

Kudos to the Sperry Pirate News!

03/11/2011

Somebody has created a parody website that highlights the petty and destructive behavior we have witnessed in the Sperry administration and school board. Presented in the form of a legitimate news publication, it facetiously gives the appearance of advocating the point of view of those who have been behind the mudslinging and underhanded tactics for the past several years. It points out in great detail – and with wide-eyed mock sincerity – the evil intentions and nefarious actions of the three most recently elected board members, who are now in the majority.

Playfully imitating true propaganda, it pretends to exploit the ignorance of readers, transforming ordinary circumstances and actions into “predetermined maneuvers” and “power plays designed to advance agendas” (oh my!). With intentional exaggeration, it spoofs a common, overused persuasive tactic: attempting to promote a dubious claim into a foregone conclusion in the reader’s mind. For example, a recent article contains this quote: “I’m very concerned this will mark a return to the in-your-face mentality we witnessed during the Burd board years.” Clearly the authors are pointing out the routine use of this trick in the past by those who wanted to give the impression that “everybody knows” the Burd years were bad. Sneaking it in as a foregone conclusion allows them to dispense with the hassles of going into actual details - details which could be disputed. The phony, contrived tone of the statement and straight-faced serious “concern” are enough to maintain the light-hearted tone, but presenting it as a quote from a “patron” gives it even more earnest legitimacy. Hilarious.

Blatantly ludicrous statements punctuate the article, seeming to hope with puppylike innocence that the reader will breeze by their assertions without noticing the pile on the floor. “...three first-time, inexperienced officers...”, “...sworn-in [sic] only seconds earlier...”, “...Carter could offer no logical reason for the change...”. The authors know, of course, that anyone who saw the exchange heard a very logical reason for the change, just as anyone who is familiar with school board conventions easily sees through the other attempts to mislead. These are just a few examples of the authors’ clever, over-the-top use of hyperbole to create striking illustrations of the tactics used to generate false impressions.

Using exaggerated melodramatic style (“Mr. Carter, appearing visibly stunned, could offer no response.” Thwack! Zowie! Boff!) and theatrical lamenting over the current state of affairs, along with the conspiratorial tone of the nebulous “unidentified sources” and suggestions of actual investigations done by the Intrepid NewsTeam, the parody creates a frank and accurate caricature of the individuals who have used these tactics to create discord and malign others for years. Hinting at irrelevant legal technicalities is reminiscent of the tactics used in the campaign against Broken Arrow Schools, surely a not-so-subtle nod to the current superintendent. Some familiar phrases join in this tribute; remember “orchestrated effort” and “three amigos”?

The authors were not content with a simple news outlet; they completed the picture with fake comments that present both sides of the controversy of the day in a mock online conversation. Prominent figures in the Sperry drama are represented through these scripted posts (even humble 612 gets a line in the script). Though there are no disclaimers, the news and comments are presented in such an obviously exaggerated and clearly satirical way that no one could possibly mistake them for genuine reporting or comments made by real citizens.

Keep up the good work! Drawing attention to the outrageous claims and ridiculous posturing of the few remaining pot-stirrers is a great way to expose their desperate attempts to mislead, distract, and divide. Doing it with such a strong dose of humor really gets the point across in an effective yet light-hearted way.

Wish I’d thought of that! ☺