

Chicken what?

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Mert Geltz... Contributed photo



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JEERS ... to the Genesee City Council. There's an apt phrase to describe how the councilors treated longtime Clerk Meradell (Mert) Geltz

You just can't print it in a family newspaper.

In its place, the adjective "cowardly" will suffice.

Geltz had been with the city for 23 years. She performed her duties successfully. When her back was turned - she was attending her grandson's high school graduation in Florida - the council gave her the boot.

What's next?

Furloughs on your birthday?

Pink slips for Christmas?

The city is having budget problems. As clerk, Geltz realized there was a problem. She was planning to retire. She told the council as much. She just wanted a little time. Perhaps the council had to act sooner than the clerk would have liked.

Why couldn't it wait a couple of weeks and talk to Geltz first? Any employee deserves as much.

Oh, and now the city wants to smooth it all over with a retirement party.

Alas, an equally apt response also would be unprintable.

CHEERS ... to the Lewis-Clark Community Concert Band. You'd have to travel to communities much larger to find such a treasure.

A 40-member band.

Musicians of every age and occupation.

Instruments ranging up to and including a bass saxophone.

A repertoire that includes anything from Broadway to marches, from classics to contemporary.

Free concerts performed about a half-dozen times each year.

Its latest outing Sunday at Pioneer Park drew an audience of 200 to 300 people.

Look for the band to perform next on July 4. The concert begins at 5 p.m. at the Pioneer Park band shell.

JEERS ... to Idaho Gov. C. L. (Butch) Otter. Talk about timing. Tuesday, the day before Congressman Mike Simpson's Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill goes to a Senate hearing, Idaho's chief executive announces his opposition.

Simpson's been at this for a decade. He brokered an Idaho compromise among conservationists, ranchers, local officials and some motorized recreationists. His latest plan - amended to clear a Democratic Congress - would create 332,775 acres of new federal wilderness in central Idaho, but release 131,606 acres for multiple use. It's a plan everybody likes just enough to accept.

Sounding more like a maverick congressman than the leader of a diverse state, Otter continues to oppose wilderness on principle.

That puts him outside the mainstream.

Simpson's plan enjoys broad support. A Republican pollster once found close to 60 percent of Idahoans behind the concept. The entire congressional delegation has endorsed it. So have former Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus and former U.S. Sen. James McClure.

The governor's position also undermines the flourishing collaborative process that unleashed Simpson's measure and empowered ordinary Idahoans to create their own wilderness destiny for the Owyhee

Canyonlands of western Idaho. Collaboration has been employed in the Clearwater basin and Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, believes it should be tried to resolve the fish vs. dams dispute.

But who wants to invest time and political capital in future collaborations if Idaho's governor might obstruct their final product?

Even if you believe more wilderness is not needed, the governor has done you no favor. This is Simpson's final effort.

Think an Idaho compromise wilderness bill is too restrictive? Try the future of those lands in the hands of federal bureaucrats. Or how about a national monument imposed from the Obama White House?

CHEERS ... to Idaho House Revenue and Taxation Committee Chairman Dennis Lake, R-Blackfoot. When it comes to integrity, Lake is without peer. And when a colleague crosses the line, Lake speaks plainly.

Case in point: Rep. Phil Hart, R-Athol. A member of Lake's committee, Hart challenged the constitutionality of federal and state income taxes in the 1990s. He lost. Now the feds say he owes \$300,000 and the state claims Hart owes another \$53,000 in back taxes.

Hart, a three-term legislator unopposed in his bid for a fourth, has been using a legislative privilege to keep the tax man at arm's length. Under the state constitution, lawmakers can't be arrested during the session. But it was never intended for Hart's purposes. Four times in six years, he's cited his involvement in an ongoing legislative session as reason to delay responding to the IRS and state Tax Commission, the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell reported.

Asked about that, Lake said: "I know other legislators have claimed similar exemption in years past. I know of one that claimed he was not subject to traffic fines while he was in session ... that was proved to be erroneous. He ended up being liable for them. They can have those fights. They're entitled to their own opinion, but when they're proved wrong, they need to step up to the plate and pay the bill."

Lake is standing up for the House - and for the average citizen who pays his taxes. Good for him.

JEERS ... to Idaho's Democratic Party. Meeting in Worley last weekend, the state Democratic Convention voted - with only one dissenting vote - to complete its platform in private.

Say it ain't so.

Tell us the champions of openness and transparency, the party that condemns Republicans for conducting business behind closed doors, didn't just do exactly that.

According to Idahoreporter.com's Dustin Hurst - and there's no reason to doubt it - delegates decided he was an unfriendly observer. Hurst works for Idaho Freedom Foundation Executive Director Wayne Hoffman.

So what? Even if Hurst worked for the GOP, what's the difference?

Out went Hurst, along anyone else who wasn't a delegate. For about two hours, Democrats debated the final points of their platform, free to say or do anything without fear of being observed or overheard by someone who is not committed to promoting the Democratic Party and its candidates.

If Idaho Democrats are unwilling to trust how ordinary people judge the inane, comical and occasionally inspiring behavior of their delegates, how can they expect voters to trust them in return? - M.T.