

Your vote can change the world

We can learn something from Britain, which shocked the world last week by voting to leave the European Union.

It's a reminder that our votes mean a lot, and in a democracy it is the public that has the power. It's always good to remind the government and the elites of that fact — but it's also good to remind ourselves.

When we wield our votes as punishment or protest, we must be careful of our aim. When we try to punish the government and its institutions, we often punish ourselves as well.

Perhaps leaving the European Union will be a good thing for Britain. More likely, it will cause years of protracted disentangling that will leave it isolated and the European Union weakened.

It's no wonder the Vladimir Putins of the world cheered the vote. When powerful but clearly flawed democratic institutions weaken, authoritarians look to fill in the vacuum.

It seems clear that Scotland will soon leave the United Kingdom (and join the EU) and ever more likely that Ireland will unify, leaving England and Wales a decidedly minor player

on the world scene. That's to the detriment of the United States, Europe and defenders of democracy everywhere.

The European Union is a bureaucratic tangle, but you cannot argue that Europe has ever been richer or more peaceful during the last 50 years.

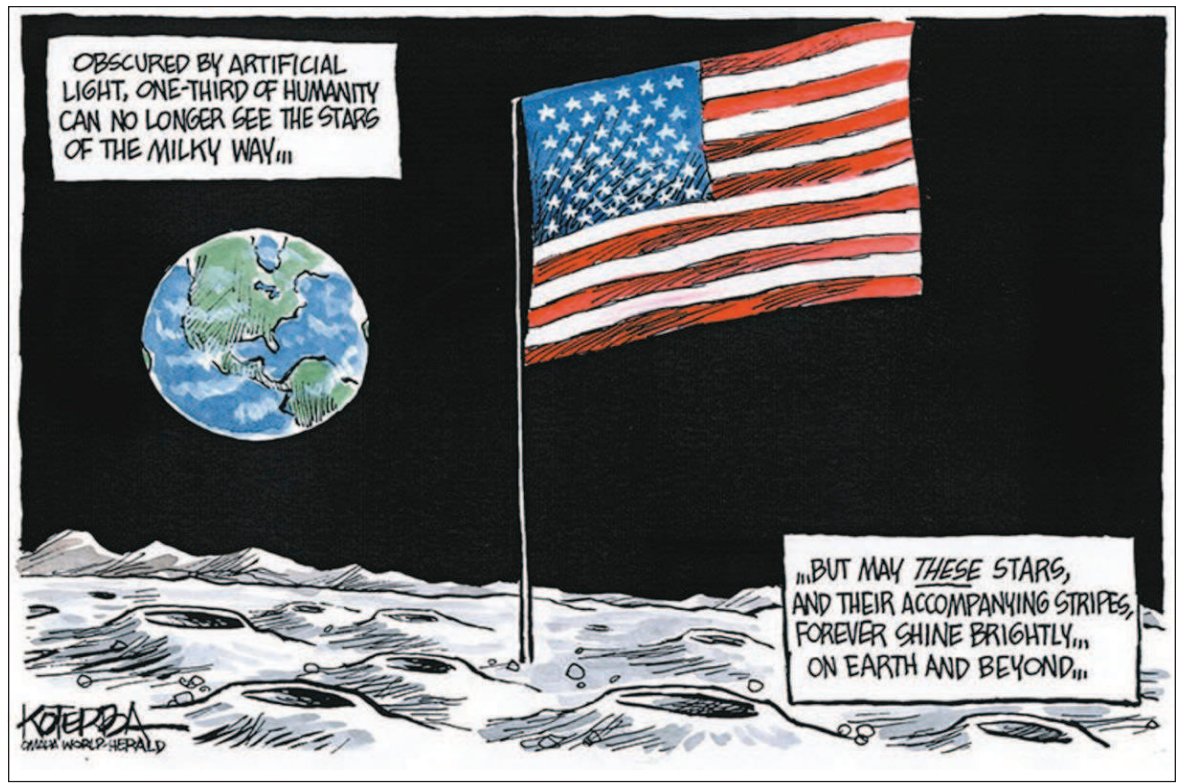
Yet this country, the good old U.S.A., made our Brexit a long time ago — way back in 1776 — when we eschewed rule from afar for local control.

It worked out well for the United States of America. The future of the "United States of Europe" is in doubt.

For now, we must let the machinations of the global political and economic systems play out, and let John Maynard Keynes and Winston Churchill roll in their graves.

But looking toward November, we can learn a lesson. A vote is a powerful thing that can change the course of nations and the world.

As German-American journalist H.L. Mencken put it in the last century, "Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard."



GUEST COMMENT

The 'outside agitator' idea

By Adam Davis
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Earlier this year, a group of people came to Harney County to address what they perceived to be gross injustice. They had concerns about land ownership, the proper scope of federal government and the elevation of some ways of life over others. Unfortunately, whatever legitimate questions they hoped to raise were overshadowed by the weapons they wore and the threats they posed. And they were, as we heard throughout the standoff, not from there. They were outsiders.

While this loaded episode was playing out in Eastern Oregon, Oregon Humanities' Humanity in Perspective class in Portland was reading Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail." King begins the letter by defending himself against the anticipated objection that he is an outsider in Birmingham. He says that he was invited in, that he has organizational ties there. But he also says, more boldly and provocatively, that he "cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham."

"Never again," he continues, "can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial 'outside agitator' idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider."

The core of King's argument is that, no matter where we come from or whom we are perceived to repre-

sent, we are all entitled and perhaps even required to speak out when we see injustice. In writing "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," King seems to be saying that our commitments matter more than our origins and affiliations.

It's tempting to compare these two instances and to wonder if, in principle, it doesn't matter that King came from Atlanta rather than Birmingham, or that the Bundy brothers came from Nevada rather than Eastern Oregon. Criticize the Bundy brothers' efforts for a number of reasons, but King's argument seems to suggest, don't condemn them for being outsiders speaking up on behalf of others — even others to whom they do not immediately belong.

But it would be difficult and perhaps misguided to ignore the circumstances surrounding these instances — the burgeoning civil rights movement in the South, the increase of anti-government unrest in rural communities. These circumstances and our own feelings about them affect how we hear the arguments that emerge. And the perceived identities and affinities of the speakers affect us, too: that King was an African American man in a dark suit, that Ammon Bundy is a white man in quilted flannel and a cowboy hat.

Set alongside each other, King's "Letter" and the Malheur occupation raise the complicated question of how much the identity of a speaker should

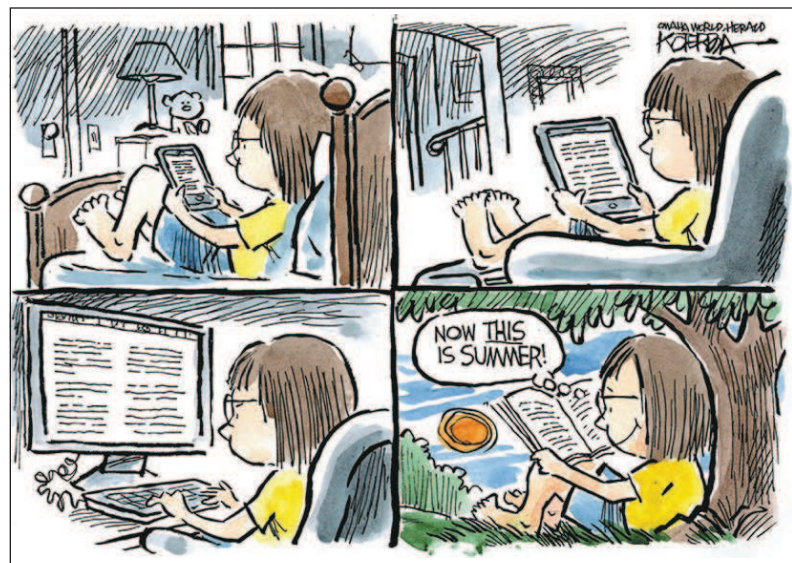
affect how we respond to the argument they are making. How much — when it comes specifically to representation — does our "single garment of destiny" tie us together? Is it really the case, as King seems to suggest, that anyone — of any race, gender or location — can speak for anyone else?

Speaking just for myself (which is how many of us — for lots of good reasons — have been taught to speak), I often find it difficult to separate the force of an argument I am hearing from my perception of the person delivering the argument — who they are and who I imagine they "belong to." The very same argument that feels just right coming from one person might feel presumptuous, offensive or dismissive from another.

It is simply the case that, for me, King's argument about there being no more outsiders in the United States is strengthened by his making the argument from jail and by his having been treated, over and over again, as an outsider.

It probably makes sense to look hard at anyone who claims to speak for others, to think carefully about how we come to hear their voices and about what we're responding to in what they say. And it certainly makes sense to take seriously and to treat with care all those who have to struggle simply to speak for themselves and be heard.

Adam Davis is executive director of Oregon Humanities. This piece was published in the Spring 2016 "Root" issue of Oregon Humanities magazine.



WHERE TO WRITE

GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
- **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
- **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.

SALEM

- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.
- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

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- **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D** — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.
- **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D** — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Email: senator@merkley.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.
- **U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R** — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why are ambulance volunteers turned down?

To the Editor:
On June 18, two young men were involved in a one-vehicle accident around mile post 2 on Top Road in Monument, the same road I live on. Both were injured and one very seriously. The lesser-injured man ran all the way to Monument to get help for his friend. Why did this other, seriously injured young man have to wait over an hour to get medical attention? He died in the arms of his brother waiting for medical care. It took an hour for an ambulance to arrive.

One year ago, Monument had a fully staffed ambulance of 10 dedicated volunteers. Now they are down to three. My wife resigned her position as a volunteer EMT intermediate with Blue Mountain Hospital after 16 years of service late last year due to certain issues with the ambulance director. She is still a currently state-licensed intermediate. A few months ago, she asked to rejoin the Monument ambulance crew and was informed by the hospital that they "had no openings at this time." No openings for a volunteer when they had just lost seven in Monument? I feel this young man was denied his right to prompt medical care, care which could have been there in less than six minutes from when 911 was called. The outcome most likely would have been no different, but at least he would have opportunity. Why?

Darrell Howe
Monument

Britton has best interests of Grant County in mind

To the Editor:
Well here we are with another fire season just around the corner, and for many here in the county, including myself, we aren't happy about how the Canyon Creek Complex fire was handled. While many would like to point a finger at someone to blame, that won't ease the feelings of so very many that lost so much.

I suggest that any finger pointing should be directed back east, way back east, where all the policy is made as to how we fight these larger fires.

My main reason for this letter is to show my support for County Commissioner Boyd Britton. I have known Boyd since he first went into business in John Day. Boyd is a man that takes his job seriously knowing that any decision he makes isn't going to please everyone, but still he has the best interest in mind for all the citizens of Grant County. Just what we elected him to do.

I have supported Boyd in the past and will continue to do so for as long as he wants the job.

Rod Kuhn
John Day

'We need a new sheriff'

To the Editor:
I would like to suggest a solution for a large part of what ails us here in this beautiful part of the world.

We need a new Sheriff. We need someone who will follow through

and bring those who put the rest of us in danger to justice whether it is shots fired or a poisoned well or a hit and run driver plowing through a rural fence, regardless of the relationship to the sheriff or his deputies.

A sheriff who doesn't pick and choose which calls to answer, regardless of severity or distance or inconvenience.

A sheriff who will listen to all factions of this county and give everyone an equal voice regardless of political or social status. We need a sheriff's office which is open to everyone, not just friends and allies.

A Sheriff who is focused the rights of all the citizens of Grant County, and who holds himself accountable for all of his actions, and is willing to admit when he has made a mistake or error in judgment.

A Sheriff that has the character to deal with his staff and citizens in a professional manner, providing an atmosphere of mutual cooperation, not administrating the office of sheriff through fear and intimidation.

We need a Sheriff who will make decisions based upon logic and the rule of law, rather than personal opinion, emotion and ego. We need a Sheriff who will truly stand by the decisions of our forefathers and the Constitution, not some abridged version subject to personal interpretation.

Because I believe in Honesty, Integrity, and the need for common sense and competence in the office of our County Sheriff, I Stand With Todd McKinley.

Dan Maynard
John Day



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PUBLISHER..... MARISSA WILLIAMS, MARISSA@BMEAGLE.COM
 EDITOR..... SEAN HART, EDITOR@BMEAGLE.COM
 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT..... KRISTINA KREGER, KRISTINA@BMEAGLE.COM
 COMMUNITY NEWS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
 SPORTS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
 MARKETING REP..... KIM KELL, ADS@BMEAGLE.COM
 OFFICE MANAGER..... LINDSAY BULLOCK, OFFICE@BMEAGLE.COM

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