

Thoughts on politics, the KBRA and dam removal agreement

Klamath Falls Herald and News

Editorial

July 14, 2010

Random thoughts and observations concerning the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and dam removal agreement:

Partisanship? Really?

Bill Walker, CEO of Gold Dust Potato Processors and Walker Brothers Farms, said something interesting in an article a couple Sundays ago: "If they and the Republican Party don't want the KBRA, what's their deal?" By "they," he meant opponents of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and dam removal agreement.

He supports the KBRA; sees it as a framework for agriculturists to have a steadier supply of water. What's interesting is that he lumps the Republican Party in with those generally opposed to the KBRA. Seems like a lot of people are doing that.

That's interesting, because here in Klamath County, most people are Republicans and if you're against the KBRA, you're probably a Republican; also, if you're for the KBRA, you're probably a Republican. In both the local races where the KBRA was an issue, Republicans won and lost. Are there two Republican parties?

Who's affected how?

Walker also said, "I think there are a whole lot of people down here who aren't saying what they should." Not only should opponents to the KBRA and hydroelectric agreement speak up about alternatives, but supporters should be more vocal about the agreements' benefits.

To be fair, why not explain more to all of us, whether we're irrigators, ag-related business people, interested in fish, power rates, forests ... or simply tax and rate payers? The costs are being bandied about; what are the benefits? What did the groups signing on to the agreements take from and leave on the table? If it was a fair deal negotiating money for the Tribes to buy a tree farm, what did the other parties get in exchange? If it is a fair deal for PacifiCorp to be relieved of liability and have ratepayers foot part of the dam removal bill and taxpayers the rest, what did the ratepayers and taxpayers get in exchange? Etc.

On the news side, the Herald and News' next round of KBRA and dam removal reporting will take that tack. They're fair questions. We'll start looking at topics along that line: "How is this a good deal for (fill in the blank)?"

On the opinion page side, we hold a good deal of respect for the process that produced the KBRA. We think the assembly of such a diverse group of parties that have in the past been at odds is quite something; that they worked out a deal most of them agreed to is impressive. But that deal has ramifications for everyone, and it would be good if proponents came to understand that buy-in from the general public, or at least quiet acceptance, would be a worthy goal.

Referendum?

Just wanted to note that before the election, opponents of the KBRA were adamant that the election was not about the KBRA. The deal was already out of local hands, they said, so why make it an election issue?

Then the primary elections were over and the pro-KBRA commissioner and legislator candidates lost. Now it seems some believe it really was a referendum on the KBRA and dam removal agreement.

Same point, in reverse, can be had on the other side.

It is a bit of a mixed up deal, we admit. And we mean no disrespect to any candidate, but we think the elections were won and lost on a whole lot of other issues. Here's a partial list:

1 — Law enforcement and public safety. 2 — Perceptions concerning budgeting prowess. 3 — Perceptions concerning strategic planning. 4 — Slashed jail capacity. 5 — Various perceptions concerning transportation, roads, road budgets, road shops. 6 — Liaison duties in regards to various

agencies and programs that are county sponsored or supported, such as KLETI, veterans service office, etc.

And besides all that and more, it's generally a "throw the bums out" year, if you hadn't noticed. Happens every decade or so, deserved or not (though in the primary, one incumbent lost, another won).

Probably the biggest thing, we believe, was ineffective campaigning, whether it was starting too late or doing too little. This is a knock-on-the-door-shakehands-and-ask-for-the-vote kind of county. We're thinking the people who did most of that got the most votes for their candidates.

Legal documents

Lately, the popular strategy for opponents is to lambaste the KBRA because it's full of legalese, bureaucratic stuff, vagueness, quid pro quo conditions ... in other words, it's a legal document (that is harder than most of us are used to because it involved more than "our side against their side").

If you're against all contracts that have legalese, vague parts, and a quid pro quo or three, you wouldn't get medical care, you wouldn't have a telephone service contract, you'd be about equally hung up filing for a marriage license or a divorce, and filing the paperwork to hold a job would be out. And how about mortgage agreements? I had to sign a form that served as proof that I'd signed a form that attested to the fact that I'd gotten the form. Still, it's nice to have a house to live in.

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