

Maybe the Unhappy Ms. Sobel Should Quit School Board

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Clark County school trustee Janet Sobel is a woman with a bright, challenging mind.

But we think it might be stretching things a bit to say that she is an unqualified asset to the school board.

In point of fact, the sum total of her antics over the past couple of years tend to put her in the category of being little more than a troublemaker -- a headline-seeking purveyor of dissension.

She did her utmost to undermine the administration of Dr. Kenny Guinn. She is the source of considerable strife and discord within the Board of Trustees itself. She opposed the selection of the new superintendent of schools, Dr. Claude Perkins. She opposed Dr. Perkins' reorganization plan. And now she is knifing him at every opportunity.

Ms. Sobel's behind the scenes politicking, manipulation of certain members of the press, and the aura of distrust can hardly be said to have worked for the benefit of the educational process in Clark County.

Instead of being a plus, Ms. Sobel has been a decided minus on the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Sobel started out on the school board by attacking virtually everything advocated by Chairman Helen Cannon, a knowledgeable, seasoned veteran of the school board whose level headed approach to the problems of the schools have made her one of the most respected public servants in Clark County.

Ms. Sobel apparently wanted to fashion herself a role as the self-anointed heroine of the teachers' unions and every dissident within the school district.

The in-fighting and petty politics which the Board of Trustees had been virtually free of before Ms. Sobel's election has now become a way of life on the board.

Apparently anxious for personal aggrandizement, or to maneuver school board actions to suit her own fancy, she began to hand feed naive young members of the press.

Gradually all but one of the six other members of the board have been alienated by a pattern of behavior which has grown from initial outbursts of rudeness to posture of almost malicious opposition to the constructive actions of the trustees.

She doesn't just disagree with the reorganization plan approved by the school board. No, she personally hopes the board gets sued over its action.

In other words, she would like to see the school district embroiled in a legal battle and have to meet the expense of a lawsuit.

She is now encouraging school district administrators--not exactly the most underpaid or maltreated of public servants to form an association and "demand" their rights.

She is supposedly carrying the banner for several former assistant superintendents of school who were reassigned to other posts when their jobs were abolished in the reorganization.

She is indignant that these administrators were not treated properly. Or so she would have us believe.

Ms. Sobel may, indeed, be sincere in this view, but we suspect that her motivation is more attributable to the fact that her personal, pet administrator, a highly capable educator in his own right, ended up being isolated by the reorganization.

Janet Sobel is an intelligent person clearly capable of making a contribution to the school district if she would approach the matters at hand in a reasoned and responsible manner.

There certainly is a need for a maverick on the board -- one who challenges and disputes and stands alone with a "no" vote. That's healthy.

But that doesn't mean such a person must engage in behind the scenes politics and deliberately set about undermining the school administration and the actions of the board of which she is a member.

That doesn't mean she has a license to start cutting up the new superintendent before he even has his feet on the ground in a tremendously demanding job.

Ms. Sobel was quoted the other day as saying that she is "disgusted" with the superintendent and the board.

Considering her warped viewpoint, her own obvious unhappiness, and the tension she creates, it might be better for Ms. Sobel if she simply resigns.

She clearly is not trusted by the majority of the board and probably not respected by them. Even her usefulness as a maverick is questionable. We believe Ms. Sobel would be better off out of the educational arena here.

We are certain the school district would be better off without her.

Essence Appoints Contemporary Living Editor

Marcia Ann Gillespie, Editor-in-Chief of ESSENCE, has announced the appointment of Stephinie J. Stokes to the position of Senior Editor in charge of the Contemporary Living department of the magazine.

Ms. Stokes will be responsible for the coordination of the home and food pages, keeping up-to-date on current trends of interest to ESSENCE's 18 to 35 year-old readership.

In addition, as Contemporary Living Editor, Ms. Stokes will oversee the planned expansion of the section to include more lifestyle pieces on subjects concerning the home, articles on how the famous and not-so-famous develop their living environments, expansion of consumer-oriented information, more how-to tips, and related book reviews.

A journalism graduate of Howard University, Ms. Stokes was formerly an editor with GLAMOUR Magazine.

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