

The Other “F” Word

Oh no, he said the F word! Fiduciary: a person in great trust who acts ethically for the benefit of another, frequently in financial matters.

The Johnson debacle is a cornucopia of lessons. Mr. Kromm, a lame duck supervisor, shows it's a good thing to apologize when caught with your hand in the cookie jar, rather than say, "What Cookies?" The Daily Republic goes further in suggesting that the jar should always be under high surveillance cookie cameras.

Mr. Kromm continues that Mr. Johnson has done noble deeds. In the mythical tale of Camelot, Sir Lancelot, the once noble protector of the realm, started well but eventually sullied his sword by lancing a lot more than the king's opponents.

What else did we learn? Not only is there a disgruntled employee whistle blower in the wings and pending litigation, but the county is spending over \$700,000 just to study whether they should persist with no bid contracting. Really? Have a cookie

The mea culpa of Kromm and the critique by the paper carry constructive ideas. Yes, to the notion of having uniform published policies and procedures in place to prevent, monitor, pursue and prosecute misdeeds. The USAF has a superb travel reimbursement model fairly and easily applied to all. Can you make a call, Sups? How about posting audited travel vouchers on a public web site. How about televising the county meetings?

One supervisor wants this considered as a "personnel matter... in closed session". Go rent "Star Chamber". The only chamber I want this aired out in is the chamber of public consciousness or the parlor of public engagement, not inside some small town star chamber where only the poobahs convene.

Do we need a vote of no confidence? Is this letter of apology, welcome and sincerely contrite as it is, akin to walking safely out from behind the OK corral after all the bullets flew and picking to side with the winner?

The best lessons learned are tied to human nature. First, cries of innocence or being somehow an exception to the rules by those caught with their hand in the cookie jar usually serves to make us guard our cookies a bit more wisely in the future. Secondly, Mr. Johnson and others may liken the papers' inquiry and outrage to... "chicken---" journalism" as the amount involved is only 60k. Is it true that this level on malfeasance is not monumental, per se? Yes. Is it also true that you just can not be a little bit pregnant?

Third; lies beget lies, and a willingness to lie when there is little fiscal gain underscores that you have someone ripe and ready to lie when the big issues are afoot.

Fourth, although humans are hard wired to know right from wrong with rare exceptions, we also have the uncanny ability to walk the gamut between sinner and saint, ethical pillar and pathetic moral bottom feeders and everything in between. We have immense ability to deceive both ourselves and other. Knowing this makes one appreciate the utility and necessity of rules to protect us from ourselves. We must all then be guardians on the wall; not just a whistle blower and not just the local paper. Without personal engagement in our political process we will inherit the ill smelling wind of the sedition and seduction of position, power and privilege. Bill Clinton did eventually make one thing perfectly clear when asked why he cheated. His answer ... "because I could"

Walt Kelly, author of the beloved Pogo comic strip said, “We have met the enemy and it is us”. We all have a penchant for mischief. We all have a tendency to become jaded by the misdeeds of others and we all can scream outrage and yet do nothing or commit similar misdeeds in our private lives; perhaps not this time, Fairfield.