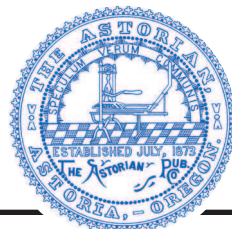


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Robust state role must continue at Hanford

The Trump administration's environmental policies are the ultimate screw-you moment for the youngest Americans, as well as for generations unborn. Following on the Environmental Protection Agency's recent easing of rules on coal, the news of a proposal to reclassify high-level radioactive waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation is a jaw-dropper. It is also a threat to our region.

Hanford is the Pacific Northwest's largest environmental challenge. Its mountain of nuclear waste was born in the secrecy and exigencies of World War II. Once that veil was lifted and Northwest states understood the implications of radioactive waste in the ground and water adjacent to the Columbia River, Oregon and Washington lawmakers pressed for federal responsibility and a seat at the table. Prominent among our advocates were U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire. That 20-year-old agreement set a 30-year timetable for cleaning up Hanford's toxins. In view of the daunting complexity of the work and unforeseen problems, this timeline is now expected to continue well into the mid-21st century.

Perhaps it is simply typical of President Trump's shallow understanding of longstanding agreements of all sorts, but the notion that the federal government could



An undated aerial view of part of the Hanford nuclear reservation.

Associated Press

unilaterally redefine the situation at Hanford is both laughable and contemptible. The momentum at Hanford has been moving in the other direction. Washington and Oregon would not surrender their hard-won roles in the oversight of Hanford cleanup. Federal courts would certainly back Washington state in defending its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy and the EPA.

This editorial page over decades has decried the pace of cleanup at Hanford. It is essential that all of us

— certainly including we who live downriver from Hanford — pay attention to what's going on. Oregon's U.S. senators — Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley — and Washington's senators — Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell — must leave no doubt that this Trump proposal is indefensible and merits a swift burial.

"Burial" was a policy theme for far too long at Hanford, and continues in some senses today. Underground storage tanks which kept toxic sludge out of sight, if not out

of mind, have been overly prone to leaks into the groundwater and surrounding air. More recently, entire trainloads of diverse poisonous waste from the bomb-building era have been causing problems in tunnels where they were secreted away. In a suspiciously impromptu decision, these nightmarish tunnels are being pumped full of grout. Nearby residents express doubts about whether this stopgap answer will come back to haunt us.

"Burial" also comes to mind in the context of longstanding national failures in how we internalize the human, environmental and monetary costs of war. For too long, Hanford as a facility was treated with much the same lackadaisical attitude too many of our leaders display toward veterans — burying their suffering and needs in an underfunded and sometimes poorly run bureaucracy. Like the Veterans Administration, Hanford will benefit from continuing close oversight. The cleanup certainly must be financially accountable. But first and foremost, it must achieve its aims of making certain its surroundings and the wider Columbia River region are kept safe for generations to come. The expediencies of war are no excuse for potentially deadly shortcuts in confronting the aftermath of those decisions.

These commitments cannot and must not be hamstrung by political expediency — by this or any future presidential administration.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Can we work together on climate change?

The Nov. 30 articles in The Daily Astorian, "A dire picture of climate change in the Northwest" and "Pro-Con: Is carbon tax the right way to fight climate change?" got me thinking about economic uncertainties in the face of regional changing ocean and forest conditions.

This uncertainty leaves local natural resource — and tourism — industries vulnerable as emissions exacerbate negative impacts. How, in our divisive political climate, can we work together to address these risks?

While adaptation efforts, such as the work by the shellfish industry and the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan are necessary, we need to unite to implement predictable market-based solutions to reduce emissions nationwide.

Recently, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, co-sponsored by members from both parties, was introduced in Congress. The policy aims to capture the true cost of emissions, including the increasing impacts to our natural resources and economy.

By pricing carbon incrementally every year, America's emissions will be reduced by 40 percent within 12 years. Generated fees will be allocated to all Americans on a monthly basis, and will create 1.2 million jobs in the clean energy economy.

I urge U.S. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici and Jamie Herrera Beutler, who have worked hard to protect our ocean resources and rural economies, to support the bill. It's time to set aside our partisan differences and work together to start addressing this very real threat for the good of our local economy and our nation.

JUSTIN SAYDELL
Astoria

Christmas tree thoughts

In my younger days, it was our family tradition to go into the forest with the proper permit, and select and cut our own, special Christmas tree. Often that tree turned out to be a foot or so too tall for our living room, but after trimming it to fit, we carefully placed it, best side out, to be admired by all.

We decorated it with lights, ornaments, artificial icicles and a star on the very top. It was beautiful. That tree, in a sense, ushered in a happy, joyful season. Family and friends gathered for a wonderful dinner with all the trimmings. Gifts were exchanged, Christmas carols were sung

and special hymns and songs heard, all over town.

People greeted each other with smiles and wishes of "Merry Christmas." Efforts were made to share with those less fortunate — especially food for the hungry, and toys for the children.

But soon the tree withers. Lights and ornaments are removed and saved for next year, and the tree is discarded. Unfortunately, many of the other good things about the season are put aside also — joy, happiness, peace, benevolence and friendly attitudes.

My children are all grown now, and we no longer cut our Christmas tree. It was replaced with an artificial one, but we try to hold on to the more important things about the season. Family gathering, joy, peace, happiness, mindful of helping the needy, and above all, remembering that God's greatest gift to mankind was Christ.

KEN TIPPS
Astoria Church of Christ

We can act better than this

Now that the election season, in all its glorious ugliness, is finally over, allow me a few strictly bipartisan thoughts.

First, truth is truth. It's not relative, and it really matters. In the just-finished election cycle, we were subjected to vicious, negative and untruthful ads in unprecedented numbers, from all sides of the aisle. What happened to the high road?

"Truth doesn't matter because we won" is not sustainable. There is always a bigger hammer somewhere. Fear-mongering hurts our humanity and drives us back toward the caves we came from.

If our elected officials can't reach across, up and down, over and under the aisle, and work together for the common good, then we the people should vote them into the nearest retirement village. That's democracy, right? Right.

Each of us possess the ability to respect each other, and this is the only thing that can make all 330 million of us, one country. This is vital, because divide and conquer is all too real. America has already fought one Civil War too many.

We can act better than this. We must act better than this if we are to survive as a civilized country. History's lessons can be painful. The Roman Empire ruled most of the known world for well over 400 years, and likely many Romans thought it would never fall. But in 395 A.D., it split apart, and the collapse began.



The difference today is, modern technology makes both good and bad happen at warp speed.

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria

Welcome to Astoria

I attended my first Astoria City Council meeting Dec. 3. Code changes were on the docket, and talk was that people were going to try to persuade the council to hold off on the vote until certain changes were made.

On entering the council room, I heard a baby crying and saw what I would consider a rather significant police presence. I did not know this issue was so divisive.

I watched from the back of the room as the council began to plow through their agenda for the night. When the issue of home stay lodging came up, to my surprise, the mayor opened it up for comment.

People streamed to the podium, making their views known in no uncertain terms. Their voices were heard. Everyone got their chance and had their say.

The pens came out, changes were made. But it did not turn out as I had hoped. The vote was taken, 5-0. The code changes were approved. Legislation small and petty, but so it goes.

But thinking back on the night, the loudest voice Monday night was the one of a baby crying for her daddy, and that daddy is now our new police officer. So in the end, the baby got what she wanted, and I got my two takeaways:

No. 1: The City Council bent over back-

wards to make sure everyone was heard.

No. 2: We all won, we all will be safer because our new police officer was sworn in.

Welcome to Astoria.

JOHN GINDER
Astoria

A trust broken

The Astoria City Council meeting on Dec. 12, to hear public comment on Hollander's request for a four-story hotel on our waterfront, was a disturbing event.

Astoria residents jammed the room and expressed concern over this permanent huge structure that will block views, and change forever the look and feel of a popular part of the Riverwalk. Some council members expressed confusion over the wording of the code. They zig-zagged up and down, round and round, and then ended up allowing this huge development.

I had assumed council members would be especially careful with such a permanent alteration. Their confusion had left room to listen to the residents of Astoria sitting there clearly in opposition. Sadly, those voices were discounted as they made their final decision approving this unpopular over-sized development.

People who live here know what the river means to Astoria. No code is necessary to tell us. It was a shameful outcome. The council members who ignored the wishes of the audience may want to hide their faces when in public ... a trust broken. They will be remembered.

LYNNE FARRAR
Astoria