

# Oligarchy feeling a bit gassy

Friday was a great day. Not only was my daughter accepted into the University of Oregon but FERC denied the certificate of public convenience and necessity to the Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline. Because I was standing in the middle of McArthur Court on the U of O campus surrounded by anxious parents and giggling young adults I had to slip outside when I received the call from an affected landowner... the order was barely 20 minutes old! Without a pipeline, the commission reasoned, there is no purpose for a LNG terminal either and so they denied Jordan Cove as well.

Naturally, I was so excited that while I waited for the order to come up on one phone I fired off a bunch of texts on the other and then stood in the hallway reading. My joy soon turned to disappointment. Make no mistake, this is a momentous moment and will have the effect of deterring both the terminal and pipeline for the foreseeable future but as one activist put it, this project is "undead." The FERC denial was made without prejudice which means both companies, Veresen and Williams, can reapply and, in fact, both companies have declared their intention to demand a rehearing. That, however, is not what is so disappointing. After all the thousands of comments about the negative impacts upon waterways and forests and oysters and clams and birds and the very air we breathe the denial came down to one thing, the market. Hardly a surprise given the Final EIS but disheartening nonetheless that the damage caused by fracking and all the methane spewing into the air at both ends of the pipe and the impact on climate meant nothing. Without purchase contracts the company simply failed to meet the minimum standard necessary to justify the use of eminent domain. No pipe, no terminal.

Pro-gas boosters cannot even blame the environmental activists for the denial. The single most effective strategy employed by the opposition was that 90% of landowners refused to negotiate

an easement. If the company comes up with a buyer or two, (Veresen, in a fit of face saving, claims it will do just that), then nothing short of a tsunami or a countywide bill of rights for a sustainable energy future will stop it.

Yet, the local gassy oligarchy have once again hitched their pony to the wrong cart and tried to put all the county's eggs into one very unsustainable and rickety basket. Gosh, what will happen to the CEP? One would hope they might finally embrace the concept of sustainability, might encourage the discussions promoted by the SDAT Report but local history tells us this is highly unlikely. We have already heard the [booster bluster from Mark Wall](#). Nevertheless, with the oligarchy effectively neutered, the rest of us can start working toward sustainability before they get their mojo back and start strutting around about another coal terminal or pulp mill, or heaven forbid, Jordan Cove raises its ugly head again.

To that end, [Coos Commons Protection Council](#), [Coos Community Radio](#) along with area students and other local partners are holding what we believe is Coos County's first sustainability fair in April to celebrate Earth Day.

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## Can a New Populist Movement Fight Off American Oligarchy?

*Published on Friday, May 23, 2014 by [Common Dreams](#)*

– Jon Queally, staff writer

Bernie is "seriously considering" it.

Warren says, "I'm not running."

A few Democratic governors are reportedly dabbling.

But with progressives nationwide yearning for a bold populist movement, is there any chance their hopes will be met in the upcoming midterm elections or on the 2016 presidential battlefield?

At the '[New Populism Conference](#)' hosted by the Campaign for America's Future on Thursday, a number of progressive thinkers and activists—not to mention Senators Warren and Sanders themselves—spoke to the idea of the "new populism" they say is desperately needed to release the nation from the stranglehold of corporate interests and a politics dominated by big money.

"So we must to have an independent movement which says, 'It doesn't matter who's in power! There are some things that are just right and we demand that they be done!'"

—Rev. William Barber

Striking a resolute and outside message at the conference was Rev. William Barber—head of the North Carolina NAACP and leader of the Moral Monday protests in his state—who rejected the idea that hope should come from Washington, DC or the establishment of either major party.

During his remarks at the conference podium, Barber pointed to the lessons of the Civil Rights movement more than a generation ago and thundered: "They built a movement in spite of the odds," and cited Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said: "There comes a time when you have to stop being a thermometer and instead change the temperature of the situation in which you exist!"

Barber said a truly populist and progressive movement must face off against both parties. "I'm sorry to tell you, if no one did," said Barber, "but sometimes Democrats don't do what they should even when they have the power. And Republicans do what they shouldn't do when they have the power."

The real solution, Barber declared, is "to have an independent movement which says, 'It doesn't matter who's in power! There are some things that are just right and we demand that they be done!'"

Defining its idea of what the term "new populism" means and why its necessary, Robert Borosage, president of CFA, presented a report by the group on Tuesday called, [\*\*The New Populism: A Movement and Agenda to Transform America's Economy and Politics.\*\*](#)

According to the report:

*For progress to be made, the demand must come from outside the Beltway, from the people up, not Washington down. This will take a movement. And that new populist movement is already being built.*

*Modern-day muckrakers are revealing just how the game is fixed and who is on take. Popular mobilizations – online and in communities – are rising up to challenge the powers that be, in the streets and in the boardrooms. Workers all over America are standing up for decent pay and benefits on the job. Citizens of conscience are raising a moral voice at injustices that need not be. The impoverished, the young, and the locked out are starting to demand jobs and justice. We need new leaders to join the sturdy band willing to take on special interests and big money. This won't get built in a day, or in one election, or in one administration.*

*But this is America's hope. America's founders were deeply suspicious of the dangers of entrenched privilege. The question always was whether the people could use the instruments of democracy to counter the influence of the plutocrats.*

In that context, during her remarks to the conference audience, Warren declared:

*The tilt in the playing field is everywhere. When conservatives talk about opportunity, they mean opportunities for the rich to get richer, for the powerful to get more powerful. They don't mean opportunities for a young person facing \$100,000 in student loan debt to start a life, for someone out of work to get back on his feet, for someone who worked hard all her life to retire with dignity.*

*The game is rigged. The rich and the powerful have lobbyists, lobbyists and lawyers and plenty of friends in Congress. Everyone else, not so much.*

*Now we can whine about it. We can whimper. Or we can fight back. Me? I'm fighting back.*

[According](#) to *The Hill*, after Warren concluded her remarks, the crowd began shouting, "Run, Elizabeth, run."

"I appreciate the thought," Warren said with a smile, the newspaper reported. Then added: "I am not running for president."

In an interview with *The Hill*, CFA's co-founder Roger Hickey said, "Hillary Clinton, if she decides to run, should be talking about the kinds of issues we've been talking about today."

Noting his skepticism of Clinton's record and her continued silence on key issues now facing the nation, he said: "There are a lot of things that she hasn't clarified."

When he took the stage later in the day, Sen. Sanders also sounded the populist message, arguing that the struggle throughout all of American history has been about the "rights" and "dignity" for those who have been refused or deprived of either. Continuing, he said the ultimate goal for progressives has always been to "create a more just and democratic society" than the one before we live in. "That's been the struggle," he

said and is now.

"Today," Sanders said, "so few have so much and too many have so little. So I conclude by urging you and begging you not to turn your backs on the political process. Now, more than ever, we need people educating other people; we need people organizing in a way they we have never done before."

Comparing the need for a progressive and populist movement to counter the money and influence of corporate interests and billionaires like the Koch brothers, Sanders said: "What we have going for us—that they don't have going for them—is the overwhelming majority of the American agree with virtually everything [that this new populist movement] believes in."

Sanders rejected the idea of blue states vs. red states and told the crowd what's needed is a national effort to organize around the progressive populist message "in fifty states in this country" and told activists they should not concede a single one.

"The stakes are enormously high," Sanders told the crowd. "What we're fighting for is whether or not the middle class survives, whether we retain our democratic structure of government or whether we evolve into a political and economic oligarchy."

He concluded: "Now is not the time to turn our backs on the struggle. Now is the time to re-double our efforts."

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Watch Sen. Warren's entire speech here:

Watch the entire day of speakers here:

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