

**Subject: RE: Stand down the Blue Ribbon Panel: A plea for maturity**

**Date:** Fri, 21 May 2004 11:54:39 -0700

**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>

**To:** "Elizabeth James" <cagebc@yahoo.com>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>

**CC:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Ms James:

I reread the letter written by Lord Halifax to Winston Churchill in 1940 urging him to be mature and sensible instead of standing up to the "Brown Shirts". However, I do appreciate the letters to the editor written in my support by people like Mr. Laurie Johnson, Ms Foreman and Mr. Cassidy, by way of example. Those are a few that have been published. I also appreciate the many phone calls and email messages supporting me in the struggle for democratic rights and efficient government. IT IS HIGH NOON and such support is appreciated.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth James [<mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com>]

Sent: May 21, 2004 10:25 AM

To: Ernie Crist; Mayor and Council - DNV; James Ridge

Subject: RE: Stand down the Blue Ribbon Panel: A plea for maturity

Dear Clr. Crist:

Thank you for your message.

As more than one politician and bureaucrat will know, one comment guaranteed to raise my ire is to be told, "No, no, no, Liz - you don't understand," or, in this case, that I have "seriously underestimate[d] the situation." I understand the situation under discussion very well - all of it.

I heartily agree with Sun Tzu that the outcome of the situation will, indeed, "be determined by moral factors". So bearing in mind, only, the taxpayer's pocket, I suggest one needs to consider whether it is "moral" to engage in "warfare" on their dime....especially when the outcome of the battle is in serious doubt:

Put another way, one needs to have at heart the interests of the community at large when one tries to decide, "..... whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer [some] slings and arrows of outrageous fortune... or, by opposing, end them...."

Before one decides whether to oppose - or not - one also needs to calculate the likelihood of ending them. I suggest the war you want to win should not be fought - and is not likely to be won - in the current arena yet, as with most wars, it runs the risk of harm to many who are innocent of the current dispute. I doubt there will be any winners or, to quote someone more successful than I in the world of politics: "You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake": Jeannette Rankin, first female Member of Congress. .

Major issues should, I believe, be fought on the fields of election campaigns, not ad nauseum around the council table - where the Mayor, councillors and bureaucrats alike are being paid to conduct the business of the district, not to engage in war.

Where I have a major difference of opinion with Sun Tzu, is that I do not regard the ongoing situation at the District as a "war." I regard the precipitating issue as an

incident which began because someone, for whatever reason, made an inappropriate decision to withhold information from an elected official and because that elected official reacted in a manner which is inappropriate to the modern workplace.

There is no doubt in my mind that others have chosen to keep the incident alive in the public mind, rather than to apply salve to the wounds. T'was ever thus.

As I've said on other occasions....citizens who care have already heard the message. The others are not listening; all both groups want is for council and staff to pay attention to business - and to spend their hard-earned money on well-run services.

There have been and still are many costly problems up at the Hall - problems that will never be solved by people who, instead of tackling those problems, are concentrating on landing the next job up the chain or on warfare.

As I indicated in earlier messages, I remain extremely grateful for the work you have done - still are doing - to put important issues before the public. Please - don't put all that work in jeopardy at this stage in the game.....stand tall and disengage from the conflict.

And one last quote: You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar.....I don't know who said it.

Sincerely,  
Liz James

Ernie Crist <ernie\_crist@dnv.org> wrote:

Dear Ms James:

Thank you for your words including those that were kind to me. However, I believe you seriously underestimate the situation in the District Hall at present. This is not about bruised egos or misunderstandings, common sense, false pride, dignity or any such normal human emotion. This is part of a much larger struggle and it is about winning or losing that struggle. The key players know that which is why Bell and company are pulling out all the stops. But as Sun -Tzu in his "The Art of Warfare" stated . "The outcome of a struggle will in the final analysis be determined by moral factors".

Yours truly,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth James [<mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com>]

Sent: May 18, 2004 4:15 PM

To: Ernie Crist; Mayor and Council - DNV; James Ridge

Cc: fonvca@fonvca.org

Subject: Stand down the Blue Ribbon Panel: A plea for maturity

18 May 2004

Clr. Ernie Crist,  
DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER  
355 West Queens  
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.

RE: Staff and Council relationships: Responsibility to citizens

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Dear Councillor Crist:

I have received your recent email, in which you comment again on your differences of opinion with Mayor Bell and some members of staff. I have also received a copy of Mayor Bell's letter to you of May 11, 2004.

By now, you will have realized that I have opted not to comment much on this dispute, ongoing since 2001. My reason for taking what amounts to a hands off approach is that, along with most others, what I know of the affair has come from you, from the Mayor, from Council discussion, from email exchanges and from the media. This gives me little confidence that I have sufficient details upon which to base a valid opinion.

Upon reflection, however, I believe that for me to continue to remain silent may well be misconstrued; hence this message. In order to do the matter justice, I regret this is not likely to be a short, off-the-cuff, note.

By your own admission, the part you played in the 2001 incident was not appropriate; hence your apology to Ms. Burrows. That said, what has never been explained to my satisfaction is what caused Ms. Burrows' uncharacteristic lack of cooperation when you asked to see a copy of the draft Council Agenda. Was she just having a bad afternoon, or had she been told by someone not to allow you to see the draft?

If the latter was the case, who was it who issued that directive - and why? It is important for the question to be answered, for it was that action that set into motion a whole series of events - events that are adversely affecting the business of the District to this day.

There is no doubt that, whether the decision to withhold the draft from you was an arbitrary one on the part of Ms. Burrows, or a more disturbing one from another source, it was not an acceptable response to a request from an elected official - and it was met with an equally inappropriate reaction from you.

What is also unacceptable in my view, is the fact that the fallout from an incident which occurred in 2001 has not been dealt with satisfactorily to this day. In fact, it is not likely to be concluded before the end of 2004 - if then. The question is: Why not? There were/are certainly enough options open to any and all of the parties involved....

\* If Ms. Burrows felt the incident was serious enough, she could have enforced her Charter rights. She did not.

\* If the RCMP felt the incident was a serious one, they could have pursued the matter but chose not to do so.

\* If you felt/feel you were unjustly accused, you were/are free to take the matter to court. You have not done so.

\* If the Mayor felt the incident was serious enough, he should have exerted his authority under the Local Government Act to force a legal resolution of the matter long before now. He did not.

Instead, the embers have been allowed to smoulder - poked into flames at periodic intervals at considerable direct and indirect cost to District citizens - for the better part of three years.

Costs have accrued - and continue to accrue - for staff time/materials, council time, and legal fees. Indirect costs relate to the fact that you now do not have normal working access to members of staff, that you have been unable - or less than willing - to assume committee functions and also to a sour working climate. This displays an abominable lack of consideration for the taxpayer who must foot the bill.

I must admit that, based upon what I have seen and heard from all sides to date, I do believe there to be a considerable political element at work in all of this. In my opinion, citizens have right to expect that Mayor Bell - with all of his years on Council - should have been able to deal with this matter competently and with dispatch. Citizens

also have the right to expect that he would be fair to all parties.

Instead, my impression is that he has been lax at best - choosing to allow the matter to hang, unresolved, rather than to enforce arbitration within a very few months of the precipitating event. In my opinion, good leadership has gone wanting.

For your own part.....one of the reasons I would have preferred an enforced arbitration is that it was obvious from the beginning that, while you were not prepared to give an inch beyond your original apology, neither is it your nature to sit silent if, in your opinion, an injustice has been done. Fair enough, nor should you. Unfortunately, though, you were not prepared to take the final step - viz. that of proving your case in court.

Now, no matter what the decision of the Blue Ribbon panel, no one will come out a winner. Not Ms. Burrows, who has undergone 3 or more years of unpleasantness; not Mayor Bell who, in my opinion, has displayed no capacity for discerning leadership; not the members of two councils; and certainly not the taxpayer who must pay the bills for work not done.

What I regret most in all of this is that a man such as yourself who, of anyone in the District past or present, has tirelessly given of himself to ensure democracy and the very best of communities, now faces a virtual tribunal for sins past, present and future, as he winds down his career - all because no-one had a better idea as to how to handle it.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not include the following comment: In all my years of trying to make a positive contribution to our Canadian democracy, there has been no-one - absolutely no-one - who has given me more immediate and useful assistance and encouragement than yourself. Certainly, we do not always agree but I believe that, in agreeing to disagree, there is always respect on both sides.

It saddens me beyond belief that, even at this late hour, Mr. Ridge could not exert his influence to bring you, the Mayor and Ms. Burrows into a quiet space with either himself or an arms-length arbitrator to bring this matter to a happier conclusion.....That, of course, would require all parties - yes, including you - to give a little; to show maturity and determination enough to put citizens first by reaching a compromise that can carry us through to the next election; and to open and close the meeting by shaking hands all round....


But perhaps I place too much faith in the ability of human beings to get along and do right by one another.

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