

O EAST OREGONIAN

OPINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

WYATT HAAPT JR.
News Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEWS

Hanford cleanup must not be buried

The Trump administration’s environmental policies are the ultimate screw-you moment for the youngest Americans, as well as for generations unborn. Following on the Environmental Protection Agency’s recent easing of rules on coal, the news of a proposal to reclassify waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation is a jaw dropper. It is also a threat to our region.

Hanford is the Pacific Northwest’s largest environmental challenge. Its mountain of nuclear waste was born in the secrecy and exigencies of World War II. Once that veil was lifted and Northwest states understood the implications of radioactive waste in the ground and water adjacent to the Columbia River, Oregon and Washington lawmakers pressed for federal responsibility and a seat at the table. Prominent among our advocates were Oregon Sen. Mark Hatfield and Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire. That 20-year-old agreement set a 30-year timetable for cleaning up Hanford’s toxins. In view of the daunting complexity of the work and unforeseen problems, this timeline is now expected to continue well into the

mid-21st century.

Perhaps it is simply typical of President Trump’s shallow understanding of longstanding agreements of all sorts, but the notion that the federal government could unilaterally redefine the situation at Hanford is both laughable and contemptible. The momentum at Hanford has been moving in the other direction. Washington and Oregon would not surrender their hard won roles in the oversight of Hanford cleanup. Federal courts would certainly back Washington state in defending its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy and the EPA.

This editorial page over decades has decried the pace of clean-up at Hanford. It is essential that all of us — certainly including we who live downriver from Hanford — pay attention to what’s going on. Oregon’s U.S. senators — Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley — and Washington’s senators — Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell — must leave no doubt that this Trump proposal is indefensible and merits a swift burial.

“Burial” was a policy theme for far too long at Hanford, and continues in some senses today. Underground storage tanks which kept toxic



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File
A sign warns of radioactive material stored underground on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Wash.

sludge out of sight, if not out of mind, have been overly prone to leaks into the ground water and surrounding air. More recently, entire trainloads of diverse poisonous waste from the bomb-building era have been causing problems in tunnels where they were secreted away. In a suspiciously impromptu decision, these nightmarish tunnels are being pumped full of grout. Nearby residents express doubts about whether this stopgap answer will come back to haunt us.

“Burial” also comes to mind in the context of longstanding national failures in how we internalize the human, environmental and monetary costs of war. For too long, Hanford as a facility was treated with much the same lackadaisical attitude too many of our

leaders display toward veterans — burying their suffering and needs in an underfunded and sometimes poorly run bureaucracy. Like the Veterans Administration, Hanford will benefit from continuing close oversight. The cleanup certainly must be financially accountable. But first and foremost, it must achieve its aims of making certain its surroundings and the wider Columbia River region are kept safe for generations to come. The expedencies of war are no excuse for potentially deadly shortcuts in confronting the aftermath of those decisions.

These commitments cannot and must not be hamstrung by political expediency — by this or any future presidential administration.

OTHER VIEWS

Who killed the Weekly Standard?

I’ve only been around Phil Anschutz a few times. My impressions on those occasions were that he was a run-of-the-mill arrogant billionaire. He was used to people courting him, and he addressed them condescendingly from the lofty height of his own wealth.

I’ve never met Ryan McKibben, who runs part of Anschutz’s media group. But stories about him have circulated around Washington over the years. The stories suggest that he is an ordinary corporate bureaucrat — with all the petty vanities and lack of interest in ideas that go with the type.

Last week, Anschutz and McKibbin murdered The Weekly Standard, the conservative opinion magazine that Anschutz owned. They didn’t merely close it because it was losing money. They seemed to have murdered it out of greed and vengeance.

John Podhoretz, one of the magazine’s founders, reports that they actively prevented potential buyers from coming in to take it over and keep it alive. They apparently wanted to hurt the employees and harvest the subscription list so they could make money off it. And Anschutz, being a professing Christian, decided to close the magazine at the height of the Christmas season, and so cause maximum pain to his former employ-



DAVID BROOKS
COMMENT

ees and their families.

The closing of The Weekly Standard is being told as a Trump story, as all stories must be these days. The magazine has been critical of President Donald Trump, and so this is another example of the gradual hegemony of Trumpism over the conservative world. That is indeed the backdrop to what happened here.

But that’s not the whole story. In reality, this is what happens when corporate drones take over an opinion magazine, try to drag it down to their level and then grow angry and resentful when the people at the magazine try to maintain some sense of intellectual standards. This is what happens when people with a populist mindset decide that an uneducated opinion is of the same value as an educated opinion, that ignorance sells better than learning.

In that sense, the closing of The Standard resembles Chris Hughes’ destruction of the old New Republic. This is what happens when the commercial forces trying to dumb down the American media run into a pocket of people trying to resist those forces.

I was on staff when The Standard was founded, by Bill Kristol, Podhoretz and Fred Barnes. They gathered the most concentrated collection of talent I have ever been around. The first masthead featured Charles

Krauthammer, P.J. O’Rourke, Robert Kagan, David Frum, Chris Caldwell, Matt Labash, Tucker Carlson and the greatest political writer of my generation, Andrew Ferguson.

Early issues featured the writings of Tom Wolfe, Gertrude Himmelfarb, James Q. Wilson and Harvey Mansfield. The person at the bottom of the editorial masthead, a young Neomi Rao, has just been nominated to replace Brett Kavanaugh on the U.S. Court of Appeals.

It was and remains a warm, fun and convivial group. The magazine’s tone was part high intellectualism, part street-level political reporting and part Hunter Thompson-style gonzo journalism.

The Standard was conservative, but it frequently dissented from the Republican establishment and delighted in modern pop culture. The staff was never unanimous about anything. The many flavors of conservatism were hashed out in its pages. If it stood for anything, I would say it stood for this: that the good life consists of being an active citizen and caring passionately about politics; that it also consists of knowing something about Latin American fiction, ancient Greek culture and social impact of modern genetics; that it also consists of delighting in the latest good movies and TV shows, the best new cocktails and the casual pleasures of life.

During the past year, under the editorship

of Steve Hayes, the magazine was as good as it ever was. Adam Keiper did brilliant work with the back of the book. Amazingly talented young writers were recruited, like Adam Rubenstein, Alice Lloyd and Haley Byrd. If you look at the issue now online — the last that apparently will ever go online — there’s an article calling on Republicans to respect due process, a look at what can be done to bring down the suicide rate, an essay by literary critic Paul Cantor on “Frankenstein” at 200 and a piece on the sixth-century Roman poet Maximianus.

Over the past few years, if all the stories are correct, McKibbin tried to change the tone of the magazine. He tried to get The Standard to hire highly partisan shock-jock screamers. He tried to tilt it more in the direction of a Republican direct mail fundraising letter. When these efforts were blocked, resentment flared and the ax fell.

The Standard is now gone, but the people and ideas The Standard nurtured will continue to flourish. The talented young people who were fired last week will go on to have brilliant careers; the courage and integrity Hayes has shown during the Trump era will continue to inspire, while the drab corporate bureaucrats fade into the sand.

■

David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times and a former staff member of the Weekly Standard.



OTHER VIEWS

Merkely editorial misguided

I believe the guest editorial of Dec. 13 discouraging Senator Jeff Merkley from running for two offices at the same time is misguided. The prestige of our state would be advanced a great deal by having a president from Oregon. I am no historian but my limited research indicates there has never been a United States president from Oregon.

In the event we were fortunate enough to see Jeff Merkley in that office it would not represent a loss to Oregon. Governor Brown would be free to appoint whomever she chooses and there is no reason to believe that the person appointed would be any less dedicated to our state than Senator Merkley is now.

**Arnold J. Theisen
Irrigon**

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. PRESIDENT
Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
whitehouse.gov/contact/

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
Greg Walden
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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. 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.