

We are not enemies

Today's political rhetoric sounds as if our nation is embroiled in a civil war.

The term "enemy" is used so frequently it seems as if people have forgotten how many true enemies we have had to face to secure and maintain our freedom.

An enemy is not someone with whom a person disagrees, despite how the term is often used lately.

According to Merriam-Webster, an enemy is "one that is antagonistic to another, especially one seeking to injure, overthrow or confound an opponent; something harmful or deadly; a military adversary; a hostile unit or force."

In the true sense of the word, an enemy is someone with whom a person cannot coexist. Not because of trivial differences but because the enemy is actively trying to harm a person's well-being.

A political rival is not an enemy — unless that rival is armed with an intent to hurt someone. Yet, that type of language is commonplace.

While politicians often use hyperbole to persuade voters, real problems result when people begin to react in their daily lives in the same exaggerated nature of many of these rhetorical claims.

People believe and act on these exaggerations. They start

treating rivals as if they were enemies, in the literal sense.

Our republic, founded on the principles of democracy, gives a voice to each citizen, but it belies the very system when all the voices are yelling and no one is listening — when the people who must work together to govern this system that provided our freedom treat each other as enemies.

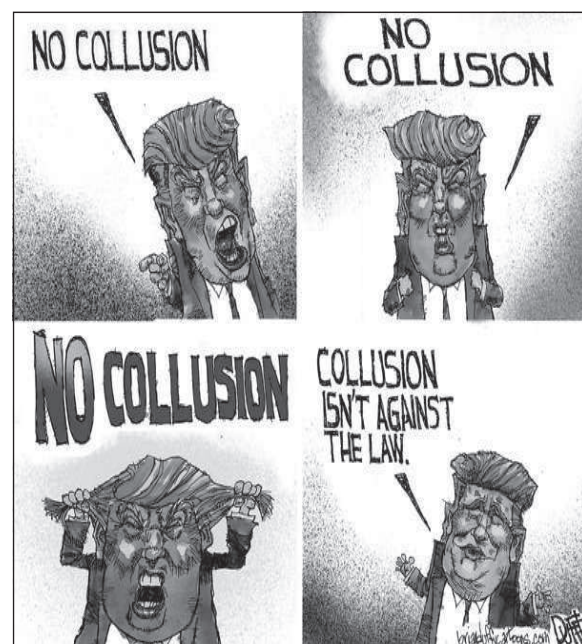
This government of, by and for the people requires, at a minimum, that people believe more in the common bond with their countrymen than in any political difference.

This country would not have been established without that strong belief in the commonalities we share. It cannot move forward without a restored belief that we are more alike than we are different.

Yet, this is not what we hear from politicians. Each side attacks the other with such growing fervor that it seems the real point of our political process — the country itself and our commonalities — has been forgotten.

If we do not restore civility to our political discourse, the chasm will continue to grow as the country swings from one pole to the other until the entire system has been unraveled.

It is those who describe their countrymen as enemies who are the true enemy of this country.



GUEST COMMENT

The importance of a free press

By Judy Patrick
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

We've been complacent. We thought everybody knew how important a free press was to our world and that all this talk about us being the enemy of the people would be dismissed for the silliness that it is.

But the reckless attacks have continued, instigated and encouraged by our president.

When the leader of the free world works to erode the public's trust in the media, the potential for damage is enormous, both here and abroad. We once set an example of free and open government for the world to follow. Now those who seek to suppress the free flow of information are doing so with impunity.

The time has come for us to stand up to the bullying. The role journalism plays in our free society is too crucial to allow this degradation to continue.

We aren't the enemy of the people. We are the people. We aren't

fake news. We are your news and we struggle night and day to get the facts right.

On bitter cold January nights, we're the people's eyes and ears at town, village and school board meetings. We tell the stories of our communities, from the fun of a county fair to the despair a family faces when a loved one is killed.

We are always by your side. We shop the same stores, attend the same churches and hike the same trails. We struggle with daycare and worry about paying for retirement.

In our work as journalists, our first loyalty is to you. Our work is guided by a set of principles that demand objectivity, independence, open-mindedness and the pursuit of the truth. We make mistakes, we know. There's nothing we hate more than errors but we acknowledge them, correct them and learn from them.

Our work is a labor of love because we love our country and believe we are playing a vital role in our democracy. Self-governance demands that our citizens need to

be well-informed and that's what we're here to do. We go beyond the government issued press release or briefing and ask tough questions. We hold people in power accountable for their actions. Some think we're rude to question and challenge. We know it's our obligation.

People have been criticizing the press for generations. We are not perfect. But we're striving every day to be a better version of ourselves than we were the day before.

That's why we welcome criticism. But unwarranted attacks that undermine your trust in us cannot stand. The problem has become so serious that newspapers across the nation are speaking out against these attacks in one voice today on their editorial pages.

As women's rights pioneer and investigative journalist Ida B. Wells wrote in 1892: "The people must know before they can act and there is no educator to compare with the press."

Judy Patrick is the vice president for editorial development for the New York Press Association.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Unacceptable behavior'

To the Editor:
It's a horrible day in Grant County when the younger working population, representing our com-

munity at the John Day city pool, humiliate a 13-year-old child over 5 cents. She was short 5 cents and was told to "go scrounge the parking lot," while the pool employee started letting other people in. This is unacceptable behavior from the

young people that lifeguard at the pool and represent our community at the pool front desk. Are we not more compassionate than that?

Jennifer Medico
John Day

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.

WHERE TO WRITE

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- **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.
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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol,

Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
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