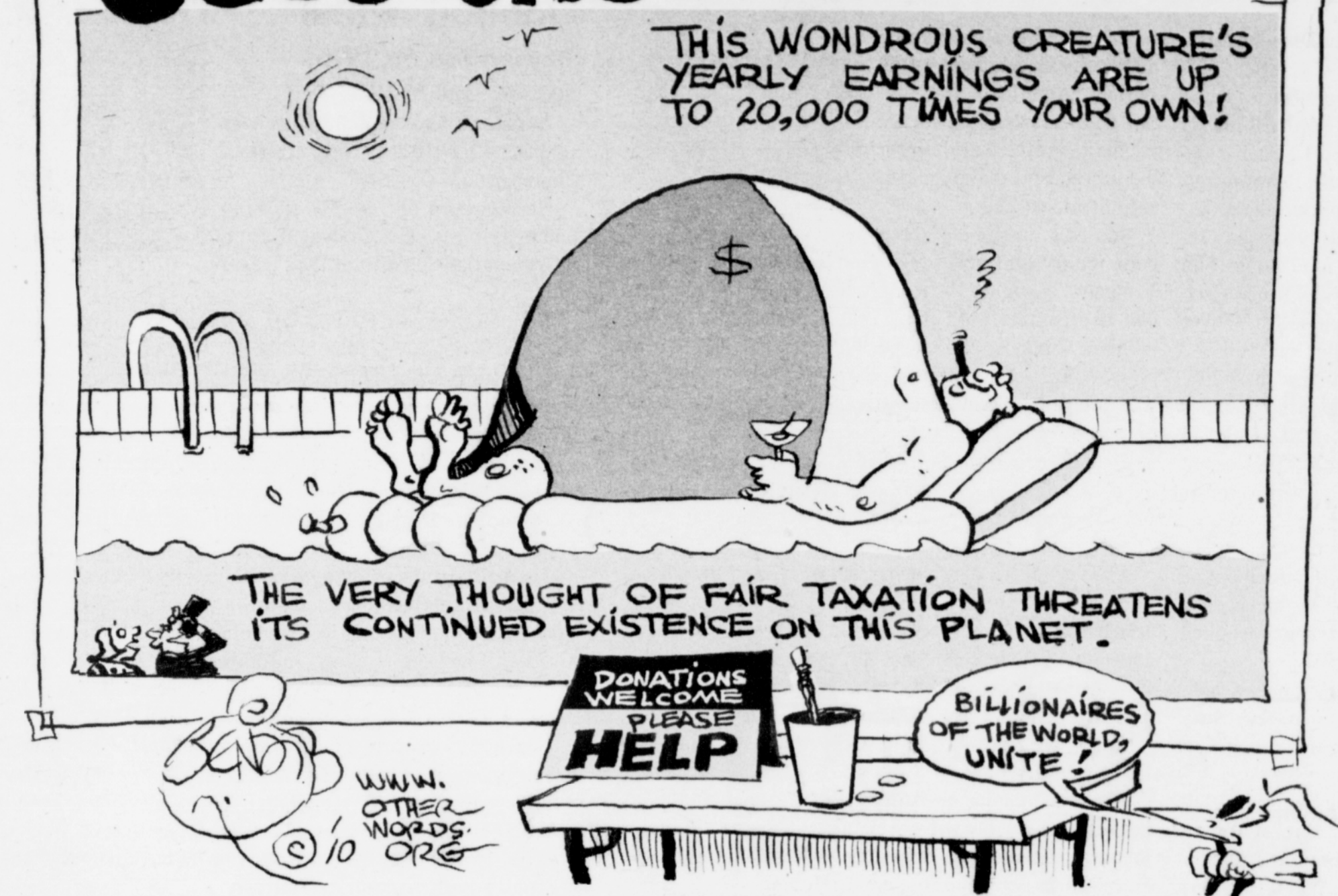



OPINION

Save the Billionaires



 **New Prices Effective May 1, 2010**

Martin Cleaning Service

Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning Residential & Commercial Services
Minimum Service CHG. \$45.00
 A small distance/travel charge may be applied

CARPET CLEANING
2 Cleaning Areas or more \$30.00 Each Area
Pre-Spray Traffic Areas (Includes: 1 small Hallway)

1 Cleaning Area (only) \$40.00
 Includes Pre-Spray Traffic Area (Hallway Extra)

Stairs (12-16 stairs - With Other Services): \$25.00

Area/Oriental Rugs: \$25.00 Minimum
Area/Oriental Rugs (Wool): \$40.00 Minimum

Heavily Soiled Area: Additional \$10.00 each area (Requiring Extensive Pre-Spraying)

UPHOLSTERY CLEANING

Sofa: \$69.00
 Loveseat: \$49.00
 Sectional: \$109 - \$139
 Chair or Recliner: \$25 - \$49
 Throw Pillows (With Other Services): \$5.00

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

- Area & Oriental Rug Cleaning
- Auto/Boat/RV Cleaning
- Deodorizing & Pet Odor Treatment
- Spot & Stain Removal Service
- Scotchguard Protection
- Minor Water Damage Services

SEE CURRENT FLYER FOR ADDITIONAL PRICES & SERVICES
Call for Appointment (503) 281-3949

Poverty on the March

Losing politically to the power elite

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS

The standard of living in the United States is unfortunately going down. Not so much for top earners.



The harshest blows, as usual, fall farther down the ladder. Now that the financial industry has finally re-grasped the levers of government power, most citizens are watching their income, assets, and net worth dribble down the drain of corporate profit and economic mismanagement.

You'll recall, for example, that Congress has lately made it very difficult for an average family to declare bankruptcy and start life afresh. Now those folks are more likely instead to remain forever poor.

Congress has also greased the skids for American jobs to skitter overseas, and for employers here to import both high- and low-skilled workers to siphon off jobs from domestic payrolls. In the name of thrift, it has chiseled as well on unemployment, food stamps, housing, child care, and most other social services. Only military expenditures have spiraled upward unimpeded.

Even the courts haven't been spared. Spending on legal services programs for the poor has been slashed, making it easier for lenders, employers, hospitals, landlords, and other creditors to run roughshod over their legal rights. There is a whole new industry assisting employers in legally challenging the validity of unemployment claims by fired workers. That helps the boss hold down his unemployment tax rate.

One result of such conniving is that countless families have been forced to double up, much as they did at this point in the last century. While this painful social condition supplies a wealth of delicious material for TV sitcoms, it's a crummy way to live. But what else can you do when a beloved part of your clan is foreclosed or evicted for inability to pay the rent?

At the very foot of the ladder, life is worse yet. Families simply break up. Junior and Sis are sent off to live with Grandma or Aunt Dolly, often separately; while Mom bunks in with more distant kin any place she can find a job. For Dad, if there is a dad, jobs are often either unavailable or unremunerative.

Health deteriorates too. Quickly. Even employer-sponsored care is now so expensive that many can no longer afford it. And more and more employers are hiring workers as independent contractors so that they not only avoid health costs, they avoid Social Security. Plus the governor of my compassionate state, Connecticut, just vetoed a bill to require paid sick leave. Consequently the poor will continue to have to work sick and infect us all.

There was a time when our nation enjoyed higher aspirations. Having survived the Depression and World War II, and having gotten Europe back on its feet, we sought a better life for ourselves. For a while we got it. Now, however, we have lost political control to "the power elite," as C. Wright Mills termed it many decades ago.

Apparently, rampant poverty is once again acceptable, if that is the price society must pay to support Wall Street avarice and eternal war. Even Social Security and Medicare are under attack. If you aren't poor yet, you'll probably get your chance soon enough.

OtherWords columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.