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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

Tip of the hat to Altrusa's challenging Hermiston water challenge, where residents are challenged to drink only tap water for two weeks and donate the money they save to help build a well in Africa.



Did we mention it's challenging? The goal is to drink nothing but fresh-out-of-the-tap water as a way to realize what a remarkable luxury that water is. And it's also a way to remember how much we take that clean, fresh H2O for granted by substituting unnecessary bottled beverages (sometimes even water from someone else's tap).

That means skipping that morning stop at Starbucks for a cuppa joe. And that frosty after-work six pack on your way to a barbecue. Even the glass of iced tea that goes great with lunch. It's a sacrifice, no doubt.

The goal is to keep that money you would have spent on those liquids, and donate it to a good cause at the end of the fortnight. If you're not sure you can do it, we encourage you to swing by McKenzie Park from between noon and 2 p.m. Saturday for the kickoff event where you can learn more. Or if you want to pony up some dough without the pain, you can make donations at thewaterproject.org and find Altrusa's Hermiston project.

Wouldn't it be great to see Hermiston raise the \$5,000 needed to bring clean water to a village in Africa?

A kick in the pants to the Pendleton City Council, which is discussing ways to restrict who can talk with the public.

Although it was not agreed upon at a recent meeting, councilors debated updating language in the city's communications plan, which would prohibit councilors and city employees from responding to public criticism, in a letter to the editor for instance, without prior approval from the council.

"I don't understand how any company can just allow the media, a citizen, whatever, to pick up the phone, call a manager and say 'Tell me about this,'" argued city councilor Tom Young, who is clearly not interested in city government being helpful to the public.

The council is considering hiring a full-time public information officer for the cash-strapped city.

Other local governments don't have this kind of position. In fact, Umatilla County has recently moved the opposite direction, empowering their department heads to speak to the press and the public and removing a long-entrenched information bottleneck. It has helped improve customer service, morale of management, and has allowed good information to faster reach the media and the general populace.

Certainly, the city of Pendleton has every right to promote its good work. And it has every right to respond to criticism, both called for and unconscionable. But we're not sure a public relations professional is required to do so. There are plenty of smart, insightful communicators on city staff right now.

At the very least, we hope the council holds off on adding a PR position until new councilors are elected in May and take their seats next year. Having some flexibility in the budget will be important for the newly elected to be able to make some of the changes they hope to institute.

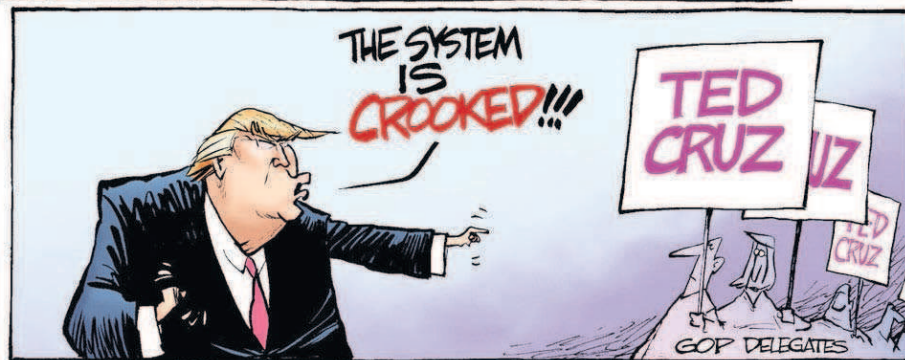
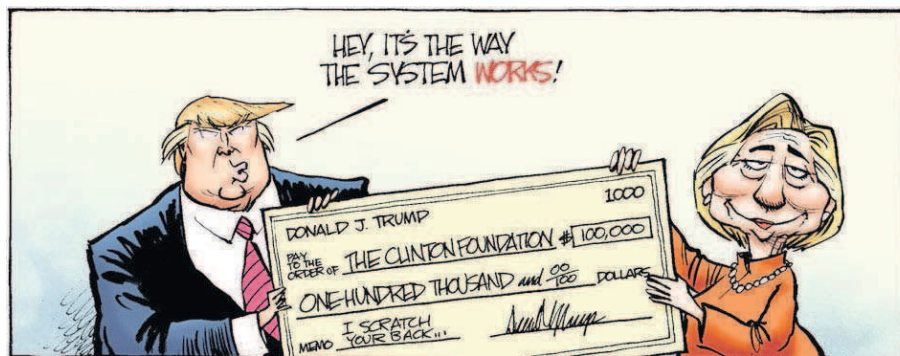
And when they make those changes, and deal with the assured pushback, they should be able to respond without having to ask for permission first.



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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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

The death of liberalism

Liberalism is dead. Or at least it is on the ropes. Triumphant a quarter-century ago, when liberal democracy appeared to have prevailed definitively over the totalitarian utopias that exacted such a toll in blood, it is now under siege from without and within.

Nationalism and authoritarianism, reinforced by technology, have come together to exercise new forms of control and manipulation over human beings whose susceptibility to greed, prejudice, ignorance, domination, subservience and fear was not, after all, swept away by the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As communism fell, and closed societies were forced open, and an age of rapid globalization dawned, and the United States earned the moniker of "hyper-power," it seemed reasonable to believe, as Francis Fukuyama argued in 1989, that, "The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism." Therefore, per Fukuyama, the end point of history had been reached with "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

This was a rational argument. It made sense. Hundreds of millions of people enslaved within the Soviet imperium had just been freed. They knew — everyone knew — which system worked better. The problem is that the hold of reason in human affairs is always tenuous.

Looking back at human history, the liberal democratic experiment — with its Enlightenment-derived belief in the capacity of individuals possessed of certain inalienable rights to shape their destinies in liberty through the exercise of their will — is but a brief interlude. Far more lasting have been the eras of infallible sovereignty, absolute power derived from God, domination and serfdom, and subjection to what Isaiah Berlin called "the forces of anti-rational mystical bigotry."

Such anti-rational forces are everywhere these days — in Donald Trump's America, in Marine Le Pen's France, in Vladimir Putin's Russia, throughout much of the Middle East, in North Korea. Representative government under the rule of law has proved to be insipid fare for an age that traffics in heady images of power and violence through solipsistic social media and online games.

Berlin, well before Fukuyama, identified a potential weakness of liberalism. In "The Crooked Timber of Humanity," he wrote: "A liberal sermon which recommends machinery designed to prevent people from doing each other too much harm, giving each human group sufficient room to realize its own idiosyncratic, unique particular ends without too much interference with the ends of others, is not a passionate battle-cry to inspire men to sacrifice



ROGER COHEN
Comment

and martyrdom and heroic feats." No, but as the framers of the U.S. Constitution knew, machinery of such liberal inspiration is the best hope to afford citizens a lasting defense against tyranny.

Liberty, however, requires certain things. Liberalism demands acceptance of our human differences and the ability to mediate them through democratic institutions. It demands acceptance of multiple, perhaps incompatible truths.

In an age of declamation and shouting, of polarization and vilification, of politics-for-sale and the insidious submersion of politics in fact-lite entertainment, the emergence of Trump is as unsurprising as it is menacing.

No wonder Putin admires him. Russian authoritarianism is all about the muscular trappings of power and popular adulation cultivated through fawning media for a czar-like figure. Berlin noted there was "some truth" to conservative writer Joseph de Maistre's view that "the desire to immolate oneself, to suffer, to prostrate oneself before authority, indeed before superior power, no matter whence it comes, and the desire to dominate, to exert authority, to pursue power for its own sake" are forces that are "historically at least as strong as desire for peace, prosperity, liberty, justice, happiness, equality."

And so history does not end. It eddies back and forth.

The broad failure of the Arab Awakening — the greatest liberation movement since 1989, an attempt by Arab peoples to empower themselves — had many causes, but a central one was the absence of any liberal constituency in societies from Egypt to Libya. Even a country with a large middle class like Egypt was not ready to accept the mediation of multiple truths through democratic institutions. So power went back to the generals, and the Islamists — even the moderates among them — were condemned to prison or worse.

In Russia, and now in countries from Hungary to Poland, and in China, forms of authoritarianism are ascendant and liberalism (or even modest liberalization) are in retreat. In the Middle East, the Islamic State casts its long, digitized shadow. In Western societies beset by growing inequality (neo-liberal economics has also sapped the credentials of liberalism), political discourse, debate on college campuses and ranting on social media all reflect a new impatience with multiple truths, a new intolerance and unwillingness to make the compromises that permit liberal democracy to work.

The threat for liberal Western societies is within and without. Liberalism may be feeble as a battle cry, but nothing is more important for human dignity and decency.

Roger Cohen joined *The New York Times* in 1990.

No wonder Putin admires Trump.

YOUR VIEWS

Socialist supporters misinformed

Think you want a socialist society where everybody is equal, and there is social justice for all? Think again! You have no idea what that means until you have lived in a true socialist country, and I mean spend time living like the locals, not in some tourist resort.

You'll find that the waitress and the doctor both make the same wage, the doctor might have a nicer apartment, but neither of them cares whether they go to work or not, although the waitress probably has more incentive as she may get some tips. The only thing you'll find thriving is the black market, and voicing an opinion that could be construed as against the ruling party, or collective, would not be tolerated.

Socialist/communist rhetoric has been with us for years, only today it's called by the euphemism of "Progressive" or "Social Democrat." History tells us that Lenin coined the term "Social Democrat" so that people would not be scared by the term communist.

Candidates from both sides of the aisle are promising free schooling, free health care, free housing, etc. As wonderful as that

sounds, in the end your freedom is replaced by your ever-vigilant commitment to the collective. This country was founded on very sound principles, and has thrived under them. Our progressives rely heavily on emotion to advance their cause, because emotion overrides reason leading us into a delusional path to a utopia that doesn't exist.

We need to get back to basics, and the Constitution, clean up all the corruption in government and let the people get back to running their own lives.

Robert Moore
Pendleton

Cimiyotti should be supported for council

When I read in the *East Oregonian* that Cody Cimiyotti was a candidate for a position on the Pendleton City Council, I knew I wanted to confirm his candidacy to those that do not know him personally.

Cody works for Seaport Airlines as a customer service agent and has a part-time job at Red Lion as a server/bartender. He is a very reliable worker and has already, at an early age, been able to purchase his own home.

He is very appreciative of the opportunities Pendleton offers

its residents, young and old, and is ready to give back by being on the city council. He will give thoughtful and unbiased study to each issue, ready to share positive solutions that benefit the community.

I urge you to consider voting for Cody Cimiyotti in May.

Pat Edmundson
Heppner

Whitman College will soon become PCU

Whitman College officials have dropped Missionary, the cause and vocation of their namesake Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. The campus newspaper, *The Pioneer*, will change its name "because it reflects the 'racism' of settlers who warred with local tribes and took their ancestral lands." The mascot working group study report found the Missionary name to be "divisive and doesn't represent Whitman's commitment to inclusion."

I suggest Whitman College officials drop the name of the Whitman, the Protestant missionaries they are so ashamed of. Since the purpose of modern higher education is "inclusion" instead of historical integrity and truth, I suggest Politically Correct

University.

The pioneer settlers that Whitman College now deems "racist" won the West. These courageous pioneers took no land that belonged to the Indians. The Indians of the Pacific Northwest were semi-nomadic and proclaimed no ownership of land only the "Creator" could own. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman sacrificed all they had for the Indians, including their lives, to secure the Pacific Northwest to the American Republic.

Does Whitman College no longer teach history? Does Whitman College have any history classes that teach the "Treaty of Joint Occupancy" between Great Britain and the United States? Had the Whitmans and the pioneers that Whitman brought to "Old Oregon" not occupied the great Pacific Northwest our precious land would belong to Great Britain, not the American Republic.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

Primmer a capable addition to city council

Although I do not live in Pendleton and cannot vote for him, I am writing to express my support for Dale Primmer in his run for

election to the Pendleton City Council.

I have come to know Dale very well in the past three years in my Umatilla County government work. In fact, I am the county commissioner with oversight responsibility for the Community Justice Department for which Dale so capably serves as departmental manager. So, I know his qualifications very well.

Dale is a pleasant, well-educated man who takes his responsibilities very seriously. Sometimes, in his position, directives arrive that are not always clear for intent and purpose. He pursues them until he is clear on their value and intent then charts the best possible course to effectively apply them to his department. He is not afraid to ask questions and confront issues. His reasoning ability is excellent and he is effective in his actions.

Working with offenders in his Community Justice function, he is no stranger to conflict and confrontation. He handles both very well and has always been able to resolve such situations to a fruitful outcome in a professional manner.

Dale Primmer will be a very capable addition to the Pendleton City Council.

Bill Elfering
Hermiston