

OPINION

the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

The Port can learn from others

Astoria could surely learn from tiny Toledo, 140 miles down the Oregon Coast. Astoria is a town steeped in history, with a rich heritage of fishing and logging, and a new embrace of tourism based on its scenic river-shore location.

And Toledo ... well, it’s just about the same, only less than half the size.

Just 7 miles inland from the bustling port and tourism town of Newport, Toledo is providing a perfect example of how a community can reinvent itself.

And Astoria could learn much from it, as our reporter Edward Stratton discovered when he researched our news story about Toledo’s recent maritime industry turnaround.

Toledo — population 3,627 — has long been a railroad stop, in large part because of its sawmill operations. It has been a center for dairy farming and for boatbuilding.

Even though it sits in the shadow cast by the much bigger Newport, it offers a charming place for coastal visitors to take a small twisty detour inland and make discoveries.

Waterfowl are much in evidence because of the scenic Yaquina River, which visitors report is excellent for cutthroat trout and the occasional Chinook salmon. Just like Astoria, art galleries display locally created pictures and ceramics and there are

THANKS TO VISION AND ENERGY, TOLEDO IS REINVENTING ITSELF ECONOMICALLY THROUGH INVIGORATED USE OF ITS BOATYARD TO SERVICE THE CENTRAL COAST FISHING FLEET.

places to eat that offer local seafood and produce.

Thanks to vision and energy, Toledo is reinventing itself economically through invigorated use of its boatyard to service the central coast fishing fleet.

More than a decade ago, a private owner shut down his Toledo boatyard to focus on his other location in Reedsport. Instead of sitting back and lamenting the loss, innovative individuals saw a community asset on the Yaquina River that could come under public ownership.

They acted — and revitalized the town.

Assisted by state financing and grants, the boatyard reopened in 2011 as a publicly run operation, and sandblasting, painting and welding crews were soon hard at work on local vessels. As is common with most successful operations, the Port of Toledo embraced the idea of a public-private partnership and invited independent contractors to use the facility, too. That brought in revenue while keeping the waterfront bustling with a grow-

ing workforce.

Of course there was some lucky timing involved. But the port would have been kept busy even without the research vessels from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Oregon State University that located in Newport.

Astoria could learn much from this model. It’s not that our Port needs to copy Toledo in exact detail, so much as become similarly energized. It needs leaders to think creatively about doable projects on the waterfront that tap into available financial support systems offered by the state.

Having a working waterfront isn’t just a nostalgic goal so artists can paint or photograph it and longtime residents can feel good that their children have job options to keep them in town. The North Coast economy has diversified in the past two decades, but a significant portion can still genuinely reflect our maritime heritage.

To obtain more state support for its operations, the Port of Astoria must finish and present a strategic

plan. That’s a reasonable ask from state leaders concerned that their limited dollars are well spent.

As Stratton has reported, this plan comes after our Port’s early exit from the industrial docks at North Tongue Point, which some observers saw as our community’s best option for a boatyard similar to Toledo’s. Now boatbuilder Hyak Maritime is pressing ahead with its own project there while improving the infrastructure.

Other waterfront controversies over the past few years have held the Port back, not least doing so much to accommodate the returning log vessels that other, less volatile, businesses have been hurt. The absurd but perhaps inevitable tariff war with China and the uncertainty it casts on continuing log exports is more evidence not to base future economic hopes on this one precarious area.

Overall, as the Port seeks new leadership following the departure of its executive director, it has its best chance to pick up the pieces. Let’s look at Toledo and “borrow” the best ideas. Let’s look elsewhere at other innovative success stories and emulate them.

If nothing else, let’s observe and embrace Toledo’s evident contention that when something potentially negative happens in any community it can be an opportunity, not a disaster.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Litter and junk

I am a 25-year resident of Seaside. I walk the beaches and dunes almost daily. I am disgusted and appalled at the litter and junk left on the beach after busy weekends. How could a human actually toss cans, bottles and food bags into the bushes and dunes?

The city of Seaside provided hundreds of garbage containers for the Hood to Coast crowds. I doubt if the offenders read newspapers, but just in case, please tell us what you’re thinking. Why do you litter the beaches?

KATHY WEIGEL
Seaside

Everything is connected

The draining of Fishhawk Lake is another indicator of folks having no idea about how their personal environment is connected to everything else around them (“State probes Fishhawk Lake draining,” The Astorian, Aug. 27).

Looking at the connections of what we buy, what choices we make, the way in which we choose to live and how our local industries impact our living conditions is important to our quality and sustainability of life.

Our region is dependent on fish vitality, commercially and for sport. Sloppy craftsmanship of the drainage system repair robbed the residents of their lake. However, is dam restoration the best solution?

The lake was an artificial, man-made water body built in the 1960s when the general public was clueless about streamside health, local soil and watershed concerns. It’s a complex issue which needs the expertise of the Department of Environmental Quality, Fish and Wildlife and Clatsop County personnel to coordinate their talents to come up with the best possible solution for fish and aquatic habitat.

Human creativity and problem-solving have built pyramids, skyscrapers and amazing civilizations. We can solve our local problems without judgment. Looking for the best talents, within our state, to conquer difficulties within our environment. I know this can be worked out with a quality solution.

PAMELA MATTSON McDONALD
Astoria

Very amusing

The story concerning the Skipanon Water Control District dissolving their organization in a fully transparent way was very amusing to me (“Skipanon Water Control District to dissolve,” The Astorian, Sept. 3).

The story states the district wants a plan “for the orderly transition of assets and responsibilities.” If the city of Warren-

ton were to obtain new information from the government that showed a future risk of increased flooding along the Skipanon River, they might decide to put the old original tide gates back on and replace the one missing gate.

I would be very surprised if the water district would not try to reorganize again to remove these gates, as all they ever wanted was a fish passage at this location.

The article admits that this project was all about a fish passage at the Eighth Street Dam by stating that the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce was no longer interested in financing this type of project with an uncooperative city.

The Skipanon Water Control District charter indicates that they were organized to prevent flooding on the Skipanon River. In December 2015, there was unusual flooding that came within 12 to 15 inches of flooding into homes located inside the city limits of Warrenton.

It’s never happened before. This flooding was likely caused by the tide gates being removed earlier in 2015, as the water control district wanted unrestricted fish passage at that dam site.

State of Oregon regulations state specifically that water control districts are not to promote fish passage over the primary requirement of flood protection.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE
Warrenton

It’s Astor Column

In response to “Is it Astor or Astoria?” (The Astorian, Aug. 22): I’ve lived here all my life, and am 73 years old, and just wanted to tell you the only name I have ever heard or used was the Astor Column.

At some point, several years back, someone started calling it the Astoria Column. However, to us older folks, it’s the Astor Column.

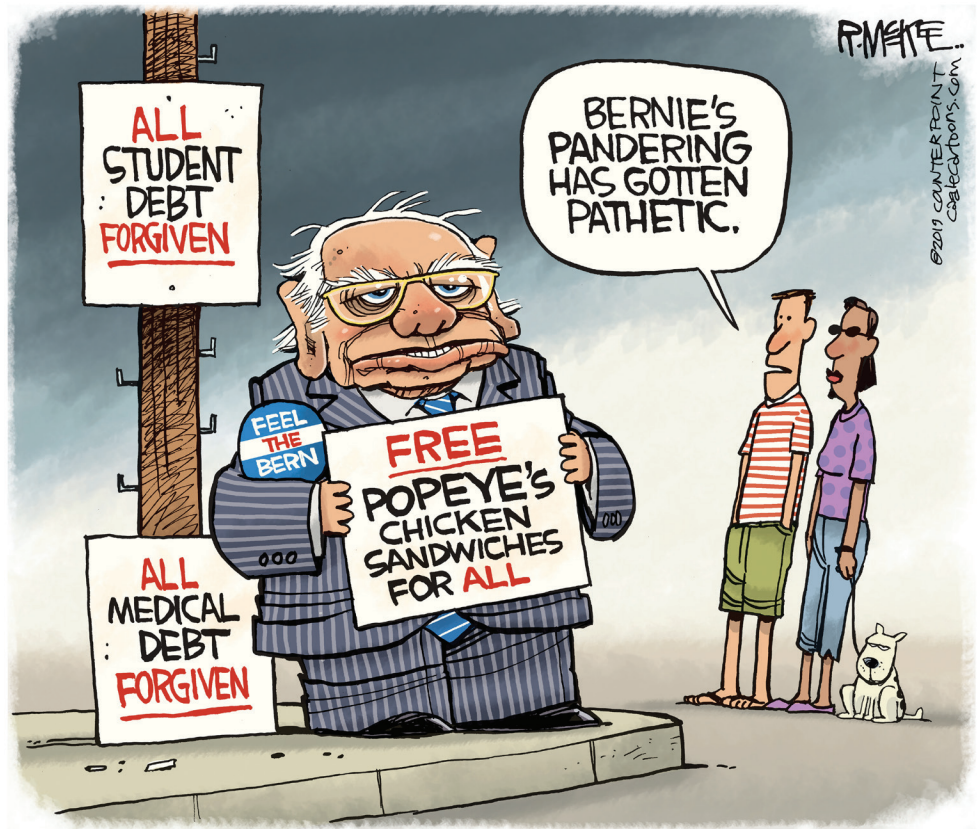
JOHN MEINERS
Astoria

Intolerable situation

American tariffs have caused controversy since 1789, when they were first used to raise revenue. The uproar today is about tariffs and China.

It seems to me the Washington, D.C., establishment has created an intolerable situation in world trade that’s unique in American history. Most folks don’t know about three unusual things politicians of both parties did the last 30 years to help create today’s predicament:

- Tax laws encouraged American companies to employ Chinese workers in China rather than American workers in America.
- They didn’t tax profits that American



companies made in China as long as American companies banked and invested those profits in foreign countries instead of in America.

- They protected Chinese companies from American competition by allowing China to put high tariffs on American-made products.

As we all know, the few Americans who built plants and did business in China became unbelievably wealthy. But over the years as China got wealthier and more powerful, America’s economy went to pot.

Seemingly everything in America was made in China. And our lowest economic growth in decades affected almost everybody. The final straw for millions of Americans was hearing in 2014 that “low growth is the new normal.”

The current administration is trying hard to fix the situation. And that’s not easy, especially when some folks, especially farmers, will be temporarily hurt in the process.

Washington, D.C., establishment politicians who oppose tariffs on China still haven’t gotten the message from the last presidential election. And it’s high time they did.

DON HASKELL
Astoria

For the love of America

I don’t understand this hatred for one’s own country. How is it today that many men and women across the great U.S. disparage the land that has given them so much?

I was a student at Lewis and Clark back in the late 1980s, and took an interesting

course on the history of Vietnam. It was particularly fascinating because the professor was a war protester during the conflict, and I am a combat infantry veteran who fought there in 1970 and 1971.

In the course of a discussion about the villagers we interacted with, I made the comment that what I had observed was that most of them genuinely liked GIs. Our instructor paused, and then said that in the past, he had believed the opposite, that the people there hated Americans.

However, he went on and admitted that he was forced to change his mind on this subject. He had visited after the war was over, and came to realize that what I had said was the truth, most of the Vietnamese people liked us.

Why is it that the men who fought in the Philippines during World War II, and in Italy — notwithstanding the fact that we were invaders of their homeland — still felt the people thought well of us? Ask those who were living in Eastern Europe under the Russians how they felt about their invaders.

I have difficulty with liberal ideas about my country.

CARL YATES
Seaside

Language

The writer Henry James said the two most beautiful words in the English language are “summer afternoon.”

My friend Russ disagrees. He says the two most beautiful words are “fish on.”

JIM HALLAUX
Astoria