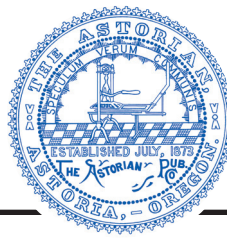


OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

We need more like him

Clyde Bellecourt's death on Jan. 11 is a reminder of one of the most transformative periods in the second half of the 20th century.

The American Indian Movement of the 1970s followed the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Each of those cultural-political events confronted the nation with a profound change in the self regard of African Americans and Native Americans.

Here around the mouth of the Columbia River, this struggle remains particularly relevant today as members of the Chinook Indian Nation and the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes pursue formal federal recognition of their existence. Such status would bring a variety of economic and social benefits — including to nontribal neighbors. But it would be most important as a form of tangible acknowledgement of the continuity of this ancient civilization in our midst.

Bellecourt, a founder of AIM, led a life that was at times violent. It was full of confrontation. And it concluded with a personal transformation toward education and spiritual healing.

Consider this: It was not until 1924 under President Calvin Coolidge that Native Americans were granted U.S. citizenship. Less than a century ago, the people who originally settled in America more than 10,000 years before the Egyptian pyramids were built weren't considered to be true Americans. They weren't even "second-class citizens." Astounding and infuriating.

Like other leaders of oppressed minorities, Bellecourt had a way of summing up the moment with piercing prose. In its obituary, the New York Times quoted Belle-



Clyde Bellecourt, second from right, at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1973 before the signing of a statement ending the standoff between federal forces and the American Indian Movement. Jim Mone/AP Photo

court saying: "We are the landlords of the country, it is the end of the month, the rent is due, and AIM is going to collect."

Bellecourt pushed athletic teams to change their names — notably the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Indians. Making the argument for that, he said: "We're trying to convince people we're human beings and not mascots. They're making fools of themselves and of us in the process."

In the Pacific Northwest, empowerment of Native Americans has been key to advanc-

ing priorities that benefit everyone. For example, expertise and advocacy on behalf of salmon restoration helps not only tribal fishermen but everyone who cares about these iconic species. The high-quality environment required by salmon may also be what humans need to prosper during the troubled century that lies ahead.

Whenever the cultural ground shifts in America, there is discomfort among the white majority. But just as Martin Luther King Jr. liberated the South from a debilitating way of life, Bellecourt was

instrumental in giving one of our nation's most oppressed minorities a revival of their culture and ancient values.

Today, far too many Native American people remain mired in poverty. The woefully neglected tragedy of murdered and missing Indigenous women deserves to spark a national crisis of conscience. We should all seek out native voices for potential answers for what ails the world, but too often they go unheard.

Bellecourt was a sharp thorn. We need more like him.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Refreshing

It is refreshing to see a former mayor still taking an active interest in their city. Kudos to Arline LaMear for her thoughtful and insightful guest column in Saturday's paper headlined "Heritage Square project is critical."

I took two thoughts away after reading it. One: Please, City Council, vote "yes" on the amendments approved by the Planning Commission.

Two: Where is our current mayor? I'm trying to remember the last time I read anything from Bruce Jones in The Astorian. It's been ages. He continues to be one of the most silent mayors this city has surely ever seen.

TROY HILL
Astoria

Real solutions

I was so impressed with former Mayor Arline LaMear's guest column "Heritage Square project is critical" in Saturday's edition of The Astorian.

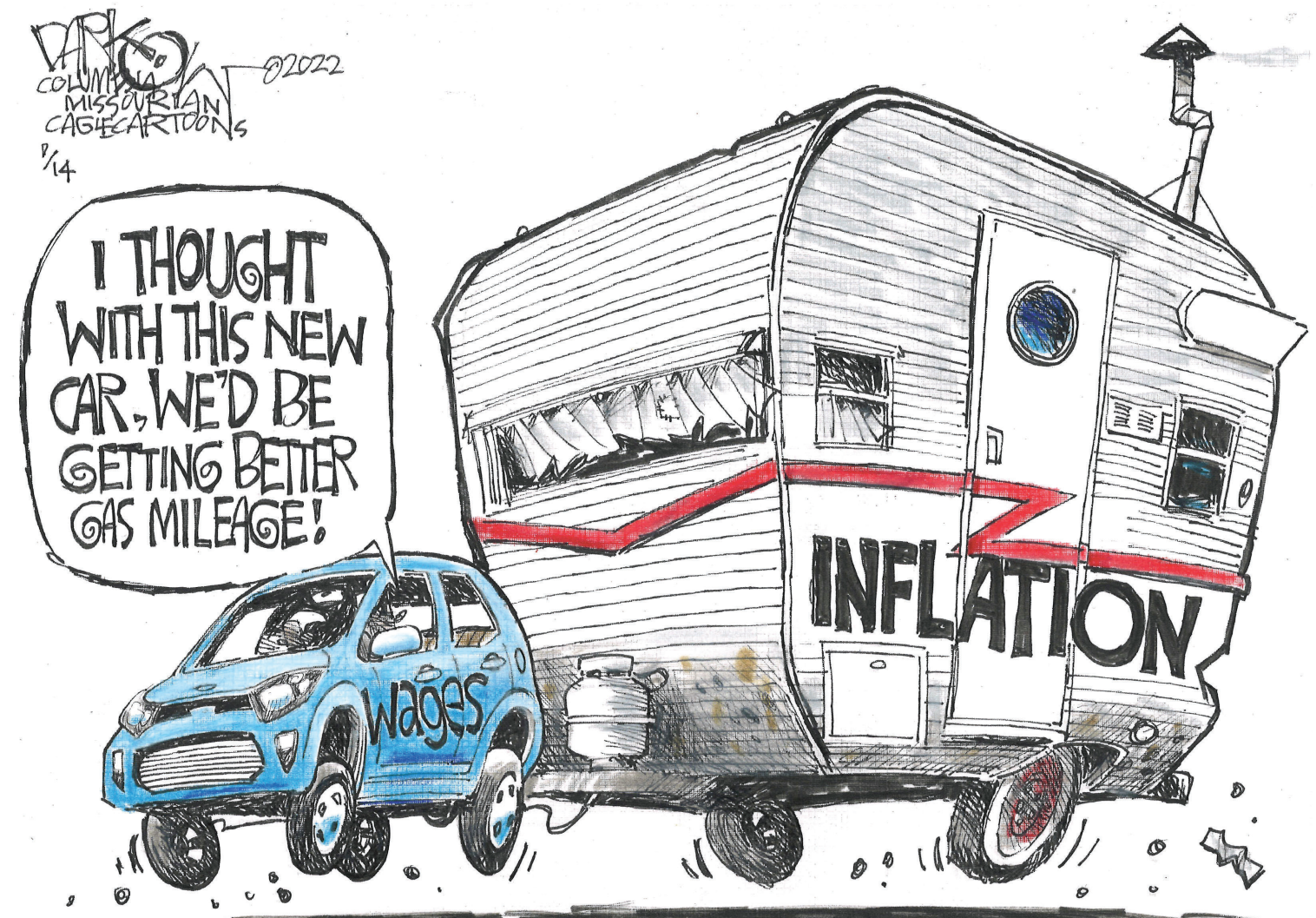
I have not seen any real evidence that the City Council or any group has provided solutions to our homeless problem. Certain individuals have done what they could, but obviously no solution has been found.

I do hope a good group of people will have read LaMear's article and will show up to support the homeless, and insist the City Council seek real solutions.

JEAN HOOGE
Astoria

As important

Regarding housing in our county: We agree there is a need for affordable housing. The focus seems to be on the homeless living on the streets, then for the low-income earners.



In the months I've been following this concern in our local paper, not once have I read about appropriate housing for our elderly population. Yes, there are assisted living facilities. They are expensive, and not all older people require that level of care.

With so many retired people in our area, why hasn't any new construction been dedicated to our senior citizens? They should be seen as important as the other priorities.

BERNADINE THOMAS
Warrenton

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.