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OUR VIEW

CARTOONIST'S VIEW

State can step up for Duluth-made TP

From its beginning, the paper mill along our western riverfront has been a public-private venture with a goal of bolstering the fortunes of Duluth and Minnesota. The mill's opening in 1987 meant new industry, new jobs, and renewed hope at a time when U.S. Steel and then the Duluth Air Base, Clyde Iron, Jenos, and so much else all had closed, plummeting Duluth into dark days of economic doldrums. This was around the time when that infamous billboard went up along I-35 on the way out of town: "Will the last one leaving Duluth please turn out the lights?"

The construction of the paper mill in West Duluth happened only because of public and private investment, cooperation, bipartisanship, and teamwork. The mill "symbolized a newfound resilience in Duluth, our refusal to give up or give in — even when a Twin Cities newspaper said we were 'dying'," a News Tribune editorial opined in January 2020.

We're emerging from dark days once again, this time because of a virus and a pandemic that just won't ease its grip and that has devastated our economy anew.

And another public-private venture, with the paper mill at its heart, is being worked on to improve the fortunes of Duluthians and Minnesotans once again — just like three and a half decades ago.

Old-fashioned bipartisan support is needed to make reality a \$3 million forgivable loan from the state and \$1.5 million in state job-creation funds so that ST Paper can convert Duluth's mill — shuttered last summer after demand dwindled for the "supercalendered graphic paper" it was producing — to start producing bathroom tissue, the market for which is always strong.

ST has been in

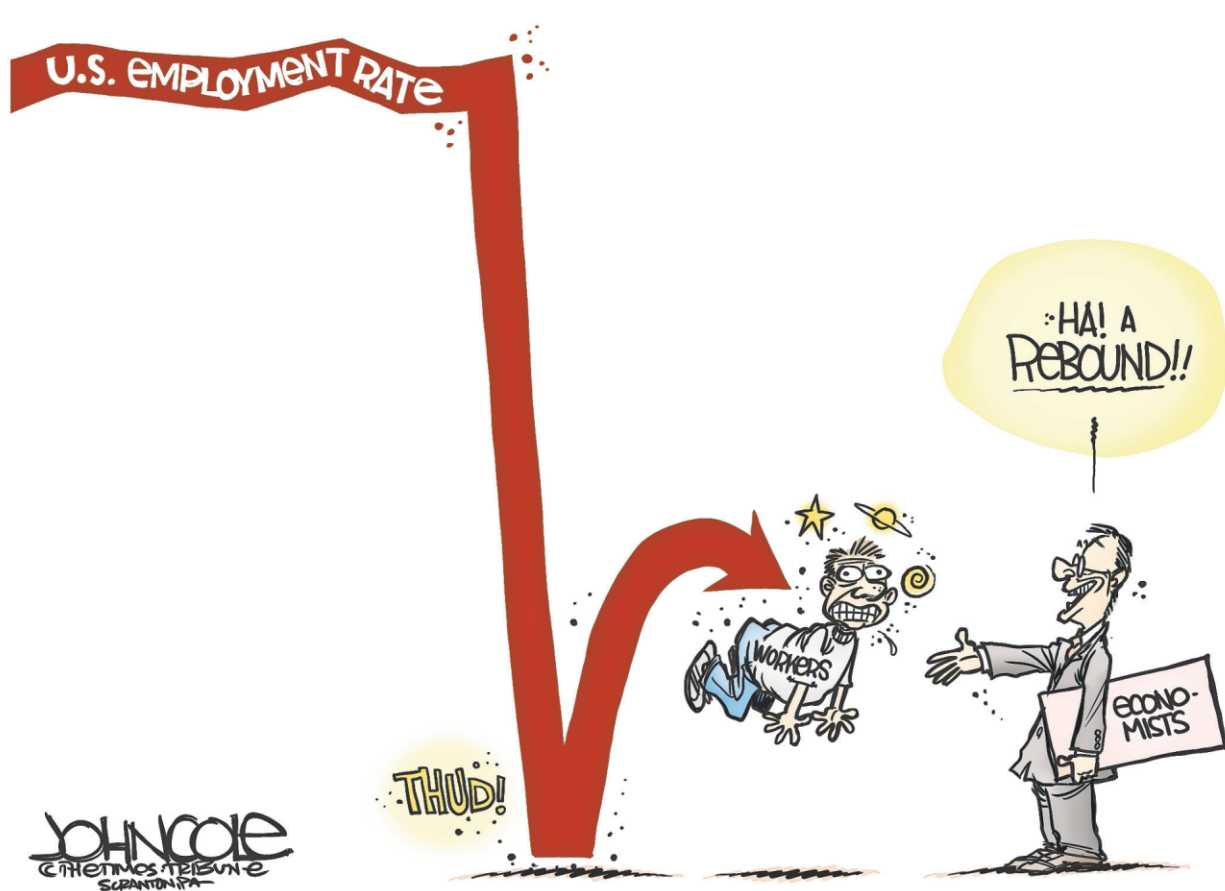
negotiations to purchase and reopen the West Duluth mill for months. With the public financing from the state, it said it will invest \$25 million for renovations, similar to other mill overhauls it has completed successfully elsewhere, and will employ at least 80 workers here at upwards of \$50,000 a year plus benefits.

Recognizing the promise of a strong payback on investment — and also the chance to revitalize and restart what has been a major industry for our city — the Duluth City Council last week voted unanimously to back ST's request to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development for the \$1.5 million in job-creation funds.

The department can also recognize this good deal and its benefits to Duluth and the state. So can lawmakers, with funding for the forgivable loan in omnibus bills now under their consideration. The \$3 million would be forgiven when ST Paper follows through on its plans, including employing at least 80 workers for five years.

"We believe we are on the threshold of moving forward with our project," ST Paper Senior Vice President Ron Thiry said in a News Tribune story. "We know this facility has undergone considerable ownership changes over the years, and we're hoping with our project that it will no longer be at the whim of digital and technological changes, because bathroom tissue should be around for a long time."

Duluth's paper mill can be around for a long time, too. Another public-private partnership stands to bolster fortunes from the shores of the St. Louis River, helping pull Duluth and the state of Minnesota out of this latest economic downturn.



John Cole/Cagle Cartoons

LOCAL VIEW

Jobs and the environment can and should work together

The challenges ahead of our country in these days and weeks following Earth Day 2021 are no less alarming than those on the first Earth Day in 1970. That was when President Richard Nixon put forth a groundbreaking plan to address pollution and create the Environmental Protection Agency. In the years that followed, Congress passed, with bipartisan support, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act.

Today, we know carbon emissions must be curbed to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. Expensive infrastructure projects have gone unfunded or underfunded for too long, resulting in crumbling pipes, roads, and bridges. As if that wasn't enough, the impacts of the global pandemic have left many Minnesotans out of work and our economy sluggish.

This trifecta has created a watershed moment, one the Biden-Harris administration is tackling head-on with the announcement of its American Jobs Plan.

Congress has been presented a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a more equitable and just future using strategies to help our communities recover and prosper by creating millions of good-paying union jobs, updating our



Olson



Austin

country's infrastructure, and putting us on a path to 100% clean energy. The administration's plan would amplify and reinforce the past and present work of the Minnesota Legislature and governor's office, from the bipartisan Next Generation Energy Act that made Minnesota an early leader in clean energy to Gov. Tim Walz's plan to put Minnesota on a path to carbon-free energy by 2040.

Minnesota is already familiar with energy-conservation investments, thanks in part to our state's Conservation Improvement Program. Additional federal investments would continue to bolster Minnesota's clean-energy jobs sector. The proposed plan would invest well over \$1 billion in electric vehicles, including promoting strong labor and training standards. This investment would go handily with a state bill to incentivize electric-vehicle purchases, truly putting Minnesota on a path to reduce pollution

from our transportation sector.

To ensure we can meet the energy needs of the future, we will need to build a more resilient energy transmission system and expand clean-energy tax incentives, investing in local businesses, union employees, and local government. All future incentives for clean energy must include strong labor standards, including prevailing wages, incentives for local hiring, registered apprenticeships, and provisions to prevent worker misclassification. President Joe Biden's proposal should address all of this while ensuring we're transitioning to 100% clean energy across our electricity, transportation, and building sectors.

Potentially overlooked, but no less important, is our need to invest in water infrastructure. All Minnesota families deserve access to clean, safe drinking water, yet this is not current reality. Replacing lead pipe and service lines is a known need and an expensive proposition, one the Minnesota Legislature has been trying to fund for years (Our View: "Finally, attention on long-neglected water needs," April 12).

Included in Biden's plan is full funding of all lead replacements, addressing the issue

once and for all. Money for upgrades and modernization wouldn't be limited to our drinking-water infrastructure. Wastewater and stormwater systems would receive funding, too, providing an influx of union jobs across the state while preparing us for the climate resiliency we'll need as we face unpredictable and extreme weather events. Again, these jobs should include prevailing wages and incentives for hiring within affected communities.

Unlike Nixon's plan, which called for regulations on industries to address the pollution problems of the 1960s and 1970s, Biden's plan is rooted in the philosophy that jobs and the environment can and should work in concert — and not in opposition — with one another. To truly take advantage of this moment, finding collective solutions is the only way to succeed. We encourage Congress to work with the Biden-Harris administration to harness the power of this unique moment in history.

Dan Olson of Duluth is international liaison and business manager for Local 1091 of LIUNA, or the Laborers' International Union of North America. Paul Austin of Minneapolis is executive director of the nonprofit Conservation Minnesota Voter Center (cmvotercenter.org).

READERS' VIEWS

Willful COVID ignorance will destroy us

Fox News TV host and political commentator Tucker Carlson could care less about your family and children and whether they live or die. He likened parents forcing their children to wear masks outdoors to child abuse. Anyone who sees it should call the police and have the parents arrested, he said.

What an outrageous and insane thing to say.

His lying propaganda is worse than Adolf Hitler's, I feel. At least Hitler appeared to love children and German shepherds.

I've received both Pfizer inoculations without any adverse aftereffects. When I go out I wear a mask not only to protect myself but for the consideration and respect of others.

Ignorance will cause our

country to die from within. Fascism is alive and well as far as Tucker Carlson is concerned, it seems.

Paul Fleming
Duluth

All 'on the hook' for injustices of long ago

The April 16 "Local View" column, "Reparations for sins of long ago just not realistic," calls for a response.

It argued that the injustice to Black people (slavery) began and ended long ago, that most current Americans have no relation to the perpetration of that harm, and that we therefore should not be "disadvantaged" in order to rectify this supposedly long-gone harm.

The harm that needs amends is intimately related to, but far more than, slavery. It is 400-plus years of policy that specifically disadvantages

people of color: slavery, Jim Crow, voting suppression, urban development, redlining, discrimination in VA housing benefits, and unequal and unjust policing, to name only some. Results: inequities in wealth, health, and opportunity that continue to cause racially specific harm to this day.

Reparations are not about punishing anyone for old or current sins. They are about correcting the injustices that grow from those sins, exist presently, and will continue unless and until policies that are race-specific harmful are ended and amends are made.

These racial harms were created by the state in affirmative policies or inaction in the face of unjust treatment by private entities. The correction must be governmental as well; this is the only way to

reach the scale necessary.

We are indeed all on the hook for fixing this. It cannot be an injustice to end inequitable policies nor to redress the harms done.

The column ended this way: "(Reparations') consequence will be discriminatory ... promoting one group of people at the expense of another." Wrong! Inside out. Redress

(including reparations) would be the end of the demoting of one group of people to the advantage of another. I urge the column's writer and other white people who agreed with what he wrote to reconsider their understanding of racism and to nurture their compassion and love of justice.

Michael Grossman
Duluth

Readers' Views and Local Views

Letters to the editor are a critical part of the community dialogue, and the News Tribune attempts to publish all letters of opinion meeting our requirements.

Letters are limited to 300 words, must be the original work of the author and must be exclusive to the News Tribune. Letters are edited for style, space, accuracy and civility. Letter writers are limited to one published submission every 30 days.

With rare exceptions, the News Tribune does not publish poetry; letters that are anonymous, libelous or attack other writers; consumer-complaint letters; thank-you letters; or letters generated by political or special-interest campaigns.

We will consider exclusive Local View columns of 600 words or fewer. Authors should possess unique insights, and their commentaries should demonstrate greater knowledge of their subject than letters.

Email submissions to: letters@duluthnews.com.

Mail to: Readers' Views, Duluth News Tribune, 424 W. First St., Duluth, MN 55802.

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