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OUR VIEW

# Tourism needs to be taken seriously

Tourism matters in Umatilla County, and nowhere more than in Pendleton. The Round-Up City is chockablock with hotels and motels that fill for the annual rodeo, but stay busy throughout the year thanks to the town’s stylish offerings for tourists, as well as interstate travelers who just need an affordable place to rest.

Pendleton is further ahead than other municipalities in Umatilla County when it comes to tourism infrastructure, but it’s easy to see other cities have plenty to offer. Milton-Freewater is a growing heart of wine country, and close to the perks of downtown Walla Walla. Tollgate and Ukiah can capture hunters and outdoors enthusiasts. And Hermiston continues to grow as an important stop for business travelers, a different type of tourism but heads in beds nonetheless.

There are opportunities to help create and promote a countywide tourism program, but county commissioner Bill Elfering’s plan was a nonstarter. He proposed adding a 2 percent tax to hotel customers’ room bill within Umatilla County.

But without an idea of how the money would be used to increase tourism, the tax was destined to fall flat with hoteliers and tourism professionals not affiliated with the county. And fall flat it did. By the time Elfering arrived for a second scheduled meeting on the issue, he had already declared the tax “off the table.”

And that’s the right thing to do.

But the tax plan’s demise also shines an important spotlight on the county tourism department.

Elfering said the tourism coordinator — Karie Walchli — doesn’t have funding to do “much of anything.” The tourism tax would have been a way to give the department some money to play with.

That’s the exact wrong way to run government, of course. Private enterprise knows that labor is expensive, and you don’t hire someone without having the revenue to afford it and a belief that your investment is going to more than pay for itself.

That’s not the way government seems to operate in Oregon, however. An ever-increasing number of government employees are forcing private enterprise to keep up with paying those significant salaries and benefits — cart before horse style. That Portland/Salem thinking has made its way to Eastern Oregon.

There are lots of tourism groups already operating — backed by both public and private dollars. Travel Oregon has made good headway. The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association also helps promote Umatilla County’s major events, to less success but on a much lower budget. Travel Pendleton works hard to keep the tourism dollars churning in that city year round.

Tourism is hard work. It’s a crop that must be planted, watered and tended for many years before it begins to bear fruit. It’s irresponsible to treat it as an enterprise from which money can be skimmed to fill government coffers.

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

### City of Umatilla has not ‘sat dormant’

In the city of Umatilla’s November newsletter, some restatement of the facts needs to occur as it appears the author of “City of Umatilla welcomes new staff” is not very familiar with what has gone on in the city over the past 15 years, let alone the “several decades” of which the author seems to speak. It might be reasonable to suggest the author owes a few previous city managers, business owners, civic leaders, and the city residents a bit of an apology.

Not taking away anything from the new staff, the article seems to imply it is the advent of the new staff that is going to miraculously turn things around. We should wish the new staff success, but the statement “after sitting somewhat dormant for the last several decades” couldn’t be further from the truth.

Revitalization of downtown has been a goal of the Umatilla City Council and city management since the late 1990s. The issue has always been available money, and not putting citizens into heavy debt to make it happen. More than several city managers and city councilors have worked with economic factions of the state, and with philanthropic foundations, to bring about change. Countless volunteer hours

have also been evident throughout the periods, and the citizenry have had generous outpourings of money — when they had money to spare and to give.

The “somewhat dormant” statement of the newsletter article is a misrepresentation of the facts, and misrepresents the continuing energy of Umatilla citizens and recognition of former city management and city councils. More would have been done, and could have been done, had additional funding been available. Former city management and city councilors, beginning with former city manager Bonnie Parker, were positive in their look forward but always cautious not to overly-encumber the citizens of Umatilla with debt. The city has always attempted to live within its means and prided itself that it was able to operate in the black.

It would not be out of hand for the author to reconsider this section of the November newsletter, and to proffer an apology to past councils, past city administration and Umatilla citizens. Because the city of Umatilla has not sat dormant — it has done its best with what it had to work with. And looking at what it has accomplished over the previous two decades, has every right to be proud of its accomplishments.

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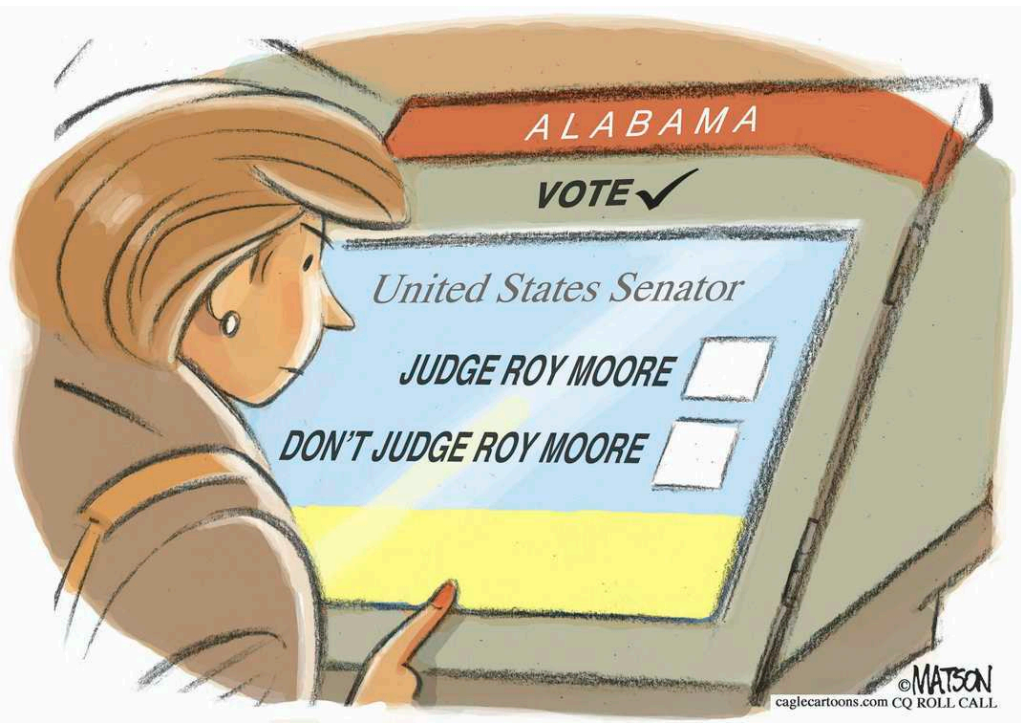
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OTHER VIEWS

# What’s wrong with radicalism

There was a striking moment in the focus group that consultant Frank Luntz recently held with a group of Roy Moore supporters in Alabama. One of the voters said that the women who are accusing Moore of harassment are being paid to do so. Luntz asked the group how many people thought the women are being paid. A bunch of hands shot up and voices called out that all of the women are being paid.

That moment captures the radicalism of the current moment — the loss of faith in institutions, the tendency to see corrupt conspiracies, the desire for total change, the belief that sometimes you’ve got to hire the biggest jerk available to get that change, and you’ve got to be willing to ignore facts to justify it.

That attitude is evident on the pro-Trump right, but also on the left. The woke activists, the angry Sanders socialists and social justice warriors are just as certain that the system is rigged, that rulers are corrupt and that the temple has to be torn down. The moderate left is being decimated across Europe and that will probably happen here.

We’re living in an age of radicalism. But today’s radicalism is unusual. First, we have radical anger without radical policies.

Stylistically and culturally, Trumpian populism screams “blow it up” and “drain the swamp.” But Donald Trump’s actual policies are run-of-the-mill corporatist. The left-wing radicals talk a lot against the systems of oppression and an institutionalized injustice. But they are nothing like the radicals of the 1930s or the 1960s.

Today’s radicals do not want to upend the meritocracy, which is creating a caste system of inherited inequality. They don’t want to stop technical innovation, which is displacing millions of workers. They don’t have plans to reverse individualism, which atomizes society and destroys community. A \$15 minimum wage may be left wing, but it’s not Marxist-Leninism.

Second, today’s radicalism is more about identity than social problems.

Both the Trumpian populists and the social justice warriors are more intent on denouncing the people they hate than on addressing the concrete problems before them. Consider the angry commentary you hear during a given day. How much of it is addressing a problem we face, and how much of it is denouncing people we dislike?

Third, today’s radicalism assumes that war is the inherent state of things.

The key influence here is Saul Alinsky. His 1971 book, “Rules for Radicals,” has always been popular on the left and recently it has become fashionable with the Tea Party and the alt-right. One of his first big assertions is that life is warfare. It is inevitably a battle between the people and the elites, the haves and the have-nots, or, as his heirs would add,



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

between the whites and the blacks, the Republicans and the Democrats, Islam and the West. If you’re not willing to treat life as an endless war you’re a cuck.

Fourth, there is the low view of human nature.

Today’s radicals conduct themselves on the presumption that since life is battle, moral decency is mostly a hypocritical fraud. To get anything done the radical has to commit evil acts for good causes. “The

ethics of means and ends is that in war the end justifies almost any means,” Alinsky writes. “Ethical standards must be elastic to stretch with the times,” he adds.

“Ethics are determined by whether one is losing or winning.” That

sentence could have been uttered by Donald Trump, but it was really written by Saul Alinsky.

What can we conclude about the radicals?

Well, they are wrong that our institutions are

fundamentally corrupt. Most of our actual social and economic problems are the bad byproducts of fundamentally good trends.

Technological innovation has created wonders but displaced millions of workers. The meritocracy has unleashed talent but widened inequality. Immigration has made America more dynamic but weakened national cohesion. Globalization has lifted billions out of poverty but pummeled the working classes in advanced nations.

What’s needed is reform of our core institutions to address the bad byproducts, not fundamental dismantling.

That sort of renewal means doing the opposite of everything the left/right radicals do. It means believing that life can be more like a conversation than a war if you open by starting a conversation. It means collectively focusing on problems and not divisively destroying people. It means believing that love is a genuine force in human affairs and that you can be effective by appealing to the better angels of human nature.

Today’s radicalism is fundamentally spiritual, even if it’s played out in the political sphere. It’s driven by the radicals’ need for more secure identity, to gain respect and dignity, to give life a sense of purpose and meaning.

The radicals are looking for meaning and purpose in the wrong way and in the wrong place, and they’re destroying our political world in the process. But you’ve got to give them one thing: They are way ahead of the rest of us. They are organized, self-confident, aggressive and driving history. The rest of us are dispersed, confused and in retreat.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, a contributing editor at Newsweek and the Atlantic Monthly, and is currently a commentator on PBS.



## LETTERS POLICY

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