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EDITORIAL

Council's cards too close to its chest

WHAT'S going on in Guyton St, inside city hall? That's a question a whole lot of people would like the answer to, especially if they are rate-payers of the Wanganui District Council. It's the question most frequently asked by people who telephone the *Chronicle's* newsdesk with "story ideas", allegations, accusations or plain old gripes relating to the council and its activities, that they believe this newspaper should "investigate".

The *Chronicle* also receives a steady stream of letters, for its Opinion page, from correspondents challenging council policies and decisions while criticising this newspaper for its apparent lack of interest in district council matters and failing to properly examine (and report on) those policies and decisions. We agree, that is precisely what the *Chronicle* should be doing, albeit that our news team these days is somewhat smaller than it used to be.

However, the problem is not made within the *Chronicle*. It is the direct result of the district council's cone-of-silence policy in dealing with "the media". Under this policy, the council's staff, from the chief executive down to the cleaner, are banned from talking to the *Chronicle's* reporters about anything and everything and even the elected members of the Wanganui District Council are firmly discouraged by the mayor from talking to the media.

Mayor Michael Laws has designated himself the sole purveyor of council "news" on every subject from the number of dogs currently in the local pound to the size and cause of the council's considerable debt. Even simple stories that would show Wanganui in a positive light can only be written with the Mayor's approval and input. Is that a problem? Yes, if the *Chronicle* is going to serve its readers in the way they want us to — with straight, factually accurate answers to some very basic questions on what council is doing and why.

But all too often the responses, carefully crafted by Mr Laws and his "communications" staff, do not answer the questions. The responses come back as press releases which are, more often than not, only a mayoral opinion — long on rhetoric, short on information.

Arguably, the council's media policy has some purpose in preventing reporters from bugging council officers with frivolous requests for information. And we have probably been guilty of that from time to time.

So, what's going on inside city hall? Ask yourself.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

God provides in times of need

Then Jesus declared: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

What about the people to whom Jesus was speaking? These people to whom He said: "I am the bread of life?" What was their reaction? They grumbled. They couldn't grasp what Jesus was telling them. As far as they were concerned, their expectations were not being met. What were they expecting? A miracle. Another sign so that they might believe. It wasn't enough that they had just seen Jesus use a young boy's five small barley loaves and two small fish to feed 5000. "Why don't you give us a clue about

READERS' LETTERS The Editor, Wanganui Chronicle, Box

Nutty

There has to be a nut loose somewhere in the council chambers. There must be if council imagines that a "prize" of \$35,000 that requires the submission of the "conceptual intent of the proposed work, dimensions, proposed materials, engineering requirements and calculations. Scales concept drawings and a maquette of the proposed work should also be included. An up-to-date portfolio is also desirable".

This is a prize? It would sound great if it didn't include the cost of making the bombproof, vandalproof, compliant work as well.

What planet are these noodles from that propose such an event will become an "internationally significant competition" — Lunaticville, Luditis?

Having said that, I will enter with an engineered proposal to relocate *The Wrestlers* to a new riverbank location where, with a bit of luck, someone will win the "Turner" prize by chucking it into the river. I am sure Billy Apple would approve.

ROSS MITCHELL-ANYON
Te Awa Rere (Gonville)

Sorry for Buck

I really feel so sorry for Buck. He did not choose to be part of a family who could not afford the responsibility of owning a pet.

Taking an animal into the family is a big commitment, one that should be thought about thoroughly beforehand. Regardless of how much love the boy said he had for the dog these are not the actions of a caring pet owner.

This poor dog was running free and got hit by a car! These are not the actions of a caring pet owner.

They could not afford to get him to the vet so they let him suffer for two weeks with a broken leg! These are not the actions of a caring pet owner.

Standing outside the vet's office begging for donations! These are not the actions of a caring pet owner...

Taking the dog from the vet's office while he was in such pain! These are not the actions of a caring pet owner.

Buck deserves a chance, most definitely.

He needs a caring home with people who can give him everything he needs — registration, microchipping, food, exercise and the necessary vet treatments. His current carers may not be able to keep these up to date. And does he have a fenced section to run about in to keep him safe in the future?

N LEAHY
Wanganui

Smoking evil

I agree with Shaun Forlong that we do not want to create a nanny state, but somehow this smoking evil has to be dealt with.

I suggest that at all park entrances there is a notice, such as: "Enjoy the Park's lovely fresh air. Please do not spoil it for yourself and others by smoking".

This is a request for co-operation rather than a threat.

JOHN H AURET
Wanganui

Lesson

It is an interesting lesson to read through copies of letters to the editor and decide if any of them have shaped the future of our fair city.

In view of the local government elections later in the year, this extract from one of my letters, that appeared in the *Chronicle* on June 18, 2004 is relevant: "... those who enter local body politics have twice the ego but only a fraction of the talent of those on the



national scene". I can't understand the mentality of anyone with that opinion of his future workmates wanting to stand for office for another three years.

Would it be a very cohesive team working in the best interest of our city?

D J BOSWELL
Wanganui

Be sceptical

One should never believe a rumour until it has been officially denied.

And now that the Minister of Health, Tony Ryall, has officially denied the rumour of a merger between the Wanganui and MidCentral DHBs, we should be very sceptical and very apprehensive.

I D FERGUSON
Wanganui

Telephony v telegraphy

My curiosity was raised by the report last week on the use of RT (radio telegraphy) to maintain communications when the Telecom XT network was down.

The report demonstrates that one should not be totally reliant on advanced technology and that, in adverse circumstances, the simplest system is best.

Radio telegraphy is the process of using coded messages sent by radio, and is a vanishing technology.

I would like to inquire whether the Morse code was used, or whether the RT used was the process of radio telephony, whereby speech is transmitted by radio.

Radio telegraphy using Morse code has saved many lives in emergency situations, and is frequently used by amateur radio operators worldwide. It should not be misconstrued as outdated; simple yes, but outdated no.

MIKE NEWMAN
Wanganui

ED'S NOTE: "Telegraphy" was a typo. The word should have been "telephony".

Underbelly

Your report of the strong support for *Breakfast TV* the underbelly of

There are clear people who resemble means they can't prejudices and j they would like. Henry, who care have on people, them.

They are the "political correct others of us call human difference

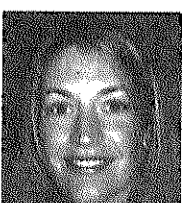
Not fair

Spectacular but headlines simply attention are bla decent or satisf failure in encour and reality as pr form.

Saturday's (F statement of "A city debt" gives

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So just when is the de



TO INFLUENCE sales, it helps to know how your customers go about making their purchasing decisions.

Have you heard of the purchasing funnel? This concept suggests that people go through five successive stages in deciding to purchase something from you. They are: awareness, familiarity

dependent on re 2) Trigger -- son consumers to "n purchase", and t choices and bran occurs, consume active seekers th funnel depicts. T research seeks