

“It Can Be Done”

President’s Presentation CORRE Annual Meeting September 24, 2008

Let me tell you a little story. It is about an old retired farmer who lived on a small farm near here. He had planted fruit trees around a little pond and cleaned it up and made it into a pretty good little swimming hole. One evening he decided to go down and look at his pond and get some fruit, so he got a bucket and started walking down to the pond. As he got close he heard a bunch of girls talking and laughing. They were skinny dipping in his pond. When they saw him approaching, they moved to the far side of the pond, scrunched down in the water, and shouted: “We’re not coming out while you are here.” The farmer held up his bucket and said: “I didn’t come down here to see you naked girls...I just came down to feed the alligator.”

There is a message here for us and for CORRE: We may be old but there is a lot of life in us yet.

My dad worked 43 years for the Southern Railway. He loved it...would have done anything for the railroad and he felt the railroad would do anything for him, which was pretty true in those days. It was a good environment for a kid to grown up in. I got to ride engines and go to derailments and eat with the men and hang out at the shops. I still have a little railroad blood in me.

I don’t remember seeing signs around the railroad about the company’s vision or its mission statement or its regulations. What I do remember is a simple four-word sign that seemed to be posted everywhere. It simply said “It Can’t Be Done” with a big red line drawn through the apostrophe and little “t” so the real message came through as “It Can Be Done.” It was a constant reminder that no matter how hard or difficult or impossible a job might seem, it should be undertaken with the thought that one way or another it could be done. It was a message to **think positive**. That is the way I feel about CORRE and it’s work. I hope you feel that way too.

Often, when someone learns that I am a member of the CORRE Board, I am asked two questions: What is CORRE doing these days and Are we making any progress? The short answers are Lots and Yes. Dave Reichle just told you of the progress that CORRE has made in 2008. It has been a good year, albeit the progress was not as much or as fast as we would like and we deserve.

Of course, we could take the J. G. Wentworth approach. You have seen it on television. Several obnoxious people say in loud voices: “It’s my money and I want it now.” Well, it is and we do, but there is a problem with that approach in our case. On the one hand, we are proud of our former employers and our association with them. We appreciate and respect them and wish them continued success. On the other hand, we are forced to struggle with them to get benefits that we earned and deserve. So, we are caught in a dilemma...somewhat like having a confrontation with a good friend or a family member. We don’t want to fight...we want to work it out.

Now, to the first question: What is CORRE doing these days? Let me answer that question by listing five major functions of the Board and give an example of each.

1. **Maintain Awareness.** The Board has to be aware of policies and activities that relate to our goals. These may come from DOE, the contractors, the congress, or even from retiree organizations at other sites. A good example of this function was CORRE's awareness of DOE's intent to issue Order 351.1, our study of it, and our role in having that Order rescinded.

2. **Identify Issues and Develop Potential Solutions.** Inherent in this function is a great deal of study and debate within the Board and its advisors. A huge amount of work went into development of our request for restoration of about 75% of lost purchasing power of our pensions.

3. **Work with the contractors and DOE.** This function entails lots of personal communication, correspondence, emails, and meetings. A prime example of this is CORRE's action when told that there was insufficient individual data to enable calculation of the cost of the proposed pension adjustment. CORRE developed a method for making that calculation and provided it to the contractors.

4. **Work with our Congressional Representatives.** The thrust of this function is to assure that our representatives have clear and accurate understanding of CORRE's issues and proposals, and to provide them with any information that they request or need. This function has been very intense during the past year, as Dave mentioned earlier.

5. **Communication.** This is a critical function. The Board has to maintain good communications not only with the membership and within the Board itself, but also with the contractors and DOE, with the media, and with the general public. Thus, we maintain an extensive web site and a blog, publish newsletters and position papers, and we encourage open discussion of our program in the print media using both letters to the editor and submitted articles from the membership.

6. **Act with Integrity.** Everything we do must be done in a highly professional manner. This means our work must be accurate and honest and rational. We want our work to be unquestionable in any and every way.

So, you see, the CORRE Board is doing lots of things...all the time. To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy: "Let the word go forth. We will pursue any lead, respond to any request, answer any question, attend any meeting, supply any information, write any document, and overcome any obstacle...in our quest for fair and just treatment of contractor retirees of DOE's Oak Ridge facilities."

Now, to the second question: Are we making any progress? My answer to that is Absolutely! We now know for a fact that our representatives clearly understand the issues and what we have requested and what is at stake. And we know for a fact that they not only support us, but they will work for us...and they have. We know that there are fewer differences of opinion between us and the benefit managers this year than last year. We know that there are two new issues on the table this year: sharing the Medicare Part D incentive money and the need to raise the cap on health insurance claims. We know that we have good relationships with the contractors. We know that some things that were in the Can't Be Done category last year are in the Can Be Done category this year.

At this point, I want to make a pitch for your help and participation. To do this, I will use Mother Theresa's "anyway" approach. That's a technique that she used to challenge people using simple statements like these::

"If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank...anyway."

"If you find serenity and happiness, people may be jealous;
Be happy...anyway."

So, I say to you:

If you recruit for CORRE, some people may reject your invitation;
Recruit...anyway.

If you write to the media, your message may end in the round file;
Write the media...anyway

If you contact your representatives, your message may get lost in the system;
Contact them...anyway.

If you offer a suggestion, it may not be usable;
Suggest it...anyway.

If you think It Can Be Done, people may think you are overly optimistic;
Think it....anyway.

After all, when all is said and done, it is what we do together that will lead to success;
...anyway.

In conclusion, my message is simple. CORRE has requested adjustments that are reasonable, straightforward, and just. We earned them and we deserve them. We are working hard to get them. We are making progress. We are in the right! Together, we can succeed.

IT CAN BE DONE.