

# A Republic in Peril

On our 235th anniversary

The January 2010 Citizens United U.S. Supreme Court decision released a flood of corporate money into our political process. Corporate spending on the 2010 congressional election skyrocketed. Prospects for corporate spending in the presidential election next year are enough to frighten the most optimistic among us.

With their Citizens United opinion, the Roberts Court decided that political spending by corporations cannot be limited by the people. The word "bribery" has lost its meaning in this country. *Webster's Dictionary* defines "bribe" (noun) as "A price, reward, gift or favor bestowed or promised with a view to pervert the judgment or corrupt the conduct of a person in a position of trust, as an official or a voter." Under the Citizens United decision, corporations have a constitutional right to spend unlimited amounts of money to sway political campaigns.

Did you know that 3 percent of ExxonMobil profits last year is more than all the money spent on congressional and national elections in 2008? The stage is set for corporations to assume complete control over our political process.

Meanwhile, global corporations post record profits as our social safety net unravels and we wage war on three continents. And the same financiers who created the mortgage bubble and crashed the world economy in early 2008 are recruited by the White House and entrusted with the responsibility for fixing the economic damage they helped create. Incredibly, their solutions involve trillions in government bailouts to financial corporations, resulting in hundreds of billions of dollars in bonuses to their former colleagues.

How did the state of our politics come to this? Is there a way to awaken from this nightmare? We say yes.

A group of local citizens has come together this year to join the nationwide social movement to restore peoples based democracy. We call ourselves "We the People-Eugene." We have come to realize that our situation is the result of a centuries-long battle between financial elites and we the people, the citizens of these United States. We note that our nation's founders warned us of the dangers outlined above:

In 1776 Adam Smith, "father of the free market," saw unregulated corporations as "a conspiracy (of moneyed interests) against the public."

Thomas Jefferson said that purpose of representative government is to "curb the excesses of the monied interests." In 1791, in discussions about the first Bank of the United States, Jefferson said "The end of democracy and the defeat of the American revolution will occur when government falls into the hands of the lending institutions and moneyed incorporations." And that "corporations that will grow up around (the banks) will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered."

And this from Abraham Lincoln, in 1864: "I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the (Civil) war, corporations have been enthroned, and an air of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."

The American Revolutionary War with England was directed against a corporation: the notorious East India Company, which sought domination over American commerce. Political pamphlets of the day warned of the privations and oppression Americans would face under the cruel hand of the company.

For nearly a century after the revolution, states were able to rein in corporations, but then the immense financial power of the railroads was used to take control of state legislatures and secure sympathetic appointments to the courts. Wholesale bribery thus eventually allowed corporations to assert rights as "persons" under the First, Fourth, Fifth and 14th Amendments, so as to escape state controls. Our generation is witness to the culmination of this process in the absurd Citizens United decision, which legalizes bribery in the name of corporate "free speech." Three out of four Americans across all political boundaries disagree with the Citizens United decision.

We find ourselves in the situation Smith, Jefferson and Lincoln warned us about. The power to regulate corporations, which our Founding Fathers won for us, has been given back to the "monied interests" through their corrupting of the intent of the American Revolution.

But wait; our own state constitution reminds us that the power and responsibility to solve this problem remains with we the people. The opening lines of the Oregon Constitution, written in 1857 before the Civil War – and before corporations bought control of the federal courts – declare: "Natural rights inherent in people. We declare that all men, when they form a social compact are equal in right; that all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness; and they have at all times a right to alter, reform, or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper."

We The People-Eugene works to make information available about what our political climate looks like and why. We invite you to join us at our fifth town hall meeting at 7 pm July 27 at Harris Hall. Come hear lawyer and LCC political science professor Stan Taylor explain how Wall Street acquired such power. Please join our discussion of ways to reverse the tide of corporate domination and come together with us to answer that most basic of human questions: How are we to govern ourselves?

*This essay was co-authored by Fergus Mclean, Graham Lewis, Alicia Markus and Stan Taylor. Contact wethepeopleeugene@gmail.com*

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DON'T FEEL SAFER

The Lane County Public Safety Coordinating Council's makeup must reflect a majority vested interest in incarceration, not rehabilitation, considering their recent 11-5 vote for funding cuts. Sponsors will lose 52 percent of its funding for released inmates, over a half million dollars. After nearly half a million in cuts, three out of four serious released sex offenders will no longer have full supervision, treatment or enough caseworkers. State funds for drug and alcohol abuse treatment for indigents at Emergence will be cut in half.

Whatever interests the council heeded, they surely weren't Lane County voters. The recommendation flies in the face of repeated county voter rejection of local tax proposals that were skewed toward greater lock-ups without sufficient rehabilitation and education components. The PSCC's decision doesn't make me feel safer and isn't likely to save taxpayer dollars. Instead, we will spend more on the barred side of our widened, revolving jailhouse and prison doors.

According to Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Measure 57's supposed treatment programs are unlikely to materialize if it is implemented. This will further imbalance our system toward incarceration and away from rehabilitation.

We unwisely belt tighten by taking off the belt and using it for punishment, when punishment through jail time itself is demonstrably the cause of much repeated crime — not its cure. Our county commissioners would do well to reject this proposal in favor of maintaining rehabilitation program spending. County commissioners will answer to me and other majority voters if they implement this lopsided recommendation.

*Ethen Perkins  
Eugene*

### FORESTS FOR HORSES

Each *EW* has multiple letters on how the rich aren't carrying their fair share of the tax burden and control our society. Cognitive dissonance was displayed in the June 2 *EW*.

In the Slant section, Seneca owner Aaron Jones was congratulated for his horses placing well in national races.

News Briefs mentions how Jones had fought environmentalists in order to log Trapper old growth. Question: How do you think Jones paid for those horses? Answer: Decimated forests.

Aaron Jones is a minor player compared to the ultra-rich. Billionaires are treated as gods and grace magazine covers and TV shows. Billionaires are sociopaths whose lifestyles use more of the world's resources and create more waste.

The occasional bone is thrown as "philanthropy." A philanthropist steals from the workers and the environment to give to themselves. They give a pittance back and are called heroes.

Would Phil Knight give money to UO if he didn't get his son's name on the arena and had Nike symbols plastered across campus?

I'm not saying be rude to the rich but don't praise them. Realize that their interests and ours are diametrically opposed.

We don't want charity, we want environmental and economic justice.

*Scott Fife  
Eugene*

### FIX THE ECONOMY?

If you just want jobs, why not build some pyramids? Or stop using farm equipment and go back to hand planting? Why are there so many people complaining about not being able to carry out their life sentences in a corporate cubicle as a wage-slave so some parasitic capitalist douchebag can buy another yacht?

As George Carlin said, it's called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it. This country needs to wake up from the fantasy that we can continue to grow more top-heavy, bureaucratic and inefficient and continue to produce disposable garbage, because monopoly capitalism will suppress all honest competition.

This economy is based on the wasteful and untenable principles of planned obsolescence, annual model changes and volume sales instead of quality and dependability. We have more bureaucrats and managers than we do skilled craftspeople and farmers. We need local, state and national initiatives to help start and run small businesses and co-op workshops where skilled craftspeople