

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Editor/Senior Reporter

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

OUR VIEW

State needs equitable way out of timber lawsuit

The courts are full of cases in which one party agrees to do something in return for money or other assets and, for one reason or the other, welches on the deal.

That, in short, is the case the state of Oregon recently lost. It took possession of 700,000 acres of timber land from 14 counties in the 1930s and 1940s. In return, the state said it would generate income from that timber and split it with the counties.

When the state reneged on the deal and decided it would manage most of the land as wildlife habitat and for recreation instead of timber production, the counties were out their land and the income the state promised to generate from it.

It's really a fairly straightforward case of one party, the state, unilaterally changing the conditions of a contract. In turn, the other party, the counties, want their money.

At least that was the assessment of a Linn County jury when it agreed with the counties and several tax districts that the state had massively shortchanged them. The jury set the amount at \$1 billion.

This has the lawyers at the Oregon Department of Justice scrambling in a quest for loopholes to get the state out of its jam. They have appealed to the state Court of Appeals, which will take up the dispute Feb. 22.

This makes us wonder what the state is trying to do, and why. It is arguing that one part of the government, counties, cannot sue another part, the state.

We're not lawyers, but the fact the state has taken the position of trying to wiggle out of a mess it created is unsettling.

The basics of the case are that the state shortchanged the counties. We have seen no evidence otherwise. When the state says it will manage land to generate income and then doesn't do that, there is no other way to interpret it.

Ultimately, the case could end up in the Oregon Supreme Court.

How it will turn out, we cannot say. But we can say the state is the irresponsible party and owes the counties their money, their timber land, or both.

These are not rich counties. They have been victimized by the state and by federal environmental laws, which have reduced the timber industry upon which they depended to a shadow of its former self.

The result: the counties are on financial life support. Congress provides some money to help keep the lights on, but the state, at least in this case, has taken a hard line.

The sad irony is Oregon's taxpayers will pay for the state's poor judgment no matter the outcome of the legal case.

If the state loses, taxpayers will be on the hook for \$1 billion.

If the state wins, it will have stuck it to the 14 counties and tax districts that it shortchanged.

Either way, the state will have done real damage to Oregonians.

We urge the attorney general and governor to sit down with the counties and negotiate an equitable resolution to this dispute. That's the only reasonable way to settle the mess the state created.

Great War Stories From This Century



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT WHILE YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE DECIDES WHETHER OR NOT TO OVERTURN THE RESULTS OF THIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION...



The German landmark overlooked by tourists



BRIGIT FARLEY
PAST AND PROLOGUE

If you love history and culture and fine things, there are few cities more attractive than Berlin, the heart of Europe.

You can roam the estate of Frederick the Great, sample the city's unparalleled museum scene and inspect Berlin's Cold War sites — the remnants of the Berlin Wall, the Bridge of Spies and Cecilienhof, the palace where the Potsdam conference took place. The best high-end shopping and food await on the Ku'Damm, Berlin's Fifth Avenue. And this January in particular, 80 years on, it is worth recalling a landmark that visitors might miss: Wannsee, where Nazi bigwigs planned the murder of the European Jews.

Nazi Germany's leadership was obsessed with race and space. Its leader, Adolf Hitler, believed Nazi Germany's destiny lay in expansion. A virulent anti-Semite, he intended to purge the lands his armies conquered of what he considered racial "undesirables." This process began in Germany when the Nazi party took power.

A 1933 boycott of Jewish-owned shops preceded the firing of Jewish civil servants and the expulsion of Jewish students from schools and universities. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws effectively stripped German Jews of their citizenship. The anti-Jewish campaign escalated in 1938, with nationwide state-orchestrated attacks on synagogues. The point was to force Jewish residents to leave Germany, but relatively few did. The price of an exit visa was prohibitively high, and few countries admitted refugees in the depression-plagued 1930s.

The Nazis' ensuing conquests in both western and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union presented a problem — every European country had a Jewish community, so the population of Jews under Nazi jurisdiction was increasing rather than decreasing. In the lands east of Germany, specially-trained murder squads (Einsatzgruppen), gunned down almost a million Soviet Jews in 1941 alone in what we now know as the "Holocaust by bullets."

But Nazi officials feared such brutal tactics might backfire in the more "civilized" countries of western Europe. There was no room anywhere in the Nazi empire for Jews, whom the regime considered subhuman. Another means of getting rid of them had to be found.

One option was a forced mass resettlement in Madagascar, then a French island colony off the southeast coast of Africa. Some 7,000 German Jews were deported to France in anticipation of a possible move there. But the logistics of moving millions to a remote island, and the very real bloodlust of the Nazi leadership, pointed to a truly final solution of the "Jewish question." In January 1942, top Nazi officialdom convened in a villa in Berlin's Wannsee neighborhood to work out the details.

When you approach the site of the Wannsee conference, you are struck by its picturesque surroundings. It sits on a beautiful lake, where locals swim and sail in summer. Nearby houses showcase the best of Berlin's architectural talent and the parked cars range from luxe Mercedes sedans to whimsical Smart cars covered in plastic daisy stickers. The villa itself recalls the gentility and prosperity of late 19th-century Berlin.

Once you are inside, however, the reverie ends quickly. There is no official record of the Wannsee proceedings, but because the villa has become a museum, the curators position the exhibits to tell the story. In the entryway, visitors

sample the publications that demonized Jews as enemies of the German people, for example the Nazi daily *The Stormer*, whose headline — "Ritual Murder!" — recycles the old and pernicious myth of Jewish crimes against Christian children.

The dining room, which opens out onto the lake, features a replica of the table where Nazi officials formulated plans to deport the Jews of Europe to concentration camps in occupied Poland, for immediate execution or forced labor in the service of German corporations. Photographs of Berlin Jews being removed from their homes and forced into camp-bound trains, sometimes to the tune of lighthearted vacation songs sung by cynical Nazi police, adorn the walls of adjoining rooms. And then, amongst the photos, evidence of the murder machinery: a receipt from Topf and sons, a Berlin firm hired to construct industrial-strength ovens for Auschwitz crematoria. Herr Topf included a thoughtful note: "We would like to thank you for placing the order with us."

A visit to the Wannsee house/museum does much more than clarify the origins of the death camps. It removes evil from its usual precincts and stages it where you least expect: in a leafy, peaceful, lakeside neighborhood. It underlines the use of euphemism in the Nazi murder machine — the Wannsee conference was to "solve" the Jewish "problem," as if the fate of millions were a math equation. And in its understatement, it brings home to you the visceral horror of the Holocaust as no written accounts could.

If 2022 makes European travel possible again, you really should consider a visit to Wannsee.

Brigit Farley is a Washington State University professor, student of history, adventurer and Irish heritage girl living in Pendleton.

EDITORIALS

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.

LETTERS

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:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801