

A French lesson for the American media

The hacked emails from Emmanuel Macron's French campaign appear to be spectacularly mundane, according to people who have read them. They include briefings on issues, personal exchanges and discussions of the weather. No doubt they also include some embarrassing thoughts, but so far they are notably lacking in scandal.

Does this description remind you of anything? Ah, yes. Last year, Russian agents stole thousands of emails from Hillary Clinton's campaign and published them via WikiLeaks. The dominant feature of the emails was their ordinariness.

They contained no evidence of lawbreaking, major hypocrisy or tawdry scandal. Even the worst revelation — a Democratic official and CNN contributor fed a town hall question to the campaign in advance — qualified as small beer. Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign engaged in much more consequential debate skulduggery. The Clinton emails were instead full of staff members jockeying for position, agonizing over strategy, complaining about their bosses and offering advice to those same bosses.

Imagine for a moment that your inbox, or your boss', was released to the world. I'll guess that it would not be free of embarrassment.

Despite the mundane quality of the Clinton emails, the media covered them as a profound revelation. The tone often suggested a big investigative scoop. But this was no scoop. It was material stolen by a hostile foreign government, posted for all to see, and it was only occasionally revealing. It deserved some coverage, but far less.

I say this as someone who likes journalism so much that I've never had another full-time job. I also say it with reverence for the many journalists doing good, hard work that, as Thomas Jefferson explained, is vital to democracy. With a president who lies all the time, often about the media, journalism becomes all the more important. And because it's so important, those of us practicing it need to be open to reflection and criticism.

The overhyped coverage of the hacked emails was the media's worst mistake in 2016 — one sure to be repeated if not properly understood. Television was the biggest offender, but print media was hardly blameless. The sensationalism exacerbated a second problem with the coverage: the obsession with Clinton's private email server.

I disagree with people who say that the server was a nonstory. Clinton violated government policy and was not fully honest. The FBI conducted an investigation, whatever you think of it. All of that adds up to a real news story.

The question is scale. In the fall,

Gallup asked Americans what they were hearing about the candidates. The answers about Donald Trump were all over the place: immigration, his speeches and his criticism of Barack Obama, among other things. When people described what they were hearing about Clinton, by contrast, one subject towered over every other: email.

That's a pretty harsh indictment of the coverage (and Gallup's research was done well before James Comey wrote his infamous letter). It is a sign that Clinton's private server and the hacked emails crowded out everything else, including her plans for reducing inequality, addressing climate change and conducting a more hawkish foreign policy than Obama. It's a sign that the media failed to distinguish a subject that sounded important — secret emails! — from subjects that were in reality more important.

Last weekend, France's mainstream media showed how to exercise better judgment.

Late Friday, two days before the election, hackers released the Macron campaign emails. French media laws are stricter than American laws, and government officials argued against publication of the hacked information. But only the campaigns themselves were legally barred from making statements during the final weekend. Publications could have reported on the substance of the emails.

They largely did not. "It was a manipulation attempt — people trying to manipulate our voting process," Gilles van Kote, deputy chief editor of *Le Monde*, told me.

French journalists rightly did not focus on what seemed like big news, because the emails surely did. They evaluated what truly was major news. Material released by a hostile foreign government, with the aim of confusing voters and evidently without significant new information, failed to qualify. Van Kote said reporters are continuing to read the emails to see if they warrant future stories.

The two cases obviously are not identical. (And van Kote wasn't criticizing American journalism; the criticisms are mine.) But they are similar enough to say that the French media exercised better, more sober judgment than the American media.

This issue isn't going away. Our digital world ensures that the private information of public figures, and not-so-public ones, will be released again in the future.

The media cannot always ignore that information, tempting as it may seem. But it also should not pretend that the only two options are neglect and sensationalism. There is a middle ground, one where journalistic judgment should prioritize news over the whiff of news.

Hey Trump, federal land is public land

President Donald Trump appears to support a plan to steal some of the land from all of the people and give it to a relative few.

Last week, Trump ordered the Department of the Interior to report on every monument over 100,000 acres created by presidential declaration since 1996. He did so with an eye to shrinking them or undoing them.

Trump called the monuments "a massive federal land grab" and said "it's time to end these abuses and return control to the people, the people of Utah, the people of all the states, the people of the United States."

We don't quite know what the president was talking about. The land involved is all federally owned — that is, owned by the people of the United States. The federal government didn't grab any land, it already owned it.

National monuments, under the 1906 Antiquities Act signed by Republican President Teddy Roosevelt, can be created only on federal land by order of a president. The president can't designate Hampton

Beach State Park a national monument or, for that matter, somebody's backyard.

The thinly populated Western states are home to the vast majority of federal lands: 85 percent of Nevada is federally owned, 65 percent of Utah, 62 percent of Idaho, 61 percent of Alaska, 48 percent of Wyoming and so on.

Republican members of Congress in those states had long sought the transfer of some or all of that land to the states. Mining, oil and other extractive industries support the transfer, as well as ranchers and other agricultural interests.

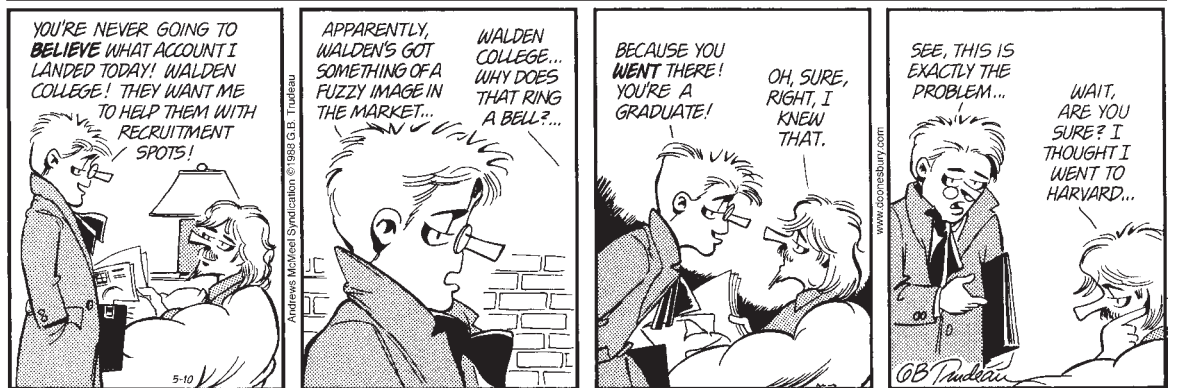
The ceding of federal lands to states is opposed by those who want to protect the nation's historic, scenic and environmental resources, by residents of those states who know that federal lands and the visitors they draw do more for the economy than the sale or lease of those lands to private developers.

Field and Stream magazine, founded in 1895, typically tells sporting men and women how to catch bass, avoid the grizzlies that aren't busy terrorizing schools and bag a big buck. The current issue, however, carries an editorial and

six pages of photos, articles and infographics that support keeping public lands public.

The track record of states in protecting their own lands or lands transferred to them by the federal government to finance schools and other essential institutions hasn't been good. The magazine pointed to Utah, whose congressional delegation supports ceding land to the states. That state's land trust sold 3,700 acres of public land, including a scenic parcel adjoining Zion National Park. The state made \$5.5 million on the deal but the public, and local residents, lost. Not all states have to manage public lands for public use, so when they choose — or lease the land to interests that want to close it to the public — property can be gated, public recreation terminated or use fees charged.

Many of America's priceless natural treasures, including Grand Canyon and Grand Teton National Parks, began life as national monuments. They and the rest of federally owned public lands should be held in trust in perpetuity for future generations and the good of the planet.



DOONESBURY GARRY TRUDEAU

Letters

Grateful for community support

DEAR EDITOR:

I'd like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the Telluride community for the outpouring of support, concern and love in the wake of our family's recent loss. Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for the unbelievable generosity and depth of support we have received.

In addition to my thanks to the entire community, I would like to specifically acknowledge St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Telluride Elks Lodge, Hotel Telluride, Clarks Market, Telluride Happy Print, Telluride School District, Rock And Roll Academy, Brown Dog Pizza and all our friends and family.

What a truly unique and special community we live in and I am honored and proud to call Telluride my home.

STEPHANIE PETTINOS AND FAMILY

NEW PROGRAM TO HELP TELLURIDE YOUTHS

DEAR EDITOR:

Do you care about the youths in Telluride? Do you want to partner

with youths to make our community an even better place to grow up? Do you want to make a difference in the lives of our youths?

Joining other like-minded individuals, both adults and youths, in the Communities That Care program might be the opportunity you have been looking for. We are just getting started in our work and want you at the table.

Tri-County Health Network received a grant from the state to implement the Communities That Care model, a program developed by the University of Washington. Information about Communities That Care can be found at www.communitiesthatcare.net.

Communities That Care will be a "locally owned and operated" community coalition of adults and youths from across the community that listens to what youths are saying about growing up in Telluride, looks at the great programs we already have in place to support them, and maps out a strategy for filling in the gaps and developing new programs. The coalition, funded by cannabis sales tax dollars, seeks to make a difference in the lives of our youths by looking for meaningful ways to engage youths, provide opportunities to build their skills, and create strong bonds be-

tween youths and adults in the community.

Communities That Care is a long-term strategy and we are in the first stages of building a Community Board to help accomplish our goals. The initial commitment is to attend two orientation sessions — after that, the board divides into work groups to look at the data, engage with youths, analyze current resources and recommend future programs. Future meetings are scheduled by the work groups themselves and by the community board according to the needs and availability of the members.

The first orientation is on May 22 from 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Telluride Fire Station, 2nd Floor, at 131 W. Columbia Ave. We will provide a light breakfast and a full lunch, as well as a \$25.00 stipend for your participation. The second orientation is scheduled for the June 2 at the same time (place TBD).

If you have questions or need more information, please contact me at 970-708-1012 or via email at pmbh@tchnetwork.org. I look forward to your involvement in the lives of our youths in Telluride.

PAUL REICH
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM MANAGER
TRI COUNTY HEALTH NETWORK