

OTHER VIEWS

Carl Kiss



What about our children? Part 1

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part column, with the second part coming in an upcoming edition of the Chieftain.

I have a problem. I deeply care about my fellow Americans. I especially care about our children and grandchildren, who are keenly observant sponges. And I truly fear the lessons our children glean from today's politically motivated behavior.

What lessons? Well, let's consider the millions in the United States, and the disproportionately larger share of rural Americans, who live with family poverty and food insecurity. So why would anyone in Wallowa County support the recent end of the 2021 Expanded Child Tax Credit, when it reduced child poverty in our country by 30%, and helped to pay rent and food costs for all impoverished American families with children?

Every Sunday, our churchgoers hear God's second most-important commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". Yet Republican opposition to continuing the 2021 Expanded Child Tax Credit sent well over a million American children back into poverty. And our children then learned that God's second most-important commandment is best quickly forgotten upon exiting church. (They know that political choices speak louder than words emptied of meaning by contrary actions.)

We all care, of course, about the economic needs of our county. So why support today's congressional Republicans' priority to make President Biden look ineffectual by opposing everything he wants, including the millions of high-wage, green-energy jobs he wants to help create? Don't believe this? How about believing the potential Republican senatorial candidates who, when asked to run, have refused. Why? Because when they asked Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell for his legislative priorities before the 2024 election, he essentially responded: "Kill whatever Biden wants. Period." Including those new high-paying jobs.

Why else would a party that seemingly declared Infrastructure Week once a week for four years, all while failing to pass an infrastructure bill, consider disciplining its members who recently voted for an infrastructure bill, because passing it now constituted a Biden success? Do your politics, like your parties, also place party loyalty above our country's infrastructure needs? Are you teaching your children to emulate today's Republicans in Congress, by prioritizing expressions of outrage at the opposing party instead of legislation to help American families address their very real concerns? Remember, boys and girls: If you want to feel powerful and always right more than you want truth and solutions addressing your concerns, frequent displays of extreme anger are always preferable to the rational pursuit of needed help.

Speaking of displays of extreme anger, let's turn to the events of Jan. 6. Not what Fox and Tucker told you happened, but what your own eyes actually saw. Some of you believe that those who gouged the eyes, severed the fingers and injured the brains of scores of Capitol police officers, who smeared our Capitol's hallways with feces while chanting, "Hang Mike Pence, Hang Mike Pence," are true patriots. Does that mean we should now cancel their real status as traitors to our country, since they tried to violate our Constitution by handing our presidency to the election's loser? Remember, boys and girls: being a bad loser is good, but being a truly terrible loser is even better.

How the heck did we get here? Well, in a trend started by Newt Gingrich and accelerated by the recent presidential loser, conservatives have been increasingly encouraged to hate and demean their political opponents, and to mindlessly accept their party leaders' words. Example? Well, there's a sum total of zero evidence that the last election was rigged, but over 50% of Republicans believe it was anyway because the bad loser told them it was. So remember, boys and girls: You must always believe today's Republicans. Especially when they lie to you. Like, for example, when they call the Capitol riot of Jan. 6 "legitimate political discourse."

Carl Kiss is a lawyer living in Enterprise, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas, and opposing viewpoints, in Wallowa County classrooms. His email address is ckisslaw@aol.com.

Choose forest protection over biomass energy

OTHER VIEWS

Marina Richie



It's no secret that the peaks and rivers of Northeast Oregon are magnificent, but there is a lesser-known wonder. This corner of the state is poised to weather climate instability better than most other places. Why? There are still intact forest headwaters holding and filtering waters — vital to fish and farmer alike. The remaining big trees and ancient groves are storing tons of carbon dioxide, and sheltering both wildlife and the human spirit, too.

That's why we must choose protection of our mature and ancient forests over false promises of biomass — the burning of trees as "renewable energy." Biomass burning power plants emit 150% the carbon dioxide of coal, and 300%-400% of the carbon dioxide of natural gas, per unit energy produced.

The "renewable" argument goes this way — trees grow back and will then once again store carbon. But trees burned today release carbon dioxide today — and seedlings take a long time to grow and cannot come close to rivaling the carbon storage of trees that are even 30 years old, let alone a century or more. Scientific studies are con-

clusive that the older and bigger trees store far more carbon and for longer than young trees.

I am mystified why biomass energy is taking off in Northeast Oregon with a heavy reliance on subsidies — it's not cost effective. There's also the insidious argument that biomass simply uses up excess pieces of wood that would otherwise go to waste. No. Biomass creates a huge drive for wood, wood and more wood to burn. That wood comes at the expense of fish and wildlife habitat, functioning ecosystems and carbon sequestration.

Why would we want to add even more carbon dioxide into our atmosphere with some vague notion we will lower it later? Here in the West, we are in the worst megadrought in 1,200 years, according to a February 2022 report in the journal Nature Climate Change.

And that's not all — the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) just released findings showing we are in big trouble — with billions of people around the world already suffering from sea rise, heat, flooding and extreme weather. We're seeing the effects here, and it's not going to get better with false solutions.

We must move quickly to reduce fossil fuel emissions and safeguard our carbon-storing trees. Instead, we're adding a staggering 40 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year to the atmosphere, while we're destroying the forests that are our allies.

But, what about the wildfires? Don't we

have to thin forests in response and why shouldn't we then burn those trees for biomass? But here's the problem — thinning is often a term for industrial logging that is applied not just at the wildland urban interface but across wide swaths of forests and in the backcountry. Logging makes wildfires — and the climate crisis — worse.

Wildfires may billow smoke, but the vast majority of forest carbon stays on site. Not so for biomass burned to completion. Yes, there will be more wildfires, but we live in ecosystems that have evolved with fire, but not logging. The key is to protect our communities by using our limited resources to thin small trees close to homes.

We can still keep Northeast Oregon climate-resilient and beautiful — if we act now. Protect our mature and older forests and big trees on federal lands. Explore mechanisms to pay private landowners well for keeping their trees standing. Embrace solar, wind, and energy conservation — in ways that preserve our natural ecosystems that are our last best hope.

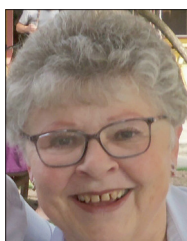
I think we all want future generations to know the vanilla scent of a centuries-old pine and to be able to dip their toes into clear, cold, fish-filled rivers.

Marina Richie is a natural history writer, journalist and author of the forthcoming book, Halcyon Journey in Search of the Belted Kingfisher. She is a prior resident of La Grande, and now makes her home in Bend.

What is driving gas prices, and what should we do?

OTHER VIEWS

Jan Blair



Two pieces in the March 16 Chieftain intrigued me: one by a reporter for the EO Media Group, with the somewhat misleading headline "Gas Prices soar as Russian Invasion in Ukraine continues;" and the other Rich Wandschneider's excellent column titled "Six-dollar gas and the war in Ukraine."

In the first, a woman from Moses Lake, Washington, was interviewed at an Island City diesel fuel station by the EO Media reporter, asking her about the price of diesel. "It's a bad deal, and I don't think it would be this way if Trump would've stayed in." Setting aside the unlikelihood of NATO and the EU nations standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the U.S. against Vladimir Putin's invasion, which Trump described as "genius" and "savvy," most people who agree with that Washington driver probably didn't bother to read the rest of the article, that quite clearly showed there's far more to the high prices of gas and diesel than Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

On CBS Sunday Morning, David Pogue interviewed two experts who gave

a crash course in "Economics 101 — Supply and Demand." In a nutshell: Fuel use (demand) dropped precipitously in 2020 when COVID hit, the lockdowns began and travel stopped. Oilfield workers no longer came to work because of the drop in travel and rigs were shut down (supply). With the end of COVID lockdowns, people have more money to spend and are eager to begin traveling again (demand). The petroleum industry began ramping up supply, but demand was spiking all over the globe. Meantime, Russia invaded Ukraine and most of the NATO and EU nations stopped ordering Russian oil. As Jason Bordoff, a Global Energy Policy specialist at Columbia University, described it, "the global market was hit with a 'double whammy' — first the pandemic, and then the invasion of Ukraine. ... There was less oil in the global bathtub of oil." The U.S. gets (according to Bordoff) only about 3% of its oil from Russia (the EO Media article put it at 8%); other nations get much more of their oil from Russia than does the U.S. so those nations had to find other sources.

When asked if President Biden should be blamed, Bordoff described it this way: The president is "a small cog in a big wheel. The president may try to steer one wheel of an 18-wheeler, but he can't steer it alone. The market is the predominant control." Nor should gas station owners be blamed. Patrick DeHaan, chief analyst with "Gas Buddy" (helps people locate the cheapest gas in their area), says there are very few, if any, incidents of price goug-

ing. The price at the pump is set by the price of oil on the global market. Recently, China went into full lockdown again due to a spike in the latest COVID variant, and oil prices on the global market dropped 30%, Bordoff said.

I hope that everyone read Rich Wandschneider's column. It is a great history lesson, and a lesson in patriotism, akin to the economics lesson described above. He imagines being Biden's speechwriter. "Vladimir Putin is the darkest thing that has happened to Russia and neighboring countries since Hitler's siege of Leningrad and Stalin's wholesale killings and relocations of real and perceived enemies." ... "There is an unholy echo in Putin to these ruthless predecessors." ... "This is the biggest threat to all of us since Hitler and Stalin. Buck up and join the world in putting down this international menace. Put a button on your chest and pay \$6 for your gas. We're all in this together."

My son, husband and I are with the 63% of Americans who say they are willing to pay more at the pump. As Rich describes it:

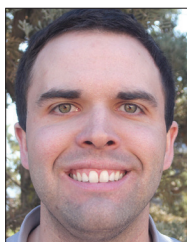
"...yes, a few people will be hurt. Give them gas coupons, a practice we developed in WWII and Safeway uses now." Thank you, Rich, for your column.

Jan Blair lives in Joseph. She is a retired senior legal secretary for a large law firm with offices in three states and the District of Columbia, and is a deacon at Lostine Presbyterian Church.

Visitor Guide inside this week's Chieftain, ready to go

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Ronald Bond



We have several major projects we take on over the course of the year here at the Chieftain.

Easily the most daunting of all, though, is our annual Visitor Guide.

This is a major heft, one that requires an all-hands-on-deck mindset. And for good reason. It is a product that not only gets into the hands of our subscribers — they are inserted in today's edition of the Chieftain, so get a copy if you are not a subscriber — but into the hands of thousands who visit the county throughout the year (hence the name).

The aim of the Visitor Guide (as is each edition of the Chieftain) is to inform. To give those embarking on a summer trip — whether it is their first time here or their 71st — ideas of activities they can undertake. It tells of the many popular events that come here each year (which, side note, it's exciting that those events appear to be on schedule this year after two years of disruptions and/or cancellations due to the pandemic).

In addition to the information about what events are taking place and what activities can be done are several stories that dive a little deeper. One looks at the growth of the JB Railriders as it becomes a reason on its own to visit the county. Another digs into the recent happenings involving the Wallowa Band of the Nez Perce Tribe and its efforts to return home. A third looks at the next 75 years of Chief



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Shown is one copy of the new 2022 Wallowa County Visitor Guide among more than 15,000 other that arrived at the Chieftain office last week. They are available now, and are in today's edition of the newspaper.

Joseph Days. And there is much more than just these.

Alongside the stories are dozen of vibrant ads for numerous businesses in the county — and if they were not a part of it, there is no way this product would happen.

I will say, from a personal standpoint, it was impressive to arrive to the office last week and see two pallets containing between them more than 15,000 copies of the Visitor Guide to disperse through the county in the coming weeks and months.

We are quite pleased with the way it turned out, and we hope you are as well. And, we hope that the information inside is informative, not only to those coming here this year to visit, but also to our loyal subscribers.

If you are a business who would like to have a box of visitor guides to give out, please reach out at editor@wallowa.com.

Ronald Bond is the editor of the Wallowa County Chieftain.