

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Harnessing rivers' power gives Northwest life

A federal judge in Portland has asked residents of the Pacific Northwest to comment on the impact of the Columbia and Snake rivers.

We're glad he asked.

All he has to do is turn on a light in his office, have lunch and take a walk around Portland to understand the rivers' direct contributions to him and millions of other residents of the Pacific Northwest.

Most of the electrical power he uses is generated by the dams on the rivers. About two-thirds of the region's electricity comes from hydropower, according to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

Much of the food he eats was irrigated with water from the Columbia and Snake rivers and their tributaries. And those barges the judge sees plying the Columbia and Snake rivers bring bulk grains such as wheat to downriver export terminals. From there much of the grain and other commodities are loaded onto oceangoing vessels for the trip to Japan, South Korea or elsewhere. About \$1 billion of grain is shipped overseas each year.

Flood control on one of the world's mightiest river systems is a factor that is too often lost on critics. Just ask the people of Vanport — oh, wait, that city in North Portland no longer exists. Its 40,000 people were left homeless — 15 were killed — during a flood of the Columbia River in 1948.

A large portion of Portland and most other riverside cities and towns wouldn't exist if it were not for the dams that control the surging waters of the rivers.

Beyond the judge's backyard,

the economic impacts of the Columbia and Snake rivers are almost beyond numbers. Where once were only dryland farms or swaths of prairie grass are now thriving farms, orchards and vineyards that grow billions of dollars of crops — crops that wouldn't exist without irrigation water from the Columbia and Snake and their tributaries.

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Beyond the economic impact, though, are the many social impacts. A steady agricultural economy provides jobs and allows families to put down roots. Whether it's a larger city such as Portland or smaller cities such as Hermiston, Umatilla and Boardman, the

rivers are a large part of the reason they even exist.

Some people want to measure the value of the Columbia and Snake rivers in fish. They believe there needs to be more fish and fewer dams. At least that's what their fund-raising materials say.

Ironically, there are plenty of fish that spawn in the Columbia Basin, and there always will be. The dams on the rivers have been modified and managed in a way that allows for fish passage.

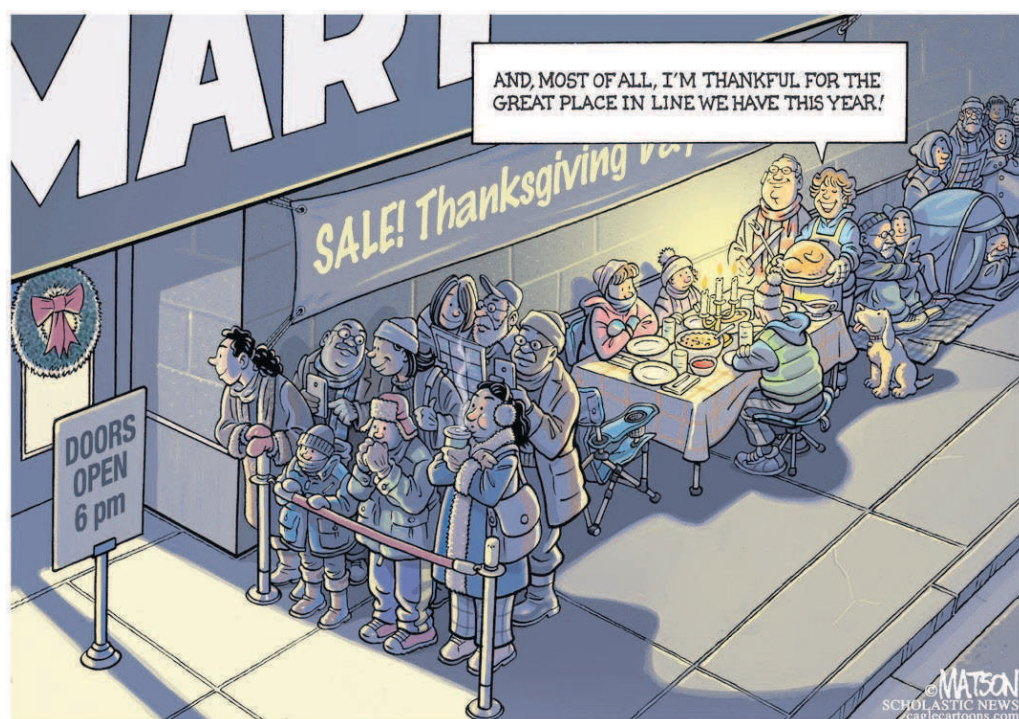
But the impact of the Columbia and Snake rivers on the Pacific Northwest — and the rest of the nation — isn't about numbers, or about fish. It's about the people who live and work in the region, all of whom rely on the rivers for their livelihoods. Without the dams the region would be a faint shadow of what it is today.

The Columbia and Snake rivers and their tributaries are in every sense the rivers of Northwestern life.

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.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

Crisis for liberalism

The 2016 campaign was a crisis for conservatism; its aftermath is a crisis for liberalism. The right, delivered unexpectedly to power, is taking a breather from introspection as it waits to see what Trumpism means in practice. The left, delivered unexpectedly to impotence, has no choice but to start arguing about how it lost its way.

A lot of that argument already revolves around the concept of "identity politics," used as shorthand for a vision of political liberalism as a coalition of diverse groups — gay and black and Asian and Hispanic and female and Jewish and Muslim and so on — bound together by a common struggle against the creaking hegemony of white Christian America.

This vision had an intuitive appeal in the Obama era, when it won the White House twice and seemed to promise permanent political majorities in the future. And the 2016 campaign was supposed to cement that promise, since it pitted liberalism's coalition of the diverse against Donald Trump's explicitly reactive vision.

But instead 2016 exposed liberalism's twofold vulnerability: to white voters embracing an identity politics of their own, and to women and minorities fearing Trump less than most liberals expected, and not voting monolithically for Hillary.

So now identitarian liberalism is taking fire from two directions. From the center-left, it's critiqued as an illiberal and balkanizing force, which drives whit-cis-het people of good will rightward and prevents liberalism from speaking a language of the common good. From the left, it's critiqued as an expression of class privilege, which cares little for economic justice so long as black lesbian Sufis are represented in the latest Netflix superhero show.

Both of these critiques make reasonable points. But I'm not sure they fully grasp the pull of an identitarian politics, the energy that has elevated it above class-based and procedural visions of liberalism.

It's true that identity politics is often illiberal, both in its emphasis on group experience over individualism and, in the web of moral absolutes — taboo words, sacred speakers, forbidden arguments — that it seeks to weave around left-liberal discourse. It's also true that it privileges the metaphysical over the material, recognition over redistribution.

But liberal societies have always depended on an illiberal or pre-liberal substructure to answer the varied human needs — meaning, belonging, a vertical dimension to human life, a hope against mortality — that neither John Stuart Mill nor Karl Marx adequately addressed.

In U.S. history, that substructure took various forms: The bonds of family life, the power of (usually Protestant) religion, a flag-waving patriotism, and an Anglo-Saxon culture to which immigrants were expected to

assimilate.

Each of these foundations often manifested illiberalism's evils: religious intolerance, racism and chauvinism, the oppressions of private and domestic power. But they also provided the moral, cultural and metaphysical common ground that political reformers — abolitionists, Social Gospellers, New Dealers, civil rights marchers — relied upon to expand liberalism's promise.

Much of post-1960s liberal politics, by contrast, has been an experiment in cutting Western societies loose from those foundations, set to the tune of John Lennon's "Imagine." No heaven or religion, no countries or borders or parochial loyalties of any kind — these are often the values of the center-left and the far left alike, of neoliberals hoping to manage global capitalism and neo-Marxists hoping to transcend it.

Unfortunately the values of "Imagine" are simply not sufficient to the needs of human life. People have a desire for solidarity that cosmopolitanism does not satisfy, immaterial interests that redistribution cannot meet, a yearning for the sacred that secularism cannot answer.

So where religion atrophies, family weakens and patriotism ebbs, other forms of group identity inevitably assert themselves. It is not a coincidence that identity politics are particularly potent on elite college campuses, the most self-consciously post-religious and post-nationalist of institutions; nor is it a coincidence that recent outpourings of campus protest and activism and speech policing and sexual moralizing so often resemble religious revivalism. The contemporary college student lives most fully in the Lennonist utopia that post-'60s liberalism sought to build, and often finds it unconsoling: She wants a sense of belonging, a ground for personal morality, and a higher horizon of justice than either a purely procedural or a strictly material politics supplies.

Thus it may not be enough for today's liberalism, confronting a right-wing nationalism and its own internal contradictions, to deal with identity politics' political weaknesses by becoming more populist and less politically correct. Both of these would be desirable changes, but they would leave many human needs unmet. For those, a deeper vision than mere liberalism is still required — something like "for God and home and country," as reactionary as that phrase may sound.

It is reactionary, but then it is precisely older, foundational things that today's liberalism has lost. Until it finds them again, it will face tribalism within its coalition and Trumpism from without, and it will struggle to tame either.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009 and previously was a senior editor at *The Atlantic*.



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

YOUR VIEWS

East Oregonian needs more conservative voices

For the best part of 2016 this newspaper and the national media, liberal press and entertainment industry have ridiculed, mocked, chastised and eviscerated Donald Trump. You have wasted multiple thousands of dollars on pundits (David Brooks, Gail Collins, Ross Douthat, Nicholas Kristof, Thomas Friedman, Maureen Dowd, Alisha Sultan) assaulting Trump's character and exalting Hillary Clinton's virtues. How has that worked out? Here are the results of the *EO's* assault against Donald Trump: Morrow County - Trump 67 percent, Clinton 25 percent; Umatilla Co. - Trump 64.5 percent, Clinton 28.6 percent.

Here is the grand question, *EO* owners: Are you going to continue this biased deceptive journalism and waste your seemingly unlimited financial resources with biased Democratic liberal pundit operatives? Understand this: You have very little credibility with your constituency (around 25 percent). If you continue your assault on the president-elect you are not only undermining your credibility, you are undermining our republic. The only pundit that got it right was George Murdock. The liberal left can not withstand scrutiny, so expect George Murdock to receive the same condemnation as Donald Trump.

The definition of insanity is to continue the same failed yellow journalism and expect a different result. The House, the Senate, the Supreme Court (very soon), the majority of state governorships and legislatures are now

controlled by Republicans. The Democrats, Republican establishment, liberal press and globalism are in disarray, yet they continue their same failed globalist agenda and duplicitous collusion with the liberal press.

I have a suggestion which I know your liberal owners will never allow: Balance your news and pundits. Put George Murdock on weekly. We need his voice in Eastern Oregon. Find pundits that represent your constituency. That would be a novel idea. Otherwise this is what will happen: Even dyed-in-the-wool liberal left coast Oregon will ultimately grow tired of violent extremist protesters destroying property and our way of life under the cover of the liberal press and Obama government. Our pansy liberally indoctrinated college students will be reduced to "cry in" sessions and Play Dough so they can cope with the reality of a conservative government. This is where the *EO* and their liberal cohorts are taking us.

God has heard our prayers. Donald Trump has woken up America. Armor up, men and women of God.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

Different isn't always wrong

The cartoon on Page 4A of the *East Oregonian* on Saturday, Nov 12 asked a really good question: Since Measure 97 was voted down, what now? An article by Gordon Friedman of the *Statesman-Journal* on Wednesday, Nov. 16 gave a likely answer: a probable budget gap of about \$1.4 billion. Of course, the failure of Measure 97

prevented the inevitable spending spree — of securely funding education and helping to provide health care for the most needy Oregonians, most of whom are children and seniors. But that would be bad for business! Similarly, the decision to raise the minimum wage was branded "bad for business."

Some 18 months ago it was in this paper that the Umatilla County commissioners were to be given a parity increase in salary of 7.5 percent. I assume that happened. Also, and if it was applied immediately, rather than incrementally as the minimum wage raise was designed to be implemented, that would have meant for each an annual salary increase of \$7,500 or more.

On Page 5A of the Nov. 12 edition, a comment by commissioner George Murdock labeled the state of Oregon a political backwater, out of step with the rest of the country. Well, yes! Oregon does bear the stigma of wanting to raise the minimum wage, to bring it closer to a living wage, and in other ways trying to make life better for its least fortunate citizens. That is what Oregon does; or, rather, that's what Oregonians do!

Oregonians are indeed out of step with part of the rest of the country. Some of our neighbors to the east, along the Rocky Mountain chain and beyond, have pretty well decided what constitutes a fair wage, having passed "right to work" laws that are specifically aimed at curbing unions and unionism in general. Is that an example of superior political acumen? Though unions have had some bad apples over the years, an

unscrupulous opportunist can be found under many a rock.

Unionism is workers, through unity and also through compromise, striving to achieve and preserve an equitable relationship with their employers. Should this be bad for business?

Harvey Foreman
Pendleton

Conservative viewpoint the majority

Before writing this I read the *East Oregonian* Letters policy, which says, "No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person." I question whether some of the letters are held to that standard.

At the risk of being labeled "less educated," I have to say that George Murdock's opinion piece gave me a feeling of validation in my political beliefs. This doesn't happen very often when I read the liberally-biased editorials, opinions and political cartoons that appear regularly in this paper. This morning's *EO* told us how Umatilla County voted and it appears that I am not in the minority here, but in a significant majority. I agree that there wouldn't be the loud outcry for unity and healing had the election gone the other way.

And, are we hearing anything from our governor about the destructive rioting going on in the state?

Charlotte Smith
Pendleton