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OUR VIEW

The big issue at heart of protest

For perhaps the only time in recorded history, Eastern Oregon is the setting of the nation's biggest news story.

For more than a week now, a group of armed protesters have failed at provoking a firefight with federal agents while occupying facilities at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Harney County residents have largely rebuffed the militancy, and have made clear that they want the out-of-area occupiers to leave. The Harney County Sheriff has relayed that message, but thus far to no avail.

We struggle to understand what the Bundy Bunch hopes to accomplish. Their action spurs headlines and editorial cartoons, Daily Show spoofs and impassioned floor of the House speeches by Rep. Greg Walden. But it does nothing for the ranchers they allegedly came to town to support. And it does nothing to resolve the real issues of federal land management in the West.

We empathize with the Hammonds. And as we editorialized earlier this week, we believe their sentence is too harsh. It is perfectly clear that the federal government wants to run the Hammonds out of business and wants ranching on the wildlife refuge to end. And if you are a ranching family on the refuge, that can rightfully make you feel targeted, bullied and imprisoned for doing what your family has been doing for decades.

But the Hammonds — and the militia — fail to understand that the West is changing and modernizing, to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others.

The cowboys long ago learned that lesson. Longer still, the fur trappers learned it. Most brutally, American Indian tribes learned the power dynamic in the region had changed forever, and their lands and way of life would never be the same again.

The Hammonds and Bundys haven't learned it yet.

In the last half century, the importance of ranching, logging and mining has diminished dramatically in the American West. That is to the detriment of ranchers, loggers and miners, and also the economy and culture of rural Oregon. It has yet to

recover, as the rural counties of the state dramatically trail the explosive economic and population growth in the Willamette Valley.

These rural Oregonians are the descendants of homesteaders that five and six generations ago were asked by the government to help settle the land. Now they have made it their home, and the same government is making life and livelihood increasingly difficult.

But to protest against the slow march of time is as useful as tilting against windmills. And that's not a metaphor — instead a literal representation of a change in culture and land use priorities in the West. Windmills dot land that cows used to. It's neither good nor bad, but it's the truth. Before the cows, the West was full of bison and salmon and wolves. Government-supported action of homesteading, dam construction and Indian wars did untold damage to that world. Now there is a movement to right those wrongs. But for every wrong righted, another is made.

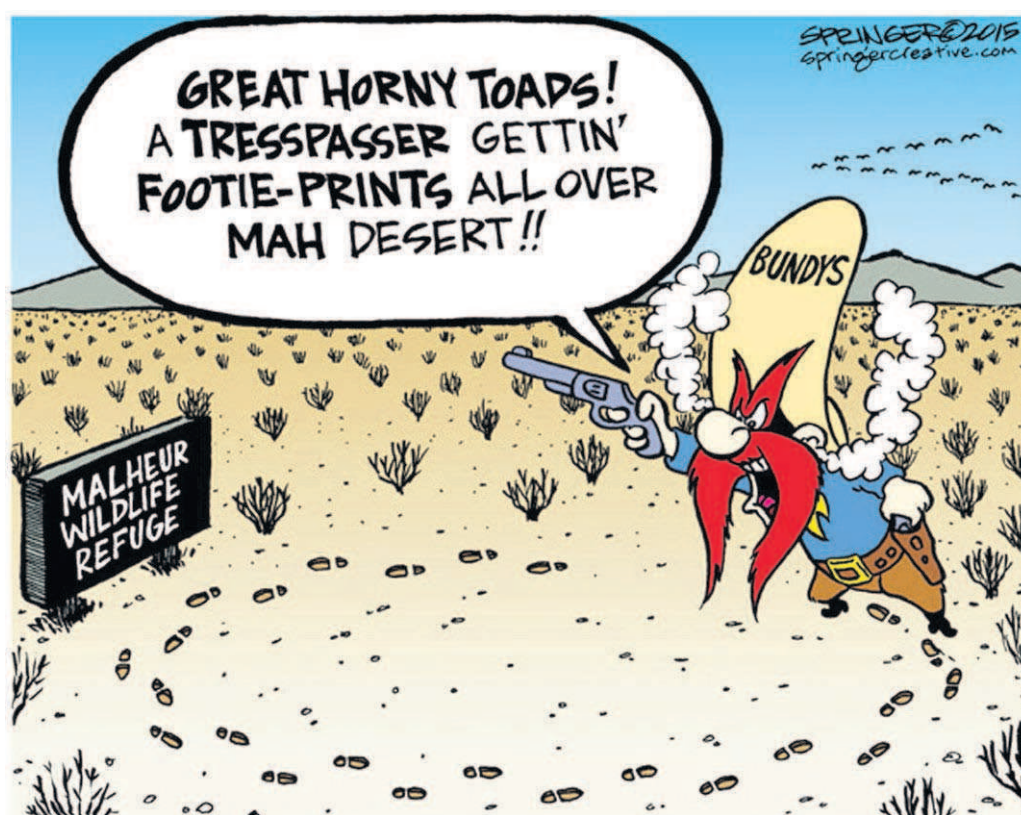
There is plenty to be upset about, if you're a westerner. There has been plenty of government overreach and enough bureaucratic ineptitude to fill the Grand Canyon. Our country's national forests need active management and they aren't getting it. Rural livelihoods are at risk like never before — well, at least since the cowboy was introduced to barbed wire, the bottom went out of the beaver trade, the American Indian was systematically crushed in the name of Manifest Destiny.

That has always been the way of the West — a relentless ebb and flow of power, of drought and plenty, of booms and busts in oil and timber and gold. The present is no different.

There is a bust afoot, especially for ranchers on fragile land surrounded by federal interests. For now, we can only hope the next boom is economic — and not from the barrel of a gun.

Once the Bundys are gone, we can do something other than that. We can try to make the West freer and fairer, more open and more sustainable, more boom than bust. But we must realize that the times are always changing, for better and for worse.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

The self-reliant generation

Last month Fox News released a poll showing Hillary Clinton leading Bernie Sanders in Iowa by 14 points. But the amazing part of the poll was the generation gap. Among likely caucusgoers under 45, Sanders was crushing Clinton 56 to 34 percent. Among the older voters, Clinton was leading 59 to 24.

When you look at numbers like that you get the impression that this millennial generation, having endured the financial crash and stagnant wages, is ready to lead a big leftward push.

Indeed, a Harvard Institute of Politics poll of Americans 18 to 29 found that 56 percent want a Democrat to win the White House while only 36 percent favor a Republican. The leftward shift is striking even within the GOP. According to the Pew Research Center, young Republicans are much more moderate than older Republicans. Among millennials who lean Republican, only 31 percent have consistently conservative views. About 51 percent have a mixture of liberal and conservative views.

But philosophically millennials are harder to pin down. According to the Harvard Public Opinion Project, 37 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds identify as liberal and 35 percent identify as conservative.

If you look at how millennials actually live, you certainly don't see a progressive counterculture. In fact, you see what you'd expect from a generation that lived through a financial crisis, family instability and political dysfunction. You see an abstract celebration of creative transformation but a concrete hunger for order, security and stability.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, millennials change jobs less frequently than people in other generations. And a study of 25,000 millennials in 22 countries by Jennifer J. Deal and Alec Levenson found that at least 40 percent expect to stay with their current employer for at least nine years. Forty-four percent said they would be happy to spend the rest of their career at their current organization.

Millennials travel and move less than earlier generations. They are less likely to have cars, and their relative lack of driving time is not compensated for by the use of other modes of transportation.

Another glaring feature of millennial culture is they have been forced to be self-reliant and to take a loosely networked individualism as the normal order of the universe. Millennials have extremely low social trust. According to Pew Research, just 19 percent say most people can be trusted, compared with 40 percent of boomers.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

This leads to detachment from large entities. Just 32 percent of millennials say America is the greatest country on Earth, compared with 50 percent of boomers. Millennials are very suspicious of organized religion. Thirty-five percent say they are unaffiliated with any religious group, compared with 23 percent of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980).

Just 26 percent of millennials are married, compared with 48 percent of boomers at that age. Only 42 percent plan to have kids. They are also having less sex. A study in the Archives of Sexual Behavior projected that millennials would have eight sexual partners by middle age while boomers had 10 or 11. According to a survey from the online dating service Match, 49 percent of people in their 20s have not had sex in the past year.

Philosophically, millennials are hard to pin down.

The general impression one gets is of a generation that is stressed, energetic, creative, skeptical and in the middle of redefining, and thinning out, the nature of affiliation. Its members have been thrust into a harsher world where it is necessary to be guarded, and sensitive to risk. They want systemic change but there is no compelling form of collective action available. Their only alternative, which is their genius, is to try to fix their lives themselves, through technology and new forms of social interaction, rather than mass movements.

Their attitudes toward Social Security perfectly reflect this stance. Most millennials expect to see no Social Security benefits by the time they retire. But they oppose reforms to take money away from older workers to distribute it downward. They just figure they'll take care of retirement individually, often using algorithm-based investment vehicles like Wealthfront.

Politically, this means that millennials may lean Democratic, but unless Barack Obama (or Bernie Sanders) is on the ticket, they don't strongly attach to the party and it is not clear that they will vote. They didn't in the 2014 mid-term elections. It could be they are more interested in improving their lives by having richer experiences, and not through the sort of income transfers that come out of Washington.

My own guess is that millennials will be a muted political force, at least in 2016. But there will be some giant cultural explosion down the road. You just can't be as detached from solid supporting structures as millennials now are and lead a happy middle-aged life. Something is going to change.

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

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include city of residence and phone number. Send to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Have Hammonds donate fine, go free

The Hammonds did do wrong; they have paid a large amount of money to right their wrong. So, to make a positive out of a negative, give them a choice to go to jail or pay \$100,000 to stay out of jail, and send the money to the Wounded Warrior program.

Jerry Bristow
Tillamook

Hammonds are not responsible ranchers

Steve and Dwight Hammond, the ranchers who sparked the recent Harney County protests, were characterized by Congressman Greg Walden as "responsible ranchers." Walden has a different idea about responsible behavior than I.

The Hammonds are convicted of poaching at least seven deer, a fact that they tried to hide by setting a fire. The Hammonds were also convicted of setting a second arson fire a few years later on Steens Mountain.

The Hammonds harassed federal employees to keep them from building a fence designed to

keep the Hammonds' cows from trespassing on federal lands. And on more than one occasion, the Hammonds threatened the lives of federal employees.

These are responsible citizens according to Walden.

Despite their vitriol rhetoric and disdain for the federal government, the Hammonds gladly collected at a minimum of nearly \$300,000 in direct subsidies from taxpayers, not to mention the below-cost grazing fees they enjoyed while feeding their cattle on public grasslands, as well as taxpayer-financed predator control, and who knows what else.

"Responsible ranchers" like the Hammonds remind me of my teenagers who wanted me to give them the keys to the car, pay for the gas, but protested when I required they be home at a certain hour. The fact is that the Hammonds are like spoiled teenagers. Instead of showing gratitude for the many benefits the rest of us bestow upon them, they only show disdain.

Rather than more local control as Walden, the Hammonds and the militia all demand, we need less. Public lands are one of our best democratic institutions where every citizen should have an equal voice in their management.

Plus, no one has a right to abuse these lands, especially those using public resources for their private gain. Grazing on public lands is a privilege, not a right.

Public lands are part of our national patrimony. It's time that Walden started representing all of us, not just the interests of wealthy welfare ranchers of Harney County.

George Wuerthner
Bend

Government has to let ranchers live and work

"Mr. President, free the Hammonds." Thank you, *East Oregonian* editors, but that would only be the first step. The Hammonds' ranch has been enduring relentless government oppression, harassment and tyranny from overzealous bureaucrats since 1970.

Why would government officials target the Hammond Ranch? The Federal Bureau of Land Management and the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service has systematically driven virtually all the other private ranchers out of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. All except the Hammonds. Beginning in 1970, the BLM/

FWS revoked 32 of 53 grazing permits of MNWR area ranches and significantly raised the fees of the remaining 21 permits. In 1980 there were still 31 ranchers that refused to sell their heritage. The BLM/FWS flooded their ranches, destroying their property and forcing them to sell their now worthless ranches.

In 1994 the BLM built an illegal fence around a Hammond ranch water source. The Hammonds rightfully objected and the Harney County sheriff arrested Dwight Hammond and he spent two nights in jail. Because the BLM actions were illegal, no charges were filed. The BLM and the FWS continued their illegal attack against the Hammonds by barricading a public road that connected their ranch and revoked their grazing permits without cause or a court order.

By now the Hammonds knew they would get no support from the local sheriff's department so they had no choice but to endure the government tyranny against them. The Hammonds were next informed the "Oregon Fence Out Law" now only applied to ranchers, not the government, forcing the them to sell cattle on portions of the ranch they could not

afford to fence. By the turn of the century Hammonds were the last ranchers left within the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

No matter what the BLM and FWS did the Hammonds would not yield their ranch or their heritage. That is when the BLM, FWS and local government officials came up with a brilliant plan: Use the courts and a 1996 terrorist law to arrest and convict these ranchers that refused to yield their land and heritage and use the press to brand them as arsonists. Once the Hammonds were convicted as arsonist/terrorists, the next step was to force the Hammonds to sign a right of first refusal so they have no choice except to sell their ranch to the BLM.

The U.S. government and local government officials need to admit they have failed to honor their constitutional responsibility and immediately work with local ranchers, loggers, farmers and citizens to restore our God-given liberty and heritage. Harney County Sheriff David Ward has done nothing to aid, support or protect the Hammonds and needs to be recalled before he instigates bloodshed.

Stuart Dick, Irrigon