

I had time to work with kids, to identify their problems, to work on solutions, to build relationships. Kids had access to lots of creative elective classes.

When Measure 5 passed in 1990, everything changed. Corporations that used to pay half of the taxes in Oregon now paid 35 percent. They saved billions in taxes. The children of Oregon paid the price.

These same corporations, and their national counterparts, now have a powerful role in deciding what gets taught in Oregon, what gets tested and what subjects don't matter. Meanwhile, the captains of industry send their kids to private schools, where they are not tested every year, and where they have lots of access to art, music, languages, etc.

The only route forward in reclaiming public education is to begin by saying "no" to these tests. Let us reclaim a time when local people had a meaningful say in how their children were educated.

*Roscoe Caron
Eugene*

ANTIQUATED FORESTRY

If you are concerned about herbicide drift from aerial spraying of timber lands, please contact Sen. Chris Edwards as soon as possible: (503) 986-1707, 900 Court St. NE, S-411, Salem 97301.

Email: sen.chrisedwards@state.or.us.
Website: oregonlegislature.gov/edwardsc.
Edwards chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, and he controls the fate of this bill — he can schedule a hearing for this much-needed bill, or not! This may happen as soon as mid-March.

On Feb. 11, Oregon Sen. Michael Dembrow and Rep. Ann Lininger and seven other co-sponsors filed bill SB 613, the Public Health and Water Resources Protection Act, to protect the health of rural Oregonians living near industrial forests and farm land.

What does SB 613 accomplish? 1) Timely notification prior to an aerial spray, 2) Accuracy in reporting pesticide use, 3) A protective buffer around schools and homes and enhanced buffers to protect drinking water systems and fish bearing streams and 4) Ensures the Oregon Health Authority is empowered to respond and investigate poisoning emergencies. OHA will also be provided with resources to develop a program to educate health care practitioners in diagnosis and treatment of poisoning.

This bill is supported by Lane County Medical Society, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, League of Women Voters, Beyond Toxics, Oregon Wild and over 20 other groups in Oregon.

*Carla Hervet, RN, MS
Eugene*

WHAT TIME IS IT?

When I'm walking around downtown, people sometimes ask me for the time, or for directions. I suggest we all coordinate our efforts to refuse those requests, because who knows what people are really doing with that time, and who knows what people are really doing with those directions?

*Ashley Wright
Eugene*

BAD FOR THE SCHOOLS?

Eugene 4J's form to opt out of the tests reads that parents have to have a "sincerely held belief." This suggests that the district will analyze the sincerity and basis of your belief.

As one who has studied the law, I have a "sincerely held belief" that under the First Amendment, the state (that includes public schools) does not have the right to pass judgment on whether someone has a sincerely held religious belief.

Schools must officially try to ensure that most students take the test. The principal will likely tell you that opting out is bad for the school.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Educators have been protesting this destructive path of high-stakes tests but have not been successful in stopping this. It appears that the only way possible to stop the destruction of our schools is massive

parent and student protest. (Thousands of New Mexico students walked out of their tests.)

Opting out of these harmful, invalid tests is the best thing you can do for your child, your child's teacher and your child's school. Just think. If all of the students in a class were opted out of the tests, then their teacher could teach something really interesting. Perhaps a lesson on the Boston Tea Party.

High school students, especially, have been set up to fail these tests. There is an alternative way for high school students to graduate. For your writing sample, I suggest a paper exploring the "sincerely held beliefs" of Gandhi.

*Nancy Willard
Eugene*

DELUSIONAL THINKING

"This Smart House," by Sophia June March 5, is subtitled "Saving the Planet with Home Automation Systems." "Smart" systems are "the future of sustainability," she declares. A perfect example of green/sustainable, i.e. delusional, comfort-zone "thinking." Easy to laugh at for its idiotic superficiality, but the denial is not a laughing matter.

Techno-modernity is the current stage of civilization, which is failing like every civilization before it. This one, by the

HOT AIR SOCIETY

BY TONY CORCORAN

Dems Press On!

THE PLOT THICKENS IN OREGON'S VACCINATION HULLABALOO

It's so much more entertaining watching Salem politics than the Boehner and McConnell Obamadrama immigration fiasco in D.C. The Oregon Senate already previewed snarky political hot-air theater in its raucous partisan debate over low-carbon fuel emissions, and the House then passed the low-carbon bill to Kate Brown in a 31-29 dust-up after sticking Kate's motor voter bill down the collective Republican pie hole. And speaking of Kate, Gov. Brown signed her first bill, a change in the outcome of class-action suits, a Democrat target since last session.

Politics may indeed make strange bedfellows, but lately Oregon's Legislature is beginning to look like an Oddfellows sleepover. We are about to have a big debate over our state policy on vaccinations, and conspiracy theories abound. Science versus Scientology! The public commons versus private parental libertarian rights! High political drama from the right and left!

Leading the fight for the Democrats is Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, a Beaverton-area family physician who graduated from OHSU and practices medicine there. That's what I love about Salem's citizen Legislature; not only are there smart people who practice what they preach, but they are also trained professionals who can teach what they practice — like intelligent public health policy!

Dr. Steiner Hayward is sponsoring SB 442, which would ban parents from claiming non-medical exemptions from their children's school vaccinations. Elizabeth and I met last week to discuss her experience

as the sponsor of this controversial measure. She said she'd been the target of some very aggressive phone and internet nastiness. She begged me not to Google her name. Her haters want to tie her down and inject her because of her neo-Nazi attitude.

This apparently was quite hurtful to this nice Jewish doctor lady. I asked her if there was any organized support or opposition in Salem for the bill. She pointed to the proponents, the usual suspects, the Oregon Medical Association, the Oregon Nurses Association, OHSU, Oregon hospitals, the Academy of Family Physicians and various public health officials. Even the osteopaths support the bill, and they never agree with MDs about anything!

The opposition is indeed odd. First came the news that the lobbyist for the Oregon Chiropractic Association, Dr. Vern Saboe, announced that he would "host" the researcher, Andrew Wakefield, whose infamous 1998 study on the link between autism and common vaccines was called "unethically financed and fraudulent" by the *British Medical Journal*. Wakefield was scheduled to testify before the Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care before Steiner Hayward found out and canceled his appearance.

Then, out of the blue (literally), guess who else wants a piece of this action? Senate Republican Tim Knoop has offered to host Robert Kennedy Jr., who is renting a Salem movie theater for one night to show his documentary opposing vaccinations, a private screening just for the Legislature! Why? Because he hates the use of thimerosal, an organomercury compound once used in vaccines. However, according

to Steiner Hayward, thimerosal is no longer used in children's vaccines.

The bad science regarding this issue is legion. The only other organized opposition to the bill is a Facebook page arguing that personal freedom trumps public health and public safety. Fortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court and at least one state supreme court (Mississippi, which also has the highest rate of immunization) have ruled just the opposite. Why the Oregon chiropractors, Tim Knoop and Robert Kennedy Jr. continue to rely on bad science is beyond me. I agree with Steiner Hayward and others that while no one claims there is zero risk in vaccines, the risk is low. While the death rate for measles is one in 1,000, the rate of severe complications for measles vaccine is one in four million. As Dr. Todd Huffman pointed out in a recent R-G letter, it is remarkably easy for curious or cautious parents to be misinformed because "junk science litters the internet."

I hope this discussion doesn't keep my clever readers from ignoring the really important debates in Salem, like SB 298, which changes the name of the State Board of Massage Therapists to the State Board of Massage Therapists and Bodyworkers. Stay tuned. ■

Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a former state legislator and soon-to-be retired state worker. The views expressed herein are his alone.

