

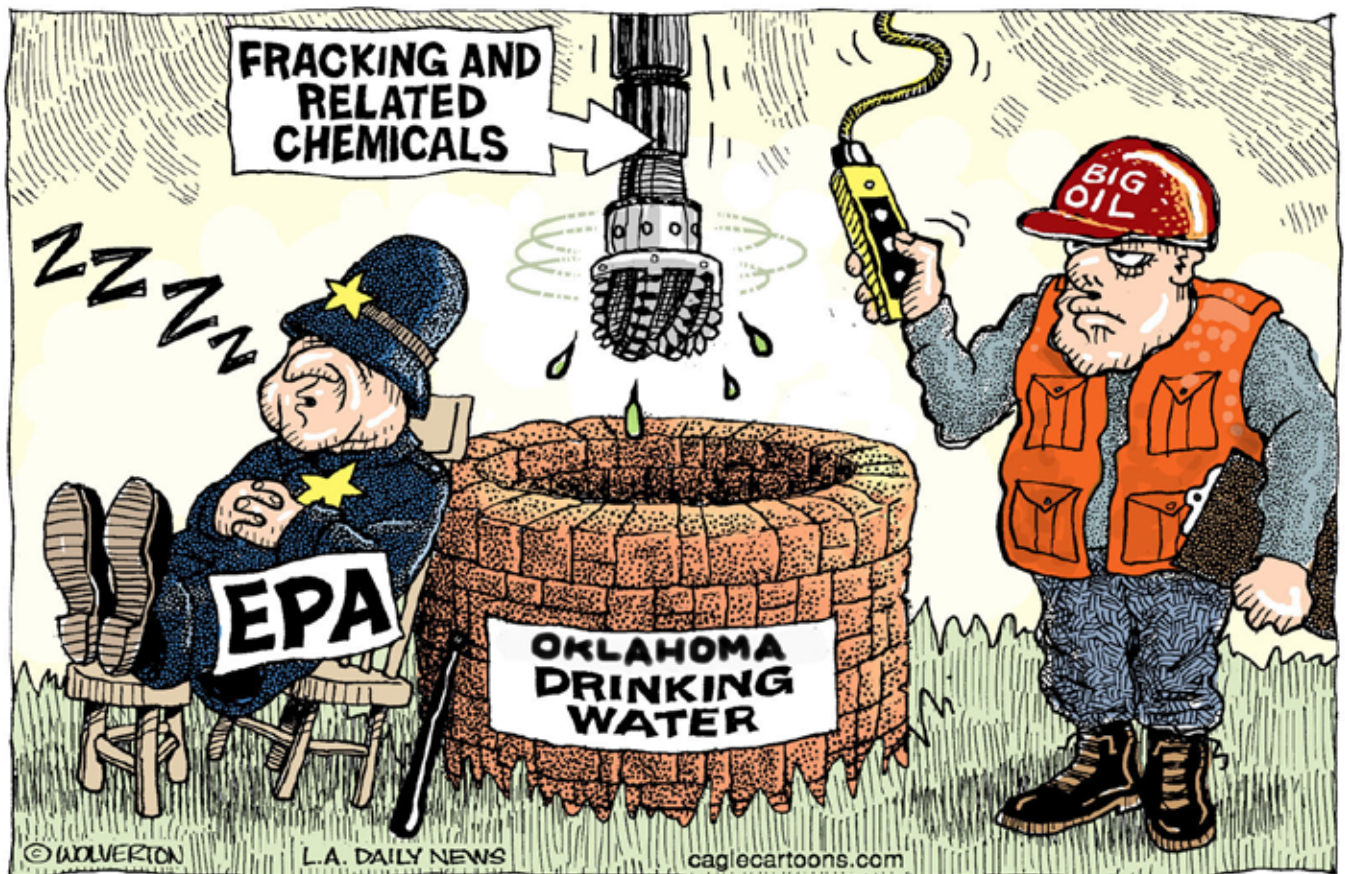
THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Troubled Waters

*Earthquakes May Not Be Oklahoma's
Biggest Problem With Fracking*



Special Report: Page 24



VOLUME 48, NO. 6

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To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO

So then to all their chance, to all their
shining golden opportunity. To all the
right to love, to live, to work, to be
themselves, and to become whatever
thing their vision and humanity can
combine to make them. This seeker,
is the promise of America.

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

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Observations

OK Corral

Chalk one up for common sense.

The same Legislature that introduced a resolution urging the presi-
dent's impeachment and approved a measure [later vetoed] making abor-
tion a felony actually stood up to the gun lobby and rejected a proposal
that would have authorized open-carry without training or permits.

Holy Slim Pickens! What in the Wide, Wide World of Sports is a-goin'
on here?

Well, it turns out modern businesses – including the NBA's Oklahoma
City Thunder – weren't exactly keen on Grandfield Republican Rep. Jeff
Coody's loopy, frontier-era scheme to allow anyone at least 21 years old
and without a felony conviction to strap on a firearm, whether or not
they know the barrel from the handle.

It was in late April, you might recall, that a licensed, conceal-carrying
man shot and killed a fellow worshipper at a Pennsylvania church in a
dispute over reserved seating.

If that can happen in a house of worship, just imagine untrained, un-
licensed, intoxicated louts at an emotionally-charged Bedlam football
game, six-shooters at the ready.

As Rep. George E. Young Sr., D-OKC, put it, "I am also just plain fright-
ened that if I were to laugh too loud, talk too loud or walk too fast, some-
one would shoot me simply because they have the means to do so."

Coody asserted that his proposal merely codified in state law what
already is a right guaranteed in the federal constitution. He needs reme-
dial civics instruction.

What the U.S. Supreme Court has made clear is that Second Amend-
ment gun rights are not absolute. Legislative bodies can impose reason-
able restrictions – covering everything from open-carry to the types of
weaponry that private citizens may possess.

If Coody and his fellow open-carry enthusiasts are so concerned with
protecting individual rights, why aren't they similarly obsessed with

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THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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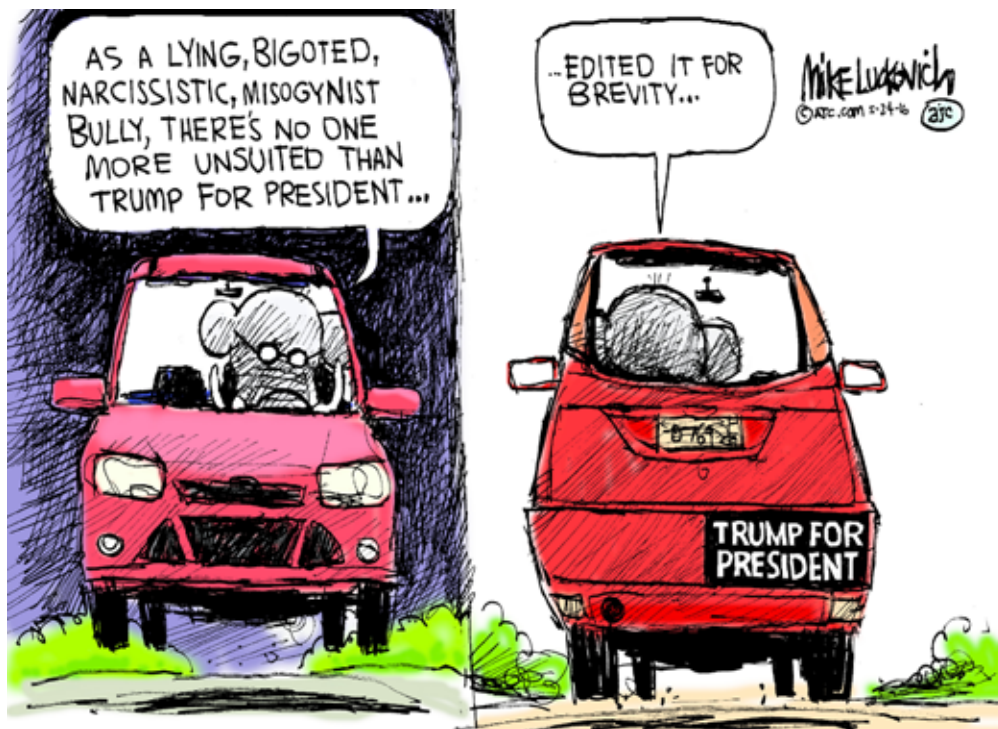
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Is term-limited House Speaker Jeff Hickman really in line to lead Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust? Longtime TSET Director Tracey Strader is retiring.

Laurel: To Gov. Mary Fallin, wasting no time vetoing SB 1552 that would have made abortion a felony. It was a black eye Oklahoma didn't need and a sure loser in court.

As GOP lawmakers continued to resist Medicaid expansion, another rural hospital – Eufaula's – closed its doors, joining Frederick and Sayre. Obama hate is jeopardizing Oklahomans' health.

Dart: To the Pardon and Parole Board, rejecting Gov. Mary Fallin's commutation recommendation for Larry Yarbrough. He has served nearly 20 years in prison, more than paying his debt for a non-violent offense.

Attorney General Scott Pruitt has issued an opinion that validates out-of-state handgun licenses carried by Oklahomans – even those obtained via dubious on-line courses. Feel safer now?

Laurel: To legislative Democrats, as united as we've seen in opposition to the disastrous GOP-crafted state budget. If D's could pick up a half-dozen seats in November, it would radically change statehouse dynamics.

Mark your calendars: June's Observer Newsmakers Series features post-session analysis from state Auditor Gary Jones and former Gov. David Walters. It's from 3-4 p.m. June 23 at OKC's Full Circle Books.

Better pack a lunch when headed to polls in November, given the plethora of state questions to be decided. The total could exceed 20.

Gov. Mary Fallin's daughter, Christina, is part of a group – including Justin Bieber – seeking to launch an in-flight gambling website from the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma's HQ near Perkins.

Former Speaker Pro Tem-turned-lobbyist Gus Blackwell faces 44 embezzlement and perjury counts, allegedly for filing false per diem claims against the state.

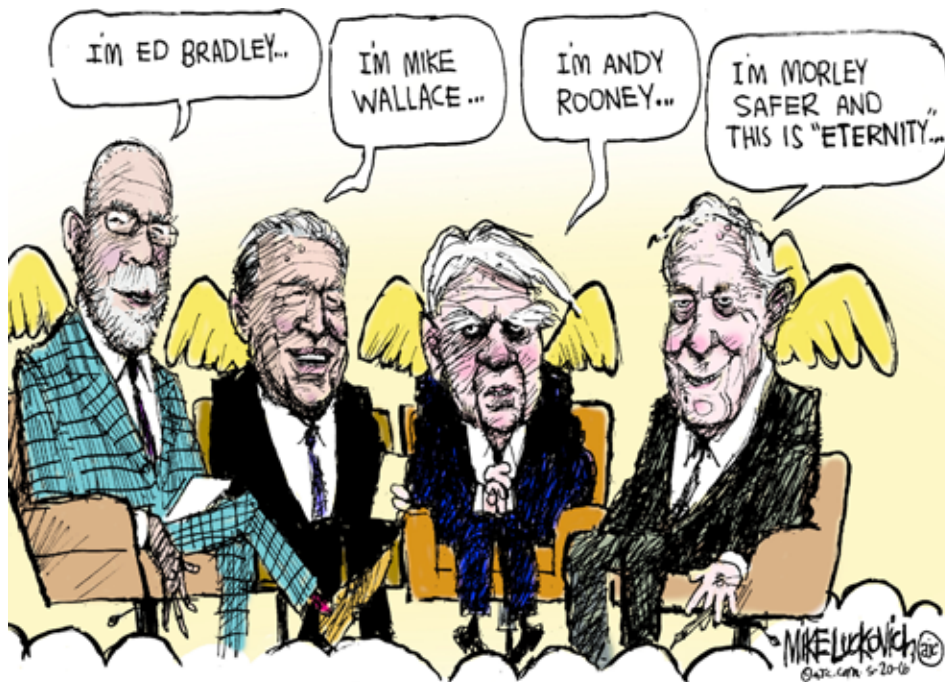
Dart: To state lawmakers, embracing a do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do arrogance by willfully violating the Capitol's gun-free policy. They know security officers won't risk their jobs by making a stink about it.

We mourn the passing of our friend Jim Wilcox, longtime Southern Nazarene University professor and occasional Observer contributor. He helped lead fight to change school's mascot from Redskins to Crimson Storm.

Dart: To Attorney General Scott Pruitt, wasting precious tax dollars at an alarming rate. This time, he wedded Oklahoma to 10 states challenging the feds' directive on transgender bathroom use. Waste of time and money.

Attention Christian fundamentalists: If voters eliminate Oklahoma's strict church-state separation in November, Hindus will seek to install a Lord Hanuman statue on the Capitol grounds alongside the Ten Commandments.

Letters



Editor, The Observer:

I sent this letter today to my state representatives, including Sen. Rob Standridge:

I own a business in Norman. I have created 14 jobs and I'm looking to hire two more positions.

There is a problem with Oklahoma's work force: Job candidates are not properly educated because you and your party members have cut education budgets so drastically. I am now required to seek out-of-state prospects to fill open positions. You may not think that is a bad thing, but how can I convince candidates to move to Oklahoma when our quality of life index is so poor?

Section 13-1 of the Oklahoma Constitution states, "The legislature shall establish and maintain a system of free public schools wherein all the children of the State may be educated." With Oklahoma public schools operating at 2008 funding levels, one could certainly argue the entire legislature and governor are acting in an unconstitutional manner.

In order, these are my priorities:

Clean water, because life will not exist without it.

Clean air, because I value good

health.

Education for all, not just those who can afford private or charter school tuition, because I have hope for the future and my business needs an educated workforce.

As you can see, none of the items on this simple list have anything to do with sex or sexuality. Yet, in the middle of a budget crisis so severe that some Oklahoma school districts are switching to four-day weeks to save money, you and so many of the others in the state Legislature wasted precious time arguing about seemingly unconstitutional bills that would attempt to change women's reproductive rights or bathroom bills. Priorities Mr. Standridge?

Oklahoma is a conservative state, thanks in large part to pandering from candidates and misinformation from right-wing media. As a Norman representative, I would have expected you to have a better understanding of your constituency given we are home to OU and Norman Public Schools. Like many others in the Norman area, I have a well-trained filter to understand the difference between fact, fiction, and opinion in the public policy debate.

Support education, support the environment, and improve the quality of life in Oklahoma.

Steve Patrick
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

I begged my legislators to concentrate on the budget all session, to not get distracted by frivolous bills that interfere in people's lives. You can see how well they listened.

They could have been working since February ... transparently. Honestly. Instead we get a cobbled-together mess the last days.

Tell me *who* has studied this carefully, anticipating unintended consequences? *Who*?

Claudia Swisher
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

The Oklahoma Legislature repeatedly refused to cancel an income tax cut lowering the top rate from 5.25% to 5% after they knew the state was facing a revenue failure and historic budget shortfalls believed to be \$900 million in January 2016. Later, we learned the shortfall was even greater – at least \$1.3 billion. Yet, the wealthiest Oklahomans kept their latest income tax cut, which increases the budget shortfall by \$147 million dollars every year.

Instead, the Legislature cut the Earned Income Tax Credit that used to keep low-wage, working families, earning an average of \$20,000 per year, from paying a disproportionate share of their income in taxes. The EITC cut will only save the state \$28.9 million.

When faced with a choice between saving \$147 million or \$28.9 million, our elected leaders chose wealthy campaign donors over struggling lower income and middle class families, who can't afford a fleet of lobbyists and lawyers to represent them at the Capitol.

One can only hope that voters

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



More Empty Promises Or Economic Renaissance?

On May 19, as the Legislature's frenzied final hours played out in the Capitol halls above, a state panel gathered quietly in the governor's second-floor conference room to try and jump-start long dormant development at Lake Texoma.

Only about half the room's seats were occupied when the Commissioners of the Land Office agreed to negotiate the sale of 50 acres overlooking the lake and historic Roosevelt Bridge to an unidentified hotel developer – something that would have been major news were it not for the circus underway upstairs.

Make no mistake: Lake Texoma is one of Oklahoma's tourism and economic-development jewels. And this is an important moment not only for the Oklahoma side of the lake – suffering economically because of a lousy private development deal cut a decade ago – but also for the entire state.

Frankly, it's unconscionable that hundreds of prime acres – including the site of the now-demolished state lodge – languished, as if abandoned, for so long. It's also a stark contrast to the long-developed Texas side, near the dam, about a 20-minute boat ride from Catfish Bay.

The proposed 50-acre sale is the result of negotiations between the state and Pointe Vista Development LLC over whether the 2006 development proceeded as required contractually.

"As a result of this settlement," said Gov. Mary Fallin, one of the five commissioners, "we are now free to move forward to bring positive economic activity to the area while maintaining the beauty of the site. I am very pleased we have reset the opportunity and am optimistic that a development beneficial to the area's economy, residents and tourists can be built sooner rather than later."

Since the hotel developer remains a mystery and it's unclear what, if anything, Pointe Vista Development LLC will do with the hundreds of acres it still controls, it's too early to know whether the commission's efforts to get the project back on track are prudent or will work.

Much appears to hinge on who ends up developing

the hotel site. If a top-notch, resort-style development is the result, it could spur other development, hopefully boosting the area's economy.

Commissioners went into closed-door executive session to discuss the deal and would not publicly identify the potential developer. When pressed after the meeting, Harry Birdwell, secretary of the Commissioners of the Land Office, also demurred.

What decision-makers long indicated privately is they are pursuing a well-known hotel developer with the track record and financial resources to build and operate a five-star-style facility.

In this case, that may well mean the Chickasaw Nation. The 50-acre site is historic Chickasaw land. The tribe already operates a small, nearby casino along U.S. 70 – not to mention hotels and casinos up and down I-35 and a resort casino in Sulphur.

Is any Oklahoma-based developer better positioned financially or experientially to make it happen than the Chickasaws?

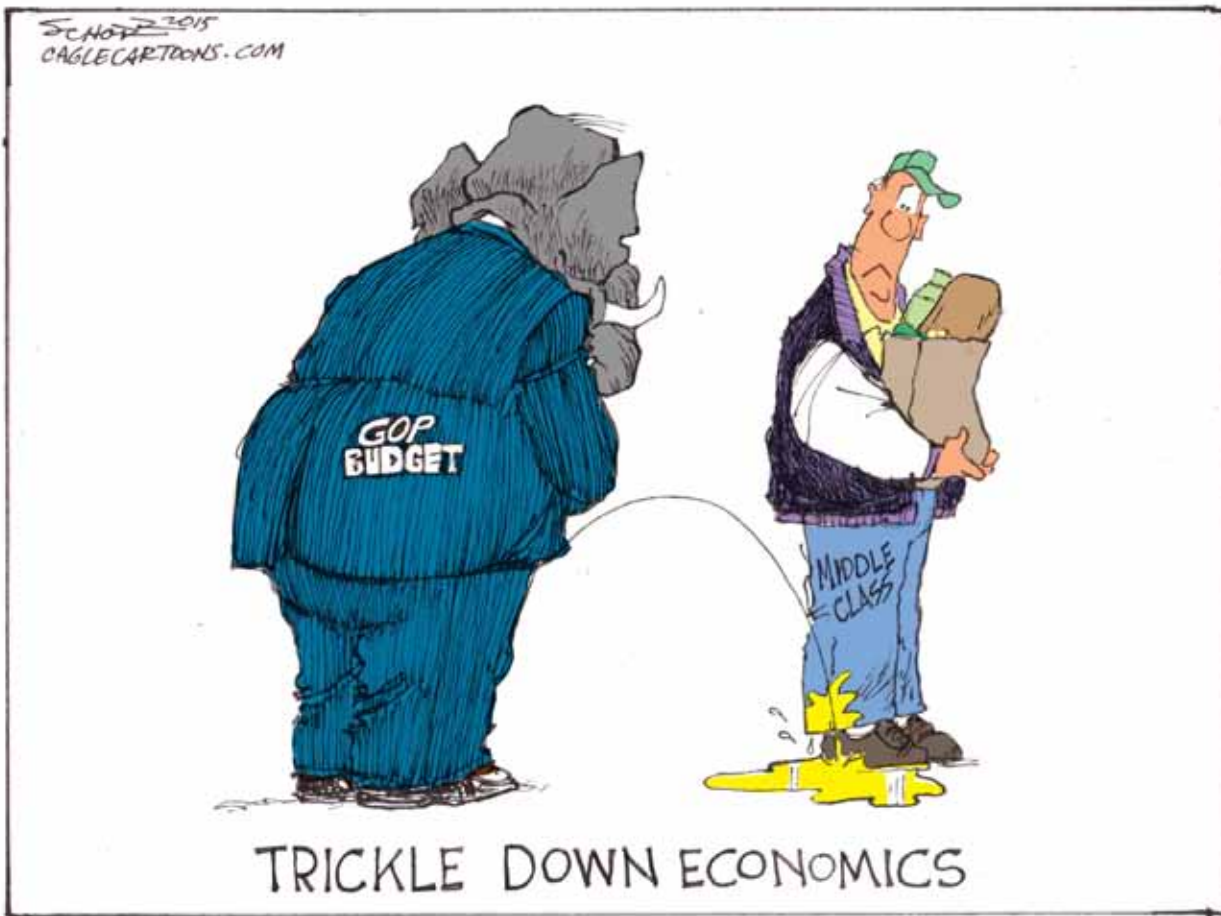
It's important that Oklahomans pay close to attention to how this plays out.

When set in motion a decade ago, Pointe Vista was expected to bolster the Republican theory that private always trumps public when it comes to government services and operations.

Instead, it left many, particularly in southern Oklahoma, longing for the good old days when a state-operated lodge welcomed scores of visitors each year and kept myriad nearby Mom-and-Pop businesses afloat.

Will the new development herald an economic renaissance on the Oklahoma side of Lake Texoma? Or will it turn out to be more empty promises – mostly minimum wage service jobs like cooks, housekeepers and lawn maintenance.

Stay tuned.



State's Fiscal Nightmare Is Far From Over

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

Now that the lamentable 2016 legislative session is history, this is the number Oklahomans need to know: \$620 million.

That is the built-in deficit lawmakers will face when they begin crafting the FY 2018 budget – truly frightening when considering the draconian nature of this year's cuts to vital public services.

The rest of the nation may not soon forget this year's hijinks – unsuccessful efforts to turn doctors performing abortions into felons, urge Congress to impeach the president, and allow almost anyone to open-carry without training or a permit.

What Oklahomans are likely to remember – painfully – is the Legislature's abject failure to deal with

a worsening structural deficit, the result of years of doling out corporate welfare and income tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

Even if oil and gas prices rebound in the near future, public education, roads and bridges, child welfare, mental health and other key services are likely to remain woefully underfunded unless lawmakers summon the political courage to increase income taxes and curtail corporate incentives.

If not, it won't be long – perhaps as early as next session – before lawmakers run out of peas for their shell game: No more cash reserves or one-time monies to plug holes in the sinking Good Ship Oklahoma.

In opposing this year's \$6.8 billion budget, outgo-

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ing Rep. James Lockhart, D-Heavener, captured perfectly the Legislature's failure to deal with the structural deficits: "Would you bet your entire future on a cancer-eyed cow?"

In fairness, legislators embraced some modest revenue-raisers, eliminating, for example, the double federal income tax deduction and requiring Oklahomans to buy new vehicle license plates.

But in what can only be described as heartless, lawmakers penalized the working poor by eliminating the Earned Income Tax Credit. It saved the state \$29 million, but will take an average \$312 a year from the pockets of families of three with a parent earning less than \$14,000.

Unsurprisingly, the GOP-dominated Legislature protected its campaign benefactors – the oil and gas barons – and their half a billion dollars in annual corporate welfare.

As a sign of their desperation, debt-averse Republicans rammed through \$200 million in road bonds, needed so that money committed to transportation could be shifted [see: Shell Game] to plug other holes.

As Sen. Mike Mazzei, R-Tulsa, who opposed the spending blueprint, put it, "An extraordinary financial mess requires extraordinary financial fixes. Half measures and borrowing money just doesn't cut it."

It was both comical and disheartening to listen to House Appropriations and Budget Committee Chair Earl Sears of Bartlesville defend a budget that even GOP State Auditor Gary Jones decried as "smoke and mirrors."

Adopting what best can be described as through-the-looking-glass-darkly rhetoric, Sears said, "Is it the best budget on the planet? I can't say that." Then, he added, "But this fills a \$1.3 billion hole" and "allows a soft landing for state government. I'm very proud of it."

A former educator, Sears all but bragged that lawmakers held common education harmless – conveniently ignoring the fact that deep mid-year cuts were not entirely replaced.

It's also worth noting that Republican super-majorities failed to deliver on promises to give teachers their first pay raises in seven years. For now, the only hope for a salary hike that would stem the exodus of educators to other higher-paying states is a one-cent sales tax proposal that will appear on the November general election ballot.

Notable: In a race to the bottom, Oklahoma is poised to plunge to 50th, behind South Dakota and Mississippi, both of which are phasing-in salary increases.

The bad news far outweighed the good this session. Some highlights and low-lights:

Bad News: The Legislature not only refused to roll back this year's .25% income tax cut – \$147 in lost revenue for FY17 – but also failed to eliminate the trigger that could result in future automatic income

tax cuts.

This year's GOP leadership was pathologically averse to even uttering the words "income tax" – clearly not wishing to upset their silk-stocking supporters who disproportionately benefit from the cuts.

The vast majority of Oklahomans will end up paying more through sales tax increases and fees than they get back from income tax cuts. Further, it cannot be overemphasized that the income tax is the fairest of all taxes – based on an individual's ability to pay.

The Legislature once again balanced the state budget on the backs of the state's middle class and poor.

Good News: The Heartland Flyer was saved for another year, but it could be a Pyrrhic victory since the Legislature raided the Oklahoma Tourism and Passenger Rail revolving fund.

Bad News: Lawmakers once again stiffed the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services – ironic given that Republicans so often blame mental illness for so many of society's ills, including gun violence.

The agency's request for \$30 million fell on deaf ears. It received a mere \$7 million to help deal with the 780,000 Oklahomans afflicted with mental illness.

More Bad News: Higher education, one of the keys to Oklahoma's economic future, was whacked with a 16% cut, political punishment for University of Oklahoma President David Boren's SQ 779 that will allow voters to decide a one-cent sales tax hike that could fund teacher raises and steer new dollars into common and higher education.

How long can GOP lawmakers play the ostrich roles when it comes to resolving Oklahoma's structural deficit? That depends on the voters. Will they remember this debacle in November? Will they punish those who drove Oklahoma off the fiscal cliff?

This much is certain: To avoid another fiscal crisis next year, Oklahoma's general revenues must increase more than 10% – something Mazzei, the Senate Finance Committee chair, regards as a pipe dream.

"There is simply not enough growth in our national or state economy at this point," he said, "for even 3% revenue growth."

Mazzei projected a minimum \$620 million structural deficit for next year, his calculations based primarily on one-time revenues used to plug holes in the FY17 budget.

David Blatt, the Oklahoma Policy Institute director and the state's leading out-of-government budget analyst, thinks the hole could be even higher – up to \$750 million.

If past is prologue, the currently projected \$620 million to \$750 million budget hole for FY18 could be even larger when lawmakers return to session next February.

Sadly, the nightmare is far from over.



Emergency Tourniquets Won't Stem Budget Hemorrhage

BY CAL HOBSON

The Legislature has gone home – thankfully – and to read their press releases, citizens may believe all is well in the neighborhood. Maybe in theirs. Not likely in yours.

Through borrowing, further depletion of the Rainy Day Fund, cleaning out every cash or reserve account in existence and delaying hundreds of millions of dollars for road projects, emergency tourniquets were compressed around the hemorrhaging state budget.

During the next 12 months, the life-blood of Oklahoma will bleed through the temporary bandages, guaranteeing an even worse financial crisis when many of the same clueless and careless solons saunter back to their palatial suites in “the people’s building.”

Notwithstanding the record \$1.3 billion budget deficit, our lawmakers – little known for their knowledge of or interest in Oklahoma history – artfully and silently squeezed out \$250 million of new debt to fix

their digs because 2017 will be the 100th anniversary of our monument to mental mediocrity, aka the Capitol.

Indeed, the odor endured in the halls, offices and ornate meeting rooms is unpleasant. However, most observers believe the offending odiferous aroma is emitted primarily by political propaganda, not poop.

Scientifically speaking, it’s all the same stuff.

Seriously, the cavernous cave needs improvement for the comfort and care of 149 lawmakers, but thousands upon thousands of our children go to hundreds of schools every day lacking weather safe rooms. Not one red cent will be spent to address that dangerous reality, but when the next killer storms strike, our myopic minions will react as they always do – issue sympathetic press releases that also blame Obama.

And why not? It always energizes their bamboozled base. Then, on cue, Tea Party darlin’ Gov. Mary Fallin

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will invite the president to tour the damage and ask for – yes – millions of dollars in federal aid to heal bodies and rebuild buidlines.

Our DC luminaries, led by anti-government but life-long public-trough-tender Sen. Jim Inhofe, will take credit for the cash and then vote against dollars for similar acts of nature in other states. Think Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, wildfires in the west, etc.

Hypocritical? Of course. Shameless double standard? No surprise. Political repercussions in Oklahoma? Zero. Chance of re-election for the very, very senior senator in 2020? One hundred percent.

Sorry. Forgive me for digressing from the lashing the layabouts lounging on Lincoln Boulevard, awaiting their next lobbyist-funded feeding. Our public servants, while allegedly holding second schools “harmless” [an impossible feat even for Houdini because appropriators previously reduced their allocation by 23%], passed an FY2017 budget that will:

Further bludgeon colleges and universities into irrelevancy by ordering an additional 16% cut; puncture the public safety net with an 11% rip; treat environmental protections as only a federal nuisance; slash transportation funding earmarked to repair crumbling roads and bridges by an incredible 40%; endanger the security of workers and inmates alike within the Department of Corrections by providing the agency a laughable increase of \$1.

As Dave Barry would say, “I’m not making this stuff up.”

But wait. Not all was gloom and doom for the lovers of “big gummint” because, at the last minute and through a sleight of hand [actually just a simple transfer of money], the House and Senate will enjoy huge operating budget increases of at least \$4 million.

When asked by the Oklahoman’s ace reporter Rick Green to justify such an aberration of funding during the largest financial meltdown since statehood, the lower body’s ever-affable money-manager, Rep. Earl Sears, R-Bartlesville, fretted that, “If we don’t do this we might not make payroll sometime in the future.”

By most calculations, the next sighting of Halley’s Comet will occur sooner ... in 2062.

However, spending – or more accurately the lack thereof, except on their “home away from home” and all of its physical and financial amenities – is only half the sorry saga of the 2016 legislative session.

For example, January speeches and press releases proffered promises to eliminate or reduce some of the most egregious tax credits and corporate giveaways doing their assigned duties in the state’s tax code. There are hundreds of them.

To his credit, Senate Financial Committee Chairman Mike Mazzei, R-Tulsa, identified 29 of these “wooly-boogers” for evaluation. Each was “scored” for effectiveness, job creation, cost to the treasury

and overall benefit for citizens. So far, so good. The worked continued for months.

Bills moved through both houses with the goal being to fill all or at least part of the unprecedented \$1.3 billion crater created by inept lawmakers themselves. Even self-identified penny-pinching Gov. Fallin, after returning at your expense from the Paris Air Show, highlighted nearly \$1 billion of these derelict and outdated dandies during her February State of the State speech.

Simultaenously, the real “A Team” on taxation also was busy. Corporate board rooms dispatched dozens of lobbyists and even company bigwigs – ranging from energy honchos, Walmart executives, tobacco, liquor and beer barons, electric company presidents and wind farm promoters – so they could ‘splain to the good ol’ boys how the cow at the cabbage. Actually, feed, seed, farm fuel and fertilizer necessary in cattle operations are already exempt from the sales tax, but cabbage, when consumed by humans, is not.

In the session-long struggle over who pays and who doesn’t, Mazzei had truth-teller and University of Oklahoma President David Boren on his side, but to prevail he apparently also needed David, youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. Goliath, the Philistine of Gath, disguised as the State Chamber of Commerce, marshaled his forces of money, misinformation and manipulation, decimating the field of do-gooders like union cannons shredded Pickett’s division on the third day at Gettysburg.

By adjournment May 27, only three of the 29 tax credits studied were modified. They are:

1. An overly generous benefit for so-called at-risk oil wells – 80% of which are owned by large producers – was capped but retained. Money gained for FY2017 unknown.

2. The antiquated double-exemption in the income tax code was abolished. Money gained for FY17? About \$86.5 million

3. A devastating reduction in the earned income tax credit claimed by the working poor. Money gained for FY17 – \$28.9 million.

Due to this change, a fully-employed single mother of two earning \$22,000 annually will see her tax burden increase by \$87 annually. At the same time, she’ll owe \$2 less in 2017 when she files her 2016 tax return thanks to Gov. Fallin’s cherished .25% cut in her personal income tax. Net loss to her bottom line: \$85.

Such are the priorities, proclivities and shameless performances of our well-paid politicians as they played a real life game of Ponzi. They should be embarrassed. By asking you to re-elect them, they obviously aren’t.

Cal Hobson, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore.

SHELL GAME SESSION



This Part Of Budget Deal May Be Greatest Threat To State's Economy

BY GENE PERRY

Overwhelmingly, the states where residents earn the highest wages also have the best-educated workforce. Both productivity and median wages in a state are strongly correlated with the percentage of residents with a college degree.

At the same time, overall state tax levels show no significant correlation with median wages. Plenty of states – including Oklahoma – have relatively low state and local taxes and relatively low wages, but there are no states with a well-educated workforce and low wages.

The link between education levels and state prosperity is clear. That's why it is especially troubling that the long awaited budget proposal from the Okla-

homa Legislature and Gov. Mary Fallin decimates funding for higher education.

The budget cuts \$153 million from higher education, a nearly 16% drop from initial 2016 funding levels. In total dollars, the cut to higher education is by far the largest cut to any agency.

These cuts come on top of years of cuts in Oklahoma that have already reduced per-student-funding for higher education by 21.7%, or \$2,081 per student after inflation, compared to 2008 levels. Last year Oklahoma made the fifth deepest cut to higher education in the nation, at a time when most states have begun to restore funding lost during the Great Recession. Over that same period from 2008 to the present, average tuition at Oklahoma's four-year colleges has

SHELL GAME SESSION

jumped 30.5% after inflation.

Even with the recent tuition hikes, Oklahoma's four-year universities have managed to keep tuition and fees relatively low compared to the national average [\$6,227 for undergraduate resident students at four-year institutions in Oklahoma, compared to a \$9,410 national average]. However, the student costs at Oklahoma's two-year institutions of \$3,620 actually exceeds the national average of \$3,435. And over the past decade, student tuition and fees have gone from 36.1% to 47.7% of total revenue for higher education, surpassing state funding that fell from 50.8% to 35.7% of total revenues.

There's wide agreement among Oklahoma's business community that we need more college graduates in our state workforce. Yet the state has dis-invested and college has become more expensive for students.

Instead of increasing our education levels, total enrollment in Oklahoma public colleges and universities has fallen for the past four years. In the 2014-15 school year there were nearly 25,000 fewer students enrolled in Oklahoma public higher education institutions compared to 2011-2012, a 9.6% drop in enrollment.

Tuition increases are especially likely to deter stu-

dents in low-income families from enrolling, even those high-achieving students who could likely obtain a scholarship. A Brookings Institute study found that high-achieving, low-income students commonly do not apply to selective universities due to concerns about cost.

Even when financial aid programs could ease the cost burden, these students are less likely to have parents or school counselors who can guide them through complex financial aid applications. Instead, they apply to two-year colleges or non-selective four-year colleges – a decision that could dramatically reduce their earnings over a lifetime.

Students from all backgrounds are likely to face higher debt burdens for getting an education, which can damage the economy for years to come, as deeply indebted students postpone buying a home or starting a new business.

Putting more of the burden on students to fund their own educations in this way doesn't make economic sense. Oklahoma lawmakers are saving a few dollars today by holding back the growth of those we'll depend on to fuel our economy for years to come.

Gene Perry is policy director for Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

Budget Will Add To Cost Of Mental Illness In Oklahoma

BY CARLY PUTNAM

Terri White, commissioner of the state Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services [ODMHSAS], has frequently said that mental health has never been adequately funded in Oklahoma. The state ranks 44th in the nation for mental health spending per capita, and hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans aren't receiving needed treatment for mental illness. Oklahoma's 2017 budget shows no sign of bucking either trend.

Oklahoma's mid-year revenue failures prompted nearly \$23 million in cuts by ODMHSAS. Just over \$4 million was cut from agency administration, while the rest fell in three areas: cuts to providers, reductions in services, and a postponed mental health court expansion. These cuts eliminated or reduced services for tens of thousands of Oklahomans, moved those services further out of reach for thousands more, and meant less preventive screenings and early intervention.

The FY'17 budget restores \$7 million of the department's mid-year cuts, but it still leaves the agency \$16 million below this year's initial funding level and

even further below what is needed to pay for services in the coming year.

Lawmakers' failure to meet core funding needs for mental health care will leave thousands of Oklahomans without access to needed care.

The cuts mean fewer options for mental health and substance abuse treatment. Reimbursement rates for private mental health and substance abuse treatment providers were cut between 3% and 30%. When we reduce payments to providers, it can cause them to stop contracting with ODMHSAS, so there will be fewer options for patients in need of help. For providers with a high volume of ODMHSAS contracts, these cuts and payment delays can destabilize their businesses and threaten access to care for all of their patients.

ODMHSAS also limited access to services to cut spending. A cap on Medicaid psychotherapy services will mean reduced services for more than 73,000 Oklahoman – by far the largest group directly impacted by this year's cuts.

The department also postponed an expansion of

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Systems of Care, a highly successful program that works with children with complex mental health and substance abuse problems who are also being served by other agencies, such kids in the Department of Human Services' child welfare system.

The ODMHSAS cuts also limited treatment plan updates to once per client every six months, so treatment programs will be less able to respond to changing patient needs.

Postponing mental health court expansion will add to prison costs. Drug and mental health courts are notably cheaper than incarceration – it costs \$5,400 per year for one person in mental health court, compared to \$23,000 per year for incarceration of someone being treated for serious mental illness.

Mental health courts have also been shown to be very effective at helping people stay out of trouble – three years after treatment, fewer than 4% of mental health court graduates were incarcerated, compared with 41% of released inmates with serious mental illness.

That's a significant cost savings, but because of cuts, a planned mental health court expansion has been postponed. That means the state's jails and prisons will continue to struggle with providing mental health treatment they were never designed for. It means more Oklahomans in need of help will instead find themselves caught in a system that continues to punish them long after they're released.

Fewer alternative court systems aren't the only way that mental health cuts are increasing pressure on the criminal justice system. The cheapest option by far is to provide preventive mental health care that keeps people out of the criminal justice system altogether – but provider cuts and care volume reductions will make it harder for Oklahomans to access that care.

Earlier this year, ODMHSAS proposed a policy change that would have ended payments to private counselors for children covered by SoonerCare. The outcry from those affected was swift and intense, and Gov. Fallin eventually rejected the measure.

Opponents of the measure suggested other cuts that could have been made instead, but the broader issue was that – as later cuts showed – there were no good options.

Like the Department of Human Services, ODMHSAS is long past the point where they can make cuts without directly affecting access to care.

It's not the way the pie is sliced that's the problem – it's that the pie has never been big enough.

Supporters of the proposed budget suggested that the limited appropriations offered to mental health and substance abuse services are the best the Legislature can do under the circumstances. But that simply isn't true.

Lawmakers had a number of opportunities to raise revenues to make these critical investments in Oklahomans – like using some of the nearly \$250 million left in the Rainy Day Fund and like stopping an income tax cut that they've allowed to happen at the worst possible time.

They just chose to ignore these options.

In March, Commissioner White warned that mid-year cuts could lead to an increase in the state's suicide rate. By failing to restore the mid-year cuts or provide additional needed funding, this budget gives us no reason to expect otherwise. *Carly Putnam is a policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org*



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A Fifth Grader's Simple Question: Why?

Dear Mrs. Fallin,

My name is Mira and I'm 11 years old. I'm writing you today, because I just don't understand what you and the other state leaders are thinking. So, I hope maybe you can give me some answers.

I attend school at Briarwood Elementary. That's in Moore. That name may sound familiar to you because it was one of the two schools affected by the May 20, 2013 tornado. I remember that day better than any other day in my life. I was in my classroom art closet with my second grade teacher Mrs. Glasgow. I remember at the last minute when the teachers decided to move us from under our desks to the bathrooms and art closet. Come to find out, they did that because there was only one wall to protect us from the tornado. ONE WALL!!!!

Each day I wake up I'm thankful for my teacher. I think about the "What if?" Some students did not make it home that day to hug their mom and dad. That morning was the last time their parents saw them. Their teacher was there to try and protect them.

I remember watching you on TV making promises about storm shelters in schools and about how our teachers were heroes that day and then you decide the state can not afford shelters in



"Please look [at] me, an 11-year-old student, and explain why we are not worth investing in anymore?"

all schools and that it is up to the districts to decide how to get them. You remember when you called our teachers heroes??? I do. I know they are because I was there. I'm still here. I see our teachers everyday and I'm reminded of what happened. We are healing and will continue to heal. However, the people you called heroes that day, you have kicked down to pad your pockets!!!

Moore Public Schools is hit with a \$10 million budget cut. I know this because I read the letter that went home to my mom. Thank goodness I can read, right! Yeah, I passed that test in third grade. Thank you. By what your office and other state leaders are doing is killing public education. I've heard you speak about how kids are the future of Oklahoma but yet you and all the state leaders

keep cutting school budgets!! Why???? Do you really need a reflecting pool so bad that it was worth cutting education for and not making us your future anymore?

Do you realize that by all the crazy state school testing, you have created students [me included] who love school not want to go because we are so stressed out over stupid testing. I say stupid because it is. I know it's not nice to say, but it is stupid. Really, it is. Our teachers [remember, heroes] work so many extra hours preparing us for these test that they are stressed, too. Now with the budget cuts, we will have less teachers but a lot more students in a class.

Oh, and don't forget our teachers have to do more work for less money. They pay out of their own

SHELL GAME SESSION

pockets for some supplies in their classroom. That's crazy. Teachers only make \$35,000 a year. OK, I know the salary may be a little off, but not by much. You and state leaders are expecting teachers [remember, heroes] to live off of \$35,000 a year? Wait, and pay for food, housing, insurance, and whatever else they need. Oh wait, I forgot you want them to pay for SUPPLIES TO TEACH!!!

So, I guess my question is, what are you doing??? When did students [remember, "Future of Okla-

homa"] and our teachers [heroes] and education became a stepping stone for you guys? I'm 11 years old and I know something is not right. I really think that instead of you and state leaders fighting for the Ten Commandments to be put on the Capitol grounds, you should put them on your desk and read them every day and actually comprehend [big word, I know] what they really mean.

Please look [at] me, an 11-year-old student, and explain why we are not worth investing in any-

more? Why are our teachers who you called heroes, are not worth investing in anymore? When did you and state leaders decide that reflecting pools, state leaders pay raises are more important than education?

Sincerely, Mira

Editor's Note: The Legislature this spring eliminated end-of-instruction exams for high school students and reduced the number of tests in lower grades. At press time, HB 3218 was awaiting action by Gov. Mary Fallin.

Legislature's Version Of Jenga

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

Jenga is a game played with 54 wooden rectangular blocks. Each block is three times as long as its width and one fifth as thick as its length. After the blocks are tightly stacked 18 levels high, players take turns removing blocks from the stack and balancing them on top of the tower, creating a progressively taller but less stable structure.

Over the past decade, special interests and their lobbyists guiding the Oklahoma Legislature have used Jenga rules to establish tax policy and appropriate funds. During this period, Oklahoma has become progressively less stable.

Public Education is a favorite whipping boy of the elite and wanna-be elite. Even before the current world oil glut and price correction, our K-12 budget cuts were the deepest in the country.

As a reminder, during the period of prosperity when oil was \$115 per barrel in June 2014; \$119 in March 2013; \$125 in March 2012 and \$127 in March 2011, the Legislature cut Oklahoma's per pupil inflation-adjusted K-12 expenditures.

From FY08 through FY15, the anti-public school legislature cut K-12 education by 23.6% and redirected nearly one in four education dollars to tax cuts for the wealthy and tax credits for corporations.

The new budget approved last Friday cuts Oklahoma's entire \$33 million textbook fund for local schools and another \$40 million from essentials like alternative education and remedial student services. Despite these cuts, anti-public school legislators and their corporate "sponsors" unceasingly pursue corporate charter schools, vouchers and ESA's to skim public funds for private and religious schools.

Education cuts did not end at K-12. Some speculate that this year's 15.9% Higher Education budget cut is retaliatory because the Legislature was angered

when OU's President David Boren proposed a ballot initiative to increase funding for K-12 and higher education. In any event, the FY17 higher education budget is \$67 million less than FY16 and an additional \$112 million less than FY15. Of course, if education budgets were not slashed, corporate interests could not continue to enjoy their tax shelters and credits.

Perhaps the most offensive example of legislative hypocrisy occurred when it repealed the refundable share of the Earned Income Credit [EIC]. The EIC provided the poorest 200,000 *working* taxpayers with an average of \$147 per year. Legislators seeking repeal of the EIC could not comprehend how a cash tax credit could possibly be fair. Poor working Oklahomans had no wining-and-dining lobbyists to remind legislators that hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits are being handed out annually to corporations and many of those corporate tax credits are transferable.

What often happens is a company, receiving a transferable tax credit that is worth more than the company owes in taxes, can use the portion they need and then sell the remaining tax credit for 75% to 80% of its value to another corporation to decrease what they owe the state. This is a win-win situation for both companies but the state of Oklahoma and its citizens receive zero dollars.

Since working Oklahomans have no lobbyists to point out this hypocrisy, the refundable Earned Income Credit is no more and the transferable corporate tax credit lives to see another day.

Every game of Jenga ends when the blocks crash down. Unless you demand accountability from your elected state officials, Oklahoma will face the same result.

David Perryman, a Chickasha Democrat, represents District 56 in the Oklahoma House.

Attention State Leaders: Trickle Down Never Works

BY JIMMY O'NEILL

"The money was all appropriated for the top in hopes that it would trickle down to the needy – but he [Mr. Hoover] didn't know that money trickled up. Give it to the people at the bottom and the people at the top will have it before night anyhow. But it will at least have passed through the poor fellows." – Will Rogers, Nov. 27. 1932, explaining the failed economic policy that led to President Hoover's loss to Franklin Roosevelt

Trickle down economics – giving large tax cuts to the wealthy, special inducements for some sectors – lay dormant for years until Ronald Reagan revived it. Huge tax cuts, lost revenue, and tripling the national debt were the results.

That has not stopped the conservative governors to experiment with the same failed policies – the latest in Oklahoma. And the result is a \$1.3 billion deficit. Cuts, cuts, cuts. Cuts to education. Cuts to human services. Cuts. Cuts. And no one saw it coming.

Seventy years ago this writer experienced trickle down economics up close. I knew exactly the disastrous results that it would create.

I grew up on a rented farm in The Osage. Somehow my family had survived the farm depression and the shortages of World War II. My father had a small herd of cattle, Brindles and Roans, with a few big-bagged black white faces. The gentle ones, the cows that would not try to kick your head off as you approached them with your milk bucket and stool, were our milk cows.

Just east of the milk cow lot, along the spring, was Dad's pig pen. Here, he fed 70 or 80 hogs each year. And my mother had a flock of Rhode Island Red chickens that she lovingly cared for.

Our main source of income came in the winter, picking thousands of pounds of pecans by hand. My father raised wheat, corn, oats and cane, but this year, 1946, he planted maize in a small field just north of the barn. He had never grown maize and the crop did not do well. Late in the summer, while we were milking, I asked my father what he planned to do with the maize crop.

He replied, "It is not worth harvesting. Tomorrow morning after milking, open the gate and let the milk cows graze it out."

The next evening one could see immediate results. The cows' udders were much fuller and a number

of them were running the milk bucket over. This is great, I thought, but the following morning one could see problems. Maize seeds are very small with hard coating and the seeds were passing through the cows undigested. In fact, the cow lot was showing a red tint of undigested seeds.

While milking I pointed this out to my father. "Jimmy, tonight we will open the pig pen gate and let the hogs root around, following the cows and eating the seeds."

That worked well – the milk cows were producing lots of milk and passing the seeds on for the pigs to eat.

But this curious eight-year-old discovered the seeds were also passing through the hogs. And my father had a solution.

"Jimmy, tonight instead of feeding your mother's chickens that high-priced chicken feed she gets from Perry's Hatchery and then locking the chicken house door, just let them run free."

The next morning the cow lot looked like a disaster zone. Chicken feathers were strewn everywhere. The hogs failed to play fair. Instead of passing food on, they ate the chickens also. And my mother was livid.

"Ernest O'Neill, if you ever experiment with Trickle Down Economics with my chickens again, I will wring your neck."

Seventy years later, Trickle Down Economics continues to work the same way. Responsible persons and businesses, the cows, attempt to play fair. But the hogs, lobbyists pushing and getting huge incentives for energy sector producers and also lower taxes, will always devour the chickens ... schools, Medicaid recipients, the mentally ill, those with no voice.

It is time Oklahoma citizens follow my mother's direction – stop this foolishness and demand investment, more revenue, not less. Oklahoma is not a Third World state. But it will take leaders – led not by partisan politics but courage – to roll back the income tax cuts, to slow the incentives given to special interests, to consider other sources of revenue.

Rural Oklahomans want to save their schools and health care. Maybe it is time agriculture waives sales tax exemptions on purchases under \$500.

Do we have those leaders in place now? A \$1.3 billion deficit says a resounding NO.

Jimmy O'Neill lives in Ponca City.

A House Republican Explains Why He Voted Against Budget

BY JASON MURPHEY

Recent legislative efforts for new taxation, coupled with the expansion of the Legislature's own appropriated budget, remind me of a presentation I gave several years ago to a local civic group. As a recently elected officeholder, I was excited about my new role as part of a transformative effort to make government less expensive and burdensome. In that presentation I spoke about taking on the status quo and bringing about reform on behalf of Oklahoma taxpayers.

After the presentation, I took questions from the audience. I can still recall a question from another recently appointed official who shared my ideals for reform. But he had a concern: "How can we tell when we have become just like 'them'?" he asked.

In retrospect, I realize the importance of his question. I have observed the effects of power and seen how it can change good people into politicians. A new person takes office with a real desire to restore the balance of power to the taxpayer – only to transition over time into someone who falls prey to the status quo. He gives up on the hard work of spending taxpayer dollars wisely and instead starts to lobby for more taxpayers dollars. It is much easier to complain about not having enough money than to carefully manage what he already has.

It isn't always easy to know if your elected official has devolved from a reformer to yet another cog in the big government machine, but it happens frequently.

Worse, you may have no idea that you might be currently supporting a status quo politician because you remember him/her as well intentioned with fresh ideas.

Here's an indicator: an elected official who tries to get more of your money while increasing his own budget has become "just like them."

Whether he realizes it or not, an elected official waves the white flag of surrender when he stops attempting to trim his own budget and instead asks to raise your taxes. Americans are already heavily taxed at every level of government. Federal, state and local government taxes, fees, fines, overpriced services, and associated costs already consume much of your income.

When the need for more funding faces government officials, all too often established politicians choose the easier task of launching a massive public rela-

tions campaign to convince people to pay more money, rather than fighting the tougher battle of lowering their own budgets.

Over the course of the last two weeks, the Legislature has approved millions of fee and quasi-tax increases. The Legislature also increased its own ongoing appropriations level. At a time when the Legislature is raiding the pockets of the taxpayer, it's so very wrong for them to fail to become more efficient within their own budget.

There were multiple reasons for why I had to vote "No!" on the proposed state budget, but this was perhaps the first and foremost of them.

As a taxpayer, I want my elected officials to do their job and do it well, without coming to me and asking for more money.

I feel like, that when my elected officials ask for more taxes and fees, while also increasing their own budget – they have become "just like them."

Jason Murphey, a Guthrie Republican, represents District 31 in the Oklahoma House

Definitions

No English dictionary has been able to explain the difference between the two words "complete" and "finished" in way that is easy to understand.

Some people say there is no difference between COMPLETE and FINISHED, but there is:

When you marry the right one, you are COMPLETE ...

And when you marry the wrong one, you are FINISHED ...

And when the right one catches you with the wrong one, you are COMPLETELY FINISHED.

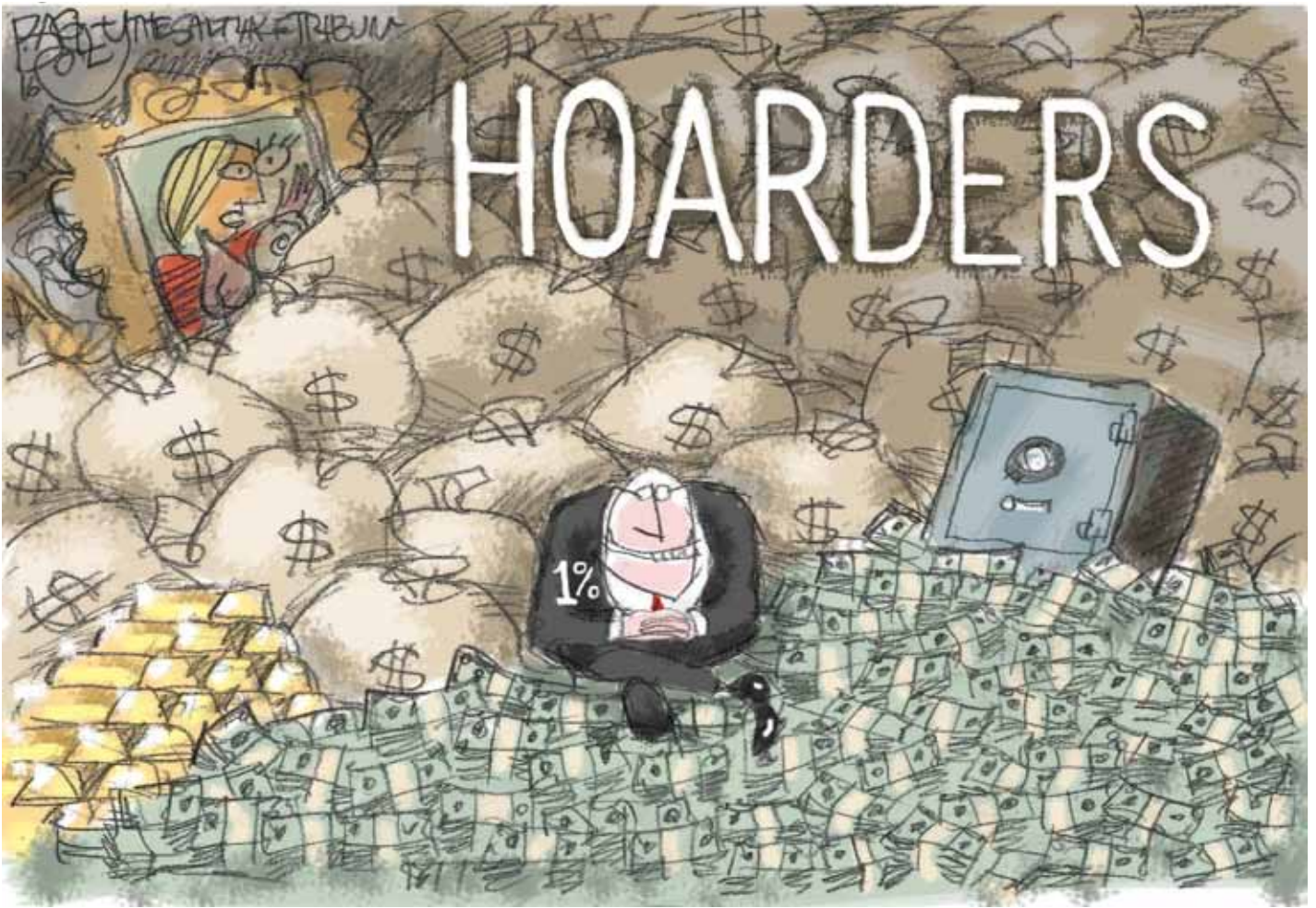
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The Roots Of Our Evils

BY VERN TURNER

When did the money meme become the driving force in everything we do?

It seems that everything we talk about in our human discourse centers around money, or, more accurately, the shortage of it. Since humans invented the concept even before written language was widespread among us, how could we have shortfalls if we committed money as our medium of exchange for goods, services and commodities for the betterment and comfort of the community?

Yeah. You guessed it. Some humans wanted more money than other humans had so they could exert power of those other people. But as a community organism, how can we justify the intentional impoverishment of other humans, when all our “moral” and “religious” guidelines say just the opposite?

In Chris Harman’s very excellent book, *A People’s History of the World*, he points out that the history of agriculture, economics and finances evolved in con-

cert with the concept of social stratification. Briefly, with the discovery of agriculture, humans were able to produce a surplus of everything that kept the village/town alive and prosperous.

This ability to overproduce allowed two things to occur: The village population was allowed to grow, and the surplus could be used as barter with other villages for their products and produce. This situation necessitated a controlling authority to be sure the surplus necessary for surviving winter, drought, storms or pestilence, was not sold off to somebody else.

The community leaders became those controllers and doled out the food as they saw fit. Ideally, this would have meant a fair and equal share for all, but knowing that the size of the surplus also created the concept of wealth for the leaders, they started calling themselves priests and operated control over the food stocks with their newly invented “police” and

“military.”

Clearly, the ideal of equity was at risk here, and this “arrangement” led to not only bigger villages that produced more surplus commodities, but also city-state-hood that had to protect its interests from marauding bands who wanted to steal the goods for themselves. So, with the invention of wealth came the invention of a protecting force.

It should come as no surprise that class stratification evolved right along with this “new” idea about wealth and commodities. The priests, who wanted to expand their own power and wealth, put more demands on the farmers who produced the commodities. Before long, the greed thing pushed the working classes even further down the societal ladder as they were removed from the oversight of their labor and its products. Add to all this the concept of hoarding. It wasn’t until people could use their produce as barter [and eventually the abstraction, money] that hoarding and holding onto the surplus became exclusive to the priests and whoever *they* deemed worthy of their largesse. This is where the money as evil comes into the story.

Fast-forward to the late 19th Century in the United States, the bastion of the industrial revolution. There were no regulations on how much money the corporate moguls could amass, nor how much they were required to pay in wages to those who made them stinking rich. There were no laws outlawing monopolies. It was the *Gilded Age* where class distinction was paramount and the lower classes were absolutely left to their own devices to shift as best they could. The *Robber Barons* of the era scoffed at equitable distribution of wealth and money. They, after all, made the rules that continued to enrich them at the expense of everyone else. So, in the span of 8,000 years, not much changed in the concept of class stratification vis-a-vis money and wealth and who controls it.

In the early 20th Century, one Fred Chase Koch was born. About that same time, the Mellon and Scaife family patriarchs were producing their offspring to carry on the family wealth machinery after they died. In the recent book, *Dark Money*, Jane Mayer gives us detailed insight into how these, and other stinking rich families, operated to not only grow their inherited wealth, but to facilitate the takeover of the U.S. Government by any means necessary.

Fred Koch became a founding member of the infamous John Birch Society that spawned the Libertarian and Tea Party movements almost a century later. It should be noted that Fred Koch made his fortune by inventing, then selling the technology for refining crude oil into high-octane gasoline.

He wasn’t able to sell it to the United States government, but Joseph Stalin’s and Adolf Hitler’s governments were eager to acquire that technology and built several refineries all supervised by Fred Koch. The high-octane gasoline allowed Hitler’s Luftwaffe to grow and outperform the other air forces of the day. After Fred saw that Stalin’s communism prevent-

ed the ruling classes from getting rich and that Hitler was truly evil, he backed away from them and helped form our own right-wing extremist ideologies here.

Fred Koch inculcated his sons to the letter of his Libertarian philosophy such that when they inherited the family business, they were all about un-doing all of the progressive and labor-friendly policies put in place from the days of Teddy Roosevelt to now.

In short, they were/are totally against *any* kind of regulation or taxation on businesses. They want to abolish all the safety net agencies and policies including OSHA, FCC, SEC, EPA, FDA, IRS and FEC agencies. The cabinet positions of Education, Commerce and Interior, they deemed unnecessary. Labor unions would be illegal. No government-sponsored health care, unemployment or welfare benefits would exist. The people would be on their own. School segregation would be allowed. All public schools would become private. The Voting Rights Act and all Civil Rights legislation would be eliminated.

Theirs is a 1984-type world where only they and their peers rule. In case anybody missed it, 1984 was written as a warning, not a field guide. The Libertarian/Tea Party philosophy calls for no regulations on businesses and banks; they think that pure, free-market enterprise is the only philosophy that should be in place, because it benefits private business and industry. The workers? Well, they’re on their own.

I point all this stuff out to show that the lust for power and wealth is a continuum that has evolved only in its intensity as the human population has grown and become more financially “sophisticated.” I use that word advisedly in that power and wealth are still the singular driving forces of the neo-conservative movement. It should be no surprise that the Kochs, et al, have created the archipelago of “foundations” to [1] have tax loopholes, [2] advocate for politicians who think their way and [3] purchase any politicians who are teetering between working for the people they actually represent and the ideology of the radical, right-wing extremists.

The elites in this country, including the Bush dynasty, continue to voice their support for failed economic systems like trickle-down or Supply-side economics. The “failure,” of course, is that the working classes get screwed while the elites get richer still. The most recent attempts to de-regulate banks and Wall Street showed us how silly it is for people to believe that the rich will take care of them somehow, with jobs, schools and health care. The facts bear out that they will *not* do these things. It’s all about the money, the root of all evil, so sayeth the Good Book, or at least good books.

We have one last chance in the United States to overcome this evil trend of wealth trickling [even cascading] upward with decreasing hope for success among the working classes. Fair wages and safety nets are *not* entitlements, they are necessities for the survival of the community of man in this country, and, ironically, for the perpetuation of wealth for the elites.

If you're worth \$100 billion, how much more do you need? The rich patriarchs say, "Just a little more." If you had more, what would you do with it? I think the Koch brothers have shown us what they want to do with their obscene wealth. They want to place themselves or their surrogates into seats of power where they control everything and the people control nothing. That, ladies and gentlemen, is fascism. Fascism lends itself to dictators.

Dictators destroy civilizations, economies and the very people they presume to govern. These are not opinions – as some of my readers say to denigrate real information – these are facts from history. You can all look them up.

Remember this essay when you vote in November. Listen carefully to those who say the things that hurt the people. They will speak of endless war, reduced benefits for labor, reduced attention to poverty, reduced regulations on the greedy and fewer rights for the people who don't look like them. You know who they are. They're on television and in the papers every day telling you how President Obama screwed everything up.

In a way, he did. He exposed the roaches on the wall that are trying to destroy the American dream of fairness and opportunity.

Vern Turner lives in Marble Falls, TX and is a regular contributor to The Oklahoma Observer. His latest book, Racing to the Brink: The End Game for Race and Capitalism, is available through Amazon.com.

How I Learned About Race

BY HARRY T. COOK

America's grappling with racial and ethnic differences has not been its finest hour. Nineteenth century New Yorkers hated Irish immigrants and made certain that Jews were confined to the squalor of lower eastside neighborhoods. Southern states produced what became, post-Civil War, a Jim Crow regime. Leafy suburbs in the North and Midwest often enough were governed by real estate restrictions: no colored, no Jews.

As for Native Americans, the Trail of Tears tells it all, despite the novel idea that Andrew Jackson wanted to protect the Cherokees from actual Americans who were busy fulfilling what they took to be their divine vocation to seize dominion over the earth.

American history as taught in the grammar schools and even the high schools I attended in the 1940s and early 1950s did not tell the real story about either African Americans or Native Americans. Little was said about the Holocaust as anti-Semitism remained an active bacterium in the national bloodstream.

Brief mention was made of various Indian wars

and how poor Gen. Custer sacrificed his life to make the West safe for white folks. Abraham Lincoln was praised for emancipating slaves, but nothing was mentioned about the cruelty that the thoroughly defeated white South unleashed upon black folks for a full 100 years after the end of the War Between the States.

My limited exposure to Native Americans came from repeated reading of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*, cowboy and Indian movies and two or three Potawatomi men who hitched rides hobo-like on the freight trains that ran through our little village.

The first Jewish person I came to know – and that was before I had ever heard the words "Jew" and "Jewish" – was a kid in my first-grade class at what was once Royal Oak, MI's Longfellow School. He lived in Huntington Woods, an adjacent suburb that was then part of the Royal Oak school system.

I cannot for the life of me remember his name, but I was once invited to his home for lunch. Our sandwiches were served by an African-American woman in a maid's uniform typical of the times: little white head-piece, white apron and a black dress. My friend's father came into the room and intoned something that seemed like the grace before meals that was said in my own home. I had no idea that it was a Hebrew text – not yet even knowing the word "Hebrew." However, the language became of first importance to me by the time I reached graduate school as have any number of close Jewish friends.

The first black-skinned person I knew by name was the day-shift doorman at the long-gone Hotel Tuller in Detroit in which an aunt of mine lived for 50 years and in the lobby of which she ran a flower shop. Mr. Bailey was his name. He was – or seemed to me to have been – well above six feet tall and presided over the elaborate entrance to the hotel with the demeanor of a royal guard. I wanted to be like him and to wear the nifty livery proper to his office.

I did not understand for some years why it was that he was not allowed to take his lunch in the hotel's cafeteria. Also I could not figure out why he had to walk all the way around to a back door of the building to use a 2x4 toilet when the fancy public ones were just inside the lower lobby fewer than 30 feet from where he worked.

Then there were the two Pullman sleeping car porters – both African Americans, of course – whose small kingdoms-on-wheels brought up the rear of the passenger trains that stopped in our tiny northern Michigan village every day but Sunday. The one was a Mr. Pooler, the other a Mr. Handy – though I noticed in due course that they both were called "George" by people who knew them and those who didn't. It was later explained to me that most sleeping car porters were then called "George" because that was the first name of the founder of the Pullman company. And what difference did it make in the first place?

Their runs originated and terminated in Chicago,

and I envied their urbanity, not to mention the crisp white jacket uniform with silver-colored buttons, which they wore along with their black caps. One day Mr. Handy slipped a paper sack to me just as the train was pulling out of the station. In it was a Pullman porter's cap. I wore it on and off throughout most of my boyhood to the astonishment of a whole lot of people.

In due course, I was off to a small, liberal arts college that, at the time I matriculated as a freshman, had about 1,200 students. Through my entire four years [1957-61] I think there were but three African Americans on campus – all male: Jim Waller, Bill Bright and Harry Montgomery.

This was true about each of them: They were possessed of far more social polish than I; each had come from a high school far better rated than my own; each basked in a general popularity that neither I nor many of my white classmates ever enjoyed. Waller, I think, was from Jackson; Bright from Highland Park; Montgomery from Battle Creek – three Michigan cities that were then still happy places to live and have one's being.

Montgomery was president of my graduating class and widely admired. It occurred to me maybe a year or two ago that he conducted himself in speech and manner as would a man born two months after we graduated from college and who is now coming to the end of his second term as president of the United States.

I took all those limited experiences with me into graduate school and on into the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church. I began that work in a downtown Detroit church three weeks prior to the uprising of suppressed African Americans in that city and the violence wreaked on its minority population mostly by white police and military personnel – a preview of what occurs too often even now.

That July 1967 tumult claimed at least 43 lives and probably half again that number whose deaths went unreported. The first social issue to arise following what still – inaccurately – is called “the riot” was that of open housing. Real estate covenants were widespread in the city even after the white exodus wore paths out to the suburbs and beyond. Some of the reaction to the cancellation and later banning of such restrictions elicited a subtler Northern version of “Segregation today! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!”

Now in my late 70s, I look back on what I learned and thought I knew in my childhood and youth and what I know now. I can say with certainty that when I first voted for a president in 1960 it never occurred to me that 48 years on I would have the opportunity to vote for an African American for that office not once but twice.

I think I will never again have such an opportunity or witness such a thing. The public abuse Barack Obama has weathered seems to preclude a repetition anytime soon. Not that having an African American

for president has changed the country nearly enough. But I'll bet no one is calling an Amtrak sleeping car porter “George” unless his nametag invites it. *Harry T. Cook is an Episcopal priest, journalist and author living in Michigan.*

Without Virtue, Freedom Fails

BY CHARLES C. HAYNES

Civic virtue – or the loss of civic virtue – doesn't make the top ten list of issues pollsters ask voters to rank. But I suspect many, if not most, Americans are doing a fair amount of private handwringing these days about our collective descent into the proverbial mud.

In the brave new world of presidential politics, personal attacks, insults and ridicule are becoming the new normal. Protesters shout down candidates, partisans get into violent confrontations and users of social media create daily streams of vitriol and hate.

The easy answer, of course, is to blame Donald Trump. After all, Trump has broken every unspoken rule about how presidential candidates speak and behave [apparently a significant part of his appeal]. Because Trump hurls insults, intimidates the media, mocks the disabled, the argument goes, the lid is off for the rest of us to do likewise.

But did Trump create the current climate – or did the current climate create Trump? Perhaps soul-searching about how we got to this unfortunate place should begin by asking the American people to take a good, hard look in the mirror.

After all, “we the people” give high ratings to angry radio talk show hosts, shock jocks, reality-show shouting matches and popular entertainment filled with images that demean and dehumanize others.

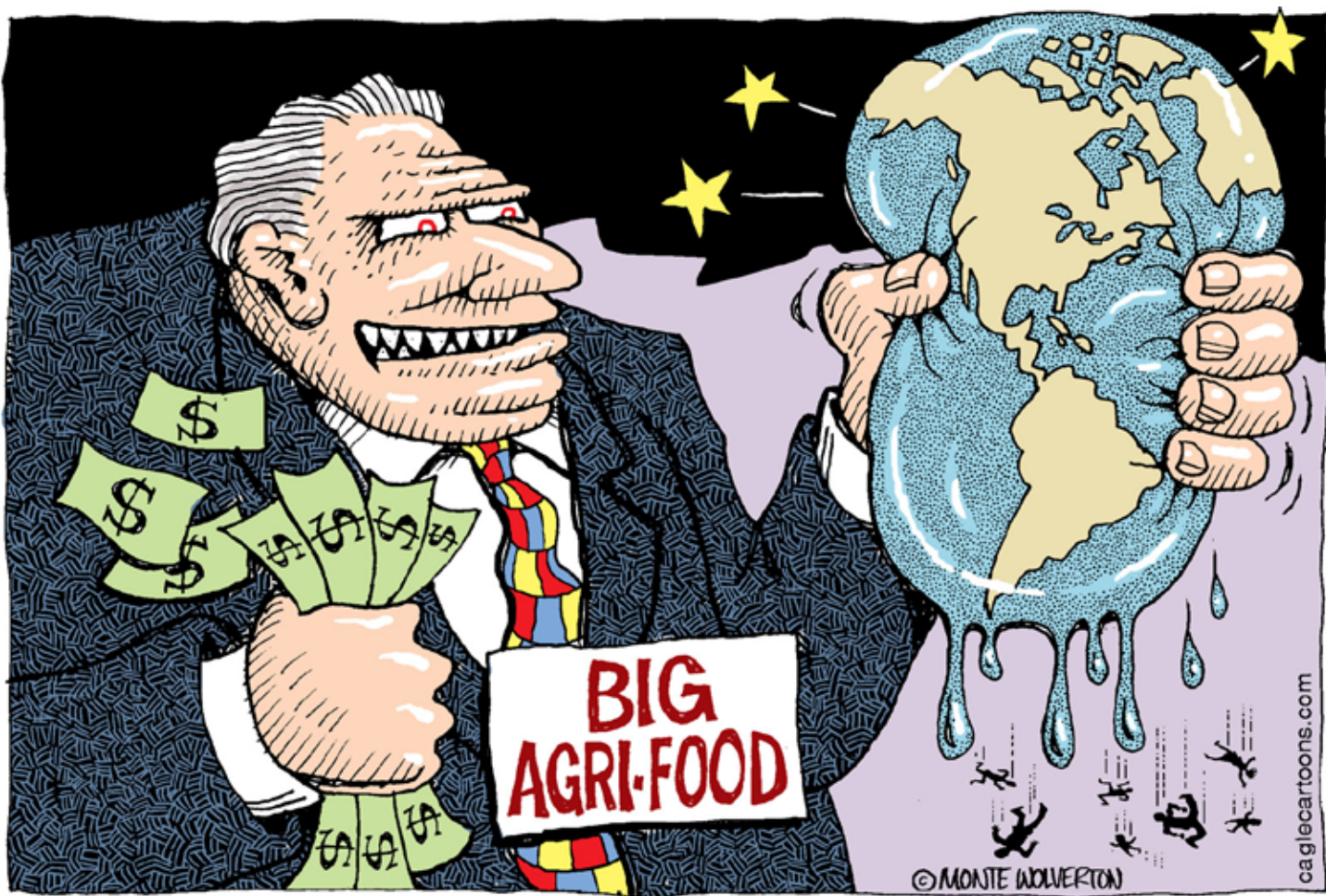
Of course, the loss of virtue – the inattention to character – in much of our culture is only one factor in the coarsening of our political arena. But it helps explain how an outrageous reality TV star can successfully transition to an outrageous presidential candidate aided and abetted by media outlets eager to cover demagoguery and bad behavior in pursuit of higher ratings.

If Americans continue to ignore or devalue core civic virtues such as commitment to civil discourse, respect for the rights of others, concern for the common good and compassion for those in need, our experiment in democratic freedom is doomed.

“Liberty can no more exist without virtue,” warned John Adams, “than the body can live and move without a soul.”

Absent civic virtue, ideological differences lead to

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The Funny Business Of Farm Credit

BY RALPH NADER

In May 1998 we held a conference dedicated to two Government-Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) – Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. In my statement to that assembly, I noted that both corporations had been enjoying good times, but cautioned that one of the unintended consequences of fat profits over a long period is the tendency of both government and private corporations to start believing in the fantasy of ever-rising profits.

GSEs often escape the accountability that Congress or regulatory agencies should impose.

Recent hearings in the U.S. House and Senate have provided some much needed oversight on another GSE – the Farm Credit System [FCS].

The Farm Credit System was the first GSE to be established by the United States in 1916. Unlike Fannie and Freddie, the Farm Credit System can make direct loans to farmers, ranchers and others involved in agriculture.

However, as The Wall Street Journal reported back in 1985: “The Farm Credit System would lend money to anyone. Herbert Ashton, an Indiana fruit farmer,

recalls being wine and dined at a local country club by bankers from his local [farm credit] system bank who extolled the virtues of inflation and offered to lend him \$1 million on the spot. ‘I turned it down,’ he recalls. ‘But they sounded like a soap testimonial. They were giving money to whoever passed their way, and they didn’t ask too many questions.’”

Not surprisingly, the Farm Credit System was also the first GSE to be bailed out by taxpayers at a cost of \$4 billion when the farm economy collapsed in 1987.

The Farm Credit System reported a net income of \$4.7 billion and assets of \$283 billion in 2014. It gets its huge funding capital from the Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation which sells bonds on securities markets. It receives exemptions from Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform and pays only a small percentage of state and local taxes.

With these facts in mind, the FCS has veered off course from the mission Congress originally intended for it to do – “... to make loans for the production and marketing of agricultural products.” The FCS’s lending practices are less focused on serving the credit

needs of new farmers and ranchers, but instead lending today focuses on large farmers, agribusinesses, utilities and even businesses having nothing to do with farming!

For example, in 2004, 25% of new FCS loans went to owners of small farms and ranches while 75% went to owners of large farms. In 2014, less than 14% of new FCS loans went to owners of small farms and ranches, while over 86% went to owners of large farms.

On their website, FCS addresses the open question of whether or not they exist to just serve farmers and ranchers by elaborating: "The System's mission is to serve all types of agricultural producers who have a basis for rural credit, as well as others who help ensure that agriculture and rural America are economically successful. This includes farm-related businesses, rural homeowners, rural infrastructure providers, including electric, telecommunications, water and waste, as well as other rural service providers."

This open-ended description leaves a lot of wiggle room about who FCS chooses to lend to – which is problematic.

Providing loans to large corporations, to non-farm enterprises and to wealthy individuals and families for a variety of non-farm investments goes well beyond what the Farm Credit System was set up to do. Some eye-opening examples follow:

- In October 2013, CoBank, a \$93 billion Farm Credit System bank, loaned \$725 million to Verizon to help finance its acquisition of Vodafone, a London-based telecom giant. At a June 25, 2014 hearing, Rep. Mike Rogers, R-MI, told Jill Long Thompson, Chairman and CEO of the Farm Credit Administration, "I have been a supporter of the Farm Credit System. But it is pretty hard for me to explain – I can't explain why you are financing a merger deal with Verizon, or the Farm Credit System is."

- In April 2015, CoBank participated in a \$300 million unsecured term loan to Black Hills Corp., a vertically integrated energy company with natural gas and electric utility operations in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming.

- In January 2015, Greenstone Farm Credit Services ACA/FLCA joined with several large commercial banks in providing "a five-year \$750 million revolving line of credit" to Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc., a national restaurant chain.

- In 2007, Farm Credit of the Virginias loaned the Kluge Estate Winery and Vineyard \$34 million to increase the winery's output and construct luxury homes on the estate.

Former Farm Credit Administration Chairman and CEO Leland A. Strom pointed out that Farm Credit System associations "have developed very efficient marketing programs for farmers and ranchers involved in commodity-type agriculture [from corn and soybean production to livestock, for example] in addition to an "ongoing and impressive" effort at "education and outreach to these farmers and their chil-

dren."

But he warned, the Farm Credit System was not providing the same level of service to those who "farm and market their products directly to consumers, local restaurants, schools, hospitals, etc., in what many call the Local Foods System."

The Farm Credit System needs congressional oversight of its operations and lending. In addition to regular congressional oversight – the recent hearings were the first in over a decade – Congress should also consider new legislation that would make the FCS subject to Dodd-Frank, require FCS to increase lending to young, beginning and small farmers and ranchers, and limit lending to non-farm corporations and non-farm activities.

Small farmers, let your member of Congress know what you think.

Nader.org

Just The Ticket

My wife and I went into town and visited a shop. When we came out, there was a cop writing out a parking ticket.

We went up to him and I said, "Come on man, how about giving a senior citizen a break?" He ignored us and continued writing the ticket.

I called him a "jerk." He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn-out tires. So Shirley, my wife, called him a "butthead."

He finished the second ticket and put it on the windshield with the first. Then he started writing more tickets. This went on for about 20 minutes. The more we abused him, the more tickets he wrote.

He finally finished, smiled at us, and walked away.

Just then our bus arrived, and we got on it and went home. We always look for cars with Trump 2016 stickers.

We try to have a little fun each day now that we're retired. It's so important at our age!

– *Thanks to A. J. Henshaw for sharing*

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Fracking Wastewater A Danger To Oklahoma's Drinking Supply

BY BOB JACKMAN

In south central West Virginia, a team of university researchers recently took samples from a stream near a storage facility for hydraulic fracturing and formation wastewater. Their focus: whether Wolf Creek's fresh water was in any way compromised by the stored wastewater.

The waters upstream from the facility were normal. But downstream, the waters were rife with chemicals commonly found in fracking fluids.

The research, contained in a U.S. Geological Survey report that drew the attention last month of the Washington Post, serves as a wakeup call for Oklahoma.

Here, the focus in recent years has been on the connection between wastewater disposal wells and earthquakes. The U.S. Geological Survey report exposes another, more insidious danger from the oil- and gas-producing technique: toxic wastewater stored in thousands of aging, above-ground tanks that can rust and leak, endangering nearby creeks, streams, lakes and fresh water aquifers.

"The key takeaway is really that we're demonstrating that facilities like this can have an environmental impact," the study's lead author, USGS microbiologist Denise Akob, told the Post.

Much of the national discussion about the dangers

of fracking involves the fouling of drinking water, chemical-laden wastewater seeping into surface fresh water sources. Often, the pollution is demonstrated via flaming water faucets. In some cases, houses with water wells explode.

But that's only half the story.

The USGS research, conducted by a team from Duke University and the University of Missouri, estimates that half of petroleum drilling and completion activities that contaminate fresh water sources in Oklahoma and other energy-producing states can be traced to surface leaks.

It's a problem with the oil industry's above-ground systems transferring billions of barrels of deep, ancient water and frack water from producing wells to high-volume disposal injector wells.

To understand the magnitude of the potential danger, conduct a test the next time you're driving by producing well sites. Count the number of tall, 500-barrel storage tanks – two-thirds or more of which are holding briny wastewaters, waiting to be disposed. Then, take notice of the differences between newer, cleaner locations and older, rusty, decaying sites.

Finally, think about all the highly-leveraged, now-broke operators who declared bankruptcy after the shale-oil bubble burst in June 2014.

What becomes obvious is this: The dearth of maintenance in these all-but-abandoned storage facilities – tank bottoms rusting, metal pipe plumbing often held together by duct tape and super-glued plastic fittings.

This can spell l-e-a-k-a-g-e.

"We've known this is a hazard for years, and we have regulations to handle it, Dr. Jeremy Boak, director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, told KFOR-TV. "If somebody's not enforcing them, that is a problem."

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board's executive director, J.D. Strong, reports his agency routinely tests drinking water sources statewide, but has discovered no contamination from oil and gas activity.

In an interview with KFOR, he also cited an Environmental Protection Agency study that found "amazingly few examples of any site-specific instances of contamination to drinking water supplies from fracking activity."

But he conceded his agency's limited budget restricts its testing ability.

Similarly, KFOR noted, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission has rules to keep the fracking process from endangering drinking water and will test specific sites if landowners express concern that toxic materials may have leached into protected water sources.

The fact is, though, the problem uncovered by the USGS research is eerily similar to what happened in 20th Century Oklahoma when the booms-and-busts of the energy business caused many wildcatters to go belly-up and abandon their operations.

What was left behind became known as "oil patch brownfields" – thousands of unplugged wells, forgotten pipelines, aging oil tanks, broken pump jacks and

junk disposal wells' leaking storage tanks.

The problem was so acute that it led to creation of the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board in which producers taxed themselves to help pay for cleanup costs. So far, the board has completed restoration of 14,300 abandoned Oklahoma well sites since 1994 at costs totaling \$100 million.

Still, OERB estimates 20,000 or more abandoned well sites remain in Oklahoma rural counties – so-called orphan wells.

How can this still be a problem? The Oklahoma Corporation Commission is squeezed between state budget cuts and an oil industry that remains mostly numb to environmental problems these sites create in rural Oklahoma.

Blinded by greed, the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association and the Oklahoma Oil & Gas Association are all-too-happy to cash in on tax credits, but have no comprehension of the urgent need for special water-quality testing.

So much for free markets regulating themselves!

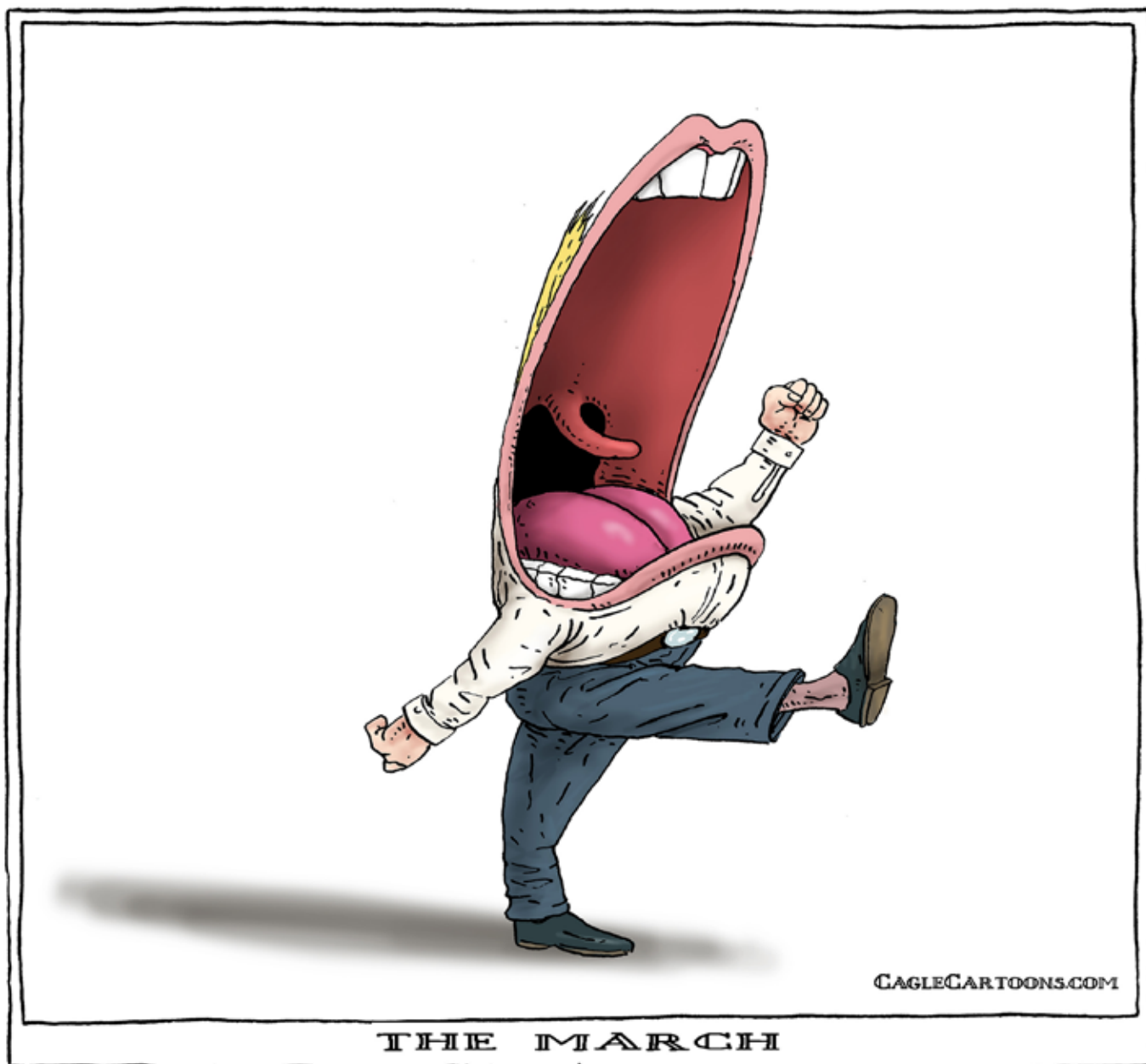
This also remains unresolved because of demographics and economics. Many of Oklahoma's rural counties are among the poorest in the nation, according to U.S. Census data. High poverty areas rarely get the public services – or the government response – they deserve. Some rural county commissioners today tell of deep funding cuts that prevent them from improving deteriorating dirt roads that serve as county school bus routes.

The Corporation Commission, with authority over the state's 193,000 active oil and gas wells, employs 58 field inspectors. Each is responsible for an average 3,400 producing oil and gas wells and 130 disposal wells. Inspectors work to prevent unsafe practices and hydrocarbon pollution of land, air and water.

The consensus from inside OCC is they need to triple that number of inspectors to adequately cover so many wells and give inspectors the authority to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30





Trump Isn't Bluffing About Deporting 11 Million People

BY TED RALL

During the run-up to America's war against Iraq, I told audiences that Bush would certainly win re-election. Some people broke down in tears.

That's my job: telling people things they prefer not to hear, especially about the future. Being Cassandra

isn't much fun. Because we live in a nation in decline and yielding to incipient fascism, the more I'm right – i.e., most of the time – the more I annoy my readers.

So please believe me when I say this gives me no pleasure: Donald Trump isn't bluffing when he threatens to deport the estimated 11 million people living

in the U.S. illegally.

Are you undocumented? Prepare to go underground.

Are your papers in good standing? Are you a good person? Prepare a hiding place in your home.

Dark days are ahead.

Do not take comfort in the fact that Trump flip-flops on all sorts of issues. Contrary to his initial, typically strident position on abortion, the master demagogue now says women needn't fear imprisonment if they terminate their pregnancy [unless he changes his mind again]. Even his much-ballyhooed Great Wall of Trump along the Mexican border may wind up as half a wall. He does this a lot.

But there's no way he'll back away from mass deportations.

Why are deportations different? Radical nativism, as defined by this promise to deport illegal immigrants, every single one of them, defined his campaign from the start. It's why he's here. It's why he won.

Reneging on deportations would be like Bernie Sanders asking Goldman Sachs for donations or Hillary Clinton changing her gender – it would betray the *raison d'être* of his campaign. He can't back down without losing most of his support.

The optics of the biggest forced population movement since those carried out by Hitler and Stalin would be awful. Police kicking down doors. Women and children dragged off in the middle of the night. Neighbors, friends, colleagues, lovers, spouses – disappeared.

Countries of origin would be reluctant to absorb millions of new arrivals, all unemployed, many of them who came to the U.S. as children and thus have no memory of their "home" countries. So the Trump Administration would have to build concentration camps to house them.

Because the idea is so outlandish, so fundamentally un-American, it's too much to contemplate seriously, even for journalists. They're in denial. If Trump wins, however – and it's entirely possible he will – he *will* carry out his plan.

Legally, there's nothing to it. Trump doesn't need an act of Congress. He doesn't even have to sign an executive order. All he'll have to do to set this outrage in motion is pick up the phone and tell the head of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement to do his or her job: enforce the law.

Camps cost money. So do more agents. No problem. President Trump can shift his budget priorities in favor of ICE. He's already said he would triple ICE's enforcement division from 5,000 to 15,000 officers. The FBI would have to pitch in.

Backlogs in the nation's 57 existing immigration courts run as long as two years. The system would have to be expanded.

Speaking of which, I look to Trump's authoritarian impulse to turn initially to the federal budget. I imagine him making a pitch that goes like this: "I won because the American people wanted my business

acumen in charge of government. Congress has totally messed up the budget process with their budget stand-offs. Let me take care of the budget, and I promise you an end to this crap. Take your kids to a national park and I guarantee it won't be closed due to some government shutdown, believe me."

Compliant media + perceived mandate + popular exhaustion = Trump gets his way.

Sad but true: subtracting 11 million people from the population, and thus two to four million from the workforce, will put money into the pockets of everybody else. Fewer workers means labor has more clout. Wages will go up.

Meanwhile, deportations will empty housing stock. Rents will decline.

In the short term, anyway, Trumpism could stimulate the economy. That would be popular.

Establishmentarians can't imagine that Trump would actually go through with mass deportations, much less how he would carry them out. "I can't even begin to picture how we would deport 11 million people in a few years when we don't have a police state, where the police can't break down your door at will and take you away without a warrant," says Michael Chertoff, head of the Department of Homeland Security under George W. Bush.

You don't need imagination to game this out. You need history.

Right-wingers will call the cops to report their undocumented neighbors. As in Nazi-occupied Europe, anyone with a grudge against someone without a valid I-9 form – resentful ex-boyfriends, etc. – will drop a dime to Trump's jackbooted thugs. Checkpoints will spring up on roads, at bus stops, in train stations. Not that they have to; mass surveillance by the NSA ensures that the feds already know where illegals live.

It won't be hard to find judges to issue warrants based on those reports.

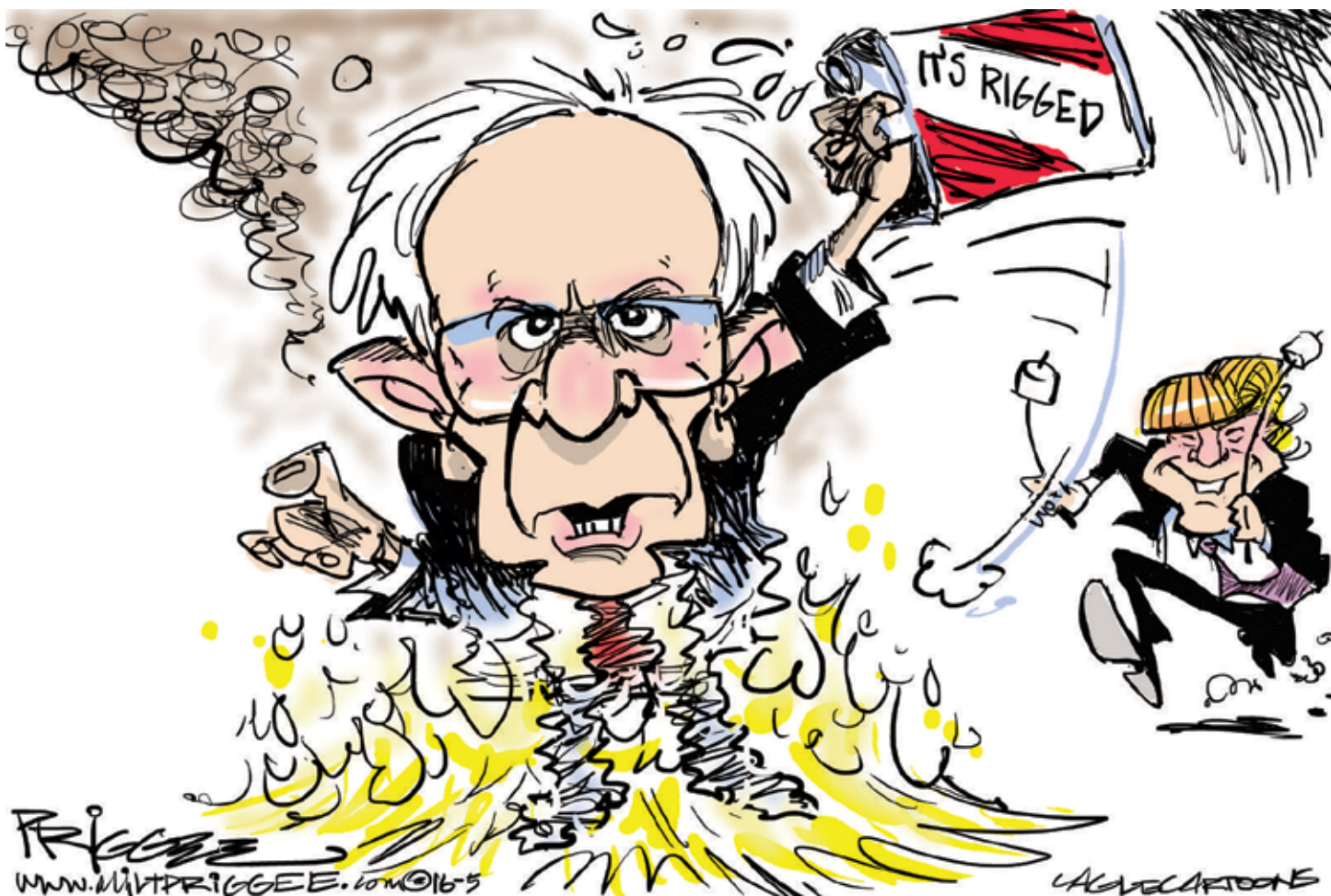
For Trump, deportations are a political necessity he can easily execute. For his critics, they won't occur because they would run against our societal values. "Unless you suspend the Constitution and instruct the police to behave as if we live in North Korea," Chertoff says, "it ain't happening."

More than most people, Chertoff ought to know better. After all, he served under a radical right-wing president who convinced us to go along with perpetual war, concentration camps, legalized torture, invading foreign countries for fun, killer drone planes and a new cabinet-level bureaucracy whose mission – and very name, Homeland Security – evokes Nazi Germany.

It doesn't take much to convince Americans to accept the unacceptable.

Ted Rall is the author of Bernie, a biography written with the cooperation of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. His next book, the graphic biography Trump, comes out July 19.

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Bernie Sanders And Racism Lite

BY FROMA HARROP

In a statement on the Nevada rampage by some of his supporters, Bernie Sanders said a remarkable thing. He said, “Our campaign has held giant rallies all across this country, including in high-crime areas, and there have been zero reports of violence.”

Who lives in “high-crime areas”? We all know the answer: dark people. But it wasn’t dark people hurling chairs and death threats at the Nevada Democratic Party convention. It was Sanders’ own white followers. [The YouTube videos make that clear.]

One reason there’s been no violence at Sanders’ rallies is that outsiders aren’t disrupting them. It is Sanders’ white posses that are invading the events of others, be it Democratic Party meetings or Donald Trump rallies.

Now, the Sanders statement did say, “I condemn any and all forms of violence, including the personal harassment of individuals.” But then he likened this outrage to shots being fired into his campaign office.

The problem with this attempt at symmetry is that we don’t know who fired into his campaign office. It is

my hope that the perpetrator is caught and thrown in jail. But we know exactly who threw chairs. The FBI, meanwhile, should be hot on the tails of the creeps who made death threats against a Nevada Democratic Party official and her family. That’s a federal crime.

Sanders should have made his condemnation of violence short and sweet. In doing so, he could have emphasized that the vast majority of his supporters are good, nonviolent people.

But then he went on, stoking the self-pity that has permeated his campaign. This was not the time to go into his allegedly unfair treatment at the hands of Democratic officials as he’s been doing ad nauseam.

If Sanders’ tying of political violence to “high-crime areas” were his only racially tinged remark, one might give it a pass. But he has a history.

There was his infamous waving-of-the-hand dismissal of Hillary Clinton’s commanding Southern victories, which were powered by African-American voters.

“I think that having so many Southern states go first kind of distorts reality,” he said.

Whose reality, one might ask. Actually, the overwhelmingly white electorates of Iowa and New Hampshire [where Sanders won big] got to go first. He didn't have a problem with that.

This is a veiled racism that cannot find cover in Sanders' staunch pro-civil rights record. Real black people seem to make Sanders uncomfortable [as Larry David captured on his "Saturday Night Live" skits].

Sanders' idea of a black surrogate has been the academic Cornel West. West has called Barack Obama "a Rockefeller Republican in blackface" and "a black mascot of Wall Street oligarchs," among other nasty things. Ordinary African-Americans tend to revere Obama, so where did this crashing insensitivity come from?

It may have come from decades of being holed up in the white radical-left universe. In the 1960s, Sand-

ers abandoned the "high-crime areas" of Brooklyn, his childhood home, and repaired to the whitest state in the nation. [Vermont had become a safe haven for liberals leaving – the word then was "fleeing" – the cities.]

Nuance alert: Sanders has done good work in attracting more white working-class voters to the Democratic side. His emphasis on economic issues is a welcome change from the party's frequent obsession with identity politics. That is admirable.

Less admirable are the windy justifiable-rage explanations in what should have been a simple censure. And to then link expectations of violence to "high-crime areas" was pretty disgraceful.

There should be no white-privilege carve-out for thuggery.

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Why Trump Might Win

BY ROBERT REICH

A recent Washington Post/ABC News poll found Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in a statistical tie, with Trump leading Clinton 46% to 44% among registered voters. That's an 11% swing against Clinton since March.

A recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll also showed Clinton at 46% to Trump's 43%. Previously she led 50% to 39%.

Polls this far before an election don't tell us much. But in this case they do raise a serious question.

Since he clinched the Republican nomination in mid-May, Trump has been the object of even more unfavorable press than he was before – about his treatment of women, his propensity to lie, his bizarre policy proposals.

Before this came months of news coverage of his bigotry, megalomania, narcissism, xenophobia, refusals to condemn violence at his rallies, refusals to distance himself from white supremacists, and more lies.

So how can Trump be pulling even with Hillary Clinton?

Throughout the Republican primaries, pundits and pollsters repeatedly told us he'd peaked, that his most recent outrageous statement was his downfall, that he was viewed as so unlikeable he didn't stand a chance of getting the nomination.

But in my travels around the country I've found many who support him precisely because of the qualities he's being criticized for having.

A Latina-American from Laredo, TX, tells me she and most of her friends are for Trump because he wants to keep Mexicans out. She thinks too many Mexicans have come here illegally, making it harder for those here legally.

A union member from Pittsburgh says he's for Trump because he'll be tough on American companies shipping jobs abroad, tough with the Chinese, tough with Muslims.

A small businessman in Cincinnati tells me he's for Trump because "Trump's not a politician. He'll give them hell in Washington."

Political analysts have underestimated Trump from the jump because they've been looking through the rear-view mirror of politics as it used to be.

Trump's rise suggests a new kind of politics. You might call it anti-politics.

The old politics pitted right against left, with presidential aspirants moving toward the center once they cinched the nomination.

Anti-politics pits Washington insiders, corporate executives, bankers, and media moguls against a growing number of people who think the game is rigged against them. There's no center, only hostility and suspicion.

Americans who feel like they're being screwed are attracted to an authoritarian bully – a strongman who will kick ass.

The former reality TV star who repeatedly told contestants they were "fired!" appears tough and confrontational enough to take on powerful vested interests.

That most Americans don't particularly like Trump is irrelevant. As one Midwesterner told me a few weeks ago, "He may be a jerk, but he's our jerk."

By the same token, in this era of anti-politics, any candidate who appears to be the political establishment is at a strong disadvantage. This may be Hillary Clinton's biggest handicap.

The old politics featured carefully crafted speeches

and policy proposals calculated to appeal to particular constituencies. In this sense, Mrs. Clinton's proposals and speeches are almost flawless.

But in the new era of anti-politics Americans are skeptical of well-crafted speeches and detailed policy proposals.

They prefer authenticity. They want their candidates unscripted and unfiltered.

A mid-level executive in Salt Lake City told me he didn't agree with Trump on everything but supported him because "the guy is the real thing. He says what he believes, and you know where he stands."

In the old politics, political parties, labor unions and business groups, and the press mediated between individual candidates and the public – explaining a candidate's positions, endorsing candidates, organizing and mobilizing voters.

In this era of anti-politics, it's possible for anyone with enough ego, money, and audacity – in other

words, Donald Trump – to do it all himself: declaring himself a candidate; communicating with and mobilizing voters directly through Twitter and other social media; and getting free advertising in mainstream media by being outrageous, politically incorrect, and snide. Official endorsements are irrelevant.

Donald Trump has perfected the art of anti-politics at a time when the public detests politics. Which is why so many experts in how politics used to be played have continuously underestimated his chances.

And why Trump's demagoguery – channeling the prejudices and fears of Americans who have been losing ground – makes him the most dangerous nominee of a major political party in American history.

Robert B. Reich served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He also served on President Obama's transition advisory board. His latest book is Saving Capitalism: For The Many, Not The Few.

Fracking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

enforce and fine petroleum operators for statutory violations.

These numbers suggest that the Oklahoma's petroleum drilling industry's surety plugging bond program is inadequate and inspection system is long overdue for overhaul.

In the eastern U.S., states that banned horizontal drilling of shale gas were motivated by the results of specialized water tests conducted by the USGS, EPA and private regional universities. In Oklahoma, by contrast, water quality tests focus primarily on bacterial fecal coliform, e-coli, and not on the costly eight metals and complex chemicals analysis used in northeastern tests.

In West Virginia, the USGS, retained by the EPA, tested for and found low levels of exotic chemicals in streams that could be traced to leaching frack and wastewater. The toxic chemicals cause genetic disturbances, resulting in a bio-migration up the food chain. In one case, a mutated, male, small mouth bass' testes changed into ovaries.

Oklahoma doesn't have a clue if similar environmental problems are occurring due to oil and gas activities. Their catch-all answer is "no funds."

The EPA requires each state to publish annually its Federal 303 (D) list of impaired water bodies. The Oklahoma Water Resource Board does not publish such a list in a readable form, with yearly charts showing water degradation in our impaired water bodies.

Classic example: we have not been informed of results of yearly chemical tests, if taken, from many Oklahoma recreational lakes – lakes previously reported years ago by OWRB as having high mercury health warnings. These lakes are located in what is known as Oklahoma's Mercury Alley [Observer, July

2014]. That report detailed how numerous Oklahoma and Texas coal-burning power plants continue to spew mercury into our lakes, and other nasty chemicals onto the land and into the air we breathe.

The state Farm Bureau and other supporters of the so-called "Right to Farm" proposal – SQ 777 – know that with voter approval, it grants corporate farm operators the legal right to forbid any special testing on their properties for pollution of surface drinking waters or subsurface sources.

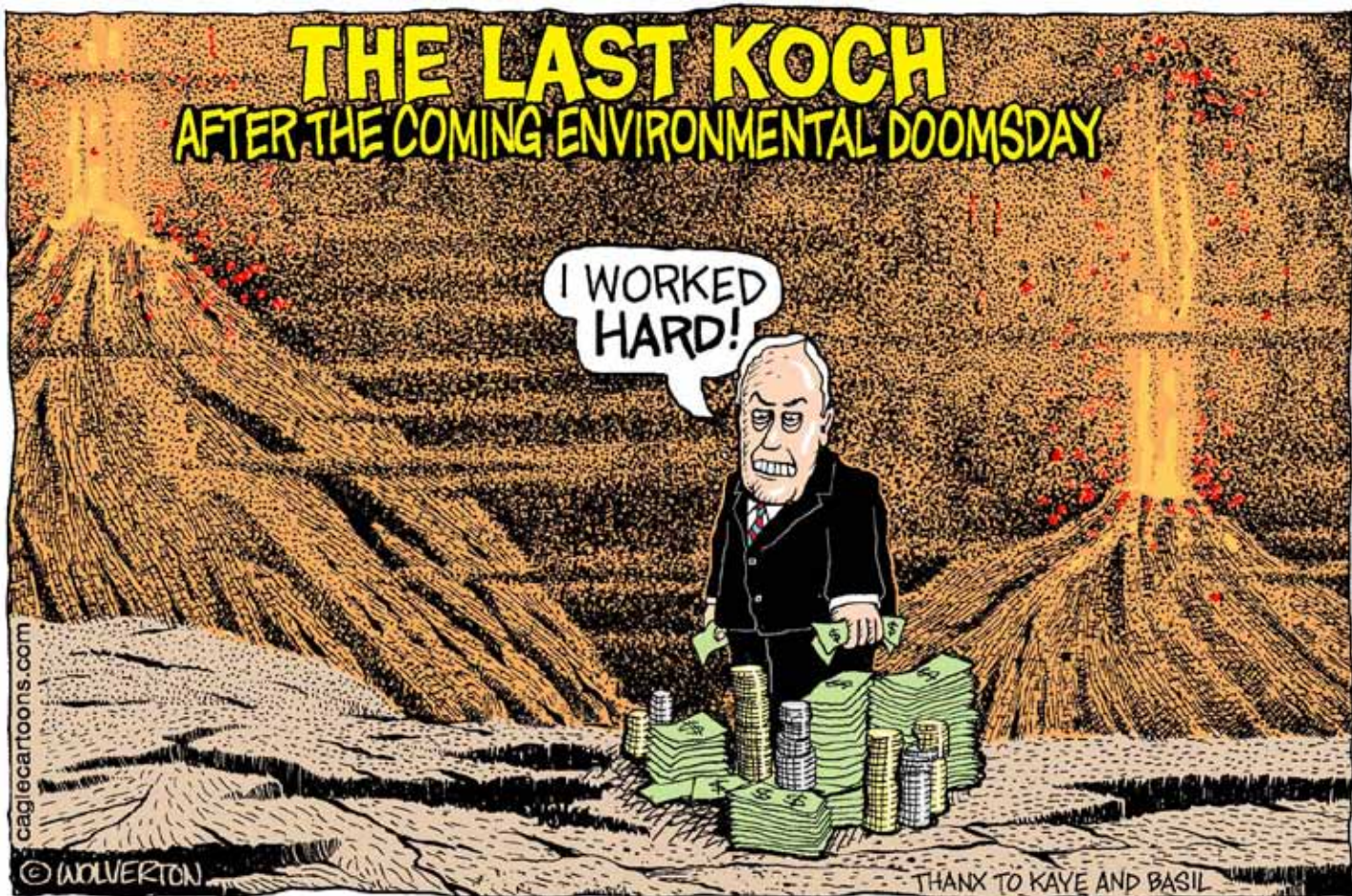
Why are they against some water tests? Special testing for levels of frack-water mixed with formation water also detects dangerous levels of herbicides, pesticides chemicals and fertilizers – additives toxic to humans, but used by big agriculture.

This is a wakeup call for clear-eyed Oklahomans. *Bob Jackman is a Tulsa-based petroleum geologist.*



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COMING CLEAN

Sierra Club's Leader Offers Advice To Climate Change Convert Charles Koch

BY MICHAEL BRUNE

An open letter from the Sierra Club's executive director to Charles G. Koch, CEO of Koch Industries.

Dear Mr. Koch,

Recently, at a Wall Street Journal forum, I heard from your company's environmental, health, and safety director, Sheryl Corrigan, that you believe that "the climate is changing," and that "humans have a part in that."

I wanted to write to welcome you into the not-very-exclusive club that includes the strong majority of Americans, 99+% of scientists, nearly all Democratic candidates and a growing number of conservative Republicans, who all believe the same thing. We're happy to have you!

Sheryl also said, "the real question is ... what are we going to do about it?"

I have a few suggestions.

First, make sure that everyone knows where you stand on this important issue. Your voice is an important one, and I hope you'll speak up if your opinion has truly changed.

Second, a transition is underway across the world away from an energy system powered by expensive and unsustainable fossil fuels and toward one powered fully by abundant, increasingly inexpensive, clean, renewable energy.

Clean energy is becoming more affordable and more accessible each day, with the cost of solar pan-

els dropping by 80% in the past eight years and wind power expected to double in the next five years.

As you know, this is in spite of your own advocacy: You have funded organizations like Americans for Prosperity that have targeted clean energy investments while fighting to preserve tax credits for big oil.

An overwhelming majority of Americans and business leaders support policies that incentivize investment in and development of clean energy. Now that your position on climate change may be shifting, we hope that you'll join the push toward the clean energy economy and invest in the clean energy sources that increasingly are powering America and the world.

Third, put your money where reality is. You and your brother have spent hundreds of millions backing organizations and political candidates who either deny climate science or oppose nearly every policy that would advance climate solutions. If you want to advance prosperity in a climate-safe world, then

please get out of the way and stop funding candidates, lobbying efforts, and organizations that deny climate change is happening or that aim to undermine efforts to address the climate crisis.

Specifically, the American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC] has been driving efforts in states across the country to undermine plans to address the climate crisis, including opposing the Clean Power Plan. It's time to make sure ALEC's platform is in accord with the reality that you may now recognize – or to stop funding its damaging agenda.

While we may not agree on each solution for addressing the climate crisis, I hope we do agree that solutions are needed. Now, let's get to work to make sure that candidates up and down the ticket from both political parties stop denying there's a problem and get to work solving it.

The world recognizes that the threat of climate change is real and is determined to do something about it. We hope that you'll join us.

Finland Offers Glimpse Into School Of Tomorrow

BY BILL CIRONE

William Doyle, a Fulbright Scholar, New York Times best-selling author and award-winning TV producer, wrote a powerful essay about the “School of the Future.”

First, the context. As a Fulbright Scholar, Doyle spent five months as a Finnish public school father and a classroom observer. In his own words, he was “completely amazed at how good Finnish comprehensive schools are” and wanted to capture the quality, impact and important lessons learned from what he saw.

Doyle wrote: “I have seen the School of Tomorrow.

“It is a place where children and teachers are safe and happy.

“It is a school where children are encouraged to be children, to play, to daydream, to laugh, to struggle and fail, to assess themselves and each other, to question and learn.

“It is a school where teachers test their students every day, not with low-quality standardized tests or faceless screens, but with constant face-to-face observations and teacher-designed assessments.

“It is a school where teachers are highly trained, treasured, and respected, and given the freedom to teach at their best.

“It is a school where teachers collaborate and experiment with ways to help their students learn bet-

ter.

“It is a place where technology is the servant, not master.

“It is a school where children are prepared for life, not only with the fundamentals of language, math and science, but with play, arts and crafts, drama, music, ethics, home skills, nature, physical activity, social and emotional support, warmth, and encouragement.

“It is part of a school system that delivers world-class educational results and educational equity to hundreds of thousands of children.”

An inspiring account of schools at their best.

Doyle went on to attribute Finland's historic achievements in delivering educational excellence to a national love of childhood, a profound respect for teachers as trusted professionals and a deep understanding of how children learn best.

Some of Doyle's favorite Finnish sayings on education are: “Let children be children” and “The work of a child is to play.”

Doyle concludes, “With a ‘whole child’ approach, by highly training and trusting teachers ... Finland has flown to the stratosphere of global performance.”

Doyle also recognizes that Finland's education system is hardly perfect.

“Its schools and society are entering a period of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



Pent Up Fury Beneath Bernie, Donnie Phenomena

Jack Nicholson dryly noted that his mother once called him a son of a bitch – and didn't comprehend the irony.

2016 has certainly been an odd year for the political and corporate elites. They certainly couldn't predict [and then subsequently stayed in denial about] the groundswell from the masses in terms of the popularity of Bernie Sanders and Donnie Trump. Much like the Nicholson example, the aloof Powers That Be are oblivious to irony: They are the ones who gave birth to the mass anger that now confronts them.

The political cognoscenti have not understood the massive public rage from today's "unAmerica" of glaring inequality and mass downward mobility that is the direct product of their wrenching the system with such power tools as: "free" trade agreements, union busting, defunding public services, downsizing, offshoring, price gouging, Citizens United, privatization, the Wall Street bailout, student debt, tax dodging, criminalization of poverty, militarization of police ... and so god-awful much more.

Instead of comprehending the public rage from the above injustices, the established powers have lashed out at these political riff-raff and intruders.

Their conventional wisdom [endlessly parroted by the corporate media] is that hordes of blue-collar voters, young people, independents, and others surging into the two outsiders presidential campaigns have been naive, unrealistic, selfish, stupid, ignorant, racist, misogynistic, anti-immigrant, fascist or some combination of the above.

Of course, such characteristics can be found among every campaign's supporters, but smearing an insurgency of millions as nothing but airheads and haters only reveals the desperation of the smearers.

Take Trump's campaign. Yes, he has recklessly continued to fan the embers of hate, belittling Muslims, the disabled, Latino immigrants, women, Spanish-language reporters, and his catchall category of "losers" – all the while reveling in the role of outlandish, boorish autocrat. Therefore, pundits and the GOP's big shots conclude, his appeal and his supporters are

racism personified. End of discussion.

Yet, in addition to walling off Mexico and banning Muslim refugees, Trump speaks about NAFTA, run-away corporations, and our "stoopid" leaders who've turned their backs on American manufacturing and the struggling of families who count on those good jobs – and that's what many of his working class supporters say they're responding to.

Sanders, too, is winning phenomenal support from a similar constituency, and he's winning an amazing 70% to 85% of 17-30-year-old voters. Like Trump, he's hammering the pampered rich who disdain and discard the working class, but in a very different way: He's also offering a renewed, uplifting, Rooseveltian vision of an "America for All," not just for billionaires.

The real story, however, is not about the two maverick candidates, but about the waves of ordinary people who've created and lifted their campaigns. They embody and give voice to the millions wrecked by Wall Street greed in the 2008 crash, who were left out of the widely ballyhooed "recovery," and who now realize that they're not included in the elite's laissez faire schemes of future American prosperity. These voters are hurting today, distressed about tomorrow, and fed up with the two-party indifference to "people like us."

They are the reason the Bernie and Donnie phenomena are not just 2016 flare-ups – but in the words of Sanders' clarion call – "a political revolution." The elite's ploys to trivialize the impact of these campaigns will only stoke the fires of the newly politicized outsiders.

No matter what happens this year to Sanders and Trump, the people are not going away.

The rebellion is on. Sanders and Trump are only the current messengers. The message itself is that We, the Grassroots People, now see that we're being sold out to giant corporations by our own leaders.

Like the distant rumble of thunder, the boisterous uprising of outsiders in this year's presidential election signals the approach of an historic storm.

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Introducing Glencore, A Rapacious Global Lord

Giant corporate entities have become so far-flung and impersonal that “human relations” departments have been created within the soulless structures to cloak the fact that there’s really nothing human about them. HR is mostly known for sending the corporate rank and file peppy motivational memos that boil down to: “The beatings will continue until morale improves.”

The beatings of American workers [wage slashing, axed benefits, union busting, mass firings, offshored factories, and brutish abuse of worker rights] have been increasing in frequency, intensity, and scope – mostly ordered by CEOs in the posh, faraway headquarters of multi-tentacled global empires.

These detached autocrats are wrecking the lives of hardworking people for no reasons but institutional greed, calculated self-interest ... and because our corporate-coddling government lets them get away with it. Let’s meet one of the most powerful of these lords of rapacious global capitalism – Glencore.

Never heard of Glencore? Neither had I until February, when I visited some members of the United Steelworkers Union outside a Glencore-owned aluminum plant [Sherwin Alumina] on the Texas Gulf Coast.

In 2014, after months of negotiating a new contract, Glencore suddenly tossed these workers a take-it-or-leave-it offer that would drastically cut wages, increase healthcare costs, and eliminate pensions for new hires. [Glencore’s profit that year was \$4.6 billion]. Fed up, 98% of the union’s members voted against the contract.

Glencore’s reaction was to lock them out and replace them with contract workers.

Some 5,500 miles away from these proud, principled workers, you’ll find Glencore’s sleek global headquarters [dubbed by Reuters as “the biggest company you never heard of”] in Baar, Switzerland.

Not merely big, it’s colossal – the 10th largest corporation in the world – with 160,000 employees in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

What Does It Mean To Gig American Workers?

Pouty, whiney, spoiled-bratism is not nice coming from a four-year-old – but it’s grotesque when it comes from billion-dollar corporate elites like Uber and Lyft.

The two Internet-based ride-hiring brats call themselves “ridesharing” companies, but that’s a deceit, for they don’t share anything – their business model relies on folks needing a ride to hire a driver through the corporations’ apps. With the bulk of the fare going to out-of-town corporate hedge funders.

The tow outfits have swaggered into cities all across our country, insisting that they’re innovative, tech-driven geniuses. As such, they consider themselves above the fusty old laws that other transportation companies, like taxis, follow. So Uber and Lyft have made it a corporate policy to throw hissy fits when cities – from Los Angeles to Atlanta, Houston to Portland – have dared even to propose that they obey rules to protect customers and drivers.

The latest tantrum from the California giants happened in Austin, when the city council there adopted a few modest, perfectly-reasonable rules, despite the screams of PR flacks from both outfits. The petulant

duo then used fibs and high-pressure tactics to get enough signatures on petitions to force a special election to overturn the council’s action. Naturally, being brats, they gave the city an ultimatum – “Vote our way or we will leave town” – and assumed that Austin’s tech-savvy voters would flock to do whatever the popular ride-sharing service wanted.

But they picked the wrong city. First, they ran a campaign of blatant lies, as though Austinites wouldn’t question them. Then, they shoved a sickening level of corporate cash into their campaign, apparently thinking that the sheer tonnage of ads would win the day for them. However, the slicks from California turned out to be uber-goobers. Despite spending \$9 million [more than the combined spending of all city council candidates in the past decade], they went down, 56% to 44%.

Since they didn’t win their campaign, Uber and Lyft have now left town in a huff leaving their 10,000 Austin workers/drivers behind to fend for themselves. Since their workers are considered contract employees, there will be no severance package or unemploy-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

more than 50 countries on six continents. It produces and trades coal, oil, gas, metals, minerals, foodstuffs, and other commodities. Indeed, its nondescript name is an acronym for GLObal ENergy COMmodity RESources, and it owns a huge chunk of the world market for many internationally traded resources, including zinc, copper, nickel, aluminum, grain, and oil. Uniquely, Glencore combines the production and shipping of more than 90 different commodities with the entirely different, corporate culture of high-speed computer trading of commodities.

Now, let's hail the chief, the uber-competitive and ravenous corporate dealmaker, CEO Ivan Glasenberg, whose \$2.3 billion in personal wealth ranked him No. 301 last year on the Forbes list of the world's 500 richest people.

Since joining Glencore in 1984 as a base-level coal marketer, Glasenberg moved swiftly up the executive ladder to become "the savviest trader on the planet." He dines with prime ministers and hobnobs with oligarchs, relentlessly pushing acquisitions, devising opaque partnerships, and gaining government favors that have made the conglomerate a dominating behemoth. But attaining, using, and holding such power in so many parts of the world can be, well, "untidy:"

- Corruption of officials and severe human rights violations by executives of Cerrejon, an open-pit coal mining operation partly owned by Glencore. Charges

include Cerrejon security forces expropriating entire villages to expand mines and, with Columbian paramilitary units, driving a Wayuu tribe off its land in what the native people called a "massacre."

- Cooking the books to evade taxes that its partially owned Mopani Copper Mines owed the people of Zambia, and letting pollution flow uncontrolled from the same mines, causing health problems for five million neighboring people.

- Permanently shuttering Glencore's Columbia Falls aluminum plant in Montana last year after 1,500 laid-off workers and local officials had, at the urging of the corporation, produced a viable plan to reopen it. Then refusing to reach a fair severance deal with USW members, some of whom had been with the plant for three decades. Also, opposing EPA's designation of the contaminated factory site for a Superfund cleanup, claiming that this would devalue its property – even though a Superfund project would create jobs and benefit the community. Brian Doyle, president of the local steelworkers union in Columbia Falls, summed up the corporation's attitude: "To Glencore, we're just a number. They don't know who we are, and they don't care."

Exactly. Which is why the workers in Texas are fighting this David-Goliath battle. To learn more, visit the United Steelworkers website at www.usw.org. – *Jim Hightower*

Gig

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

ment benefits for them.

This is part of the new "gig" economy – the latest corporate buzz-phrase from Silicon Valley to Wall Street. CEOs are hailing a Brave New Workplace in which we lucky worker bees no longer have to be stuck in traditional jobs with traditional hours, traditional middle-class pay scales, traditional benefits, traditional job security, and all those other fusty "traditionals" of the old workplace.

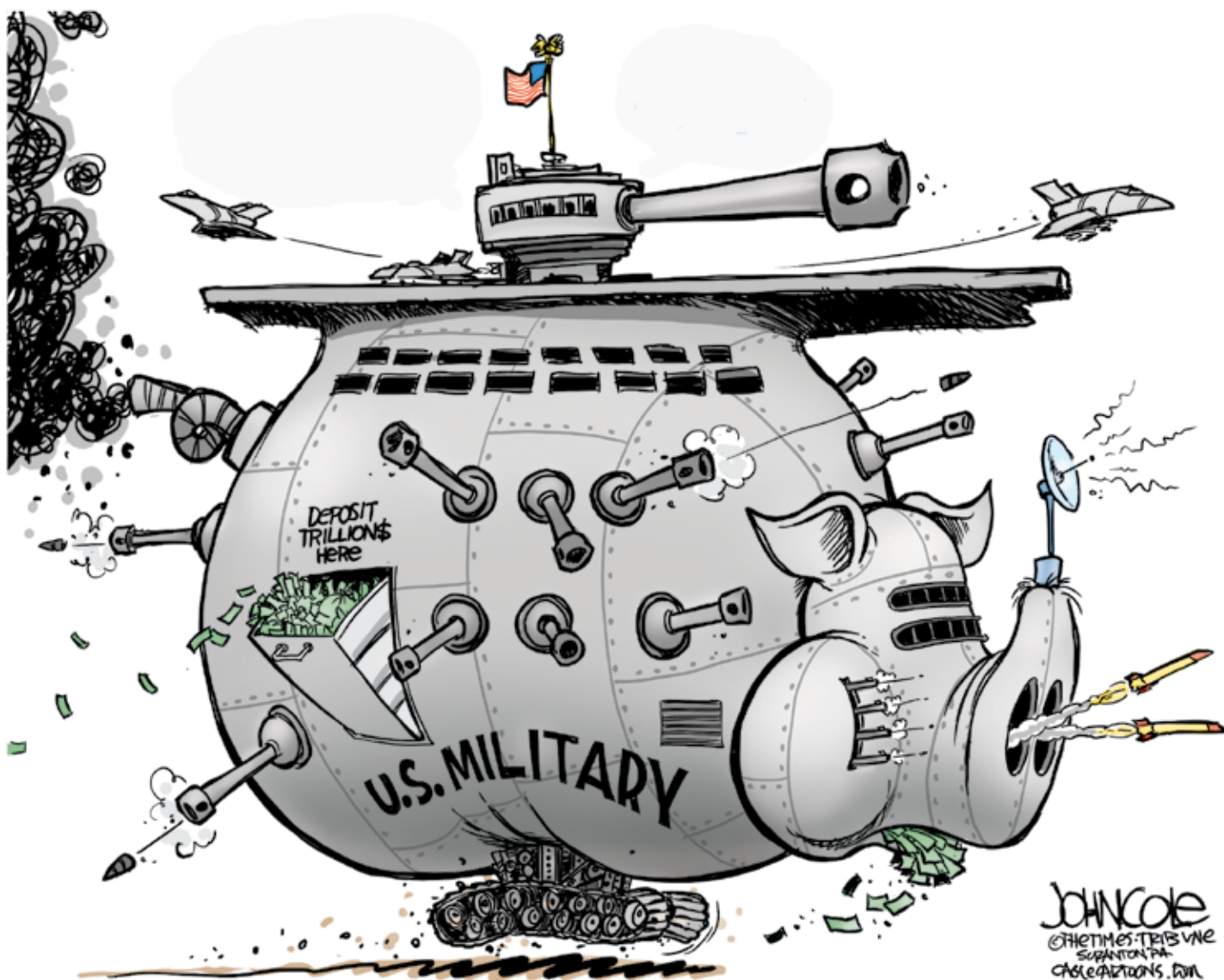
In fact, in the gig economy, you're not even bothered with having a workplace. Rather, you'll be "liberated" to work in a series of short-term jobs in many places, always being on-call through a mobile app on your smart phone or through a temp agency. How exciting is that?

Well, they use "exciting" in the sense of distressing and nerve-wracking. The gig economy means you're on your own – you're not an employee, but an "independent contractor," with no rights and no union. You might have lots of calls to work this week, but there'll be many weeks with no calls. Don't get sick,

injured or wreck your car, for no health care or workers' comp are provided. A pension? Your retirement plan is called "adios chump."

This "alternative work arrangement" is not a futuristic concept – it's already here and spreading fast. And it's not just ride-hiring gigs either. Some 16% of U.S. workers are now in this on-call, temporary, part-time, low-pay, you're-on-your-own economy, up from only 10% a decade ago. Corporate chieftains [backed by the economists and politicians they purchase] are creating what they call a workforce of non-employees for one reason: Greed. It directly transfers more money and power from workaday families into the coffers of moneyed elites.

Their gig economy is aptly named, for "gigs" are crude four-hook fishing devices that are dragged by commercial fleets through schools of fish to impale them, haul them in, and cash in on the pain. And if you don't think the gig economy is painful, why don't you ask the 10,000 Uber and Lyft workers in Austin how they feel about it? – *Jim Hightower*



Republicans' Military Budget Could Make Every Homeless Person In America A Millionaire

BY ADRIENNE VARKIANI

Last year, the United States spent more than \$596 billion on the military, a total greater than the next six countries in the world combined. But the Republican-controlled Congress is looking to increase that number for next year.

In late May, the House passed its version of the annual National Defense Authorization Act [NDAA], allowing for \$602 billion to be spent on the country's defense in 2017, but the way the money is budgeted

could mean that total military spending could actually end up being far higher.

Under the bill, \$18 billion would be moved from the Overseas Contingency Operations [OCO], which is currently used primarily to fund operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, to the general budget to be used for additional troops and equipment.

As Politico reported, this would likely leave enough money for such operations only through April, forc-

ing the next president to request additional funding. Thus, the House bill would effectively increase the total military expenditure for next year.

The White House has also noted that this breakdown could leave less money for U.S. war-fighting, making it more likely that additional funds will be needed halfway through 2017.

In a 17-page statement released, the White House said that Obama's senior advisers would tell the president to veto the current bill, calling it a "gimmick" that gambles with war funds and risks the safety of U.S. troops.

The statement also pointed to other flaws in the bill, including the prohibition on the use of any of the funds to shut down Guantanamo Bay or transfer the detainees currently held there. [A similar prohibition was included in the 2016 NDAA, which despite objections, Obama eventually signed.]

According to figures by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], the United States doesn't just spend more than the next six countries combined, but it also spends more than double the next biggest military spender in the world, China.

As the House looks to increase that number, here's a breakdown of just some of the other ways that enormous sum could be spent:

Buy Every Homeless Person A \$1 Million Home

In January 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] found there were 564,708 homeless people on a given night in the United States. As ThinkProgress has previously reported, one of the best ways to end homelessness is to make more permanent housing available.

Last year, an HUD study found that giving families permanent subsidies, like a housing choice voucher, is more effective in preventing homelessness than other interventions, like short-term rental assistance or temporary housing. It also helps keep families together.

A 2014 study from the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness estimated that it cost the state over \$31,000 each year for each chronically homeless person, compared to just \$10,000 to provide them with permanent housing, job training, and health care.

Using those findings, ending homelessness in the United States would likely require about .01% of next year's likely military expenditures. The government could even purchase a \$1 million home for every homeless person in the United States with the budget, and it would still have money leftover.

Help Those Fleeing War

Today's refugee crisis is the worst the world has seen since World War II, and the United Nations estimates that there are nearly 60 million refugees seeking safety.

But compared to other countries in the world, the United States has taken in a depressingly low number of refugees fleeing conflict.

Last year, Canada accepted 25,000 refugees from Syria specifically in just four months – but it took the

United States five months to accept only 841. That number is especially embarrassing, considering that U.S. GDP is nine times greater than that of Canada, and far greater than countries in the Middle East that have taken in millions of refugees.

There isn't an easy way to break down the costs per refugee resettled in the United States, but in the last fiscal year, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] – which helps settle refugees and provides them with resources like medical services and job training – had a budget of \$1.65 billion, again less than .01% of the expected military budget for next year.

An added bonus is that while there are costs to refugee resettlement, research from around the world has shown that accepting refugees has a positive [or simply a neutral] effect on a host country's economy and wages. One reason for this, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that there is a high rate of entrepreneurship among refugees.

"There's not any credible research that I know of that in the medium and long term that refugees are anything but a hugely profitable investment," Michael Clemens, a senior fellow leading the Migration and Development Initiative at the Center for Global Development, told the Washington Post last fall.

Fix U.S. Infrastructure

U.S. infrastructure is in shambles. A report from the American Society of Civil Engineers [ASCE] estimated that from 2016 to 2025, there will be a funding gap of over \$1.4 trillion for things like surface transportation, water, electricity, airports, and waterways and ports.

If this gap isn't addressed, ASCE estimated that each U.S. household would lose \$3,400 in disposable income each year during that time period. This cost comes from things like inefficient roadways, congested airports, and electricity grids and water systems that won't be able to keep up with demand.

In February, Obama included a \$35 billion per year clean transportation plan in his budget request, to be funded by a \$10 per barrel tax on oil and phased in over five years. It was shot down immediately by the Republican-controlled Congress – which is now pushing forward a bill that will likely increase military spending in 2017.

While next year's military budget can't solve all of U.S. infrastructure problems, even a little bit could go a long way.

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Whose Morality?

BY ANN DAPICE

Supreme Court turmoil nothing more than a playground scuffle

State ed standards found lacking

Violence encouraged at rallies

And so the headlines read. We are confronted by those who are or would be our leaders who, nevertheless, reason and behave at lower levels of moral development.

Acting beyond pre-conventional and conventional modes of right and wrong challenges our institutions – whether family, school, or religion – to do better in fostering inclusive levels of development. In our demographic and disruptive world of change, moral development is crucial if we are to respond to issues that challenge us all. We cannot afford leaders or citizens who operate at the level of a greedy, angry or manipulative child.

In the issues we hear about most – education, health, environment, prisons, racism, lack of justice and compassion – we hear little about the moral development that is the foundation for these concerns. In the '70s and '80s there was much discussion of moral development by a number of theorists. Such notions seem now relegated to the past at a time when human activity may require this knowledge the most.

In general, human development proceeds from the egocentric child who must depend on family and others for survival to the ego/ethnocentric teenager and adult where family and one's group or groups [e.g., religion, political party, race, nation] take on major importance. For some it continues on to include the needs of the world.

A prominent Harvard developmental psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg [1927-1987], provided a conceptualization of moral development based on his cross-cultural research. He proposed six stages divided into three levels.

The first pre-conventional [egocentric] level involves Stage 1 that has to do with avoidance of punishment and deference to power [e.g., "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth"] and Stage 2 that is concerned with satisfying oneself and occasionally others.

The second conventional [ego/ethnocentric] level includes Stage 3, behaving for the approval of others [e.g., manners, peer pressure and required dress] and a Stage 4 orientation toward authority and fixed rules [e.g., the Ten Commandments].

The third post-conventional level includes Stage 5 where right action can change after examination [e.g., amendments of the U.S. Constitution] and Stage 6 which involves individual conscience and a self-chosen ethical principle [e.g., the Golden Rule origi-

nating in many cultures, not limited to Christianity, and most frequently misunderstood at the egocentric level as "do unto others as they've done unto you" (revenge) or "do unto others so they'll do for you."]

Eventually, children assert normal developmental independence and realize that they're not always punished for infractions of rules, decide that the "crime" may be more than worth the punishment, and recognize that as they grow older and physically larger their parents have decreasing control over them and their environment, and thus they move to Stage 2 satisfying themselves.

Most oppressed adults, whether out of frustration or exhaustion, will move to the Stage 2. People at Stage 2 only do things for what they'll "get out of it."

Typically they may externalize blame, be opportunistic, wary, manipulative, and exploitive. To the extent that they are bigger [as in "bullies"] and more powerful, they can cause great misery. People in this stage rather enjoy the challenge of breaking the law and are not intimidated – nor usually stopped – by rules and laws.

This is the stage of most prisoners in the U.S. It is also the stage of business: Buyer Beware! Almost all lawbreakers, whether "white" or "blue-collar crime," can be located in this stage. Whether street "con" artists, or "white-collar" smart, these individuals can often pretend group values well. They may be upper middle class or street gang members but they will support their group as long as it works for them.

It is important to note that while normally the stages are developmental, there are chemical and physiological states that can cause a "Stage 1" to artificially "progress" a stage, and higher stages to "regress" to Stage 2. The effects of addictive substances and behaviors that stimulate internal addiction [e.g., drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.] can cause Stage 2 behavior since it is the reward pathway they stimulate.

It is no surprise then that our prisons are full of drug and alcohol addicts.

Individuals at Stage 3 seek the approval of others and follow the conventions of their groups, whether in manners, speech or attire. "Particular values" are especially important to Stage 3 individuals and they often feel guilty for breaking the most trivial of rules. They seek "niceness" as opposed to universal "goodness."

Oriented to peers and "peer pressure," they only break rules if everyone in their group is "doing it." These are the individuals who would most likely be affected by "shame-based" legal sentencing. Stage 3 people will not want to be caught doing anything that

would embarrass them to their group.

Curiously, people at this stage will make unkind comments, seemingly unaware, about people of other races and religions in front of a person of that race or religion. When asked, they'll say something such as, "Oh, she's my friend, she's not like the 'others.'"

At Stage 4 individuals are oriented to authority and fixed rules. People will say, "Without laws there would be chaos" and they feel guilty breaking laws. Rules and laws are behaviorally stated – e.g., "don't steal," "don't kill" – but often they don't make finer distinctions such as the difference between denying health care to seriously ill people, starving people to death and killing them. In their reasoning, "legal" stealing based on common practices is acceptable.

These laws generally only apply within one's group. For example, one cannot kill within the group [murder], but may be required to kill someone from the "outside" [war]. Laws emphasize property orientation and possession.

Stage 4 individuals are generally law-abiding but will lack an understanding of the meaning or "spirit" behind the law. They are also often in social position to "find" or write loopholes in the law – loopholes which "just happen" to fit their ego/ethnocentric interests.

Kohlberg said that Stages 5 and 6 might be different forms of the same level with Stage 5 more legalistic in nature. Stage 5 individuals determine what is right based on open examination of laws. New evidence, new understandings or experiencing the dilemmas themselves may allow for changes in perception of what is moral. Such individuals are able to go beyond the immediate interests of their own groups in viewing matters such as justice. While they will not break existing laws, they will work conscientiously to make laws more just. There is formal opportunity for change in the U.S. Constitution, but few lawmakers actually achieve this stage of development – thus, laws too often reflect lower levels of development.

Individuals at Stage 6 act according to individual principle. This is the stage of the Golden Rule or the imperative stated by Western philosopher Immanuel Kant which says we should act only according to a principle that would be acceptable as a universal law for everyone. Such individuals will openly break laws which they believe to be unjust but only using the criteria of non-violence.

Research by Kohlberg and colleagues shows that most people do not develop past Stage 3, the adolescent stage, and the individuals who reach universal stages only seem to do so in mid-life and beyond.

What factors are related to moral development? Kohlberg suggested several. He wrote that leaving home and family, assisted in adult development when answers are no longer determined by one's family and group. Another factor in development is the experience of conflict that is not readily resolved at one's present stage so new ways must be found for reasoning and acting.

While Kohlberg viewed moral development as a cognitive process where reasoning was consistent at a given stage, later in life he considered conditions which would allow people to act at higher stages than they could reason. Moral development is obviously a matter that extends beyond cognitive ability.

There are many examples of highly abstract and intelligent humans who have demonstrated exceedingly low moral development and actions. Formal education may be helpful but is not required.

In fact, some conditions of education such as rigid inculcation act as barriers to development. Moral development requires the ability to examine consequences of one's actions and the actions of others, not just inculcated lists of unexamined values and related behaviors.

Later in life Kohlberg examined actions related to moral development. He observed that there are two decisions to be made in moral action. The first is the decision of what is right. The second is the commitment to act on that decision.

He and colleagues noted that persons socialized for obedience to authority might make the decision about what is right but not act on it without being told to do so. Those socialized to flexible autonomous reasoning and action intuitively acted on what was right, even though they could not give conscious reasons why. They had been taught through ongoing reasoning about good actions versus arbitrary obedience. This allowed them to act beyond what they could consciously reason.

In general, people at higher stages of reasoning were observed to be more likely to carry through on moral action.

Kohlberg told of interviewing people who had saved lives in plane crashes in the Boston and Washington, DC bay areas in the early 1980's. He reported that when he interviewed the men about their moral reasoning, they said they had no thoughts of whether to act or not, only whether to stop to remove their shoes and clothes so they wouldn't be weighed down as they swam to the rescue.

In other words, the "heroes" had already made the decision of what was right and their responsibility to act accordingly at an unconscious level and their consciousness was filled with the non-moral information of what was the best way to "follow through." Even the best moral judgments can go astray without knowledge of how to accomplish them.

In summary we need leaders and citizens who have the moral development to examine what is right, to accept the responsibility to act on what is right, and the knowledge and skills to follow through.

Tulsa resident Ann Dapice, PhD, is executive director of the Institute of Values Inquiry, a 501(c)(3) research organization, and director of Education and Research for T.K. Wolf Inc., a 501(c)(3) American Indian organization. She consults with the University of Pennsylvania on development of Native American Programs.

Three Simplistic Conservative Beliefs That Completely Slow All Progress

THIRD WAVE CAPITALISM

How Money, Politics, And The Pursuit Of Self-Interest Have Imperiled The American Dream

By John Ennenreich

Cornell University Press

\$29.95

BY JOHN EHRENREICH

The following is an excerpt from the new book Third Wave Capitalism:

For there to be any possibility of a progressive resurgence, we have to confront the conservative narrative and address the question of why so many Americans buy in to it. George W. Bush famously told then-Sen. Joseph Biden, “I don’t do nuance.”

The right has been very successful at reducing complex issues to simple slogans. The examples are many: the “Contract with America,” the “Right to Work,” the “Right to Life,” “death panels,” “If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns,” “weapons of mass destruction.”

Complexity is a confusing issue to the Left. We are caught between wanting to imitate the Right, with its catchy phrases, and a respect for the much more complex truth.

Three sets of simplistic conservative belief stand out, accepted by virtually all Republicans and, unfortunately, by many Democrats.

First: “We can’t.” The most pressing problem in the United States and the key to most of its problems, say conservatives, is our unbalanced budget and the resultant overwhelmingly large national debt. Raising taxes to deal with it is unthinkable. Higher taxes would burden ordinary taxpayers and businesses, the “job creators,” and would threaten our international competitiveness. The bottom line is that we simply can’t afford to expand government programs [for example, the social safety net].

Second: “The problems are too complex.” The belief that complex social problems can be solved through acts of government is widely considered to be foolish. Many years ago, when I was in college, Henry Kissinger, then a professor, would occasionally have lunch with the members of our campus anti-nuclear weapons group. Scoffing at what he saw as the naïveté of our proposals to advance world peace through a nuclear test ban treaty, he would proclaim in his deep German accent, “These things are more complicated than they seem.” [We callow youths, out of his presence, would mock him, proclaiming in fake German accents, “These things seem more complicated than they are.”]

Third: “We don’t want to.” To conservatives, freedom is inherently a characteristic of individuals and “big government” is the enemy of freedom and prosperity. Societal constraints on individual freedom put us on the slippery slope to tyranny. It is not government but the “free market” that solves social problems, and the only legitimate goals of public policy are to promote “growth” and serve the needs of businesses [the “job creators,” the “drivers of the economic engine”].

Let us examine each of these contentions. First, “we can’t” and the problem of the debt: Budgetary constraints seem to make it impossible even to consider introducing new and expensive government programs. Many liberal economists have argued that the supposed threat to our economy posed by the national debt has been greatly exaggerated. In any case, the

budget surpluses of the later Clinton years were turned into massive deficit neither by something inherent in our system of government nor by the alleged tendency of liberals to throw money at social problems. The causes of the deficit were simple. Government income was deliberately reduced by the Bush-era tax cuts favoring the wealthy and then reduced further, involuntarily, by the recessions of 2001 and 2008. Meanwhile government spending increased, largely due to the soaring costs of the Bush war of aggression in Iraq. Nothing inevitable. All reversible.

There are other, longer-term deficit concerns, to be sure, such as the shortfall anticipated for Social Security. The latter, at least, can be fairly easily fixed by adjusting the payroll tax [most notably by applying it to all earned income, not just income up to \$118,500, as it is now]. The only relatively intractable part of the deficit is that due to rising costs for Medicare and Medicaid, but what makes health-care costs “intractable” is our unwillingness to confront their real source, the medical-industrial complex.

But leaving the issue of the causes of the deficit aside for a moment, let us embrace complexity. Yes, we do have a moral obligation not to leave our grandchildren with a crippling burden of debt. But that assertion does not end the discussion of what is “moral.” We also have a moral obligation not to leave our grandchildren with a decaying infrastructure, not to leave them with the consequences of runaway global warming, not to leave them with the legacy of several generations of bad schooling, not to leave them with an over-expensive and under-effective health-care system, and not to leave them with a society riven by racism and morally tainted by the failure to eliminate poverty.

Then there is the “it’s too complex” argument: The irony is great. Americans pride ourselves on our “can-do” attitude, yet right-wing think tanks, media, pundits, politicians, and preachers have

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drummed into our heads over and over that, while individuals can dream of conquering the world [metaphorically, of course], we must reduce our expectations with respect to public action to meet common needs. The only way

to address societal problems is through “free market” solutions, they say.

Things are complicated. There are no magical solutions to the world’s problems. And no matter how reasonable, clever, or well-

crafted proposals for reform are, we can expect fierce opposition, blowback, unanticipated consequences, and unpredicted complications. But things are also very simple. It remains possible to imagine a better future for America and to take steps to make this vision real.

Finally: "We don't want to:" The conservative narrative continues with interlinked concerns about the proper roles of government and the proper relationship between government, business, the free market, and the distribution of wealth. Again the ironies are great. Mistrust of our government is perfectly understandable. It has long been bureaucratic, inefficient, wasteful, and opaque. It has long served business interests, although, as we have seen, in recent years it has become increasingly hard to untangle government from business interests. Let us recall the financial crisis of 2008 and the recession that began in late 2007 and, by the economists' definition of recessions, was over by mid-2009. It is hardly a secret that, in reality, by six years later we had still not recovered. Wages remained below their pre-recession levels, unemployment and underemployment remained high, and many of the public services that we had become used to were gone. But it was not the actions of government that caused the financial crisis and the recession and the failure to recover rapidly, but

the actions of the financial sector and the inaction of government at the behest of conservatives and their business allies.

It was the failure of government to regulate financial markets that permitted the abuses that led to the crisis, and the failure of government to provide adequate stimulus to the economy, the failure of the government to provide relief for "underwater" homeowners, and the failure of the government to maintain the social safety net that have extended the suffering.


Yet somehow the Right has turned that history into blaming the downturn on "big government" itself and into demands to cut government programs even further.

It is the same with the vastly increased misdistribution of wealth and income of recent years. It resulted from soaring CEO salaries, monopolistic power over markets, the same predatory lending practices that also brought us the financial crisis and the Great Recession, tax cuts mainly benefiting the rich, government tax subsidies to private corporations, laws passed under corporate influence to weaken unions so that they can't protect the incomes of their members, and so forth.

Yet somehow it is OK with the Right for the private sector to engineer a vast redistribution of income but not for the government, acting on all of our behalves, to redistribute it back.

John Ehrenreich is a clinical psychologist who's authored books on health, humanitarian and social policy as well as U.S. history.

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Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

huge budget and social pressures. Finnish students slipped in one recent round of global benchmark tests."

Finland, he believes, will view times of struggle as opening doors of great opportunity.

Quoting French philosopher Albert Camus, Doyle said, "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better – pushing right back."

Finland's schools have long been its bedrock strength, and their approach to education is an inspiration and a model to the world.

Bill Cirone is superintendent of schools in Santa Barbara County, CA.

Oklahoma Friends Meetings (Quakers)

*Friends believe there is
that of God in everyone.
They cannot prove this,
but when they act as if
it were true, their trust
is justified.*

- Author unknown

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Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

protecting the rights of individuals not to be exposed to untrained, unlicensed pistol-packers?

Ironically, Coody's specious proposal may have done all clear-thinking Oklahomans a favor.

It affords an opportunity to discuss an important public policy matter that somehow never seems to capture the imagination of a Legislature – perhaps because it is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the gun lobby.

The issue: Why not require liability insurance for gun owners?

The state already requires Oklahomans to carry liability insurance for one of the deadliest weapons around, the motor vehicle. The idea is, if you cause an accident and damage someone else, you have insurance to help make the innocent victim whole.

Gun accidents happen. Why shouldn't victims of a weapon-related mishap enjoy the same expectation that they, too, will be made whole?

Irony Alert

One of the more delicious moments during the just-completed legislative session was when read-my-lips, no-new-taxes Republicans wailed publicly that Democrats would not support a \$1.50 per pack cigarette tax hike.

Seriously.

The same Republicans that own 71 of 101 House and 39 of 48 Senate seats, more than enough votes to do whatever they want – and their party's governor, Mary Fallin, to sign it into law.

Isn't it interesting that legislative Republicans who assiduously marginalized Democrats since seizing legislative super-majorities suddenly were left with little in their quiver but to blame Democrats for not helping save them from the fiscal mess they created?

House Democrats were wise to exercise their limited power to influence the budget by voting as a bloc – they refused to support the cigarette tax unless Republicans agreed to a Medicaid expansion that would pump \$900 million federal dollars into the state.

These are tax dollars that Oklahoma taxpayers sent to Washington. The Legislature's refusal to accept the federal expansion means Sooner tax dollars are underwriting health care for the working poor in other states while 175,000 of Oklahoma's most vulnerable remain without health coverage and the state's hospitals buckle under the mounting costs of uncompensated care.

All because of who resides in the White House. Rather than work with ObamaCare – *oh, the humanity!* – the state's Republican leadership would rather

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risk the physical health of thousands of Oklahomans and the fiscal health of Oklahoma's medical facilities.

Talk about playing politics with people's lives.

The 2016 session may be the best argument yet for budget-only sessions every other year. Or state Auditor Gary Jones' idea of making Oklahoma's statehouse a unicameral legislature.

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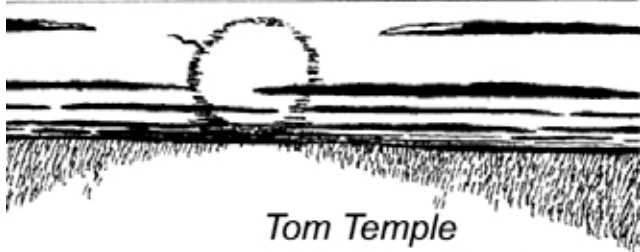
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men and women of the right to join the union
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Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Dart: To term-limited Rep. Sally Kern, saying in her farewell House speech she stands by her 2008 remarks the “homosexual agenda” poses a greater threat to the U.S. than terrorists. Her bigotry won’t be missed.

We note the recent passing of former Gov. David Hall. Too bad he’s most remembered for federal indictment only three days after leaving office in 1975. He should be remembered for standing up to OK’s most powerful interests.

Wow! U.S. adults claiming no religious affiliation [22.8%] now outnumber Catholics [20.8%] and Protestants [14.7%]. – Pew Research Center

Dart: To U.S. Rep. Steve Russell, authoring proposal that would let religious groups receiving government contracts discriminate against LGBTQ individuals. He calls it religious freedom; we call it bigotry.

For all the pre-session chatter about criminal justice reform, lawmakers mostly dawdled. Best hope for comprehensive change is ex-Speaker Kris Steele’s proposed state questions, 780 and 781. They need 65,987 signatures by June 7.

Texas is following Oklahoma’s lead when it comes to undermining local control. Gov. Greg Abbott signed a measure prohibiting local bans on fracking, nullifying one enacted in Denton.

AARP Oklahoma recently honored Gov. Mary Fallin, Tulsa Sen. Brian Crain and Weatherford Rep. Harold Wright as “Capitol Caregivers” for efforts on first-in-nation law helping unpaid family caregivers.

The percentage of students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied in 2013 dropped to 22% – lowest percentage since 2005. – National Center for Education Statistics

All the slick-tongued oratory in the world can’t conceal the duplicity on display this session by House leadership. They imposed deep cuts on most agencies, while giving their own budget a \$1.8 billion boost. Then insisting it was just an accounting maneuver. Yeah, right.

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

will demand justice at the ballot box in November.

Phyllis Bryant
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

In an attempt to maintain its strong anti-LGBT position, the Oklahoma Legislature has banned the sale of milk in Oklahoma. Sen. Ralph Shortey and Rep. Sally Kern sponsored the bill.

"The homos are trying to kill us all. They are even proud of their genocide," said Shortey.

Kern shook her head as she held up a gallon jug of milk. "Look! It's right here on the label of the very thing that is on every breakfast table in Oklahoma. They tried to be clever, but we deciphered it and the message is clear: Homogenized is code for 'homo genocide,'" exclaimed Kern.

Shortey said, "In my day, milk came from cows, not homos."

This emergency legislation was to take place immediately, and all Oklahomans are asked to check their milk. Kern said if the container says "homogenized," the milk should be immediately discarded.

Scott J. Hamilton
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

For the past two years many football players on Baylor's team were guilty of criminal sexual assaults on various women. The head coach, Art Briles, and university president, Kenneth Starr, covered up these crimes in the interest of not jeopardizing their highly successful football program. When the Baylor Board of Trustees discovered this evidence they promptly fired both men.

If the name Kenneth Starr seems familiar it's because he was independent counsel in the 1990s and nearly succeeded in orchestrating the removal of President Clinton from office via the impeachment route. Starr and his highly paid staff had not discovered the Monica Lewinsky affair but rather had the evidence handed to them by Lewinsky friend, Linda Tripp.

Starr had come up empty in his pursuit of the infamous "Whitewater," "Vince Foster suicide," and "Travelgate" so-called "scandals."

To his credit, Starr had several years ago expressed



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"regret" that his efforts led to the impeachment trial. Since then, Starr has even praised Bill Clinton as "Jimmy Carter-like" in his humanitarian efforts since

leaving office in 2001.

Finally, though being removed as president at Baylor, Starr remains as chancellor and faculty member.

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

In reply to Mary Francis' *The 'Dividend' In Fee and Dividend* [April Observer]:

The purpose of carbon fees is to bring down carbon pollution of the atmosphere by making products with large carbon foot-prints more expensive and those with smaller ones more attractive to consumers. It depends on "free market" capitalism to make it work.

I put quotes around "free market" because no market is free. Somebody always controls and manipulates it, whether that is government doing it for the public good, or big business doing it for profit.

A socialist economy is not the objective of Fee and Dividend, but if the free market is to be employed in the interests of cleaning up the planet, then consumers must have money with which to direct the market.

For that reason, funds cannot be diverted to govern-

ment, but must be returned to the citizens on a per capita basis, free from taxes.

Fee and Dividend works by charging a fee on carbon as it is produced at the well-head, mine mouth or port-of-entry. Producers pay the fee directly; consumers pay it in the price of the products they purchase. The fee must be charged as close to the point of origin as possible so that no product escapes it and products damaged or lost in the distribution system are included. We don't want carbon from leaking gas lines and maritime disasters escaping into the air without paying the fee.

Is this "fee" really a tax? No. If you refuse to pay a tax, the government takes your property and sells it to collect the tax. If you refuse to pay the fee, nothing happens, except that you can't buy the product. Try to run your car without gasoline.

To make this whole system work, we need the help of a capitalist production system. Only through competition for consumer dollars will producers be encouraged to reduce their carbon use.

Doug Stevenson
Via E-Mail

Virtue

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

mentorship, as is the case on many college campuses today. Absent civic virtue, religious differences trigger anger and violence, inflicting harm on minority religious groups. Absent civic virtue, school board and city council hearings degenerate into shouting matches, tearing apart communities.

In short, absent civic virtue, freedom is no longer free.

Reversing the decline in our collective commitment to civic virtue will not be easy – especially in the year of the anything-goes presidential campaign.

But if we take the long view, there is something we can do to prepare the next generation to do better: Make sure that every school teaches and models civic virtues and good character as a core part of its educational mission.

Last month, while grownups were shouting past each other at the Democratic convention in Nevada, young people of strong civic character were being celebrated in Washington, DC.

At a press event on May 17, Character.org, a national organization that supports character development in schools, workplaces and communities, designated 68 schools and four districts from 15 states as National Schools and Districts of Character. [Full disclosure: I am a founding board member of Character.org.]

If you want to feel hopeful about the future of democratic freedom in America, visit a School of Character [the complete list of past and current honorees can be found at www.Character.org]. From the moment

you walk in the door, you can tell that this is a place where young people and adults care about one another.

In Schools of Character, students, teachers, administrators, staff and parents collaborate to create a shared commitment to core ethical values that are taught and modeled throughout the school culture. Students participate in service-learning projects, develop the skills of civil dialogue, learn to address differences with understanding and respect, and in many other ways, prepare to be engaged, ethical citizens in a democracy.

Educating for civic virtue works: In Schools of Character, bullying is rare, cheating declines, test scores go up, drop out rates are low, attendance and graduation rates are high. Isn't that the learning environment we want for every student in every school?

Legislatures and courts alone cannot protect our fundamental freedoms, especially the freedoms protected by the First Amendment. Our freedom is ultimately sustained by the civic virtue of citizens.

"Human rights can only be assured among a virtuous people," wrote George Washington. "The general government can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an oligarchy, an aristocracy, or any despotic or oppressive form so long as there is any virtue in the body of the people."

Charles C. Haynes is vice president of the Newseum Institute and founding director of the Religious Freedom Center.

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