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OUR VIEW

Disaster averted, threat remains

Friday's oil train wreck at Mosier, as destructive and damaging as it was, could have been much worse.

Many people could have been killed.

Many buildings — even a whole town — could have been burned to the ground.

The train could have tipped toward the river, spilling even more oil into the Columbia.

It could have closed Interstate 84 for days or weeks.

It could have put rail lines out of commission for weeks or months.

Some certainly consider Friday's derailment a disaster, no matter how much worse it could have been.

And there will be significant, long-lasting environmental

and economic damage, though thankfully no lives were lost and no major infrastructure destroyed.

But plenty more could have gone wrong. The same engine, cars and caboose that derailed and caught fire had earlier rumbled through Boardman and Arlington and past Hermiston, as well as numerous other railtowns in Idaho and Oregon. Carrying crude oil from the Bakken region of North Dakota, many populations both large and small feel the vibration of these rolling, highly flammable loads as they course through their city centers. That definitely doesn't sound safe.

But rail is currently the only way to transport large quantities of oil across the country. Politically, it has become impossible to approve massive pipeline projects that move fossil fuels from one part of the country to another. Perhaps that is a long-term good, and will help keep more muck in the ground rather than in the ozone, though at the same time it increases our dependence on

foreign oil.

And in the short term, transporting oil by rail makes it dangerous than if we used pipelines — although environmental and health and safety dangers exist there, too.

Oregon and Washington representatives have called for a temporary moratorium on oil trains through the Gorge, and Tribal and environmental groups have called for making it permanent. Clearly,

they hold a stronger hand than they did when a fiery oil train crash in the Gorge was just a hypothetical.

Right now, it is imperative to clean up the damage to the extent possible. We need to know why the train crashed, and if additional rules and regulations can

help reduce derailments. We need to demand Union Pacific and other railroads invest in the safest railcars and technology, to prove that safety really is job one. We must realize that this additional expense will raise the price of oil, but perhaps save destruction and death down the road.

American infrastructure is as weak now as it has ever been, due to our bifurcated political system and the remnants of more than 15 years of war and divestment abroad.

The Columbia Gorge is too important a place ecologically and economically, to tourists and Tribes and citizens from Astoria to Arlington. We've spent billions there to restore salmon runs, money that could all be undone in an instant. Eastern Oregon, southern Idaho and the Intermountain West has everything to lose if rail and interstate and even barge traffic was disrupted through it.

The dangers and the threats are high, and we must ask ourselves if the risk is still worth it.

There will be long-lasting environmental and economic damage, though thankfully no lives were lost.

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's attack on judge breathtaking in its vileness

The Dallas Morning News

Donald Trump's presidential campaign is littered with more insults and disrespect than anyone can count. Now he's added a racist assault on a member of the federal judiciary to his hit list. Has he no respect for anyone or institution?

Trump's latest target is U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel, the presiding judge over two of the three Trump University lawsuits that accuse the billionaire's business venture of defrauding students. Last week, Trump ranted and tweeted that Curiel is "Mexican" and is biased in the court proceedings. Why? Trump claims the judge opposes his plan to build a wall on the border between Mexico and the United States and is a "hater."

No evidence exists of any of these vile accusations. But that hasn't slowed Trump's hair-trigger tongue. Given his status as the presumptive GOP nominee, these comments undeservedly trash the integrity of a federal judge, threaten the independence of the judiciary and reveal, once again, the smallness of the man who could become president.

Judge Curiel was born in Indiana to Mexican immigrants who arrived with elementary school educations. He is as American as Trump, who is the grandson of immigrants. Suggesting that Curiel is biased because of his heritage insults any minority who has pursued the American Dream to laudable accomplishments. Curiel's parents gave him an

opportunity at the American Dream, as did Trump's ancestors. Are we to assume that any judge is unfit to judge someone of another background? For the sake of the judicial system, the answer had better be "no."

Some Republicans who back the party's presumptive nominee are shocked by Trump's behavior. No less a

Trump supporter than former Speaker Newt Gingrich called the comments inexcusable and labeled them among the worst mistakes of Trump's campaign — and that's saying something.

Sadly, others, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and former U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, offered weak-kneed responses that prioritize politics over principle. On "Meet the Press," McConnell said he disagreed with Trump's comments but favored party unity behind Trump. In his op-ed in *The Washington Post*, Gonzales defended Trump's right to question whether a judge is biased.

That misses the point. Trump crossed a line when he questioned Curiel's judgment based on his ethnicity and threatened to do something about the judge when he becomes president. Such actions are indefensible and should have been denounced without equivocation.

Trump continues to pick vile fights with anybody who doesn't look like him — women, Mexican-Americans, even the Pope. The very future of the GOP — not to mention personal reputations — are at stake each time Republican leaders tolerate his foul behavior.



"WE CAN GO FURTHER!"

OTHER VIEWS

Let's have a better culture war

The recent fight over transgender bathrooms represents the *reductio ad absurdum* of the culture war.

We argue about cultural and moral matters in the first place because we care about our characters and the characters of our children. We understand that a free society requires individuals who are capable of handling that freedom — people who can be counted on to play their social roles as caring parents, responsible workers and dependable neighbors.

Further, we know that this sort of character formation can't be done just individually. It's carried out in families, schools and communities. It depends

on some common assumptions about what's right and wrong, admired and not admired — a common moral ecosystem.

So we care intensely about the health of that ecosystem and we argue about how to improve it.

The laws commanding where transgender people go to the bathroom, on the other hand, show

how the culture war has devolved into an overpoliticized set of gestures designed to push people's emotional hot buttons.

These laws are in response to a problem that doesn't seem to exist. They are in response to a threat of sexual predators that has no relation to the existence of transgender people. They are about legislating a group, not about what constitutes good behavior. They are an attempt to erect crude barriers when a little local consideration and accommodation could get the job done.

For some reason, some defenders of traditional values are addicted to sideshows that end with the whiff of intolerance. At the same time, the larger culture itself has become morally empty, and therefore marked by fragmentation, distrust and powermongering.

The larger culture itself needs to be revived in four distinct ways: We need to be more communal in an age that's overly individualistic; we need to be more morally minded in an age that's overly utilitarian; we need to be more spiritually literate in an age that's overly materialistic; and we need to be more emotionally intelligent in an age that is overly cognitive.

Rather than fighting endless losing battles over sexual identity, we need a better culture war. We need a new traditionalism.

A tradition, whether it's Thanksgiving dinner, an annual family reunion or a burial ceremony, takes a physical activity and infuses it with enchantment. There's a warmth to our traditions and rituals that is fueled by love and contact with the transcendent.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

That has to be the opening assertion of a new traditionalism — that we're not primarily physical creatures. There's a ghost in the machine. We have souls or consciousness or whatever you want to call it. The first step of a new traditionalism would be to put the spiritual and moral implications of everyday life front and center.

If public life were truly infused with the sense that people have souls, we would educate young people to have vocations and not just careers. We would comfortably tell them that sex is a fusion of loving souls and not just a physical act. We'd celebrate marriage as a covenantal bond.

We'd understand that citizenship is a covenant, too, and we have a duty to feel connected to those who disagree with us.

We'd see cloning and the death penalty as reckless acts that tamper with something mysterious. When we talked about foreign policy we'd talk not just about our material interests but also about what purpose we've been called to play in history.

If we talked as if people had souls, then we'd have a thick view of what is at stake in everyday activities. The soul can be elevated and degraded at every second, even when you're alone not hurting anybody. Each thought or act etches a new line into the core piece of oneself.

The awareness of that constant process of elevation and degradation adds urgency to a bunch of questions. For example, what are we doing to a prisoner's soul when we throw him in solitary? Can we really tolerate having so many people falling out of the labor force and unable to realize the dignity that comes with steady work? In what ways do our phones lead to attachment or isolation? When is shopping fun and when is it degrading?

We'd also need a new political science. The old one was based on the model that we're utility-maximizing individuals, seeking power. That's true, but love is the elemental desire of the spirit. People are desperately motivated to love something well, and be loved. A core task of communities is to arouse and educate the loves, to widen and deepen the opportunities for love and to appraise people by how well and what they love.

Our culture is overpoliticized and undermoralized. This new traditionalism would shift the debate and involve a thicker way of seeing and talking about public life. The debates that would follow would not be divided along the conventional lines.

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

YOUR VIEWS

Judge Temple unfairly criticized for doing her job

Your article "Judge's mistake restarts rape trial" inaccurately portrays the role of a judge in a trial. In that case, evidence was offered by an experienced, competent prosecutor. It was objected to by the defense attorney. It involved a difficult question of law. Judge Temple made a decision based upon the law and facts presented. In this case, as in many cases, the Court of Appeals disagreed and sent the case back for a new trial.

I have handled over 200 appeals to the Oregon Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. In every case someone could say the appeal was based on a "judge's mistake." Actually, however, most were based on a disagreement over law or evidence.

Judges are called upon to make split second decisions during trial. Judge Temple did so here. Many of the very best judges are at times overruled by the Court of Appeals. That is the way our system is supposed to work. Judges don't deserve criticism for doing their jobs.

W. Eugene Hallman
Pendleton

Minimum wage increase already having an effect

Be careful what you ask for.

The big announcement by Walmart a few months ago about raising wages hits home. Asset Protection forces cut and cashiers replaced with self-checkout here in our local store. Evidently it's cheaper to allow shoplifting and machines don't require benefits. Is it just me or is dealing directly with a person a thing of the past?

This is just the first step as wages begin to rise. The answer? We need more subsidized housing for the unemployed such as the new Sergeant City being constructed, affectionately called Pendleton Heights. I wonder if Governor Brown would approve of the progress we've made since her last visit. Take a drive out and visit if you really want a look at the professional landscaping that the city is financing. This is just the beginning. I think the city calls it progress.

Has anyone been to Pizza Hut lately?

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Editor's note: Pendleton's Pizza Hut franchise recently closed.

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.