

Sustainability fund is good idea from Visit Bend

Some people will harrumph and scrunch up their faces if you mention tourists and Bend.

They have had enough of tourists. They have had enough of people treating Bend like a play thing. They have had enough of the added traffic. They have had enough of people visiting and then deciding to move here.

And for the scrunched up harrumpers there is perhaps no more despicable villain than Visit Bend. It's the economic development organization that adeptly tries to bring tourists here and ensure they have a positive impact. "We don't need it," we often hear harrumphed. "The word is out about Bend?"

Of course, they do have a point. But Bend would be a very different place if those tourist dollars weren't boosting the economy. And by law, the money that comes in from tourism taxes has to be spent on tourism-related stuff.

Already, Visit Bend has had a serious campaign at the forefront of its marketing efforts urging visitors to take The Bend Pledge. It encourages people when they visit to tread softly, take only memories and leave only footprints. Be nice and behave. Visit Bend even gives away prizes for people who sign the pledge, encouraging more people to pay attention to it.

Visit Bend is also launching some-

thing new, the Bend Sustainability Fund. It's going to take some of its funding and invest it in the community. It is looking to create tourism-related facilities that will last for more than 10 years. Such a facility would have to have substantial use by visitors because of those legal requirements for tourism taxes.

Anyone can apply for project funding. They must be able to pull the project off and the project must create sustainable recreational resources and outdoor experiences. Projects should be shovel ready. There must be community support for the project. There should be a plan for long-term maintenance and care. It should be accessible to all. The money is coming from the city's transient room tax, not other taxes. The grant application process starts on July 1.

What sorts of things might be right? Trailhead parking. Bike trails. Sports facilities. An equestrian camp. Improvements to Deschutes River access. Public restrooms, too.

Do you have an idea? There is more information here: www.visitbend.com/bend-sustainability-fund/.

This fund could bring some great improvements to Bend and environs for everyone.

About that letter from Travel Portland

Did you see the ad for Portland that showed up in the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle and The Seattle Times?

Maybe. Maybe not. It's worth checking out. There's a good overview in the Willamette Week.

The ad is an effort from Travel Portland, the tourism promoter. It tries hard to market Portland to visitors by urging them to look past some of the headlines and see the city for themselves.

"You've heard a lot about us lately," the ad says in part. "It's been a while since you have heard from us."

"We have some of the loudest voices on the West Coast," the ad later continues. "And yes passion pushes the volume all the way up.

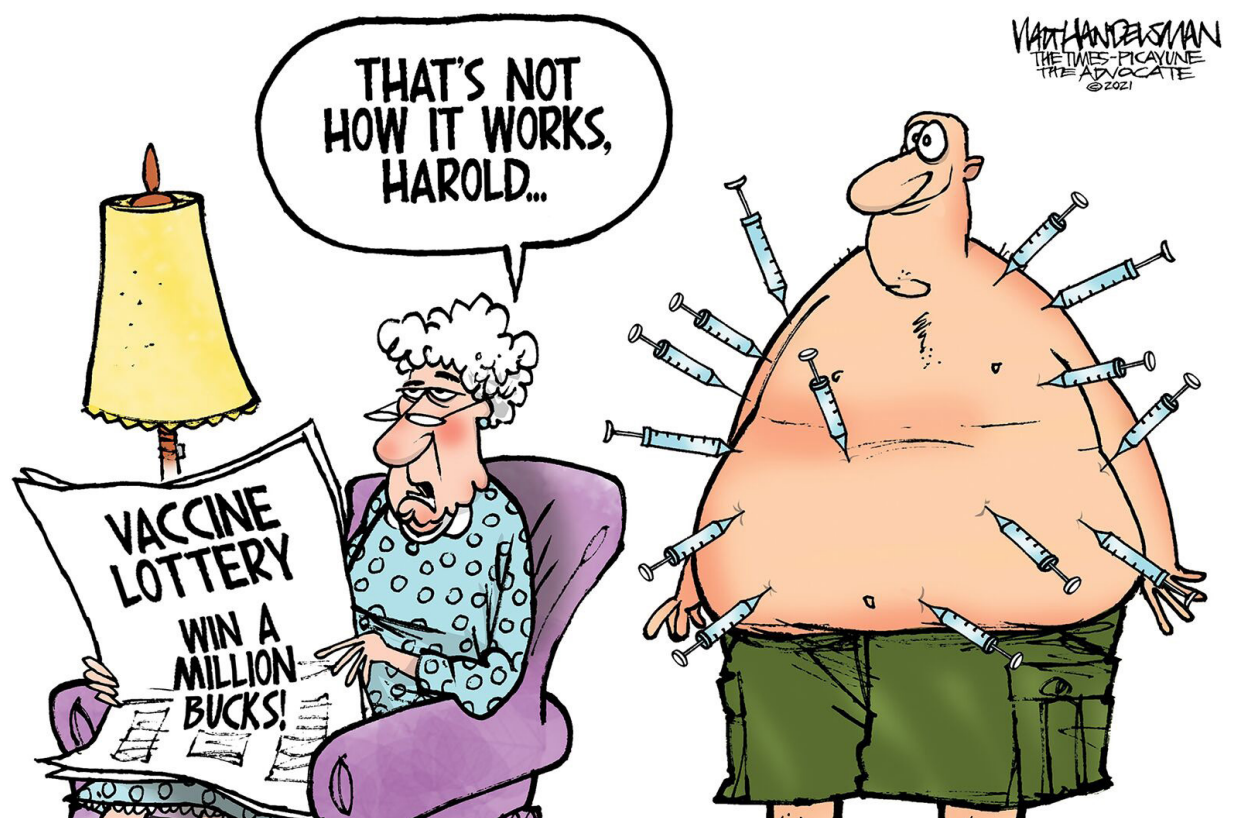
We've always been like this. We wouldn't have it any other way?"

The ad has more polished word-smithing than that.

We picked that excerpt, because it's a place where it's trying to round off the edges.

Some people object to the way the ad portrays Portland. Yes, in fact, they would have it some other way. Yes they would not like their city to be known as a place of protests. Others would like the city to give them less reason to protest.

The thing that intrigues us about the ad is that it is right, in a way. You only have a chance to truly know a place if you go see it for yourself. Portland is wreathed by a narrative that is not completely fair, nor is it completely wrong.



GUEST COLUMN

Water sharing is not enough

BY YANCY LIND

The Bulletin recently covered the plight of some farmers with junior water rights getting only 40% of their traditional water deliveries while senior water rights holders continue to get their full allotment.

Beginning in the late 1800s settlers were lured by developers to Central Oregon with sometimes dubious promises of cheap land, good soil and weather, and plentiful water. Dreams of fertile farms helped bring the wagon trains. The first to arrive and organize were given the most senior water rights and every right after that was more junior. North Unit Irrigation District around Madras has the most productive farmland but the most junior rights. While they have been here the longest, fish and wildlife have the most junior water rights of all.

Contrary to popular belief, a water right is not water ownership. We, the public, own the water. A right allows an irrigator water provided its use is "beneficial." Beneficial use is not well defined, but it was commonly understood to mean economically productive; something that would help the region grow. It is also important to know that the water is free. Irrigators commonly do not understand this, but they are charged by their irrigation district for the delivery of the water, not the water itself. We, the public owners of the water, get nothing.

Today, 88% of all water rights in the



Lind

Upper Deschutes Basin are held by irrigators, 2% by municipalities, and the rest is in streams and rivers. While there are many economically viable farms, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, most Deschutes County water right holders are small with higher costs than income, aka "hobby farmers." If you look around Deschutes County, you will see many acres of well-watered fields, perhaps with a few horses or cows.

Water rights are protected by law, and everyone should be able to pursue their hobby of choice. But what if an irrigator wanted to give up some water? Until this extreme drought year this was limited by the districts, and additional water is not being allowed to go instream.

A partial solution would be to establish a well-functioning water market, where water can be freely bought and sold while protecting water rights, land use designations and tax breaks. Water markets have been shown to work in other states and would work here as well. In fact, the Deschutes River Conservancy runs a limited water leasing program, which provides a small, but important, amount of flow into local rivers at some times of the year. (55 CFS this year spread over the entire basin.) There also used to be a

water bank that facilitated permanent transfers to rivers and cities. This program was shut down by the districts. A water market would be a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. The solution to our water problems would be to also charge irrigators for their water.

Junior water rights holders in North Unit Irrigation District have become highly efficient in their use of water out of necessity. Similar incentives do not exist elsewhere. For example, 25% of Central Oregon Irrigation District still uses flood irrigation, the most inefficient form of irrigation. Charging for water would quickly fix this.

Charging for water would also help direct water to economically viable uses, the original intent of granting rights. Additionally, raised funds could be used to buy water to permanently put back into rivers and streams, along with other ecological restoration activities, helping to reverse 100+ years of damage from often wasteful irrigation practices.

This is a radical idea, one that would require changes in our laws. In the face of a heating planet and a booming population, however, we need to think of radical solutions or the plight of North Unit farmers will be visited on the rest of us. Neither planned canal piping, nor water conservation by homeowners, is enough to solve our worsening water problem.

Yancy Lind lives in Tumalo and blogs at www.coinformadangler.org.

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries.

Email submissions are preferred. Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

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American society is not nearly as woke as it sometimes appears

BY TYLER COWEN

Bloomberg

It is sometimes called "Conquest's Second Law of Politics": "Any organization not explicitly and constitutionally right-wing will sooner or later become left-wing." I am hearing this more and more lately, leading me to wonder if it is actually true. And if so, why?

It is easy enough to find anecdotal evidence in support of it. Numerous foundations that arose from the fortunes of right-leaning founders, such as Pew or Ford or Hewlett, have morphed into left-wing institutions. I can't think of a major foundation that came from a left-wing founder and then moved to the right. In the broader sweep of American history, universities have not been explicitly left-wing — but they are today.

And the law is not necessarily confined to nonprofit institutions, which are vulnerable to capture by left-leaning educated elites. This doesn't explain the advent of "Woke Capital" — corporations pushing for explicitly Democratic or left-leaning policies, such as voting reform in Georgia.

America's professional sports leagues have to varying degrees endorsed conceptions of racial politics closer to that of the Democratic Party.

Therein lies a clue as to the nature of the ideological shift. Those same sports leagues are not in every way woke. Football, for instance, remains a violent sport, imposing injuries on many relatively disadvantaged young men, while the NBA allows itself to be bullied by China on issues of human rights.

One possibility is that institutions respond to whichever groups make the biggest stink about a given issue. On many political issues, the left cares more than the right, and so those left-wing preferences end up imprinted not only on public opinion-sensitive nonprofits but also on profit-maximizing corporations. Yet when it comes to statements about Hong Kong, China cares a great deal and most Americans do not, and so the NBA responds to that pressure.

Additional forces strengthen Conquest's Second Law. Educational polarization increasingly characterizes U.S. politics, with more educated

Americans more likely to vote Democratic. Those same Americans are also likely to run nonprofits or major corporations, which would partially explain the ideological migration of those institutions.

There are, of course, numerous U.S. institutions that have maintained or even extended a largely right-wing slant, including many police forces, significant parts of the military, and many Protestant Evangelical churches. Those institutions tend to have lower educational requirements, and so they are not always so influential in the media, compared to many left-wing institutions.

Furthermore, the military and police are supposed to keep out of politics, and so their slant to the right is less noticeable, although no less real. The left is simply more prominent in mass media, so Conquest's Second Law appears to be truer than it really is. (Note that by definition the law excludes explicitly right-wing media.)

Left-wing views, at least on some issues, might have more of a "least common denominator" element than do many right-wing views. On aver-

age, the intellectual right is more likely to insist on biological differences between men and women, whereas the intellectual left is more likely to insist on equality of capabilities.

No matter your view, the left approach is easier to incorporate into mission statements, company slogans, and corporate human-resource policies.

Egalitarian slogans require less explanation, are less likely to get an institution into trouble with the law, and are more compatible with a desire to attract a broad range of workers and customers.

So as nonprofit institutions have become larger and big business has risen in relative importance, those trends also will instantiate Conquest's Law. As large organizations adopt a more egalitarian tone in their rhetoric, explicit right-wing views will tend to become less prominent in those organizations.

The common thread to these explanations is that left-wing views find it easier to win in spheres of reporting, talk and rhetoric — and that those tendencies strengthen over time.

It follows that, if Conquest's Second Law is true, societies are more right-wing than they appear. Furthermore, it is the intelligentsia itself that is most likely to be deluded about this, living as it does in the world of statements and proclamations. It is destined to be repeatedly surprised at how "barbarian" American society is.

There is also a significant strand of right-wing thought, most notably in opposition to Marxism, that stresses the immutable realities of human nature, and that people change only so much in response to their environments. So all that left-wing talk doesn't have to result in an entirely left-wing society.

Conservatives thus should be able to take some comfort in Conquest's Second Law. They may find the discourse suffocating at times. But there is more to life than just talk — and that, for liberals as well as conservatives, should be counted as one of life's saving graces.

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog *Marginal Revolution*.