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OUR VIEW

Occupational hazards

It's over. Finally, it's over.

After 41 days that alternated between hand-wringing and heart-wrenching, the occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge has ended. Four protesters remained until Thursday. Much of their last 12 harrowing, confusing hours in the refuge streamed live and unedited through the Internet. It was a glimpse into paranoia and fear, into anger and frustration.

We heard grievances about this country — a lack of jobs, a lack of purpose, a lack of morality, a lack of future. It was the cry of the fearful, the pessimistic and the proud, grabbing the bullhorn and the moment and shouting straight into our speakers.

Whatever it was, you had to listen. At times it was scary — the threat of violence both coerced and self-inflicted were ever-present. And at times it was farcical — the list of grievances included Hillary Clinton, the Middle East and a lack of marijuana.

But there is no laughing off the underlying issue.

This has been a traumatic experience for Eastern Oregon. The days were dark to be sure. And now that the out-of-state players have left the field, we're left to sift

through their message and their actions.

For 41 days, Eastern Oregon was a dangerous place to be. Not because of the armed men and women holed up at the refuge, and not because of federal and state law enforcement swarming around them. They posed threats only to one another and anyone who stood between them.

But the weapons carried by both sides isn't what threatened us.

The danger is the seeds, already planted and beginning to take root, now doused with gallons of water and a hefty heap of fertilizer. You know the kind. The seeds of mistrust for neighbors with the wrong bumper sticker on their truck. Of animosity toward "the government" as a bogeyman instead of an entity that can and should be held accountable by the people. Of blatant disregard for reasonable discourse — instead choosing to cling to a single line from the Constitution, an ugly prejudice, or a stern glare and a wall of silence.

Like a flock of winter birds taking off from Malheur Lake, the occupiers have left. It's up to us to decide what their pattern in the sky means, and which seeds we want to tend to now that they're gone.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton turnover a time for a change

Pendleton suddenly has a major turnover in the city's politicians. First, I read that Evan McKenzie was forced to resign. The town's city planner stifled economic development in the city for years. Read his 110-page Universal Plan for evidence of his obsession with bicycles and requiring businesses to build bike shelters.

Then, Plute's recall surfaced. I have read letters commending Plute for his Economics 101 editorials. He failed to mention his strategy of getting \$500,000 from the city for the Temple Hotel renovation and then not using that money to pay a local plumber for services rendered.

There has been a mass exodus of local politicians who decided to throw in the towel after being criticized for their ineptitude and poor decision making.

Millions have been invested in the airport's drone testing program. Have Steve Chrisman tell you how much revenue has been generated and what the return on investment is as of February 2016. The airport is an endless money pit and now the airline service for Pendleton has gone bankrupt.

The city council tried to solve this dilemma by taking \$650,000 from the library budget and transferring that sum

to the airport budget to pay down its debt. That action should have resulted in a recall of all the members of the city council who voted in favor of this strategy.

Every year, Tremper and Associates does an audit of the city. On more than one occasion, Tremper has warned the city council about transferring funds yet they continued with the practice year after year.

The city manager has miscalculated the costs of projects on more than one occasion and the city then had to borrow money from banks to complete the project. An example is the convention center expansion that cost around \$1 million.

The latest news is that there is now a candidate for mayor from the Round Up Development Corporation. Keep in mind that this is the organization that convinced the city to purchase 40 acres of barren land at the airport. That land without infrastructure should have sold for \$3,000 an acre but the city paid \$11,000 an acre and a member of that organization made a nice profit at taxpayers' expense.

There is a need for a coalition of candidates with a platform that will include fiscal responsibility and transparency. Pick up an application and make a difference.

Jerry Cronin
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS



Taiwan flaunts China with its democracy

Taiwan has just elected its first woman president, Tsai Ing-wen, a calm, cerebral, almost shy, Western-educated lawyer. Moreover, she represents the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) standing for Taiwan's independence. China, who passionately regards the island of Taiwan as a renegade province to be integrated, will pressure the new president to acknowledge its "one China" concept. But just how hard will be the question.

Background: Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT (Kuomintang or Chinese Nationalist Party) moved to the island of Taiwan in 1949 after defeat by Mao Zedong's Communist forces. The KMT ruled Taiwan under strict, even oppressive, martial law until 1987. But since then, Taiwan has established a well-functioning democracy with the first direct presidential election in 1996. The KMT has won except from 2000-2008 when the DPP prevailed, causing significant tensions with China because of its pro-independence stance. China has long kept missiles aimed at Taiwan.

KMT: Recent KMT governments have forged ever stronger economic ties with mainland China. Today, a large number of Taiwanese are investing and working in China. Departing President Ma Ying-jeou even had a historic hand-shake last year in Singapore with Chinese President Xi Jinping. How China must loath therefore the DPP's return to power.

Firsts: Ms. Tsai (pronounced "sigh"), who will take office on May 20, is the first woman elected to the presidency in Taiwan (by a margin of 56 percent). Additionally, she is the first female head of state in East Asia with no relation to a former head of state.

DPP's win: Taiwan's thorny, unresolved political issue is whether its future lies as part of China or independence. This latest election reflects a growing number of youth who see themselves more as Taiwanese than Chinese. Their very active "Sunflower Movement" objects to the authoritarian leanings of the KMT and worries that Taiwan's currently weak economy will make it ever more dependent on China. Ms. Tsai's victory is likely due to her capture of this youth demographic.

Women: How has Taiwan put so many women into politics in marked contrast to China? Explanations include Aborigine matriarchal traditions, promotion of women's education since Japanese colonial times, and, importantly, a series of quotas set in the legislature to ensure women's representation. Thus voters in Taiwan have become accustomed to women politicians, and today's young voters are said to even find women trendy.

Profile: Almost 60 years old (but looking exceptionally young), Ms. Tsai is of part



HARRIET ISOM
Comment

Hakka, part Aborigine descent. Her father owned a car repair business; and, at his behest, she earned a law degree at National Taiwan University before going abroad for a Master of Law at Cornell University (1980) and a PhD in law at the London School of Economics (1984). She taught law upon return to Taiwan but was soon appointed to many councils and commissions. She joined the DPP in 2004 and has been its chairperson several times. She was defeated in her first presidential bid in 2012.

Leadership style: Ms. Tsai is neither fiery nor confrontational. Instead she is variously described as shy, scholarly, calm, mellow, moderate, rational and exhibiting a certain cosmopolitan savvy in a party with a raucous, provincial reputation. Her speeches are described as logic-driven (imagine!). Notwithstanding her quiet demeanor, she has proved to be a very strong political actor, corralling often fractious DPP party elements.

Policies: Ms. Tsai's own first priority is reviving Taiwan's economy which grew just 1 percent last year. She advocates the creation of an innovation driven economy and she wants increased trade beyond China with SEA, Japan and the US. She urges a more open and consensus based approach to Taiwanese politics and help for the disadvantaged such as Aborigines. And since she can't ignore China, she has developed a complex, subtle way of speaking about cross-strait relations that allows for flexibility and interpretation. She has assured China and the US that the "status quo" is the centerpiece of current DPP policy.

USG Reaction: The USG, as protector of Taiwan, is hopeful that nothing flares anew with China. A USG statement congratulated her on her win but noted America's "profound interest in the continuation of cross-strait peace and stability."

Chinese Reaction: So far Chinese official reaction has been muted, although Xinhua news agency has called on her to be prudent, saying Taiwan independence was a "poison." In the next few months, Beijing will be listening for any overtly pro-independence stands and badgering her on its "one China" policy. The worrisome question is just how threatening the assertive President Xi and his military hardliners will be. Ms. Tsai's cautious, nuanced, collaborative style may be just what is needed in a President of Taiwan having to deal with such a mega-neighbor.

Ambassador Harriet Isom grew up in Pendleton and has retired to the family ranch. She was a career diplomat serving in Asia and Africa from 1961 to 1996.

LETTERS POLICY

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. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

Livin' Bernie Sanders' Danish dream

American capitalism has always been distinct from continental European capitalism. We've had more entrepreneurial creativity but less security. Our system has favored higher living standards for consumers while theirs has favored stability for employees and producers.

For the past several decades, the United States has had a bipartisan consensus that we should stick to our style of capitalism and our style of welfare state. There has always been a broad consensus that a continent-size nation like ours had to be diverse and decentralized, with a vibrant charitable sector and a great variety of spending patterns and lifestyles.

American values have always been biased toward individualism, achievement and flexibility and less toward dirigisme, order and economic equality.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

It's amazing that a large part of the millennial generation has rejected this consensus. In supporting Bernie Sanders they are not just supporting a guy who is mad at Wall Street. They are supporting a guy who fundamentally wants to reshape the American economic system, and thus reshape American culture and values. As he told

ABC's George Stephanopoulos, he wants to make us more like northern Europe.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Sanders would add \$18 trillion to the federal budget over the next 10 years. Currently, total government spending is about 36 percent of GDP. Under Sanders it would rise to about 47.5 percent of GDP, putting us comfortably in the European range.

First, Sanders would centralize power in Washington. If you radically increase the amount of

money going to the Washington establishment, as Sanders would, you're giving that establishment greater resources to control American life.

Second, Sanders would weaken the ability of members of the middle class to make choices about their own lives. He would raise taxes on the rich, but there is only so much money you can squeeze out of such a small group of people. European welfare states generally rely on a highly regressive value-added/sales tax — usually around 20 to 25 percent.

Middle classes across Europe bear a much higher tax load than the American middle class. As Austan Goolsbee, a former economic adviser to President Barack Obama, has noted, you really can't have a Swedish-style welfare state without a broad high tax burden. That means less spending power for most Americans, and fewer resources to choose one's own lifestyle.

Third, Sanders would change the

incentive structure for the country's most successful people. He proposes raising the top tax rate to 52 percent. As Josh Barro noted in *The Times*, when you add in state, local and other taxes, top earners would be paying a combined tax rate over 73 percent. In high-tax locales like New York City and California, it would be even more.

It's possible that entrepreneurs, company founders and others would pay these rates without changing their behavior, but I wouldn't count on it. When you make risk-taking less rewarding, you get fewer risk-takers, which is exactly what you see across the Atlantic. When you raise taxes that high, the Elon Musks of the world find other places to build their companies.

Fourth, Sanders would Europeanize American public universities. It sounds great to make college free. In fact, it's a hugely expensive program that would mostly benefit the already affluent.

It would create, as in Germany, a legion of eternal students who have little incentive to leave school because the costs are so

low. It would give Washington officials greater control over state universities, determining what sort of faculty they could hire and what sort of programs they could run. It would threaten hundreds of private colleges, which could no longer compete against the completely subsidized state system. It would reduce the pressures universities now feel to reform themselves because it would cushion them with federal largess.

The changes in the health care system would be along the same lines. Sanders would create a centralized and streamlined system. His approach would also, as in Europe, reduce the rate of medical progress, increase the rationing of care, increase the wait times for patients, induce many doctors to retire and centralize decision-making. He might reduce health care costs by \$6 trillion over the next decade, but his proposal to do this gives new meaning to the word vagueness.

David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times.