

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

70 Ain't Old (If You Are a Tree)

IS AGE-ISM WOKE, LESS WOKE OR UN-WOKE?

I finally made it up to the state Capitol in mid-May for the first time this session. I even found Magoo's Sports Bar, my favorite top-secret unofficial senate caucus office in Salem. I had a 70th birthday beer with two old contract lobbyist friends, one a Republican and the other a Democrat, and I tried to get a sense of the legislative pulse this session. They both groaned simultaneously. "It's as bad as it's been since you left the building, Tony." I reminded them that was 16 years ago. They asked me if I missed the PERS debate. Some things never change.

Turning 70 was a sweet birthday for me. As the Irish say: It's better to be *seen* than *viewed*! I only bring up my age to address today's prevailing question: Who do *you* like in the Democratic presidential primary? And who *won't* you vote for? And why?

We have 23 announced Democratic candidates, similar to the circular firing squad that arose amidst Republicans who were defeated ultimately by Trump in their 2016 primary. According to the *National Review* the ages of the various official candidates in 2020 will be: Bernie Sanders, 79; Joe Biden, 77; Elizabeth Warren, 71; Jay Inslee, 69; John Hickenlooper, 68; Sherrod Brown, 67; Amy Klobuchar, 60.

RUFKM? Kamala Harris, Kirsten Gillibrand and Cory Booker will be in their 50s. Beto O'Rourke and Julian Castro will be in their 40s and Pete Buttigieg will be in his 30s. Trump will be 74.

To get a sense of the generational difference when Joe Biden was first elected to the Senate, Buttigieg, Gabbard

and Castro had not been born yet and O'Rourke was two months old.

Bill Clinton and Barack Obama were 46 and 47 when elected. Polling today shows that 37 percent of all Democrats, Republicans and non-affiliated voters won't vote for a 70-year-old.

But I wasn't in Salem to see if anyone up there had a clue who might get elected in 2020. I was there to attend an annual training conference hosted by the Oregon Judicial Department.

For the past 13 years I have served as a volunteer on an Oregon Citizen Review Board (CRB) in Lane County. This CRB is a program within Oregon's state court system that reviews the cases of children in foster care and reports our findings to the juvenile court judges. Currently, there are 62 boards in Oregon's 36 counties. Lane County has nine boards.

There's been a big controversy over recent out-of-state placements of foster children and "hotel" placements as a substitute for traditional foster family "homes." A renewed \$24 million class-action lawsuit filed against the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and a report on the conditions of foster facilities in Utah are the latest in a growing set of serious allegations against the agency. And there's a bill before the Legislature to deal with "congregate care" facilities — group homes or institutions providing 24-hour care.

I've watched Oregon's foster care system for 30 years. I started life in an Irish orphanage, described as a "work farm for unwed mothers," for three years. I'm interested

in other states' best practices and how we do business. I represented child protective service workers for 20 years as an SEIU union representative; prior to that I was a rank and file member, a state worker doing welfare fraud investigation. I served 10 years in the Legislature and 13 years with the CRB. Which proves nothing more than that I am very old and apparently can't hold a job.

Here's what I learned at the CRB conference: 7,500 kids are currently in the system, 76 of them are being held out-of-state, some of them in congregate care. These 76 kids are housed out of state because we do not have enough beds for seriously mentally ill children or children who pose serious physical or sexual risk to other children, adults and animals.

If the governor's budget were adopted tomorrow with an additional 100+ case workers right now, **we would still only be at a 67 percent staffing level**, according to Child Welfare's Program Administrator Marilyn Jones. That's the point I always make: This is a 30-year underfunding problem in the making.

Putting kids in hotels was inevitable. Sending kids out of state was inevitable. Lack of resources is not a new issue in the foster world. Understaffing and caseload size have been a problem for a long time. The governor's oversight commission is a good first start. I hope they listen to frontline workers and supervisors.

Stay tuned.

Former state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is former legislator and a retired state employee.

VIEWPOINT BY CHUCK AREFORD

Green New Deal is a Must

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A DIRE EMERGENCY

Americans are waking-up to the existential threat posed by climate change. Polling shows concern about global warming spiking among Americans while Democrats push the ambitious Green New Deal. Remarkably, surveys indicated strong support for key components of the Green New Deal, even among Republicans, when it was introduced in December 2018. Washington's Gov. Jay Inslee is running for president on a climate change platform, and the CBS's *60 Minutes* featured the Juliana "climate kids" lawsuit. Doubtless this is in response to the dire urgency of the climate crisis and creates hope and opportunity for saving our Earth.

The latest climate change science is grim. Global warming is happening faster and thus is far more advanced than previously thought. The current heat retention from greenhouse gases is estimated to be the equivalent of 400,000 nuclear bombs (the size of the one dropped on Hiroshima) exploding every day. A 2016 *Scientific American* article states that oceans have absorbed 93 percent of this heat, otherwise the atmospheric temperature would have risen an unimaginable 97 degrees Fahrenheit. The laws of physics are real and immutable.

Over the past 542 million years, there have been at least five mass extinctions, and they all closely corresponded with sudden increases in atmospheric

carbon dioxide and ocean acidity. Atmospheric CO₂ is rising one hundred times faster than any previous natural increase and oceans are acidifying faster than anytime in the last 300 million years. We are either at the beginning of or in the midst of the sixth mass extinction.

The current concentration of atmospheric CO₂ has historically led to an increased temperature of 7 degrees Celsius, which could happen before the end of the century. Such a temperature increase would be beyond catastrophic, as vast regions of the Earth would become uninhabitable.

The good news is that if we act quickly and decisively, the worst outcomes from climate change can probably be avoided. The only way to save our Earth is to rapidly reduce greenhouse gasses, as outlined in the Green New Deal (HR 109). We can then resume our role of global leadership, convincing the rest of the world to follow suit. We have no choice.

The struggle also involves environmental justice. We must ensure that minorities, indigenous communities, working people and those who live in rural areas do not bear an inordinate burden of the cost of the transition from fossil fuels.

Critics of the Green New Deal offer intense resistance, saying it is too expensive and unrealistic. It is the climate deniers, however, including our president and 150 members of Congress (all Republicans) who are seriously deluded, living in a fantasy world deep in the

pockets of the fossil fuel industry. They insist it is too expensive to save our planet, which is not only absurd, but untrue. An investment switching over to clean energy now could save as much as \$26 trillion do by the year 2030. Legitimate criticism says our current levels of consumption are simply unsustainable, even with clean energy, and the Green New Deal will not solve all our environmental problems.

The Green New Deal will pass if ordinary Americans heed the call to mobilize like we did in World War II; it is a global emergency. In addition to working with our elected officials, we can go to rallies, lectures, workshops, marches and protests. We can talk to our friends and neighbors and dialogue with those who disagree with us. The 350 Eugene Calendar and other progressive sites offer climate-focused events, usually several times a week. We can enrich our lives while finding the courage to leave our comfort zones and do something truly extraordinary.

Historical research by Erica Chenoweth, political scientist and professor of Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, tells us that is only takes 3.5 percent of the citizens in a country engaged in active and sustained non-violent resistance to change any but the most ruthless government. Trump may veto the Green New Deal but we the people have the power. The Green New Deal is right in front of us, we just have to reach out and grab it.

Chuck Areford is a retired mental health professional. has been a Eugene resident for 30 years and volunteers with 350 Eugene.