lives. Between 1940 and 2016, a total of 3,348 people died in the United States on account of hurricanes, according to government data, for an average of 43 victims a year. That’s a tragedy, but compare it to the nearly 140,000 lives lost when a cyclone hit Bangladesh in 1991.

Why do richer countries fare so much better than poorer ones when it comes to natural disasters? It isn’t just better regulation. I grew up in Mexico City, which adopted stringent building codes following a devastating earthquake in 1957. That didn’t save the city in the 1985 earthquake, when we learned that those codes had been flouted for years by lax or corrupt building inspectors, and thousands of people were buried under the rubble of shoddy construction. Regulation is only as good, or bad, as its enforcement.

A better answer lies in the combination of government responsiveness and civic spiritedness so splendidly on display this week in Texas. And then there’s the matter of wealth.

Every child knows that houses of brick are safer than houses of wood or straw — and therefore cost more to build. Harvey will damage or ruin thousands of homes. But it won’t sweep away entire neighborhoods, as Typhoon Haiyan did in the Philippine city of Tacloban in 2013.

Harvey will also inflict billions in economic damage, most crushingly on uninsured homeowners. The numbers are likely to be staggering in absolute terms, but what’s more remarkable is how easily the U.S. economy can absorb the blow. The storm will be a “speed bump” to Houston’s \$503 billion economy, according to Moody’s Analytics’ Adam Kamins, who told The Wall Street Journal that he expects the storm to derail growth for about two months.

On a global level, the University of Colorado’s Roger Pielke Jr. notes that disaster losses as a percentage of the world’s GDP, at just 0.3 percent, have remained constant since 1990. That’s despite the dollar cost of disasters having nearly doubled over the same time — at just about the same rate as the growth in

the global economy. (Pielke is yet another victim of the climate lobby’s hyperactive smear machine, but that doesn’t make his data any less valid.)

Climate activists often claim that unchecked economic growth and the things that go with are principal causes of environmental destruction. In reality, growth is the great offset. It’s a big part of the reason why, despite our warming planet, mortality rates from storms have declined from .11 per 100,000 in the 1900s to .04 per 100,000 in the 2010s, according to data compiled by Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser. Death rates from other natural disasters such as floods and droughts have fallen by even more staggering percentages over the last century.

That’s because economic growth isn’t just a matter of parking lots paving over paradise. It also underwrites safety standards, funds scientific research, builds spillways and wastewater plants, creates “green jobs,” subsidizes Elon Musk, sets aside prime real estate for conservation, and so on. Poverty, not wealth, is the enemy of the environment.

Only the rich have the luxury of developing an ethical stance toward their trash.

The paradox of our time is that the part of the world that has never been safer from the vagaries of nature seems never to have been more terrified of them. Harvey truly is an astonishing storm, the likes of which few people can easily remember.

Then again, as meteorologist Philip Klotzbach points out, it’s also only one of four Category 4 or 5 hurricanes to make landfall in the United States since 1970. By contrast, 10 such storms made landfall between 1922 and 1969. Make of that what you will, but remember that fear is often a function of unfamiliarity.

Houston will ultimately recover from Harvey’s devastation because its people are creative and courageous. They will rebuild and, when the next storm comes, as it inevitably will, be better prepared for it. The best lesson the world can take from Texas is to follow the path of its extraordinary economic growth on the way to environmental resilience.