

Discussion of LCCC employees morale in public would be "suicidal?" "Stupid?"

How insensitive. Dare I say stupid?

When the best word a guy who makes his living choosing words could come up with to describe his fear of discussing a matter that should be openly discussed is "suicidal," he displayed an insensitivity to LCCC students and their parents. And to Laramie County voters as well. All of us.

It is well known that some young people with links to LCCC ended their lives by suicide in the recent past. And, a Trustee chooses that word to describe his feelings toward discussing employee morale problems at LCCC?

When I use the word "stupid" in the presence of my two nearly perfect granddaughters, I am quickly and vocally chastised. Sometimes, loudly. But, under these circumstances and times at LCCC, that word is much more desirable than the other used by Tom Bauman.

One who attended the meeting at which the words were used agreed with the WT-E coverage, in which it was reported: "Bauman said he did not want to participate in a 'wide-open discussion' on the subject. Doing so would be a 'path to suicide and stupid,' Bauman asserted."

What did he mean? Apparently he believes that to discuss what is generally perceived to be very low morale on campus by both students and employees would end his political career as a Board of Trustees member. What else could he have been referencing?

In the interest of full disclosure, I will remind readers that I am strongly supportive of electing at least two, maybe three, new LCCC Trustees in the November election. I favor the removal of Tom Bauman and George McIlvaine. Voters can decide whether they can be effective anymore. My interest is in having new Trustees who may be able to turn the educational tides and reverse the decline of LCCC. The present course is, and has been, very destructive, not to mention it has subjected our community college, Cheyenne and Laramie County to criticism, derision, scorn and ridicule around the United States and, to a lesser extent, around the world.

At the same Board meeting that Tom Bauman used the indefensible word, another Board member said, "... it is difficult to have a discussion about morale on campus because employees will not speak honestly for fear of losing their jobs."

That's all you have to hear to know that morale on campus is in the toilet. When students won't speak up out of fear and employees won't out of a greater fear - of

losing their jobs, you don't need much more of a discussion to conclude things have been allowed to deteriorate too far.

Many of the students at LCCC are at an age where they just don't know what to expect. They do not have enough of "life's experience" to know answers that older students have. Younger students I have interviewed fear Darrel Hammon's "reach." They fear that he somehow can still hurt them in their academic situations even when they are no longer LCCC students. He has not been effective at much else but he has instilled a disturbing fear of revenge and retaliation toward those who may speak the truth if it differs from his version of the truth or it may harm him in any way.

Enough is enough. Darrel Hammon admitted at that meeting that at, "every college he has been to has had morale problems ...". That admission was probably unintentional. If an airline pilot said, "every plane I fly crashes," you'd get him out of the cockpit. If a police officer said, "every arrest I make leads to accusations of police brutality," you'd take him off the beat. Darrel Hammon does not lead by example. He does not lead. But he does hold a position from which he can coerce, intimidate and damage others. And so long as voters tolerate Trustees who feel their job is protecting the president, supporting a rogue president, fearing his position, things will not improve at LCCC.

Can you imagine an admission that, basically, "everywhere I go, morale goes down the drain?"

I hear from various people - students, staff and others - at LCCC, or recently out there, and the input is always the same - morale is bad and students try to ignore their surroundings and just work at getting an education. Troublesome students have been tolerated. Incompetence in leadership has been rewarded. ALCSD1 substitute teacher was dismissed for not recognizing a problem she did not know existed. A community college president has been rewarded for ignoring a much more serious problem he did know existed and, by his inaction and poor judgment, the problem was greatly exacerbated.

Personally, to me, the primary election defeat of Jim McBride was huge. With a new state superintendent of public instruction, we now have a chance, at least some hope, of improving public education in Wyoming through the high school level. But until Darrel Hammon is terminated at LCCC, improvement in all public education will be seriously limited. His removal is more important than the continuation of the Hathaway Scholarship or ending PAWS testing. Nothing is more critical.

Once again, the WTE objects to a litigant appealing to the Supreme Court. It's okay for them to cost taxpayers money with appeals but it's wrong for a public entity?

When the WTE didn't like the stupid granting of a temporary restraining order by district court judge Peter Arnold, they raised legal hell and he reversed himself. The other side in that dispute was Laramie County Community College. It did not trouble the WTE one whit that they were causing a public entity to expend money to engage in a legal battle with them.

When former district court judge Ed Grant issued one of his typically bizarre decisions about the City's board of appeals being able to do what they had done, the WTE appealed that ruling to the state supreme court. Obviously, they had no concern for the fact that their adversary in that matter would have to expend public dollars to defend Grant's ruling.

The WTE prevailed, legally, on both of the above matters. They know as well as anyone that the lower courts often, all too often, get things wrong and if a litigant such as themselves accepted the bad ruling, justice would not be served.

For several years, the WTE encouraged, no, make that commanded, the City of Cheyenne to make repeated illegal annexations and, when challenged beyond the erroneous district court judges, they cheered the City's defense at the Wyoming supreme court. The \$300,000 spent by the City came from public funds and the WTE never objected nor challenged that spending of taxpayer money.

So, why adopt the shallow position now that Laramie County School District One is somehow wasting money in trying to insure that a new district court judge got it right when he ordered the release of salaries of individual teachers in the school district as well as other employees?

They, the WTE, have been the beneficiary of such an appeal. Why would they want to deprive the school district of the same legal protection? Why haven't they encouraged the school district to make the appeal so, when finally decided, we have "law" to work from, not just a district court judge's take on the law. A "take" by the way that has often been found erroneous.

Frankly, I don't have that curiosity in me.

I don't much care what school teachers make. I don't much care what employees at the City make, or what federal, state or county employees are paid. Should those employees care much about others knowing what they make? That is their choice to make. It is their decision and I will respect it even if I disagree with it. Which I don't. I made a decision a very long time ago that I would not work for government (after my Navy days). Nothing radical or profound about that decision. It was just my choice. I didn't want to work for a bureaucracy where right does not always prevail nor wrongs always fail.

But, I don't have a mad on for those who chose to go that route. Many make intelligent and reasoned decisions about working for government. It just wasn't my calling. I also decided I wouldn't get into food service or manufacturing. And, basically, that I would not work for someone else, punch a time clock or be paid by the hour. Nothing against those who do, I just decided I wouldn't. And, I haven't.

I don't care what my neighbor makes or whether he can afford to drive the SUV he drives. I don't care what his mortgage payment is or what kind of clothes he wears. I do care about spouse or child abuse. That's my business. But not a helluva lot about what else goes on around me. I'd like neighbors to take good care of their lawns but I don't agonize about it (much) when they don't. And I don't eat free food from grocery demos.

I don't care if my grandchild's Spanish teacher makes \$80,000 a year or \$35,000. Or \$7.50 an hour. I do care if they can teach the subject not just speak it. And that would be the case even if they were paid only \$12,000 a year. Or whether they were a Math or History teacher. Expectations don't have to equal compensation. They can be greater. If you want to be a teacher for whatever benefits and rewards there are to that, be a teacher. But earn your money, whatever you're paid. And what you're being paid is your business, not mine. I would get on your tail for incompetence whether you're making \$22,000 a year or \$102,000. Incompetence is incompetence, regardless of salary.

Still, it's none of my business how much you're paid and I just don't care. Having said that, I do care how much a bozo like Darrel Hammon is being paid. I consider that different. And because I publish this piece, I can make that distinction.

LCSDD1, I support your choice in appealing the district court decision. They are legally wrong so often, there is no reason you should sit back and accept a new judge's decision as gospel. So, appeal away. If you lose, I still won't be interested in your teachers' salaries.

I was once called the morning after an election in northern Wisconsin in which my candidate had won by five votes, defeating a four-term incumbent. The caller said, "they going to try to steal the election." How, I asked. By demanding a recount, he exclaimed. I told him I would have done the same thing - nothing wrong with that. The process allows it. And the process allows an appeal of any district court decision to the Wyoming supreme court. I would not begrudge even the WTE that opportunity. So, quit whining, Reed, and prepare your Answer. Once the Supremes weigh in, we'll know what the law is here in the state. Not until.