

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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LaMear bears witness to a public health crisis

The measures the mayor backs are common sense

One of the startling revelations of 2016 is Democrats finding their voice on gun control. In defiance of the National Rifle Association and other gun pressure groups, Oregon U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley have spoken out on the need to adopt measures that many of us deem are sensible — banning the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, for instance. Gov. Kate Brown's recent support for such measures was equally startling. She did something her predecessor John Kitzhaber, an emergency room physician, would not.

Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear's statement of conscience on guns Monday night was an act of courage. One does not see many small town mayors in rural areas raising their head on this issue. The measures that LaMear backs are common sense — concerning assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, stiffening the no-fly list and making mental health funding a national priority.

Sandwiched between our U.S. senators, our governor and our mayor is state Sen. Betsy Johnson, who has been unmoved by the public health exigency of so much carnage — from massacres, accidental shootings and suicides. There was a time in Oregon when the NRA could kill a candidate's prospects. The insurgent Bob Packwood played the gun card against U.S. Sen. Wayne Morse in 1968. That no doubt is what kept Kitzhaber quiet,

even in the aftermath of the Clackamas Town Center shootings. A popular politician such as Betsy Johnson now can afford to recognize a teachable moment.

As Mayor LaMear said, doing the things she advocates does not remove guns from hunters or from people who lawfully own guns for self protection. Hers are sensible protections, which public health physicians have long advocated.

If there is one thing we can predict with certainty, it is that there will be another gun massacre somewhere in America before many more weeks pass. There will also be accidental shootings and suicides by gun. In excess of 30,000 Americans this year will die as a result of guns. If we do not recognize this epidemic as a threat to our stability and our culture, we are either really stupid or fatally lack the courage to see straight.

Property neglect drags us down

Success stories should inspire local governments

Astoria's recent success in finding a path forward for the neglected Flavel properties and the city of Long Beach's efforts to clean up the last of its derelict buildings should inspire all local governments to do the same.

It can be a messy business — in every way — when private landowners lose the interest or ability to maintain aging structures, or allow junk to pile up around property.

Such neglect not only lowers the value of a specific address. It also drags down the value of adjoining real estate. At some point, individual cases of neglect become blights on the entire community. This impedes economic development and limits revenue for everything from schools to community maintenance. Derelict build-

ings and land also attract crime and uninvited guests — everything from termites and rats to criminals looking for a place to crash.

There are impediments to dealing with these problems — everything from lack of code enforcement money and staff to local good old boys protecting their own. But ultimately, it takes community leadership and committed citizens insisting on at least minimal standards, and hopefully high standards.

Trends in increasing real estate prices are helping clear the region's inventory of ugly orphaned property. Counties and municipalities all must make a priority raising community standards, encouraging all property owners to meet expectations.

Property rights don't extend to the right to drag down your neighbors.

Trump and the sultan

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

Turkey is a long way from Cleveland, where the Republicans are holding their presidential convention. But I'd urge you to study the recent failed military coup against Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. America is not Turkey — but in terms of personality and political strategy, Erdogan and Donald Trump were separated at birth.

And the drama playing out in Turkey today is the story of just how off track a once successful country can get when a leader who demonizes all his rivals and dabbles in crazy conspiracy theories comes to believe that he alone is The Man — the only one who can make his country great again — and ensconces himself in power.

Let's start with Erdogan, who was prime minister from 2003 to 2014, but then maneuvered himself into the previously symbolic role of president and got all key powers shifted to that position. I confess that when I first heard the news of the July 15 coup attempt, my first instinct was to consult that great foreign policy expert Miss Manners, *The Washington Post's* etiquette columnist, because I was asking myself, "What is the right response when bad things happen to bad people?"

"Dear Miss Manners: I instinctively oppose military coups against democratically elected governments, like the one in Turkey. But am I a bad person if part of me felt that Turkey's president had it coming?"

Anyone who has been following Turkey closely knows that Erdogan has been mounting a silent, drip-by-drip coup of his own against Turkish democracy for years — jailing reporters, hounding rivals with giant tax bills, reviving an internal war against Turkish Kurds to stoke nationalist passions to propel his efforts to grab more powers — and by generally making himself into a modern-day sultan for life.

I'm glad the coup failed, espe-

cially the way it did — with many secular Turks who actually opposed Erdogan's autocratic rule, and had been abused by it, nevertheless coming out against the plotters on the principle that Turkish democracy must be upheld. That was a truly impressive act of collective wisdom and a display of democratic sensibilities.

The maturity of the Turkish people resulted in Erdogan's getting what golfers call a mulligan, or a do-over, to demonstrate that he is committed to the universal precepts of democracy. Will he? Or will Erdogan go right back to his preferred means of staying in power: dividing Turks into his supporters and enemies of the state, weaving conspiracy theories and using the failed coup as a license for a witch hunt, not only for plotters but for anyone who has dared to cross his path?

The early signs are bad. A day after the failed coup, Erdogan dismissed 2,745 judges and prosecutors. How did he know exactly who to fire in one day? Did he already have an enemies list? To date, he has now reportedly purged 1,500 university deans, revoked the licenses of 21,000 teachers and either purged or detained nearly 35,000 members of the military, security forces and judiciary as part of his "cleansing" of coup supporters.

Here's the real tragedy: Erdogan was an outstanding leader his first five years and truly lifted the country's economy and middle class. But since then it's all gone to his head, and he has gotten away with increasingly bad behavior by creating an us-versus-them divide between his loyal, more religious followers, and the more secular communities in Turkey.

Because his followers see their dignity wrapped up in his remaining in power, he can say and do anything and never pay a political price. His base will always rally to his us-ver-



Thomas L. Friedman

If you like what's going on in Turkey today, you'll love Trump's America.

sus-them dog whistles. But Turkey in the long run suffers.

Sound familiar?

Trump relies on the same tactics: He fabricates facts and figures on an industrial scale. He regularly puts out conspiracy theories — his latest is that President Barack Obama's "body language" suggests that "there's something going on" with the president — hinting that Obama is not comfortable condemning the killing of cops by African-American gunmen and has sympathy for radical Islamists.

Trump also relies on the us-versus-them bond with his followers to avoid punishment for any of his misbehavior. He, too, is obsessed with his own prowess, and he uses Twitter to get around traditional media gatekeepers — and fact-checkers —

to inject anything he wants into the nation's media bloodstream. (Erdogan just uses his own friendly media.) And most of the people Trump has surrounded himself with are either family or second-raters looking for a star turn, including his vice-presidential choice and the person who wrote his wife's convention speech and clearly plagiarized part of it from Michelle Obama. The whole thing reeks of flimflam.

If Trump is elected, I don't think there will be a military coup, but I guarantee you that Jeb Bush's prediction will be proved true, that he'll be "a chaos president" just as he's been a "chaos candidate." Americans will regularly be in the streets, because they are not going to follow — on any big issue — a man who lies as he breathes, who has not done an ounce of homework to prepare for the job and who generates support by conspiracy theories and making people afraid of the future and one another.

If you like what's going on in Turkey today, you'll love Trump's America.

GUEST COLUMN

Oil trains from hell

By ROBIN CODY

Special to The Daily Astorian

The whole idea — of fracking North Dakota and shipping flammable crude oil by rail through the Columbia River Gorge — is not just a violation of nature. It's also a threat to people who live near the tracks.

These trains are explosive. A recent fiery wreck of a Union Pacific oil train in the gorge just missed destroying the river town of Mosier. The gorge is a national scenic area and windsurfer heaven. It's almost never not windy. But on this windless day, the fireballs and toxic black smoke rose straight up, sparing Mosier. Also by chance, broken tanker cars crashed landward instead of toward the river. A civic catastrophe and environmental nightmare did not quite happen. But next time?

Many more oil trains could be on the way. Proposed now, for Vancouver, Washington, is the largest oil-by-rail terminal in the Pacific Northwest. This new project would double — to four each day — the frequency of mile-long trains carrying volatile Bakken crude to the Port of Vancouver.

In protest of this madness, a stubborn bunch of us citizens sat ourselves on Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks in Vancouver on a recent Saturday and refused to budge. The Vancouver 21 (eight men and 13 women) were arrested and booked for criminal trespassing. Pretrial hearings are set for Aug. 16.

Some of us take rail hazards personally. Me, I have a 4-year-old granddaughter and her folks living in the blast zone of train bombs.

Our protest was a political act, planned in advance and well anticipated by law enforcement. In the third hour, BNSF security forces — not city or county police — moved in. They wore police costumes and drove vehicles marked POLICE and delivered repeated warnings of



Submitted Photo

Protesters sat on the tracks to oppose oil shipments by rail.

Some of us take rail hazards personally.

jail time and up to \$10,000 fines. A BNSF engine, blaring its horn, inched to within 40 yards of us.

We could never have staged, on our own, a clearer example of corporate America's grip on civil justice.

Too little attention focuses on the industries that contribute to, and profit from, America's dependence on fossil fuels. It's 2016. About climate change and its causes, the evi-

dence is in. The U.S. is awash in oil. The bulk of this oil surging West will surely be burned in Asia. As if we had some other planet to fall back on. As if we didn't know, by now, that today's energy policy is fouling the future of our kids, our grandkids, and on down.

Robin Cody is the Portland author of "Voyage of a Summer Sun: Canoeing the Columbia River."