

**THE WENATCHEE
WORLD**

THE FIERCELY INDEPENDENT VOICE
OF NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON

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They want the data to flow

Yahoo! It is coming to Wenatchee. Microsoft and Yahoo! are coming to Quincy. The biggest names in the information technology business want to be here.

Why here and why now? Yes, we've got cheap electricity. We've had cheap electricity for 50 years. It sure helps, but that can't be the only attraction. We've got cheap real estate, especially compared with Yahoo!'s headquarters city of Sunnyvale, Calif. But Mississippi and South Dakota, or Washtucna for that matter, have it cheaper. We have a very nice state-of-the-art building with the Confluence Technology Center. That helps too. Yahoo! says it wouldn't come here without it. But one building isn't the reason. Yahoo! is going to spend more refurbishing the CTC than it cost to build it in the first place.

And Yahoo! wasn't lured like a pro sports franchise or a Boeing assembly plant, with sweetheart deals and big tax breaks. Yahoo! is paying full freight. It never asked for favors.

So if you ask the insiders what gives, why now and why Wenatchee, and they mention the deciding factor. Chances are you've never heard of it: NOANet.

It's not a Weather Service Web site. NOANet is short for the Northwest Open Access Network. It is a consortium formed by Washington PUDs better than five years ago to lease unused fiber-optic cables from the Bonneville Power Administration. It is NOANet that can provide Yahoo! with what wants — bandwidth, lots of it, to move massive amounts of information in and out of the region, more information than any human can easily imagine. NOANet provides capacity, reliability and redundancy, say the Port District officials who worked with Yahoo! Capacity and reliability are just as important to companies like Yahoo! as cheap power.

NOANet is one result of six-year-old legislation that allowed public utilities to get into the telecommunications business. The law enabled PUDs to install local fiber-optic communications systems. Chelan County and Grant County PUDs in particular did up their local systems in big ways, and not without controversy and questions about the wisdom of the investment. Those are local systems. They aren't worth much to a big data user like Yahoo! unless they are connected to the outside world. That's what NOANet does.

This system was controversial when it began. Private utilities said the public utilities were competing with private industry unfairly, and selling services that private companies already could provide. The counter was that this situation was not unlike the 1930s, when rural areas were without electricity, and considered too small and unprofitable to get it. Public utilities were formed to do the job. Now data is the commodity, and the out-of-the-way counties need to be able to handle it to prosper and compete with services available in the major cities.

Critics called it socialism in the information age. Defenders said it gives rural areas the capacity to compete. Without, they will be left far behind.

Whether it's socialist fiber or not, Yahoo! and more companies like it are going to use it. There is more information to store and move and retrieve every day. Internet sources say Yahoo! alone will have capacity to store up to 7 petabytes of information, which makes it the largest data portal in the world. A petabyte, if you didn't know, is a quadrillion bytes. That's 1,000,000,000,000,000 bytes.

Get used to big numbers. We have the capacity.

Tracy Warner's column appears Tuesday through Friday. He can be reached at warner@wenworld.com or 665-1163.

Anne Applebaum



The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — It was unusual — tape recorders not being de rigueur in Britain — but this time there was a transcript of what was said. Just as unusual: It all began politely. The journalist, Oliver Finegold of the Evening Standard, asked Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London, "How did tonight go?" Not so unusually, the mayor, who was emerging from a reception, responded with an insult: "What did you do before? Were you a German war criminal?"

"No, I'm Jewish, I wasn't a German war criminal, and actually I'm quite offended by that. So, how did tonight go?"

"All right, well you might be Jewish, but actually you are just like a concentration camp guard, you are just doing it because you are paid to, aren't you?"

It was all downhill from there. The mayor called the Evening Standard "a load of scumbags and reactionary bigots." The journalist published the interview. Other city politicians asked Livingstone to apologize. Knowing Liv-

ingstone — which I do, slightly; I once spent an evening listening to him defend Stalinism — no one should have been surprised when he refused. Which he did: "The form of words I have used are right," the mayor said. "I have nothing to apologize for." Whereupon, incredibly, something called the Adjudication Panel for England suspended the mayor from his job for four weeks.

So revelatory — so rich with lessons about modern Britain — is this incident that I hardly know where to begin. Here we have, in a nutshell, evidence of the breakdown in relations between the British media and British politicians; the increasing incivility of British public life; the nasty strain of anti-Semitism on the far side of the British left (Livingstone has just called Ariel Sharon a war criminal, clearly a favorite insult, as well); and, to top it all off, the growth in the power of undemocratic, unelected "quangos" — quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organizations — of which there are now hundreds in Britain.

We also have evidence of something that, in the wake of the cartoon fracas across the Muslim world, should interest us all: the Western world's

It's becoming far harder for everyone else to see the value of uninhibited, unrestrained and deeply offensive free speech.

growing inability to deal with its own offensive, insulting and racially or ethnically controversial debates. We don't, for the most part, burn flags, storm embassies or hang foreign prime ministers in effigy when someone offends the general public's sensibilities, which is an extremely good thing. But neither does it seem right that an unelected committee should prevent the elected mayor of London from doing his job, just because that mayor is unpleasant and offensive (and I can personally testify that he is both). Surely it's the voters' job to weigh Livingstone's

behavior against the fact, conceded by all, that he has improved the flow of London traffic.

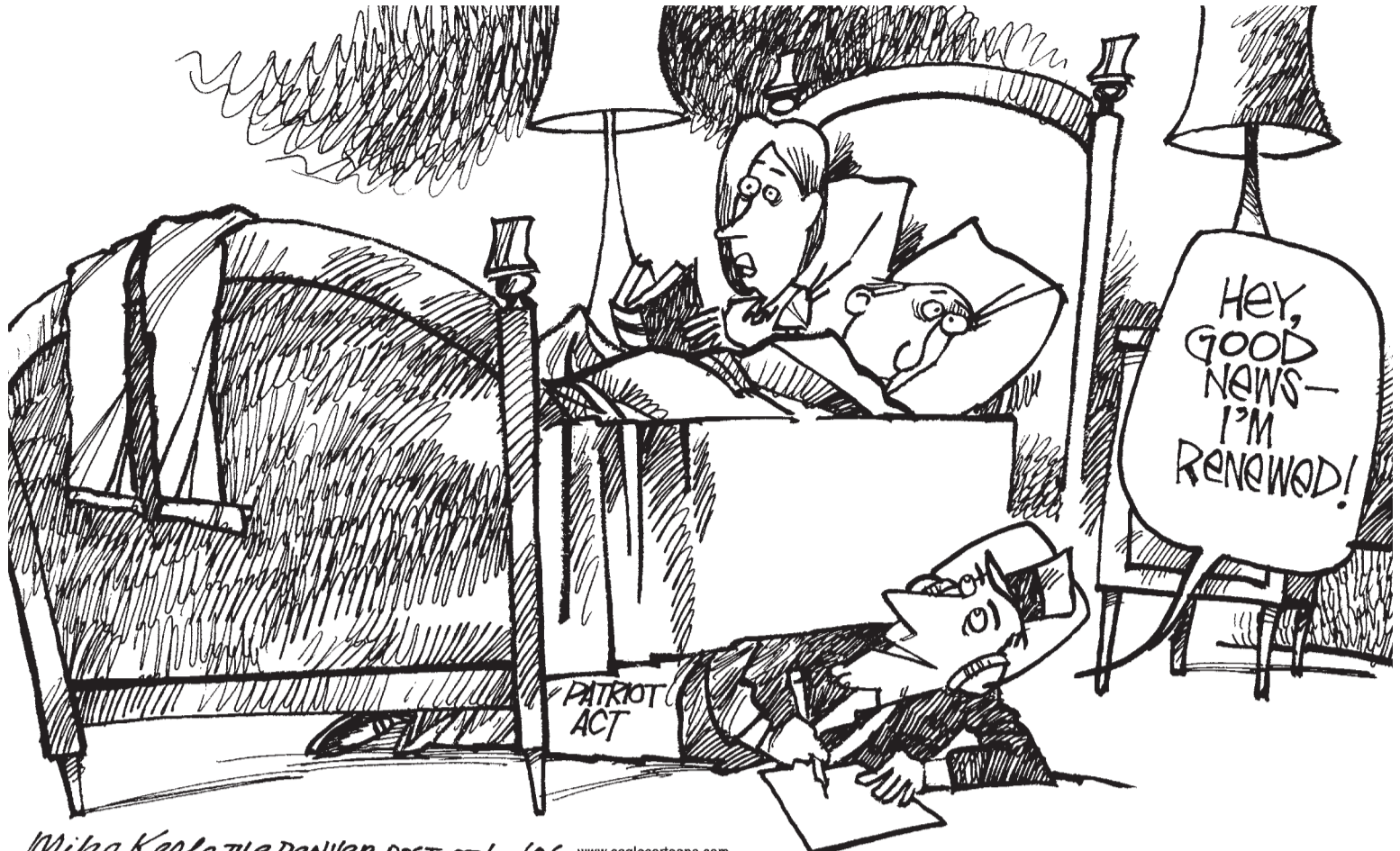
It is not directly analogous, but the recent imprisonment of historian David Irving is troubling in some of the same ways. In a Vienna court last month, Irving pleaded guilty to Holocaust denial — a crime in Austria — and received a three-year jail sentence. There is no question that Irving, too, is an unpleasant man. Irving, an extremely knowledgeable historian and the author of more than two dozen books on Nazi Germany, is nevertheless willing to twist that knowledge when the mood takes him, largely to create outrage and direct attention to himself. He has claimed, at times, that the Holocaust never took place; that it did take place but Hitler knew nothing about it; that millions died, but not at Auschwitz, and so on. He enjoys lecturing to Austrian and German neo-Nazis. He once joked — prepare to be really, really offended — that more people had died in the back of Ted Kennedy's car than in Nazi gas chambers.

Still, I'm with Deborah Lipstadt, the historian whom Irving unsuccessfully sued for libel several years ago and who

proved in the course of that trial, that he had altered facts and massaged documents to make his pro-Nazi case. "The way of fighting Holocaust deniers is with history and truth," she said — not jail sentences.

Maybe it's no coincidence that both of these stories somehow involve World War II, a tragedy from which Europe, and indeed all of the West, has never recovered. Maybe it's no coincidence that they both involve political mavericks, far left and far right, who aren't influenced by normal political constraints. Or maybe they're just a sign of the times. In a world in which a Jewish man can be found tortured and murdered outside Paris, as one was last week, in which imams issue fatwas against cartoonists, in which the golden domes of mosques explode and in which religious intolerance seems to be exploding too — it's becoming far harder for everyone else to see the value of uninhibited, unrestrained and deeply offensive free speech.

Anne Applebaum writes a regular column for The Washington Post. She can be reached at applebaumanne@washpost.com.



Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 02/05/06 www.caglecartoons.com

Safety Valve: Letters from readers

A landlord's view

I would like to reply to Paula Benson's letter of Feb. 26 regarding "Sorry housing." She stated her son, within his income, looked at "filthy rundown slums." As far as what she said, there's no doubt it is all true. Since Paula didn't mention the price range her son was looking at, possibly most rentals don't go that low.

There are slum landlords around, but all landlords are not alike. Most maintain their rentals, if for no other reason, just to keep renters. Paula pointed out how expensive it is to get into a rental. Many landlords don't charge all the initial costs she pointed out. Also, all rentals are not filthy, or at least not in the beginning of the tenant's occupancy!

I belong to an association of about 200 local landlords. The landlords who belong to this group receive monthly tips on updated laws and the how-to's of attracting good tenants. Many of us, including myself, only charge tenants our costs when screening a new tenant. As far as the high rents go, the government does not subsidize what we charge and most of us have mortgages on our properties. We can't stay in business if we can't pay our mortgages. We can't pay our mortgages if we have empty housing.

I would like to see all landlords belong to our association, the Rental Association of Wenatchee Valley. It would be a great help to rental owners, which in turn helps the renters.

RHODA JEFFERS
East Wenatchee

It's the choice

In answer to Roy Parks' Safety Valve letter ("Buy American," Feb. 27), I would like to add my 2 cents. First, Mr. Parks is 85 percent right. But to the other 15 percent, here is my answer:

Yes, we should buy U.S. products. But here is the reason some of us do not. First, Japanese cars are cheaper, run longer, and are easier on gas. We on Social Security cannot afford to pay \$40 for a pair of jeans when we can buy them at Wal-Mart for \$16. Also, people who make \$7 per hour go where they can buy cheaper. We who are low-income have to pay the same price for a loaf of bread or a gallon of gas as the one who works for \$40 an hour.

That is the reason everything is so high, because the people who work for car compa-



By Sam Tsohonis, Wenatchee

nies, mechanics who work on cars, Boeing workers all outprice themselves. They cry because they have to pay some of their insurance. Well, how would they like to earn \$400 a month and pay \$120 to AARP insurance? So do not cry to us low-priced Americans about buying from the U.S.A. We are just trying to survive. But I'm still proud to be an American, because I can have a choice what to buy and where.

JEAN MOORE
Chelan

Off to the race

To our anonymous donors: Though we really have no idea who sent the money, our Great Race Team at Cashmere High School has received it and is appreciative beyond

TYLER THEISS
Treasurer, Great Race Team
Cashmere

Send letters to The Safety Valve, Box 1511, Wenatchee, WA 98807.

Freedom of speech brings the freedom to be disagreeable