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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to drills on the Columbia River this week, in preparation for a potential — but as of now theoretical — oil spill in our region's most important waterway.

The Columbia has plenty of environmental dangers in and around it — the dams, the oil trains, the barges, the coming Cascadia quake. Heck, we now have to add fire to the list after the Eagle Creek blaze jumped the river last month, burning both sides of the Gorge.

But an oil trail spill would be among the most catastrophic, especially if both Oregon and Washington emergency crews are unprepared. As was saw in Mosier, a crash can quickly start a fire and begin damaging local waterways. It doesn't require much of

a leap to trace the potential impact to the Columbia at large and its outlet into the Pacific. And as we learned with Eagle Creek, the Columbia Gorge communities are vulnerable — both economically and culturally — when Gorge's ecology is damaged. Protecting the river is both good for nature and good for our wallets.

A kick in the pants to continuous vitriol that is heaped upon Oregon wolves.

To this day, nothing we write about brings out the knives more than these canines. Our Saturday story about their increasing numbers in the Blue Mountains and Umatilla County, and the problems they have caused to sheep and cattle producers, continued that ignoble tradition.

Wolves are predators that eat other animals. That does not make them evil or bad, but it does mean that the lives of Blue Mountain ranchers have been made more difficult.

We have empathy for those folks, and want to find solutions to the newly-raised problems. That can include financial help, and the ability to kill habituated animals and packs (just as we do with bears, mind you.)

But wolves are part of Oregon's woods. That's not changing, no matter how catchy a phrase or vicious a threat. Forget "smoking a pack a day" and "shooting, shoveling and shutting up." While worth a chuckle the first time we heard them, they're not suitable first and last words in a debate.

The sooner we can leave the nasty sarcasm behind, the faster we can get on with understanding what the wolves' reintroduction means and how we can manage them.

A tip of the hat to two important education initiatives that we've spotlighted in the newspaper this week.

On Wednesday, we ran a story by Jayati Ramakrishnan and Antonio Sierra about initiatives in Hermiston and Pendleton to diversify their workforce, and attempts to convince students of all backgrounds to consider returning to their schools as educators. It's an important way to build community and help improve outcomes — studies show that young people who have teachers who look and talk like them do better in school.

On Thursday, Jayati kept the hits coming with a story on RISE, a mental health initiative in Hermiston schools. It's a critical program that tries to teach people who come from difficult backgrounds or have difficulty processing emotions how to get better at it. If it shows promise, RISE will be helpful not just for those who participate, but for every student who shares a classroom with them going forward.

We applaud the efforts and look forward to seeing results down the line.

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

If it ain't broke, don't fix it

The Dalles Chronicle

Early this week, Susan Buce, marketing manager of the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, was watching news reports pertaining to the Eagle Creek Fire and the devastation it had caused businesses in Troutdale and the western end of the Gorge.

Her Facebook post that the Gorge didn't stop at Hood River caught the attention of Lisa Farquharson, president/CEO of The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Farquharson was moved to contact the KGW television station to make them aware of the plight of businesses in The Dalles that were also affected by the freeway closure.

For the first half of this month, both lanes of Interstate 84 were shut down while firefighting activities were underway. The westbound lanes are now open, but the eastbound lanes that carry traffic from the Portland-metro area will remain closed until hazardous dead trees and rolling boulders have been removed.

The fire stripped away the ground cover that kept soil stable in many areas. "Having 84 cut off was like an artery being severed off," said Steve Light, owner of Freebridge Brewery.

He and other business owners urged people to make the trip east, even via

detour.

"We still have the doors open," said Light. "We're serving beer, producing food. Please come to The Dalles."

That appeal went out to thousands of viewers, thanks to Farquharson's efforts.

We believe it is safe to say that our local chamber is one of the most dynamic in the region.

Farquharson and staff have gotten The Dalles mentioned, or garnered stories, in the Smithsonian magazine and many other publications.

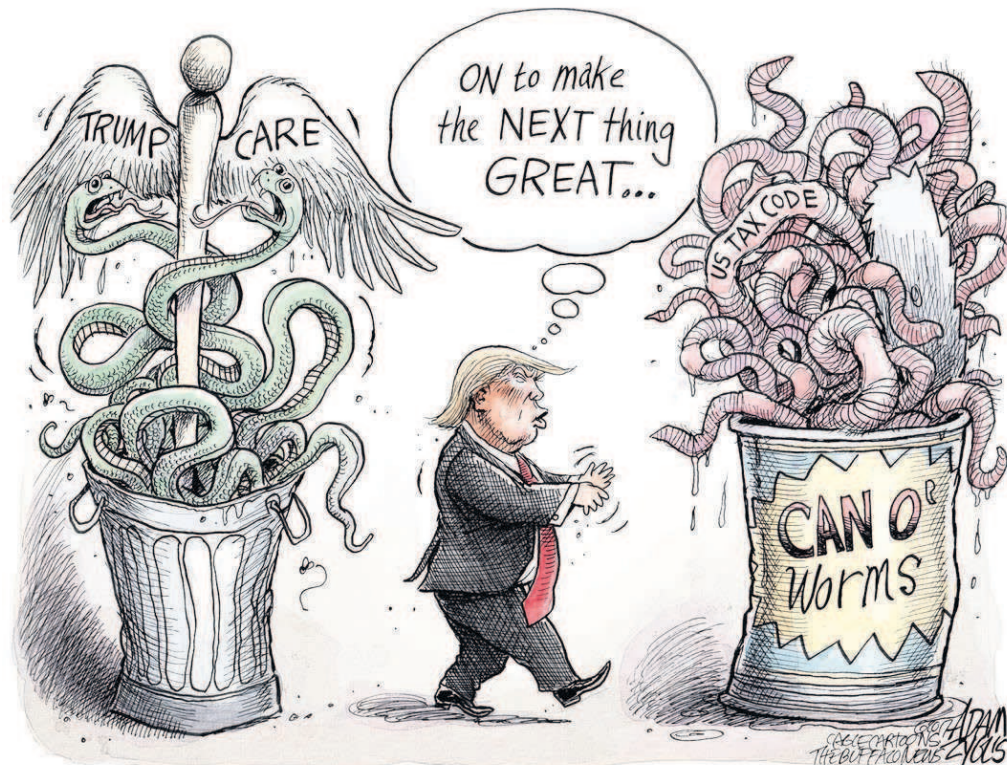
Between January 2015 and March 2017 alone, The Dalles has been commented upon or covered in 129 stories in varied publications.

An article in Road Runner Magazine alone would have cost \$40,700 in advertising dollars, said Farquharson, who hosted the riders and photographers a couple years ago.

This exposure for the community has been circulated to 11 million in printed form and online to 81 million during 2016-17.

Perhaps the biggest proof that the chamber's marketing and promotional campaigns are effective — including staging the Northwest Cherry Festival and promoting the Fort Dalles Fourth, Cruise the Gorge and Columbia Gorge Fiber Festival — is the boost in lodging tax revenue since Farquharson took the helm in 2012.

OTHER VIEWS



Folks, we're home alone

Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote a famous memoir, "Present at the Creation," about the birth of the post-World War II order — an order whose institutions produced six decades of security and growth for a lot of people. We're now at a similar moment of rapid change — abroad and at home. Many institutions have to be rethought. But any book about Washington today would have to be called "Absent at the Creation."

Surely one of the most cynical, reckless acts of governing in my lifetime has been President Donald Trump and the GOP's attempt to ram through a transformation of America's health care system — without holding hearings with experts, conducting an independent cost-benefit analysis or preparing the public — all to erase Barack Obama's legacy to satisfy a few billionaire ideologue donors and a "base" so drunk on Fox News that its members don't understand they'll be the ones most hurt by it all.

Democrats aren't exactly a fire hose of fresh ideas, but they do respect science and have a sense of responsibility to not play around with big systems without an ounce of study. Not so Trump. He scrapped the Paris climate treaty without consulting one climate scientist — and no GOP leader protested. Think about that.

That failure is particularly relevant because, as this column has been arguing, "climate change" is the right analytical framework for thinking about how we shape policy today. Why? Because we're going through three climate changes at once:

We're going through a change in the actual climate — disruptive, destructive weather events are steadily on the rise.

We're going through a change in the "climate" of globalization — going from an interconnected world to an interdependent one, from a world of walls where you build your wealth by hoarding the most resources to a world of webs where you build your wealth by having the most connections to the flow of ideas, networks, innovators and entrepreneurs. In this interdependent world, connectivity leads to prosperity and isolation leads to poverty. We got rich by being "America Connected" not "America First."

Finally, we're going through a change in the "climate" of technology and work. We're moving into a world where computers and algorithms can analyze (reveal previously hidden patterns); optimize (tell a plane which altitude to fly each mile to get the best fuel efficiency); prophesize (tell you when your elevator will break or what your customer is likely to buy); customize (tailor any product or service for you alone); and digitize and automatize more and more products and services. Any company that doesn't deploy all six elements will struggle, and this is changing



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

every job and industry. What do you need when the climate changes? Adaptation — so your citizens can get the most out of these climate changes and cushion the worst. Adaptation has to happen at the individual, community and national levels.

At the individual level, the single most important adaptation is to become a lifelong learner, so you can constantly add value beyond what machines and algorithms can do.

"When work was predictable and the change rate was relatively constant, preparation for work merely required the codification and transfer of existing knowledge and predetermined skills to create a stable and deployable workforce," explains education consultant Heather McGowan. "Now that the velocity of change has accelerated, due to a combination of exponential growth in technology and globalization, learning can no longer be a set dose of education consumed in the first third of one's life." In this age of accelerations, "the new killer skill set is an agile mindset that values learning over knowing."

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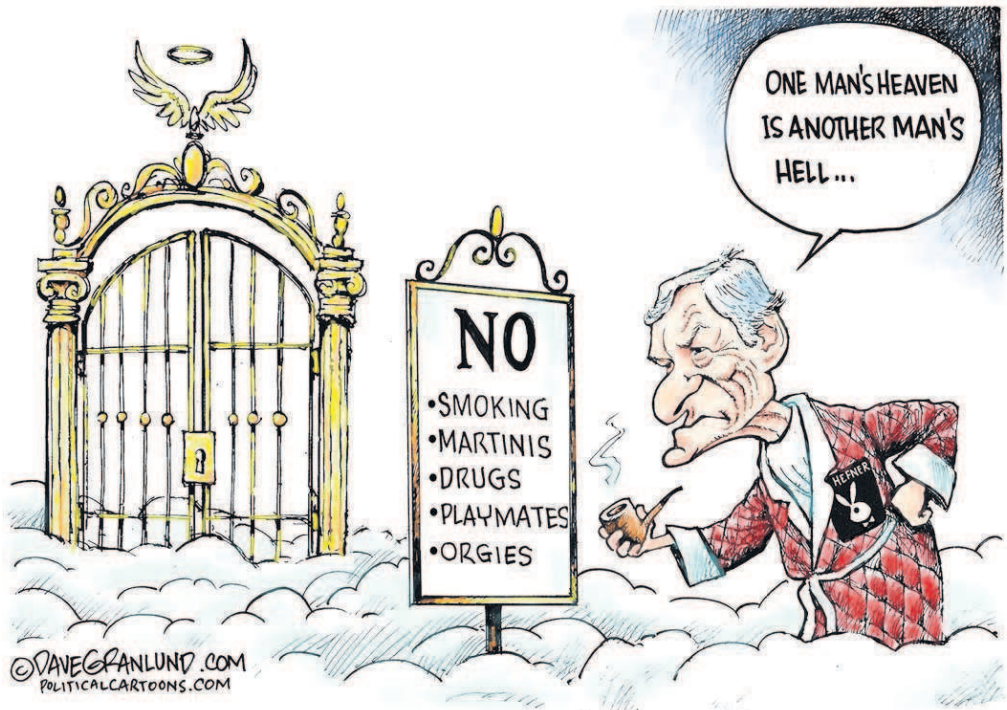
— Heather McGowan, Education consultant

At the community level, the U.S. communities that are thriving are the ones building what I call complex adaptive coalitions. These comprise local businesses that get deeply involved in shaping the skills being taught in the public schools and community colleges, buttressed by civic and philanthropic groups providing supplemental learning opportunities and internships. Then local government catalyzes these coalitions and hires recruiters to go into the world to find investors for their local communal assets.

These individual and communal adaptation strategies dictate the national programs you want: health care that is as portable as possible so people can easily move from job to job; as much free or tax-deductible education as possible, so people can afford to be lifelong learners; reducing taxes on corporations and labor to stimulate job creation and relying instead on a carbon tax that raises revenues and mitigates costly climate change; and immigration and trade policies that are as open as possible, because in an age of acceleration the most open country will get the change signals first and attract the most high-IQ risk takers who start new companies.

There was no good time for Trump to be president. But this is a uniquely bad time for us to have a race-baiting, science-denying divider in chief. He is impossible to ignore, and yet reacting to his daily antics only makes us stupid — only makes our society less focused on the huge adaptation challenges at hand.

Thomas Friedman, a New York Times columnist, won two Pulitzer Prizes.



LETTERS POLICY

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