

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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# Traitors to their class

By TIMOTHY EGAN  
*New York Times News Service*

You probably know from his weepy reminiscences that the speaker of the House, John Boehner, once worked as a bartender and a janitor, and took seven years to get out of college.

Maybe you've heard that Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin is a preacher's son who churned out burgers and fries at McDonald's.

And you had to catch that bit from Sen. Joni Ernst about putting bread bags over her shoes while growing up kind of poor in rural Iowa.

People from humble beginnings often carry an extra load of empathy through the success of their later lives, a sense that, with a few bad breaks, things could have gone the other way.

And there's the party of tough luck, pal. In the case of the three Republican leaders cited above, and most of those who aspire to be the GOP presidential nominee next year, these Horatio Algerians for the new Gilded Age are working to keep the downtrodden down. They are traitors to their class, with all the strutting moral superiority that comes with the conversion. Ernst, the lump-of-coal-hearted new senator from Iowa, and Walker, who always seems to be promoting something that needs actuarial tables to disguise, at times sound as if they actively despise the poor.

Last fall, Walker opposed raising the minimum wage in Wisconsin from the poverty-level \$7.25 an hour. After a group of workers claimed that the threshold violated a state mandate to offer a "living wage," his administration slapped them down. Even though a minimum-wage worker would have to put in 81 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Wisconsin, Walker's people saw no need to offer them a few pennies more.

Part of it is Walker's fealty to the restaurant industry. Part of it is his inaccurate belief that raising the minimum wage kills jobs. And part of it is nostalgia for the days when he was a lad earning his first paycheck under the Golden Arches. He made it. Why can't they?

"In America, it is one of the few



Scott Walker



John Boehner

places left in the world where it doesn't matter what class you were born into," Walker said in Iowa in January. "It doesn't matter what your parents do for a living."

Except it does. Much of the new evidence on the causes of inequality finds that moving up from one class to the other in America has gotten far more difficult. The rich, even doofus members of said class, get the right tutors that get them into the right schools where they make connections to get the right jobs.

They never face the peril of losing everything because of, say, a large medical bill, or the dead weight of a college loan.

As for Walker's outdated take on wages and prosperity, he could look to states that have raised their minimum wage and are creating jobs at a faster pace than those holding to the lowest pay.

Meanwhile, Walker's low-wage fortress of Wisconsin lags behind the national average in job creation. If paying people next to nothing at the entry level were such a design for growth, employers would be flocking to the Badger State. Even Wal-Mart, which built the original business model for how to make billions on the backs of people who need state assistance for basic things, will soon be paying its serfs more than Scott Walker thinks is necessary to live on.

Ernst loves to talk about growing up in the rosy patina of near-poverty. "My mom made all our clothes," she wrote on her campaign website. "We went to church every week, helped our neighbors when they needed it, and they did the same for us."

See, you deadbeats: Why can't you just stitch together your own clothes and grab an extra chicken

wing at the church picnic if you're hungry? Of course, she opposed raising Iowa's minimum wage. And she thinks subsidizing health care for lower-middle-class families is a terrible idea. She's working, with most Republicans in Congress, to take away health care for millions of Americans.

Bartender Boehner was probably a decent dude at happy hour. But Speaker of the House Boehner has no tolerance for the kind of folks who might have wandered into his family tavern after losing a job. As people in one state after another vote to raise their minimum wage — red states and blue — Boehner will not allow a simple vote on that most basic pay principle to take place in the House. He once said he'd commit suicide rather than vote to

raise the minimum wage.

Giving the people who flip burgers, clean floors and stock grocery shelves a few dimes more an hour is not a handout. Offering working people some help on their insurance premiums does not promote dependence. Nor do those things hurt the economy — just the opposite.

So where is this coming from? The class traitors guiding the Republican Party, and the harsh new federal budget unveiled this week, usually promote policies with personal anecdotes. Their condescension toward the poor springs from their own narratives: They are virtuous because they made it, or vice versa. Those who haven't made a similar leap are weaklings. It's a variant of Mitt Romney's view that 47 percent of Americans are moochers. Stripped to its essence, it's a load of loathing for their former class, delivered on a plate of platitudes.

## Electric rail holds enormous gains

*Bold scheme to electrify the Empire Builder makes sense*

If an American rides trains in Europe or Japan, he gains the sensation of being an envious visitor from a Third World country. When it comes to rail transport — for passengers or freight — enormous gains in capacity, speed and energy savings are achievable in the U.S. rail network.

Martha Baskin brought this perspective to our region, writing in the Seattle-based news site *Crosscut*. Baskin reports on a significant, credible proposal to electrify the main northern corridor that runs from Chicago to Seattle.

The benefits of electrifying a line such as the Northern Transcontinental Corridor, known more familiarly as the Empire Builder route are twofold. It would reduce energy costs and carbon use. Another startling observation that Baskin makes is from an energy economist who notes that, "You increase speed because electric trains have better acceleration and braking than diesel trains."

The Northern Transcontinental Corridor is a major freight artery. Lately it is prominent for its transit of oil and coal.

Baskin quotes a Vashon Island activist named Bill Moyer, who is director of The Backbone Campaign. Says Moyer, "I can't imagine that anyone would think the highest role (this line) could play is to be a fossil fuel corridor to Asia."

There is such rejoicing and self-congratulation that America is on its way to becoming a net ener-

gy exporter that we can easily forget the enormous gains our nation could make from large scale conservation measures such as electrifying rail lines like Seattle-Chicago.

A third benefit from electrifying the northern corridor would be the momentum effect. Making a success on a corridor of this length would breed further success.

Passenger rail in the Seattle-Eugene corridor has grown dramatically over the past decade. As the 21st century progresses, this corridor's significance and the need for carbon reduction will only grow. Both Oregon and Washington have 20-year rail transit plans. According to Amtrak: "Oregon's plans call for six round trips between Eugene and Portland. Washington State's plans call for 13 round trips between Portland and Seattle, and four round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia."

Washington state legislators are keenly interested in schemes to electrify the northern corridor. If that moves forward, our north-south corridor should follow.

Read the complete *Crosscut* article at: <http://bit.ly/1C5koJ1>

## Immunizations aren't just for children

*Ilwaco whooping cough makes case for adult protection*

A case of pertussis — better known as whooping cough — at Ilwaco High School this month is both an example of the nationwide controversy over vaccinations and a reminder that immunizations aren't just for kids.

A teacher was diagnosed with the illness, which is more closely identified with children because of the truly grim and life-threatening ways in which it affects the young. Students who lacked a recorded immunization for pertussis had to stay home. They either had to take a five-day course of antibiotics and then get a doctor's letter reporting that they were symptom free, or else stay away from school for 21 days after their last potential exposure. That's a lot of class time to miss, and yet a small price to pay to make sure whooping cough didn't gain a foothold in the area.

There is much public discussion about the social obligation to immunize and protect one another against infectious diseases, versus individual choices to decline vaccinations for ourselves and our children. For some, shots represent an unacceptable personal risk in return for a vague public good. Much resistance to vaccinations is, however, based on scientifically discredited notions about side effects that don't exist. Immunizations are, in fact, one of the great lifesavers of the modern world and something we owe each other.

Beyond this thoroughly well-aired matter, the Ilwaco case points out a somewhat separate situation — the need for adults to remain conscious of our own vaccinations. This is especially true for young adults. But at each stage of life there are shots that

can help us avoid sickness and death for ourselves and those around us.

Pertussis, tetanus and diphtheria are all protected against by the Tdap vaccine. All adults should get this shot once, followed by the Td vaccine every 10 years to maintain immunity against tetanus and diphtheria.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is relatively new and protects against a sexually transmitted virus that causes cancers in men and women later in life. It is recommended for women up to age 26, men up to 21, and men ages 22 to 26 who are immunocompromised or who have sex with men. This is a measure that can avoid unimaginable tolls of suffering in later life, while protecting our loved ones from the same fate.

Other shots we should all be certain we've had include those for meningococcal disease for first-year college students living in residence halls, along with those for hepatitis B, hepatitis A, chickenpox (varicella), and measles, mumps, and rubella, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control.

Adults of all ages can help ourselves and society at large by making sure we get shots for pneumonia, influenza and shingles.

In busy lives, immunizations are the kinds of things that slip off the to-do lists of people who are otherwise smart and responsible. But now that pharmacies, health fairs, public health departments and other venues all commonly offer appointment-free shots that are often completely covered by private and public insurance, it's easier to get it over with. Let's do, for everyone's sake.

## Why Jeb Bush could lose

By ROSS DOUTHAT  
*New York Times News Service*

If you're keeping score during the endless 2016 pre-season, this was a pretty good week for Jeb Bush.

First, he watched Scott Walker, currently his main competitor for the Republican front-runner slot, stumble through another not-ready-for-prime-time moment, first hiring a well-liked young consultant named Liz Mair and then sacking her one day later because it turned out that she had tweeted intemperately about the sacred state of Iowa.

Second, he survived Andrew Ferguson.

Ferguson is a brilliant essayist and reporter for the *Weekly Standard*, and lately he has been an angel of death for Republican presidential hopefuls. During the last presidential pre-season, he profiled Haley Barbour of Mississippi and Mitch Daniels of Indiana, and both governors lived to regret it. Barbour let slip what sounded like praise for the civil rights-era White Citizens' Council in his native Yazoo City; Daniels told Ferguson that the country needed a "truce" on social issues. Not coincidentally, neither man ended up even mounting a presidential bid.

In 2013, a Ferguson profile of Ted Cruz included a devastating section in which the journalist, trapped in cars and green rooms with his subject, realizes that Cruz only speaks in stump speeches, and won't stop giving them. Then, just last month, Ferguson decided that three 2016 hopefuls didn't even deserve full profiles and filleted the ambitions of Chris Christie, Rand Paul and Mike Huckabee in a single ruthless piece.

But his Jeb profile, on the cover of the latest *Standard*, may actually do its subject political good.

Oh, there are digs at the Bush family courtiers pinning for a chance to work for "45." But the candidate himself comes off very favorably. More important, he comes off the way he needs Republican primary voters to eventually see him — as a politician who's much more authentically conservative than his centrist image and who has both the record and the scars to prove it.

Were I in charge of conservative outreach for the Bush campaign, I would be blast-emailing the profile to doubtful right-wing activists, with "Jeb: He's on Your Side" in the subject line (or "Jeb: The Anti-Romney").

But I wouldn't fool myself with the notion that Jeb's biggest problem in the primary season is his policy positions. His stances on immigration and Common Core will hurt him with conservatives, and his record in Florida will help him, but his biggest problem right now is identification, not ideology. There just aren't that many Republican voters who want to vote for a dynastic heir in 2016, and it isn't clear yet if they'll decide that they ought to vote for Bush in spite of that reluctance.

Voting for president is a political act, but it's also a relational one. As the presidency increasingly dominates our politics, people want a nominee who will somehow personally represent all the virtues that they associate with their country, their political coalition and their world view. They want an archetype, an inspiration, a figure who can somehow personify liberalism, or conservatism, or America itself.

Among Republican voters, every-



Ross Douthat

thing that's appealing about a figure like Ben Carson — or, in a different way, Sarah Palin before him — is explained by this desire.

But at the same time, voters are more responsible than polling swings sometimes suggest. They know (or enough of them know) that in the end they ought to support someone who actually has a chance of being elected president and

effectively governing the country. And when the tension between "want" and "ought" can't be resolved as neatly as it was by Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the vintage Barack Obama in 2008, the side of "ought" almost always wins.

That's why there hasn't been a real no-hope nominee in either party since George McGovern in 1972. That's why Mitt Romney, unloved and unwanted, was still the Republican pick in 2012. And that's why if Jeb could just run against, say, Carson, Huckabee and Cruz, it wouldn't matter that voters don't want to be represented by another scion of the Bush dynasty. In the end, they wouldn't really have a choice.

But right now, in Walker and Marco Rubio, Bush faces two opponents whose backgrounds and identities — the working-class slayer of unions, the self-made immigrant's son — match the way Republican voters want to think about their party in a way that a silver-spoon politician, whatever his record, never will. And notwithstanding Walker's recent stumbles, neither he nor Rubio obviously fails the "ought" test, since it's possible to imagine either man doing better than Bush against Hillary Clinton in a general election.

That doesn't mean either can overcome Jeb's institutional advantages. But he needs them to flounder a bit and to look unready; failing that, he needs to find a way to show them up.

Because otherwise, Rubio or Walker might start to convince Republican voters that this time, how they want to vote is also how they should.

Timothy Egan

