

Submitted by Bernie Ziegler, October 8th, 2011

The Latest from the Island Trust's Ministry of Truth (Minitrue in Newspeak)

By Bernie Ziegler

(Note to reader: To allay the fears of some and the confusion of others, the following represents my personal views, not those of any group or association.)

Good News! Judging from the comments I've received, people actually read my recent remarks on the upcoming LTC elections. Most of that feedback was positive, but I've also been taken to task by some. One of Saturna's champions of civility and political correctness told me that my recent comments regarding trustee Neff were personal and offensive. I explained that I merely cited the facts, which tend to speak for themselves, and that my opinion was a political commentary on Ms. Neff's activities as a trustee, rather than a personal attack. Alas, my interlocutor turned and walked away before I could add the classical feminist rallying cry, that "the personal is political". I guess I won't be invited to her naked sauna in the foreseeable future.

Was it offensive to note that Ms Neff voted herself a pay raise, at taxpayers' expense, while denying that she would directly benefit? Was it uncivil to quote her statement that she does not represent Saturna voters, but rather the trust and its mandate? Or that she pushed two poorly crafted (and consequently withdrawn) proposed bylaws without concern for their impact on people and without consulting islanders beforehand? (In Ms Neff's own words, if she is re-elected, these are "just the thin edge of the wedge of things to come"). Was it rude to mention Ms. Neff's own statement that she is running for a second term, because she thinks she "can beat SIPOA"? Was it impertinent to cite her statement that she "does not make decisions, because those are made by the Trust staff"? I think that my critique was neither ill-mannered nor uncouth or personal. It was factual. An elected official/candidate's words and actions are fair game in politics.

Now I'd like to focus your attention on the latest attempt by the Saturna Local Trust Committee (LTC) to educate us peasants, by disseminating the correct spin for the Trust's agenda. The LTC or more likely, the trust's high-priced taxpayer-funded PR consultants, has started to publish a bi-monthly 4-page newsletter, imaginatively titled *Trust Issues*, the first of which appeared in our mailboxes in September. It is also available on-line. <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/sa/pdf/sanewstrustissuessep2011.pdf>

The stated purpose of *Trust Issues* is to provide information about the LTC's activities from "knowledgeable sources" and to "ensure that the discussion about the work of the LTC can be based on accurate information." It just wouldn't do to allow the obviously misinformed people on Saturna to make up their own minds on the benefits of the Trust executive's "Places before People" agenda. Our trustees don't believe that anyone else has the intellectual wherewithal to understand "the work" of the LTC. They have set out to tutor us with this taxpayer-funded LTC newsletter (a \$3,000 budget allocation). This sounds like the beginning of the "process of continuous alteration" perfected in George Orwell's Ministry of Truth, one of whose purposes was to "rectify" news.

Consider the following statement on the front page of the inaugural *Trust Issues*:

“The storage building regulation applies to storage buildings being constructed anywhere within the Saturna Island Local Trust Area and so the amendment to require some water catchment on such storage buildings was also applicable to the whole island.”

This is a non-sequitur. There is no connection between creating a new category of building and a consequent requirement of water catchment. This new reason for the implementation of island-wide water catchment does not hold water – to coin a phrase. It is an example of a serious lack of care and attention, if not outright incompetence. Kudos go to the men and women of Propdep, the Minitrue Propaganda Department (for those of you unfamiliar with Newspeak), for their “rectification” of the facts.

Accessory buildings were defined in Saturna Land Use Bylaw 78, adopted in 2002, with storage buildings subsequently classified as a special type of accessory building in bylaw 100 in September, 2010. However, bylaw 99 put in place to ensure water catchment for new construction at East Point, is flawed: accessory buildings were not included as a type of construction requiring catchment.

So, our local trustees and their parachuted-in chair spent all summer and all their energies – and staff time - pushing bylaw 104 to plug this perceived minor hole in the water catchment regulations, i.e. storage buildings were not covered by bylaw 99, while leaving the front door wide open on all other types of accessory buildings. Our trustees, who supposedly take their jobs seriously, should have been aware of that omission in bylaw 99, (or perhaps competent staff should have pointed it out...). It makes you wonder what other “accurate information” these “knowledgeable sources” have in store for us.

The last two attempts at jamming unnecessary and poorly crafted bylaws down our collective throats were derailed by us misinformed peasants; 102 was rejected and 104 has been sent back to the drawing board ... no doubt to be reincarnated as another version in the next cycle of “activity” or “work program”, as the Trust’s Propdep likes to call its efforts.

Firsthand information from the “knowledgeable sources” is only available at LTC meetings which are cleverly scheduled mid-day, mid-week. Unless you are unemployed, retired, without a life or just plain idle, you have to be very determined to keep an eye on Islands Trust activities.

It must be frustrating for the trust executive to see their acolytes’ lack of success on Saturna. Ergo *Trust Issues*, the Saturna LTC’s newsletter – and I use that term loosely, since nearly a quarter of its space is taken up with nothing but filler, complete with links to the IT’s propaganda sites. *Trust Issues* advises islanders that “talking directly to the trustees ... is the fastest way for individuals to give us your suggestions and get questions answered.” There are two problems with this invitation. First: Given that the trustees

can't provide accurate information in print (case in point: July 12, 2011 IT letter signed by trustee Luckham and *Trust Issues*), why would you expect to fare better through personal contact? Second: Why would you talk to a trustee who says she doesn't make decisions, who only parrots the Trust agenda and who says she doesn't represent you?

In a society increasingly dominated by dunces, frauds and amateurs, it is essential to find competent people to represent us. In the upcoming election, we all must look for candidates who understand regulations, who will make the effort to listen to us and who are willing to speak for us – in all our names – both on the Local Trust Committee and on the Island Trust Council. To achieve that, it is paramount that all property owners on Saturna, whether full-time or part-time, who want to enjoy their property without ever-increasing regulatory interference, and who care about our community and our island make the effort to register and to vote for capable candidates willing to stand up for us, on November 19. If we don't, we will deserve three more years of the same “work”.