

Climate change on labor's radar

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

It's been 26 years since NASA scientist James Hansen told the U.S. Senate that human use of fossil fuels is responsible for an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that are causing global warming. It's been 17 years since three dozen countries (but not the United States) agreed in the Kyoto Protocol to cut greenhouse gas emissions. It's been eight years since Al Gore released the climate change documentary *Inconvenient Truth*. And during that time, global atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has risen — from 350 parts per million to 363, 385, and this year, 400 parts per million — a level not seen in 800,000 years.

On Sept. 21, as many as 400,000 people took part in People's Climate March in New York City to demand action be taken *now* to slow and reverse global warming. And the big event was mirrored by 2,600 other events around the world, including a rally and march of several thousand in Portland at Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

In New York City, labor unionists took up several city blocks. In Portland, the labor presence was pretty small: Just two or three banners, and not more than 20 participants. But attendees did

hear from the state's top labor union officer — Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain — who made a call for unity.

"There are those who want to force workers to choose between good jobs and the environment, and there are those who will support environmental change only if done as cheap as possible at the expense of workers," Chamberlain said. "Those are false observations and false choices."

Chamberlain followed, and echoed, Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, who called global climate change the most serious challenge and greatest threat facing our children and our grandchildren: "This is not a choice between the environment and the economy. It is the simple statement that the environment is not a resource to be exploited. In fact the environment is the foundation of our economy."

But if that's so, serious measures are going to have to be deployed. Climate change has already begun to affect the state, national, and global economy. In Oregon, California winemakers are buying up Willamette Valley vineyards, driven north by worsening drought. Insect pests are also moving north, and dry forests have made large-scale annual wildfires the new normal.

To address global warming, environmental groups — with labor at the table — are discussing the pros and cons of campaigning for a carbon tax in the 2015 Oregon Legislature. The Canadian province of British Columbia has implemented a carbon tax, while the state of California has begun a "cap-and-trade" system of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (an improved version of the system implemented in Europe). In the state of Washington, Governor Jay Inslee has formed a Carbon Emission Reduction Task Force that is studying both options. Oregon legislators considered a cap-and-trade bill in 2009, but it didn't have enough support to become law.

But in 2013, a bill passed by the Oregon Legislature commissioned an in-depth study of the impacts of a carbon tax. That report is due this November. If Oregon legislators take up a carbon tax proposal, it could have far-reaching local benefits as well as costs. Putting a price on carbon would stimulate conservation. And a preliminary version of the report indicates that a tax of \$60 per ton of carbon emission would generate as much as \$2 billion a year in revenue. The Oregon Constitution says any tax on motor vehicle fuel has to go for road construction and



The science is in: It's getting hotter. The only question is what to do about it. At the Sept. 21 People's Climate March in Portland, supporters demand action while marching along Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

maintenance, so any portion of a carbon tax that affected gasoline could generate a boom in highway and road

work, or even resuscitate scrapped plans for a new transit-friendly I-5 bridge over the Columbia River.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON LABOR ENDORSEMENTS



IBEW Local 48 endorses candidates who support living wages and working conditions

STATE RACES

- 3rd Congressional District **BOB DINGETHAL**
- 17th Legislative District Position 1 **MONICA STONIER**
- 17th Legislative District Position 2 **RICHARD McCLUSKEY**
- 18th Legislative District Position 1 **MIKE BRIGGS**
- 18th Legislative District Position 2 **MAUREEN WINNINGHAM**
- 19th Legislative District Position 1 **DEAN TAKKO**
- 19th Legislative District Position 2 **BRIAN BLAKE**
- 49th Legislative District Position 1 **SHARON WYLIE**
- 49th Legislative District Position 2 **JIM MOELLER**

COUNTY RACES

- CLARK**
Craig Pridemore
County Commissioner Dist. No. 3
Doug Lasher
Clark County Treasurer
Deanna Pauli-Hammond
County Clerk
COWLITZ
Mark Smith
County Commissioner Dist. No. 3
- Byron Hanke**
PUD Commissioner No. 3
Tony Golik
Prosecuting Attorney

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2014 Endorsements

U.S. HOUSE

3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
BOB DINGETHAL

STATE SUPREME COURT

- Pos. 1 — **MARY YU**
- Pos. 3 — **MARY FAIRHURST**
- Pos. 4 — **CHARLES JOHNSON**
- Pos. 9 — **DEBRA STEPHENS**

LEGISLATURE

- 17TH DISTRICT:
House #1: **MONICA STONIER**
- 18TH DISTRICT:
House #1: **MIKE BRIGGS**
House #2: **MAUREEN WINNINGHAM**
- 49TH DISTRICT:
House #1: **SHARON WYLIE**
House #2: **JIM MOELLER**

(Paid for and authorized by the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council.)



CLARK COUNTY

Commissioner Dist 1:
CRAIG PRIDEMORE

Prosecuting Attorney:
TONY GOLIK

Public Utilities Commissioner, #3:
BYRON HANKE

County Clerk:
DEANNA PAULI-HAMMOND

County Sheriff:
CHUCK ATKINS

Superior Court Judge:
BERNARD VELJACIC

Clark County Home Rule Charter
YES
County Treasurer:
DOUG LASHER

BALLOT MEASURES

Yes on Initiative 1351: Reducing class sizes so that students of all ages and backgrounds, from all parts of our state, have the opportunity to learn and succeed in uncrowded classrooms.