
Primal Scream--Free Speech, Loyalty and the Times Horrid--8/25/08

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By Alun Whittaker

It is sad that City Manager Tanner has found it necessary to formally remind his employees that official statements about bankruptcy must only come from the authorized city spokesperson, JoAnn West.

It is really sad that, at this difficult time, city employees need to be reminded that they owe some kind of loyalty to the city that so well provides for their living and retirement.

It is heartbreaking that, when the press in general have dealt fairly and objectively with the bankruptcy issue, our local newspaper has consistently encouraged disgruntled city employees to make false, misleading, and slanted statements, and to publish them in screaming, front page headlines. Not until days later, if ever, do retractions or corrections appear buried deep in the paper.

It is disastrous that, when we all need to see and hear the truth about our city, members of City Council and the public openly make jokes in the City Council chamber (and on the streets) about the "Times-Horrid", its blatant pro-union propaganda, and failure to accurately report the statements and actions of city employees and Council Members.

So, is it surprising that Mr. Tanner warned his staff about making on-duty remarks to the press? More than likely he was advised by City Attorney Soley, and outside counsel that publishing such an instruction was necessary and appropriate. If not, then it was still the wise course to do when he is so well aware of the predators lurking outside city (and union) hall in wait for the latest leak, speculation, or down right fabrication. Richard Freedman's fans and bloggers may be happy to rely on his "little bird" sources. For verifiable facts, the reasoning audience prefers to hear from JoAnn West.