

Oral History Collection

Professor Chad Pearson

Interviewer: Mr. Kensu Morgan

Date: Fall 2015

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Mr. Morgan: Hello, I'm Kensu Morgan. I'm here for my interviewee. Tell us, what's your name?

Prof. Pearson: My name is Chad Pearson.

Mr. Morgan: Where do you live in Denton?

Prof. Pearson: I live on Alice Street.

Mr. Morgan: How long have you lived in Denton, exactly?

Prof. Pearson: For about a year and a half, in Denton County for about three or four years.

Mr. Morgan: So tell us, what is the fracking referendum? What makes it so important?

Prof. Pearson: It's important because fracking, the process of hydraulic fracturing, is dangerous. It's bad for the air, it's bad for the water, there's a pretty much scientific consensus about its problems, and so it's in the face

of that, that a number of us in Denton mobilized, and campaigned, and ultimately secured a ban on fracking.

Morgan: How long did the fracking referendum last, the fight and the ban itself?

Pearson: I know that for a good number of years folks in the community have been upset about it. The ban was passed in November of 2014, that's roughly one year ago, exactly. And the ban itself lasted until June, when the city council overturned the ban.

Morgan: Why were you anti-fracking? You said yourself you weren't here at the beginning. Why were you anti-fracking when you moved here?

Pearson: The reason is because of the adverse health effects of it. The dangers associated with it. And as I mentioned, there's a historical, excuse me, a scientific consensus, serious scientists, not those on the take, understand the risks. Certainly there are--the corporate polluters will pay off scientists to write nonsense about it supposedly being unharmed. But it is harmful. And we need to be serious about that.

Morgan: What is your profession that makes you so certain

about these things? I read up on you. You're a history professor, right?

Pearson: That's correct. I teach history at Collin College in Plano. I actually study employers and business organizations historically and look at the way in which they engage in astroturfing. Astroturfing is the process by which elites have a cause, and rather than point to their own narrow class interest, they present their cause as something that the people are in favor of. So, for example, in the fracking case we have these very big, profitable corporations who profit from this poisonous process. And they present the issue as one of it being good for jobs, good for the economy, they don't highlight their own narrow, class interests. I'm interested in cutting through the garbage, the BS, and exposing these corporate hoodlums for what they [Break].

Morgan: The fracking referendum, from a small county in Denton basically made world-wide news. How did you feel about that in general?

Pearson: I was happy to see the exposure in places like *Al-Jazeera*, the *BBC*, the *Guardian Newspaper*. I think it's important, it's a world-wide event and there

are others who are involved in it, as well, in other locations.

Morgan: The fracking referendum passed, and it was probably great, it gave people hope, and then the ban on bans happened. What was the name of it?

Pearson: HB40.

Morgan: Yes, I'm sure it really down played you all, and in fact it really did a lot more than ban it, it banned other bans as well. How did it make you feel? How did it do for the moral of everybody in general?

Pearson: Speaking for myself, I'm not surprised. I see the politicians in Texas and in most regions around the country as serving the interests of the ruling class, the most privileged members of society. So, in essence the corporate polluters paid off the legislature to enact this legislation. They don't serve the people, they serve these fat cats, these capitalist pigs.

Morgan: Regardless of the ban, a lot of people wouldn't have given you a chance in the first place. You were just a bunch of grass roots people. [Break]

Morgan: And yet you somehow, against every odd managed to beat them. You managed to, at least for a time, to

get the fracking referendum done. How does that make you feel?

Pearson: It shows the limitations to their lives, it shows the possibility of ordinary people coming together and fighting back, and it shows that money can't buy everything.

Morgan: You believe that not only the ban will be lifted but the fracking referendum, the ban--basically put back in place. It's a very tough road, especially with this sort of thing. Do you believe it will ever come back in place, and how long do you think it would take, overall?

Pearson: I don't know how long it will take, but I think that HB40 is--appears to be in violation of the Texas State Constitution, which exclusively states that municipalities have the power to regulate industry in their communities. And HB40 takes that power away. I think there will be fights on the legal front. The outcome, I don't--

Morgan: Thank you for your time, Chad Pearson. It was very informative.

Pearson: Thank you.

[End of interview]