

OUR FAILED LEADERSHIP

The full page ad on the back cover of *EW* Feb. 28 illustrates the interesting psychological conditioning that happens to politicians over the course of their careers. The ad extensively quotes Peter DeFazio calling for a moratorium on a whole class of toxic chemicals used in commercial forestry. The facts and detail presented make DeFazio sound like the kind of strong, environmentally conscious leader that we'd like to have holding office.

Unfortunately, DeFazio wrote those words back in 1985. Having spent the subsequent 28 years building a solid career in politics, DeFazio has found it necessary to replace the principles and idealism of his youth with the pragmatism of a seasoned politician. He now supports legislation that would place thousands of additional acres of protected federal forest land into commercial logging with massive clearcuts and helicopter spraying of toxic chemicals.

From the Tea Party to Occupy Wall Street, concerned citizens of all stripes are wondering what's wrong with our "leadership." We must bring a discussion of human psychology into politics. Politicians, bureaucrats and corporate executives fall across a psychological spectrum. At one end is willful ignorance, at the other end is psychopathy. But the vast majority of the people running the

world are in some degree of denial or delusion, and therein lies human kind's biggest problem.

Robert Bolman
Eugene

RIP, GLENWOOD CAT

On Thursday, Feb. 28, in the late afternoon, a rather huge, somewhat salt and pepper colored, tailless cat found its way between some hedges for a bit of rest in the Glenwood area on Franklin Boulevard. I saw this cat resting from inside a building and as I approached the window for a better view, the cat saw me and ran off into the street and was killed by a passing car. After my sadness I got a box and went out into the street, stopping traffic, and put the remains in the box.

This was a tragic incident and I am sure the owners of the cat are wondering where it is — maybe kids too. A family member has died with no way to contact the owners and it was important for me to let the Glenwood community be aware of this. A donation to Greenhill has been made in the name of "Glenwood Cat."

Dennis Lyons
Glenwood

4J'S GUINEA PIGS

As a parent of a junior at Churchill High School, I am wondering why no

one is asking the students and parents at Churchill how the 3x5 schedule is working for us? If we have to be the guinea pigs in this experiment, wouldn't it be respectful for the School Board to put our suffering to good use in informing their decision about the fate of the other high schools?

How can the School Board not challenge Superintendent Berman's comment (at the end of the March 6 meeting) that he is committed to making sure the new schedule allows students to take both music and a full IB [International Baccalaureate]? When is he planning to make good on this commitment? Because my daughter is losing her band class right now. As both my daughter and CHS parent Julie Butler explained at the meeting, there is no way to make this work in the 3x5 schedule.

This year at Churchill, my daughter is attending the School of Hard Knocks and learning that the adults running the world don't really know what they are doing, that people don't really mean what they say and that even when you speak truth to power (as she did so well) and even when you have an overwhelming majority on your side (80 percent of high school teachers!), the people in charge can still ignore you. Is this what the 4J School District wants her to learn?

Sharon Blick
Eugene

PLANNING TAINTED

It is not surprising that Delta Sand and Gravel (*R-G*, March 3) has plans to expand its mining operations on 68 acres of farmland and has hired Bill Kloos as their attorney.

Lane County mining interests are now emboldened by the stripping of public input by the recent ruling of no site review for the residents of Dexter/Lost Valley (Parvin Butte). Lost Valley Rock Products also used Bill Kloos as their attorney.

Bill Kloos' comment "I am confident (the county) will see it the way we see it" should cause much concern to the opponents of Delta's expansion.

The influx of political money from mining interests to Lane County commissioners has tainted the planning process. The commissioners no longer represent their districts and we shall remember them on voting day.

Arlen Markus
Dexter

ACCESS TO GLASSBAR

Please, anyone who cares about keeping our parks open to public access, go to the Glassbar Island Facebook page and read all about it and sign the petition, and tell your friends too. The county is telling us we can't cross 100 yards of parking lot to get to the state-park! The river and

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Ways and Drones

WHAT CAN DEVLIN AND BUCKLEY GET DONE?

When we did PERS reform in 2003, we didn't attach it to the budget as severely as you're seeing in this 2013 version of the Hot Air Society. It's stunning to see both parties and two branches of state government simultaneously tying the funding of education, public safety and human services so tightly to one target.

Gov. Kitzhaber linked his proposed budget with \$850 million in PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) savings directly to K-12 spending. The Republicans, through the Oregon School Board Association, proposed reforms totaling \$1.5 billion in PERS savings, gutting benefits for their main whipping boys and girls — teachers and public employees. You've got to hand it to those school board association folks, though; thank God we have all 197 Oregon school districts' boards looking out for students' self interests and not their own. I wonder if they've even contemplated the savings that could accrue to K-12 if we simply agreed as a state to go to 36 county-based school districts? Think about it; do we really need 197 school districts with their redundant superintendents and redundant administrative staff? But I can hear the cacophony of yelping already: That's a third rail of Oregon politics! Drain and Yoncalla, for example, could never merge: What would happen to the football programs?!

I agree with the teachers, firefighters and cops that there are other equitable ways out of this economic mess: Place more responsibility on the shoulders of the big banks and corporations that caused it, not on the overburdened backs of working and retired Oregonians. I agree with their unions that before the rug is pulled out from under a single retiree, we need to make sure that every corporation pays its fair share. Before our teachers, firefighters and personal support workers are asked yet again to do more with less, we need to make sure that our leaders are being as responsible and efficient with our tax dollars as possible. It's the Oregon way. Take that, you school boards, you!

The guys in the middle of this negotiation are the Democratic co-chairs of the joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin and Rep. Peter Buckley. Devlin is one of my heroes. The former Marine drill instructor defeated then Public Enemy #1 of the Oregon public employee unions, Bob Tiernan, for his first election victory.

Buckley is also a great guy. He should have gotten the Hot Air Perseverance and Perspicacity Award last session, when the House was evenly divided. Buckley was stuck in a room for six months as co-co-chair of House Ways and Means with Dennis Richardson, who was a coconut. Peter had to spend an entire session with that guy, and he still came out of it with his sanity and a grin.

The co-chairs' initial proposal depends on about \$450 million in PERS savings, using a variation of the reforms suggested by Kitzhaber. Granted, it's light, but this is just a starting point. Buckley makes a good point; to any extent the Legislature is going to rely on PERS fixes, those fixes are at risk in the courts. Without a reasonable discussion of new revenue, that reliance alone could be devastating to future agency budgets if the courts don't sustain the changes.

While Devlin and Buckley are the co-chairs of the joint Ways and Means Committee, they don't operate exactly jointly. Because all revenue bills, anything having to do with a tax increase, must originate in the House. All revenue bills require a 60 percent majority to pass. There are 34 House Democrats and 26 House Republicans. Ergo, no percent partisan majority. Granted, the D's could pull off an R or two — if they could find brave Republicans who were never running for office again in their lifetime or who are already expected to be defeated by a know-nothing Tea Party knucklehead in the primary. But then you'd also have to have all your Democrat votes lined up as well. Good luck with that one.

You have the same problem in the Senate. And the Senate, even though it has a 16-14 Democrat edge, also got more conservative. Three of the relatively moderate Republicans left the Senate. Democrats no longer can negotiate with reasonable folks like Frank Morse, Dave Nelson or Chris Telfer; they were replaced by remorseless righties.

But, there's always hope. Guess who the chair of the House Revenue Committee is? I'll give you a hint: He's from Lane County and he'll tax anything that moves — as Grattan Kerans used to say.

Tony Corcoran is currently a state employee and his observations in this column are those of a private Oregon citizen.

