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## **Kris Casdorph: Destroying WV labor will not bring prosperity (Gazette)**

By Kris Casdorph

“Build it and they will come.” This is the call that Senate President Bill Cole makes as he destroys organized labor in West Virginia.

It’s an argument with which West Virginians are familiar. Senator Joe Manchin made a similar argument when fighting for a fairly deep tax cut for West Virginia businesses while occupying the Governor’s mansion. One need only look at the results we have reaped to see the fault in this “Field of Dreams” pitch.

The tax cuts initiated by then-Gov. Manchin have resulted in devastating effects for the people and government of West Virginia. Our state currently faces a budget deficit of more than \$350 million as they tackle the issues facing our state in 2016. Political conservatives often argue that a reduction in tax rates results in an increase in tax revenue. They say that while the rate of taxation for businesses decreases, a reduction in rates will lead to a broadening of said base. These reductions will encourage new businesses to open in our state.

Such fantasy has proven to be folly in these hills we all call home. West Virginia has little to offer to outside business interests. Resource extraction, be it coal or natural gas, has been the primary driver for “growth” of the economic climate. While tax easements and holidays may have led to an increase in government revenue in other states, our unique position as the Saudi Arabia of the United States has led to a far different outcome.

Much like Saudi Arabia, resource extraction is our state’s most attractive feature. Our natural resources (and the energy those extractions represent) are nearly all we have to offer to the outside world. Failing to tax these extractions and the businesses that perform such extractions at a fair rate has done nothing less than cripple West Virginia since Joe Manchin abandoned his post as our chief executive for the glory of a seat in the United States Senate.

Even Sen. Manchin is questioning the sanity of these tax cuts for our irresponsible corporate citizens in the extraction industry. Today, we are being asked to accept on faith the “wisdom” of destroying organized labor and prevailing wage protections for the benefit of the amorphous “business interests” that claim concern for West Virginia. History should be our guide in this matter.

Outside business interests have rarely concerned themselves with the plight of West Virginia’s citizens or our economy. Such interests were happy to pay West Virginia workers with monopoly money, ensuring both servitude and poverty, while protecting their own bottom financial line. What fantasy makes us believe the issues of today are aimed at a different goal?

“Build it and they will come.” Even this quote is a fallacy. In the film “Field of Dreams,” the actual quote is “Build it and he will come.” Are we expecting the Koch brothers to swoop in and suddenly concern themselves with the plight of the people of West Virginia? Will Donald Trump swoop down with his millions to save West Virginia from bankruptcy out of pity? Have we ever been relieved from our sad situation through the efforts of outsiders?

Tax cuts as a method of business growth have been proven to be a fantasy here. Such solutions may work in other places, but they are not effective here at home. Bowing down to the out-of-state masters in the form of busting the unions our grandfathers fought, bled and died for is an insult to our heritage and the sacrifice our forbear made on our behalf. Have we forgotten who we are?

He is not coming. If he is, he is not coming to enrich us. He is coming to exploit us; much as he has in past generations. Remember your roots. Be wary of the outsider and his promises of a better tomorrow. We have been let down by that promise time and time again.

Kris Casdorff, of Charleston, is a graduate of West Virginia State University and of the WVU College of Law.