

basics after performing *any* function is deluding itself and its citizenry as to its worth. Social democracies such as Canada and the European nations with the highest standards of living have other things at play that help this delicate balance.

One major cost for employers is health care. All these other countries have some form of single-payer, which shifts a lot of the burden off the owners. Even with a modest tax increase, this is a definite plus for businesses. Another benefit these other countries have compared with ours is that education for them is not a cause for indebtedness. For most it is free and depends on effort and intelligence, not money.

Because of these reasons alone it is feasible and ethical to shrink the gap in wealth inequality by paying our workforce more money.

David Ivan Piccioni
ESSN board member
Eugene

RISKY EXPERIMENT

Those espousing the positives of raising the minimum wage usually neglect to mention some potential negatives and unintended consequences. Here are some:

A loss of business flexibility in staffing. A potential and likely reduction in benefits for employees paid for by their forced “raise.” (Wages are taxed but benefits are not.) A reduction in the incentive for low wage-workers to improve skills and education. The effect on morale of those already making \$15 an hour, or anywhere near it, if and when they don’t get a commensurate increase.

Larger businesses, as if they already need it, will be further encouraged to automate low wage positions. Small businesses will be affected the most and are least able to afford it resulting in downsizing or outright closure.

The economy has improved since 2008, but when the next economic downturn comes the unemployment will likely be

much worse as more expensive workers are shed at an ever-greater rate than in the past. The effect will be on those on fixed income who will not see a “raise”; for example, Social Security’s COLA will not accurately reflect any increased inflation that a lone state’s increased minimum wage will engender.

There are other potential negatives one could add to this bold and risky experiment that is being rammed through without a vote by the public who will be affected. The old saying the road to perdition is paved with good intentions still applies, unfortunately.

Karl Stout
Eugene

WASTED TAXES

As a property owner, my property tax bill shows many bond issues for schools, which seem to be used for repairs. I also have a difficult time with the fact that anyone who has a disabled/ autistic child

can send him or her to school each day and they learn nothing. One of the teachers shared with me about a 15-year-old boy who lies in a stroller and masturbates, and they have a screen around him. We as taxpayers pay for that!

And what about the 40 percent of the sales tax the schools will be receiving from marijuana sales? When does that happen?

Marlene Pearson
Eugene

CLOSED BORDER

This year may be the last time we see swallows and swifts in our beautiful state for some years to come. I intend to enjoy their flying antics as much as possible this summer until they return south to Mexico and beyond in the fall.

As it seems quite possible that Donald Trump may be elected in November, I expect they, along with many others, will fall victim to the closure of the southern border.

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Trojan Wolf: Salem’s Silly Senate

WHERE’S WILL ROGERS WHEN WE NEED HIM?

Just when you thought our Oregon Legislature couldn’t get any more dysfunctional than it was — it did. Senate Republicans took a page from the old Democrat playbook and refused to meet last Wednesday, denying the Senate a quorum. The immediate feedback even from Republicans was that their minority leader Ted Ferrioli’s latest move to obstruct the process backfired from a public relations standpoint, making his caucus look clownish and incompetent. Worse than our Republican U.S. Congress even — a sad comparison.

After receiving this negative feedback, the senate R’s immediately returned to the floor on Thursday morning. Cowboy humorist Will Rogers once described my gender thusly: “There are three kinds of men. The ones that learn by readin’. The few who learn by observation. The rest of ’em have to pee on the electric fence for themselves.”

It only got worse. Ferrioli announced that his caucus would only work banker’s hours — no evening sessions, no weekends. And he also refused to suspend a bygone technologically moribund Senate rule that requires entire bills to be read word for word (Xerox began selling copy machines in 1959) before a vote could be taken. Last Thursday, the Senate slogged through four hours on the floor, managing to vote on 12 bills. The 35-day deadline for this even-year session is March 6, and can only be extended by a two-thirds vote of both chambers. Fat chance. Somebody ought to turn off the electricity before these boys really *hurt* themselves! Alternatively, piss on ’em.

Anyway, just to demonstrate that neither party has a monopoly on stupidity, listen to this cautionary tale. Will Rogers also said, “I am not a member of any organized party — I am a Democrat.”

It appears Democrat House Speaker Kotek is having better success with her counterpart, minority leader Mike McLane, than Senate President Courtney is having with his. Kotek allowed House Republicans to vote on and pass HB 4040. It’s a bad bill sponsored by ranchers that could interfere with a current lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) decision to de-list wolves as an endangered species. The bill is either a wolf in sheep’s clothing or a Trojan horse; I love mixed metaphors.

HB 4040 is sponsored by two Eastern Oregon House Republicans on behalf of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association and the Oregon Farm Bureau. Many believe that Kotek knew it was a bad bill, but offered it up as a signal to McLane and other more moderate members of his caucus that House D’s *could* negotiate and give House R’s something they wanted.

HB 4040 puts in statute a requirement that the Legislature ratify last year’s decision by state wildlife agency officials to de-list wolves. Many, including Congressman DeFazio and state Sen. Prozanski, believe the bill could neuter a legal challenge currently before the Oregon Court of Appeals. The lawsuit, brought by the usual

suspects — environmentalists and animal rights advocates — contends that ODFW’s decision to de-list was based on bad science, didn’t follow the requirements of the state’s wolf management plan and would increase hunting pressure on wolves.

HB 4040 was assigned to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. In a surprise move, committee Chair Chris Edwards, a Democrat, voted with the two Republicans on the committee, Chuck Thomsen and Alan Olsen, to move the bill to the Senate floor for a vote. Two other Democrats on the committee, Prozanski and Michael Dembrow, had concerns that the bill might preclude the Court of Appeals from answering the question of whether ODFW failed to demonstrate it followed its own wolf management plan. Edwards argued that it’s not unprecedented for Oregon lawmakers to weigh in on policy issues instead of having them hashed out through litigation. Prozanski didn’t believe the Legislature should try to attempt to answer such a complicated question in the seven days remaining in this session. So Floyd and Michael filed a minority report.

Holy shit, Batman! Unprecedented scenario! When is the last time two Senate Democrats had to file a minority report to defeat a Republican bill with a Democrat majority in both chambers and a Democrat governor? Senate President Courtney has lost control of his caucus and Gov. Brown is nowhere to be found on this bill, except to weakly defend ODFW. She’s been governor for a year now, so it is actually her agency.

What happens next should be entertaining. As Will Rogers also said: “I don’t make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.” Stay tuned.

Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a former state senator and a retired state employee.

