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OUR VIEW

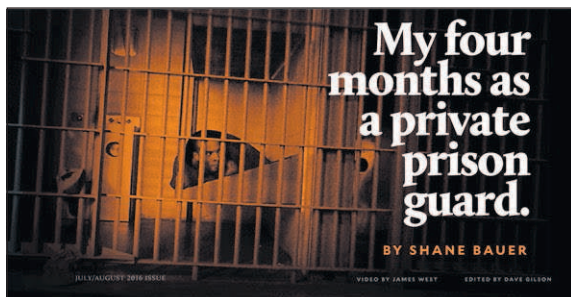
Feds move away from private prisons

In July, online outlet Mother Jones published a massive piece of journalism that has since had a massive effect on the country, and the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Reporter Shane Bauer spent four months working as a guard at a corporate-run prison in Louisiana, spotlighting the poor conditions for both employees and inmates.

Just a month after the piece was published, President Barack Obama announced that the country will start reducing the number of federal inmates currently being held in private

prisons and work toward ending the practice entirely. Currently there are 193,299 federal inmates behind bars.



It's a long, great read (five chapters and hundreds of thousands of words, and took 14 months to write and fact check.) You can, and should, find it online in its entirety. A few highlights:

- Bauer was required during his four-month training class to be exposed to tear gas.
- He was paid \$9 an hour by Corrections Corporation of America, which runs the prison.
- There were never more than two floor officers per general population unit, roughly one per 176 inmates.
- Inmates have the upper-hand over outnumbered guards. Drugs and violence are rampant.
- Prisoners are also mistreated, and keeping them behind bars as long as possible is good for the company's bottom line. So they're kept longer for infractions, often

without "trial."

▪ 82 percent of the more than 1,000 federal civil cases filed by prisoners between 2010 and 2015 named CCA as the defendant.

According to Mother Jones, CCA houses more than 66,000 inmates, mostly across the rural South. That makes it the second-largest private prison company. In 2015 it made \$1.9 billion in revenue and \$221 million in income.

The piece, in general, makes clear that for CCA, the bottom line comes before the safety of guards and inmates, and the civil liberties

of everyone in their care and employ.

We're thankful that Obama is moving federal inmates away from private prison

oversight. If the government takes your freedom and liberty, it should be required to hold up the other end of the bargain and offer a safe, healthy place to work off your sentence. It's costly for taxpayers but perhaps that should induce us to find better ways to punish lawbreakers and better ways to rehabilitate them.

We should be reminded that Obama's policy change does not cover Immigration and Customs Enforcement's private prison population, which often oversees 34,000 immigrants awaiting deportation. The issues at those facilities are often worse than anything documented by Bauer and deserve further scrutiny.

For a readership area that includes multiple state prison facilities, we must note how important it is to keep private prisons out of Oregon.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

A lot — but not too much — to decide in November

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Oregonians will vote on seven statewide ballot measures in November, the same number as in 2010. The last time an Oregon general-election ballot featured fewer than seven ballot measures was in 1982, when Gov. Vic Atiyeh was re-elected.

In between, the state has seen a glut of ballot measures — 18 in 1994, 23 in 1996 and a modern record of 26 in 2000. The fever has been broken, with numbers subsiding to the single or low-double digits in the past decade, improving the odds that voters will take the time to study each ballot measure carefully.

Part of the reason for the lower numbers is that the Legislature has made it harder to put initiative measures on the ballot. Petitioners are subject to tighter regulation than they used to be — including a law that prohibits paying petitioners for each signature they gather.

The crackdown came in response to concerns that well-funded organizations had found ways to buy their way onto the ballot. These concerns may have been felt most acutely by Democratic leaders who saw that many of these organizations were pushing an anti-government, anti-tax and anti-labor agenda.

Another factor is the withdrawal from the scene of Oregon's two most prolific authors of initiative measures, Bill Sizemore and Kevin Mannix.

Sizemore often had several initiatives on the same ballot, usually intended to limit taxes or spending. His activities came to a halt after a jury found his organizations guilty of racketeering. Mannix promoted a series of tough-on-

crime measures in the 1990s, but the pace of his work has slowed. This year, a Mannix-backed initiative to abolish the state estate tax was barred from the ballot because signatures had been gathered improperly. Both Sizemore and Mannix were Republican nominees for governor, and though they were defeated, their influence on public policy in Oregon has been far-reaching.

This year, the most consequential initiative by far is Ballot Measure 97, which would impose a 2.5 percent tax on gross corporate receipts of more than \$25 million. The tax would raise an estimated \$3 billion a year — an amount its union backers claim would be enough to rescue Oregon schools and other public services from their long decline, and which business-led opponents claim would hurt the economy, kill jobs and ultimately be paid by Oregon consumers.

Also on the ballot are two education-related initiatives. Measure 99 would tap lottery funds to pay for outdoor school programs for all students in Oregon. Measure 98 would require the state to fund programs to keep students from dropping out of high school — including vocational education and college readiness classes. A fourth initiative would ban in-state trade in such animal products as elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn.

The Legislature referred three measures to the ballot: Measure 94, eliminating the mandatory retirement age for judges; Measure 95, widening investment options for university funds; and Measure 96, diverting 1.5 percent of lottery funds to veterans' programs.

It's a manageable list — and a relief from the bedsheet ballots of the not-so-distant past.

ANIME 8/24 THE AUGUST CHRONICLE 8/24



OTHER VIEWS

Why America's leadership fails

We've clearly had a failure of leadership in this country. The political system is not working as it should. Big problems are not being addressed.

But what's the nature of that failure? The leading theory is that it's the corruption: There is so much money flowing through Washington that the special interests get what they want and everyone else gets the shaft. Another theory has to do with insularity: The elites spend so much time within the Acela corridor that they don't have a clue about what is going on beyond it.

There's merit in both theories. But I'd point to something deeper:

Over the past few decades, thousands of good people have gone into public service, but they have found themselves enmeshed in a system that drains them of their sense of vocation.

Let's start with a refresher on the difference between a vocation and a career. A career is something you choose; a vocation is something you are called to.

A person choosing a career asks, How can I get the best job or win the most elections? A person summoned by a vocation asks, How can my existing abilities be put in service of the greatest common good?

A career is a job you do as long as the benefits outweigh the costs; a vocation involves falling in love with something, having a conviction about it and making it part of your personal identity.

A vocation involves promises to some ideal, it reveals itself in a sense of enjoyment as you undertake its tasks and it can't be easily quit when setbacks and humiliations occur. As others have noted, it involves a double negative — you can't not do this thing.

It's easy to be cynical, but I really do think most people entered public life with this sense of idealistic calling. When you spend time around government officials you are constantly struck by the fact that they are more impressive in private than in public. Somewhere at the base of their personal story you usually find an earnest desire to serve some vulnerable group.

The fact is, political lives are simply not that glamorous or powerful or fun. Most politicians wouldn't put up with all the fundraising, the stupid partisan games, unless they were driven at some level by the right reasons.

But over the years, many get swallowed by the system: all the calculating consultants; the ephemeral spin of the media cycle; the endless meetings with supplicants; the constant grind of public criticism; the way campaigning



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

swallows time so they get to spend less time thinking about policy; the way service to a partisan team eclipses service to the cause that brought them into this in the first place.

For example, Hillary Clinton seems to have been first inspired by a desire to serve children, but over the decades walls of hard-shell combativeness formed. Mitt Romney seems to be an exceptionally fine person, but when he was campaigning his true nature was often hidden under a film of political formulas.

As the poet David Whyte once put it, "Work, like marriage, is a place you can lose yourself more easily perhaps than finding yourself ... losing all sense of our own voice, our own contributions and conversation."

It plays out differently in different cases. But a careerist mentality often replaces the vocation mentality. The careerist mentality frequently makes politicians timid, driven more by fear of failure than by any positive ideal.

Such people are besieged by the short-term calculations and often forget about their animating vision and long-term ideal. They rationalize that, since the opposition is so evil, anything that serves their career serves the country. This is not just bad for the people involved but for the system itself.

People with a vocation mindset have their eyes fixed on the long game. They are willing to throw themselves toward their goals imaginatively, boldly and remorselessly.

People who operate a career mindset, on the other hand, often put self-preservation above all. Nothing gets done because everybody's doing the same old safe rigid thing.

I do think there's often an arc to vocation. People start with something outside themselves. Then, in the scramble to get established, the ambition of self takes over. But then at some point people realize the essential falseness of all that and they try to reconnect with their original animating ideals.

And so I think it possible to imagine a revival of vocation. If Clinton is elected, maybe even she can remind us that we've all developed these bad habits, that most of us secretly detest the game we're in and the way we are playing it.

It would be an act of amazing bravery if she could lead people to strip away all the careerist defense mechanisms and remember their original vows and passions.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Don't believe corporate scare tactics in Measure 97 debate

I found it interesting that Rebecca Tweed, the Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales campaign coordinator, stated "most of the \$6 billion measure will be paid by Oregon consumers through higher prices."

By this logic I would expect to see the following sign when I go to our local McDonald's: "Welcome to Oregon, where the lowest corporate taxes in the nation allow us to make incredible profits. In order to pass those savings on to you, our loyal customers, please note that all items on the dollar menu will in fact only cost 95 cents. Enjoy!"

Likewise I should expect Subway's \$5 footlong to only set me back four and change. When I go to price a table saw at the Home Depot website, there should be an alternative price given to Oregon customers. It stands to reason that if higher corporate taxes leads to higher consumer costs, costs should be much lower in our state where corporations pay less than they do in any other state.

I wonder too, that if most of the costs will be passed on to the consumer, why are corporations pouring tens of millions of dollars into defeating this measure? Corporations have historically had no

objection to point of sales taxes paid by consumers.

Are we to believe that corporations are spending massive amounts of money to protect us poor consumers from higher prices? This would constitute an act of magnanimous corporate altruism heretofore unseen in the history of the world. Please. Corporations oppose this measure because they want to preserve their sweetheart deal in the state of Oregon.

Finally, if corporations are able to simply raise costs on consumers to pass on the cost of paying their fair share, why wouldn't they just raise their prices regardless? This would allow them to make an even greater profit to reward their shareholders and lavish their executives with even more outlandish compensation packages.

Indeed, given the fact that McDonald's, Subway and Home Depot are not currently giving discounts to their Oregon customers, it would appear that they already have. I applaud Governor Kate Brown and the Citizen's Initiative Review Commission for supporting Measure 97.

Please join me in voting yes on Measure 97 for a better Oregon.

John Scanlan
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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