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OUR VIEWS

Oregon lights a fire under coal power

Most Oregonians get it: The age of coal is over. Nations, states and companies that don't immediately begin a serious transition to non-coal electricity will face a steep upward curve in costs, which will be passed along to consumers and future generations.

Though details will doubtless be refined during the legislative process, utilities, conservationists and consumer groups make a good case for Oregon House Bill 4036. Weaning Pacific Power and Portland General Electric off coal in 14 years, this bill is designed to satisfy state voters who would otherwise be tempted to pass a ballot initiative this year that might be more clumsy in achieving the same goal and cost \$600 million more.

As the cost of wind, solar and other clean energy comes down, regulations aim to keep fossil fuel-related greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and ocean. By starting to lock in predictable costs for alternative energy, the big private utilities and society as a whole give themselves a path that avoids future price shocks.

Oregon already is planning on the end of the Boardman coal-fired power plant by 2020, PGE's one facility in the state.

HB 4036 would mean Oregon would cease buying coal-generated electricity produced out of state in places like Wyoming. With vast reserves of coal and other fossil fuels, the interior Western states will doubtless search for other customers for dirty power. But in the long run, it's likely other states and the federal government will join with Oregon in developing new ways to provide electricity.

HB 4036 will double Oregon's alternative energy usage by 2040. This ambitious push toward a sustainable future will provide an additional impetus for clean-power inventors and investors — improving the technology and bringing costs down. Pacific Power's analysis of the legislation finds it will increase costs by less than 1 percent a year through 2030. Oregon-related carbon emissions through 2040 will be 35 million tons less than they would be without this bill.

It's rare to build such a broad coalition of support as HB 4036 has achieved. It won't please climate-change deniers, whose mantra is still "Burn baby, burn." A strong majority of Oregonians prefer the sane approach exemplified by the legislation.

Calling all qualified candidates

Because of the quirks of the U.S. presidential process — and democracy in general — Iowa got its day in the sun Monday.

Actually, it's been in the sun for the past two months at least, as Republican and Democrat presidential candidates have stopped in every restaurant, church, community center and school in the state in an attempt to get that crucial first foothold in the long climb to becoming their party's nominee.

As the candidates and media pack up and head northeast to New Hampshire for the next stop on the roadshow, we'll take a minute to look at the picture closer to home.

Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk, a fixture in local politics for two decades, said Monday he's not going to run again. Councilor Jane Hill left her seat to take a job with the Tribe, and two have already filed for it, while councilor Chuck Wood also said he isn't going to run for another term.

They have been three of the most energetic members of Pendleton's city government, and their absence will be felt. While there are no clones out there who will exactly replicate what they have brought to the council chambers and the city at large, we know there are many in this community who would make great civic leaders.

We'll refrain from naming names (for now), but ask our readers to take a minute to think about those you know who have the energy, wisdom and poise it takes to make a good councilor or mayor and encourage them to run. Sometimes all it takes is a nudge.

And if we end up with multiple qualified candidates, all the better. We'll let them pitch their ideas and thereby achieve the promise of the democratic process.

We may be fascinated with the presidential race, but in truth the local election has the potential to affect our daily lives in more ways in the next four years.

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

Trump, Sanders and the revolt against decadence

One of the puzzles of the 2016 campaign, unexpectedly defined by the ascent of a billionaire reality TV star and a septuagenarian Vermont socialist, is why now? Yes, voters are angry, yes, they're exhausted and disgusted and cynical about everything. But why is everything boiling over in this particular cycle, in this presidential campaign?

Consider: The economic picture is better than it was in 2012, when Republican primary voters settled for Mitt Romney and an incumbent president was re-elected pretty easily. (In both Iowa and New Hampshire, the unemployment rate is under 4 percent.) The foreign policy picture is grim in certain ways, but America isn't trapped in a casualty-heavy quagmire the way we were in 2004, when Democratic voters played it safe with John Kerry and George W. Bush won re-election.

As Michael Grunwald argued recently in Politico, the worst-case scenarios of the post-Great Recession era haven't materialized. Obamacare is limping along without an imminent death spiral, and health care costs aren't rising as fast as feared. The deficit has fallen a bit, and inflation is extraordinarily low. The stock market is wobbly, but we haven't had a double-dip recession.

On the cultural front, out-of-wedlock births are no longer rising. Abortion rates have fallen. Illegal immigration rates are down.

The state of the union isn't all that one might hope, but it could clearly be a whole lot worse.

So what are Trumpistas and Bern-feelers rebelling against?

One answer might be that they're fed up with exactly this — the politics of "it could be worse," of stagnation and muddling through. They aren't revolting against abject failure, or deep and swift decline. They're rebelling against decadence.

Now it may sound absurd to cast a figure like Donald Trump, the much-married prince of tinsel and pasteboard, as a scourge of decadence rather than its embodiment.

But don't just think about the word in moral or aesthetic terms. Think of it as a useful way of describing a society that's wealthy, powerful, technologically proficient — and yet seemingly unable to advance in the way that its citizens once took for granted. A society where people have fewer children and hold diminished expectations for the future, where institutions don't work particularly well but can't seem to be effectively reformed, where growth is slow and technological progress disappoints. A society that fights to a stalemate in its foreign wars, even as domestic debates repeat themselves without any resolution. A society disillusioned with existing religions and ideologies, but lacking new sources of meaning to take their place.



ROSS
DOUTHAT
Comment

This is how many Americans, many Westerners, experience their civilization in the early years of the 21st century. And both Trump and Bernie Sanders, in their very different ways, are telling us that we don't have to settle for it anymore.

With Trump, the message is crude, explicit, deliberately over the top. Make America Great Again. "We will have so much winning if I get elected that you may get bored with the winning."

But it resonates because the diagnosis resonates — especially with older Americans, who grew up amid the post-World War II boom, the vaulting optimism of the Space Age, the years when big government and big business were seen as effective and patriotic rather than sclerotic and corrupt. Trump is offering nostalgia, but it's not a true reactionary's lament. He wants to take us back to a time when the future seemed great, amazing, fantastic.

Likewise Sanders, except that in his case the glorious future is more midcentury Scandinavia than Space Age America. After Obamacare became law, it seemed to many people that the welfare state project was basically complete, that the future of U.S. liberalism mostly involved tweaking entitlements around the edges to keep them solvent. But Sanders is telling liberals, younger liberals especially, that the heroic age of liberalism isn't over yet, that they can have a welfare state that's far more amazing and fantastic than the one their forefathers constructed.

The fact that both of these messages — Trump's "Make America great again" and Bernie's "Why not socialism?" — involve essentially recycled visions of the future is a sign of how hard it is for a decadent society to escape the trap of repetition.

But more important, the fact that both men are promising the implausible or the impossible — and the fact that Trump is openly contemptuous of our ragged republican norms — is a reminder that there are worse things than decadence, grimmer possibilities for the future than drift and repetition.

The disappointment and impatience that people feel in a decadent era is legitimate, even admirable. But the envy of more heroic moments, the desire to just do something to prove your society's vitality — Invade Iraq to remake the Middle East! Open Germany's borders! Elect Trump or Sanders president! — can be a very dangerous sensibility.

There are pathways up from decadence. But there are more roads leading down.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. His column appears every Sunday. Previously, he was a senior editor at *The Atlantic* and a blogger for *theatlantic.com*.

YOUR VIEWS

Fed up with politics as usual

Enough is enough when it comes to the politicians, whether locally, state-wide, or on the national level, taking a stand, demanding this or that, and then when something bad happens they either blame someone else or deny they had any part of it.

Such is the case with "sit-in governor" Kate Brown, and Oregon's clown prince U.S. Senator Merkley. Both were front and center in demanding that the feds step in, concerning the Harney County standoff, both demanding quick and firm actions to end it. Well folks, they got their wish. The FBI was dispatched by the Obama regime and as a result one person is dead. Almost instantaneously, Katie and Jeff ran out saying "nothing we did helped create the killing of an individual, it was all the doing of the people of Harney County."

Sounds a bit like the "Fast and Furious" gun running of Obama and Holder, or the murders in Benghazi.

Personally I am tired of politicians who are more concerned with photo ops, even when it ends with the death of an individual, than they are about common sense resolutions to problems. This standoff could have ended with some basic tactics: shut off power, stop the in and out travel

and stop letting the group access to town for food, and most important, send the media packing as attention was what this group sought and the media was more than happy to provide it.

In my view, Brown and Merkley both have blood on their hands as they demanded this be brought to an immediate end, mostly for political reasons, i.e. Katie wanted to show how well she handled the situation, Merkley wanted to show he has Obama's ear, and as a result an Idaho man is now dead.

Now to the naysayers, I did not support the group's actions, or the actions of the individual killed, but I do support an investigation into the overreach by the BLM, Dept. of Interior, EPA and the DOE. And yes, I know such an investigation will not happen with the current politically motivated Justice Department under Obama.

John Harvey
Stanfield

Extremism in anti-Planned Parenthood agenda

Now that the little children are almost done with their playground temper tantrum because they don't like the way the game is being played, can we get back to the serious

matters facing this country. The nonsense going on at the Malheur NWR obscured the actions of a Houston, Texas (noted bastion of left-wing ideas), grand jury.

The persons responsible for producing the Planned Parenthood videos were indicted while no charges were filed against Planned Parenthood itself. This was the issue some extremists were willing to risk a draconian shutdown of the federal government over last fall.

Think carefully before you cast a vote for someone who would endorse that kind of scorched-earth governance.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

Let voters decide on Plute

Those of us that are circulating the petition for recall of Al Plute, city councilor, are neither cowards nor bullies. We are just concerned citizens. There is no personal vendetta against Mr. Plute.

The city council lists this as one of their goals: "Creating a vibrant business and community environment." City councilors vote on many issues that affect business in Pendleton. How can we expect Mr. Plute to be a part of creating a vibrant business environment if he refuses to pay a bill from a local business? Even though a settlement

has now been reached, it took a lawsuit and over three years to come to that point. When the latest ruling was made, the East Oregonian felt the same way: "... Judge in ruling finds \$200,000+ attorney bill ... 'reasonable' for winner, scolds losing Pendleton developer and city councilman as 'unreasonable. ...' (East Oregonian, December 3, 2015.)

We are exercising our rights as citizens of Pendleton to use the recall process. We don't dislike Mr. Plute or wish him ill will. We simply feel he is ineffective as a city councilor. Once the required signatures are gathered, the citizens of Pendleton will decide.

Larry Anderson
Pendleton

Plute recall is baseless

It's fact that Al Plute has done much good for the City of Pendleton. His comments to the *East Oregonian* are an effort to educate the citizens of this city about the problems we are facing.

His opponents in this 'Recall Campaign' are basing their arguments on emotion and little else.

Ignore the petition!

Terry Hill
Pendleton