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OUR VIEW

Army should give straight answer on future of depot

For years, albeit with some hesitation at times, the U.S. Army was fairly clear that when the Umatilla Chemical Depot closed, they planned to hand the property over to a local development group. That organization, the Columbia Development Authority, would then divvy it up for private development.

There were already plans in the works. Infrastructure upgrades to highway ramps and roads going through the property was on the way. And a number of businesses in different industries had expressed interest in locating and building on the prime real estate.

Screeeeeeeech! That is the sound of the needle scratching over a record, the music fading suddenly and the bright lights coming up. Everything has come to a stop.

A surprise to the local development authority, the muddled voice from the Pentagon now states that they may want to hold on to the property after all and do the job of selling it off themselves. Spokesman Dave Foster told The Associated Press Thursday that the Army has made no decisions on the "most appropriate way to convey the property."

This tentative, indecisive stance is a step backward at a most inopportune time. When businesses are considering long-term, expensive capital outlays, they require stability and an absence of unknowns. They don't want surprises, nor to be saddled with any additional risk than is absolutely necessary.

The neighbors in Hermiston,

Umatilla and Morrow County were burdened with that chemical depot for more than 50 years.

It was also buoyed by it — the good-paying jobs it offered helped put much of western Umatilla County on the map.

But now that the buoy has been taken away, the burden should be too.

Taxpayers footed the bill from Day 1. If the Army needs funding, it should come from Congressionally-approved sources, not land sale.

And don't forget, taxpayers footed the bill from Day 1, from construction to cleanup. If the Army needs funding, it should come from Congressionally-approved sources, not land sale.

If the Umatilla Chemical Depot is no longer a hazardous but necessary cache of chemical weapons employing hundreds of well-

paid Oregonians, then we think it should be a place where the greater Hermiston area can do what it has been doing well for decades now: creating good jobs in the transportation, agriculture and technology sectors. Creating tax dollars. Creating added-value goods that feed our nation. Helping families in rural Oregon flourish.

We know what dealing with the government can be like, and we know the Pentagon can be even more lumbering and less transparent than most federal agencies.

But we can't have lumbering.

If we're going to make that property a privately held, job- and tax-creating piece of land again, we need agility and local decision-making power. At the very least, we need to know now what the Army's decision is, so we can start planning the future.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEWS



But are we really?

The journalists at Charlie Hebdo are now rightly being celebrated as martyrs on behalf of freedom of expression, but let's face it: If they had tried to publish their satirical newspaper on any American university campus over the last two decades it wouldn't have lasted 30 seconds. Student and faculty groups would have accused them of hate speech. The administration would have cut financing and shut them down.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Public reaction to the attack in Paris has revealed that there are a lot of people who are quick to lionize those who offend the views of Islamist terrorists in France but who are a lot less tolerant toward those who offend their own views at home.

Just look at all the people who have overreacted to campus micro-aggressions. The University of Illinois fired a professor who taught the Roman Catholic view on homosexuality. The University of Kansas suspended a professor for writing a harsh tweet against the NRA. Vanderbilt University derecognized a Christian group that insisted that it be led by Christians.

Americans may laud Charlie Hebdo for being brave enough to publish cartoons ridiculing the Prophet Muhammad, but, if Ayaan Hirsi Ali is invited to campus, there are often calls to deny her a podium.

So this might be a teachable moment. As we are mortified by the slaughter of those writers and editors in Paris, it's a good time to come up with a less hypocritical approach to our own controversial figures, provocateurs and satirists.

The first thing to say, I suppose, is that whatever you might have put on your Facebook page yesterday, it is inaccurate for most of us to claim, Je Suis Charlie Hebdo, or I Am Charlie Hebdo. Most of us don't actually engage in the sort of deliberately offensive humor that newspaper specializes in.

We might have started out that way. When you are 13, it seems daring and provocative to "épater la bourgeoisie," to stick a finger in the eye of authority, to ridicule other people's religious beliefs.

But after a while that seems puerile. Most of us move toward more complicated views of reality and more forgiving views of others. (Ridicule becomes less fun as you become more aware of your own frequent ridiculousness.) Most of us do try to show a modicum of respect for people of different creeds and faiths. We do try to open conversations with listening rather than insult.

Yet, at the same time, most of us know that provocateurs and other outlandish figures serve useful public roles. Satirists and ridiculers expose our weakness and vanity when we are feeling proud. They puncture the

self-puffery of the successful. They level social inequality by bringing the mighty low. When they are effective they help us address our foibles communally, since laughter is one of the ultimate bonding experiences.

Moreover, provocateurs and ridiculers expose the stupidity of the fundamentalists. Fundamentalists are people who take everything literally. They are incapable of multiple viewpoints. They are incapable of seeing that while their religion may be

worthy of the deepest reverence, it is also true that most religions are kind of weird. Satirists expose those who are incapable of laughing at themselves and teach the rest of us that we probably should.

In short, in thinking about provocateurs and insulters, we want to maintain standards of civility and respect while at the same time allowing room for those creative and challenging folks who are uninhibited by good manners and taste.

If you try to pull off this delicate balance with law, speech codes and banned speakers, you'll end up with crude censorship and a strangled conversation. It's almost always wrong to try to suppress speech, erect speech codes and disinvite speakers.

Fortunately, social manners are more malleable and supple than laws and codes. Most societies have successfully maintained standards of civility and respect while keeping open avenues for those who are funny, uncivil and offensive.

In most societies, there's the adults' table and there's the kids' table. The people who read *Le Monde* or the establishment organs are at the adults' table. The jesters, the holy fools and people like Ann Coulter and Bill Maher are at the kids' table. They're not granted complete respectability, but they are heard because in their unguided missile manner, they sometimes say necessary things that no one else is saying.

Healthy societies, in other words, don't suppress speech, but they do grant different standing to different sorts of people. Wise and considerate scholars are heard with high respect. Satirists are heard with bemused semirespect. Racists and anti-Semites are heard through a filter of opprobrium and disrespect. People who want to be heard attentively have to earn it through their conduct.

The massacre at Charlie Hebdo should be an occasion to end speech codes. And it should remind us to be legally tolerant toward offensive voices, even as we are socially discriminating.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Disrespectful to replace Darby with Esther Motanic statue

In regard to the letter in the *East Oregonian*, I find the idea to replace the statue of Stella Darby with the statue of Esther Motanic disrespectful. In Pendleton's history this block was known as the red light district, full of bars and brothels.

If moved, the statue of Esther Motanic should be placed at Brownfield Park surrounded by trees, flowers and the riverwalk.

Jerry Severe
Pendleton

Recipe for disaster: limiting motorized use on public land

A recipe for locking up public lands to motorized use:

Ingredients: one regional forester, three forest supervisors, environmental groups and state agencies (ODFW preferred)

Seasonings: flouting rules and ignoring the public.

Add in two others that will blend smoothly with a regional forester picked ripe from the vine to force motorized use restrictions on the public. Blend in a yearly bonus of somewhere around \$5,000 dollars a year to turn a deaf

ear to local residents' calls for keeping their mountains open.

- In a separate bowl, collect a ratio of "interested groups" of 4-to-1, anti-motorized use to pro-motorized use, to cover the supervisors and regional forester.

- Spread the "interest group" topping over the blended forest supervisor/regional forester mix and cover heavily as to disguise any sense of preconceived agenda.

- Apply a generous seasoning of flouting rules on how public engagement should occur, smothered with a heavy application of ignoring the public on their concerns.

- Place in a "consensus" oven set at "till hell freezes over" and wait to see when the forest supervisors and regional foresters actually act upon locals concerns.

Meal will be done when the supervisors and regional forester are soft to the touch, poking with an email or phone call to test tenderness, and are ready act upon local residents' concerns.

Until they reach that point you should place the meal back into the oven and increase the heat till such time as the forest supervisors and regional forester act accordingly or are done, whichever comes first.

John D. George
Bates Ore.