

The Last Word

Letter from a secret reader

By Russell Mokhiber

We recently received a letter from a young reader in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

"I've been paying five dollars individually for each issue since I discovered your publication in February, through Ian Ward's 2022 *Politico* Magazine article," he wrote.

"I actually don't agree with much of what's written in the *Capitol Hill Citizen*, but I continue to pay each time. Both for the thought-provoking ideas I'd rarely if ever encounter otherwise, plus the emphasis on print editions which I love."

"Obviously, my number one request is a subscription option, which is probably the number one request among your readership writ large."

"But I also have a D.C.-specific recommendation as well: newspaper boxes."

"That's the way many people in this town find out about *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *Politico*, and other similar publications with print editions. If you put some newspaper boxes by the metro stops most frequented by D.C.-area politicians, you would definitely increase your readership. A few such stops to consider: Capitol South, Rosslyn, Pentagon, Clarendon, Federal Triangle, Judiciary Square, Courthouse, Ballston, and Federal Center."

"I do hope you and the team consider my advice about print newspaper boxes. Interestingly, just in the past several months alone – and running contrary to the trend for literally the entire two decades prior – much of the rest of the journalism industry is now expanding or relaunching print editions (*Spin* magazine, the *Onion*, *Playboy*)."

"But the key is, people have to physically see your publication around. And I fear that with *Capitol Hill Citizen*, they're just not. Currently, it's more of a case of – if you know, you know. I just want more people to know."

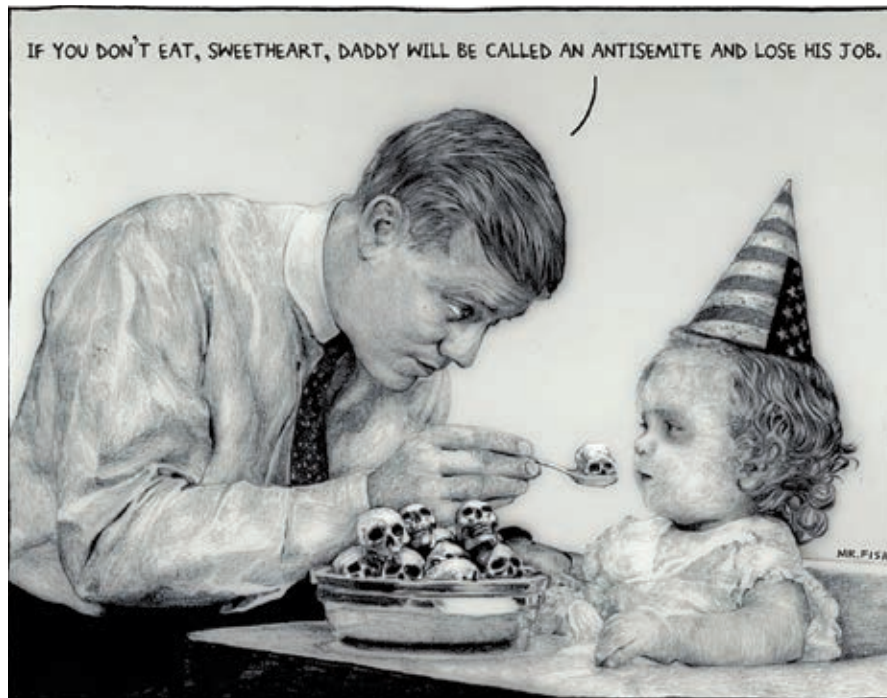
"Keep up the thought-provoking work in 2025 and beyond."

I wrote back asking if we could print the letter with the reader's name and city in the upcoming February/March 2025 edition in the letters to the editor column.

"I didn't really intend this letter for public publication," he wrote back. "Consider me a secret reader, and a paying one at that. But publicly associating with your publication would probably be a bad look considering my future career aspirations."

I was taken aback, not because I hadn't thought of a young person not speaking the truth due to "future career aspirations."

We are surrounded by people, young and old, not speaking the truth for fear of retribution.



And as the Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko once wrote – "When truth is replaced by silence, the silence is a lie."

So, here we are, walking around, just lying to each other.

At least our secret reader admitted it – I'm lying because it would be a "bad look" considering my future career aspirations."

Now ask yourselves – what on earth in the *Capitol Hill Citizen* would be a "bad look" for his future career aspirations?

Let us guess what it might be.

Our article about how Kellogg's puts artificial ingredients in its Froot Loops in the United States but not in Canada?

Not likely.

Our article about how Congress is no longer printing Congressional hearings? Nope.

Our article about how Postmaster General DeJoy Slows DeMail? (Might our secret reader have career aspirations in the postal service?)

Also, not likely.

How about – the genocide?

Let's say that our secret reader was eyeing a career on Capitol Hill.

"I didn't really intend this letter for public publication," our reader wrote back. "Consider me a secret reader, and a paying one at that. But publicly associating with your publication would probably be a bad look considering my future career aspirations"

Reading the *Citizen*, he would learn that to be outspoken about the genocide on the Hill is a "bad look" for his "future career aspirations."

And it was happening all around the country.

In October 2024, *MarketWatch* ran a story titled "Can I be fired for my political opinions? Yes – so choose your words about Israel, Palestine, Trump and Biden very carefully."

Maybe our secret reader was a recent law school grad who witnessed his fellow law students having their job offers at major law firms rescinded for protesting on campus against the genocide.

Our secret reader was reflecting a reality that was on the ground in America, even if most Americans were in deep denial.

I was in a coffee shop in West Virginia and ran across one of the highest profile liberal Democrats in the community and we were discussing the outcome of the election.

She asked what I thought the key factor was in Trump trouncing the Democrats.

I said – the genocide.

And she said – the genocide?

As in – what genocide?

Now, I couldn't tell exactly what she meant.

Was she yanking my chain?

So I said – as far as I know, there's only one genocide that the Democrats in Congress, Bibi Biden and Holocaust Harris funded and that's ongoing now.

(That sort of ended the conversation and I went back to reading a book I had purchased at a used book store in town – *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* by Edmund Morris, which opens with President Roosevelt greeting thousands

of Americans who stopped by the White House to shake the President's hand on New Year's Day 1907. By the end of the day, Roosevelt had shaken the hands of 8,510 people, setting a new Guinness World record. That's about 50 handshakes a minute.)

Everyone faces the dilemma our secret reader is facing.

About twelve years ago, our oldest son was searching for a college to attend and my wife and I took him to Cornell University's School for Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) to visit. I had my doubts about the Ivy League, but at least it was a labor school, I said to myself.

Then when we went to take a look at the school up close, we found out that the ILR was more about the I than the L.

I found myself looking at Room 305 in Ives Hall with a plaque welcoming visitors to the Pepsico Lecture Hall.

I walked downstairs and found another that read – A Gift from Schering-Plough Corporation. The Career Services Office has signs celebrating gifts from Citibank and J.P. Morgan.

And on and on it went.

I took notes. But I was warned by family members that my son was planning on attending the ILR School and that if I publicized the corporate naming rights at Cornell, it would be – using very similar words used by our young secret *Capitol Hill Citizen* reader – "a bad look" for my son's "future career" at the school.

In July 2013, *Harper's* magazine published my article titled – Plaque Ops: The Corporate Conquest of a Labor-Relations School.

(My son now sums up our family this way – "We're all about judgment, shame and guilt.")

The point is – our secret reader is clearly not alone.

Almost everyone in our society understands what's a "bad look" for their career. Take the case of one Senator Bernard Sanders.

The night before the big climate march in New York in the fall of 2015, Chris Hedges did an event with Sanders, Bill McKibben, Naomi Klein and Kshama Sawant, then socialist city council member from Seattle.

Sawant and Hedges asked Sanders why he was running for President as a Democrat and not as a third-party candidate.

"I don't want to end up like Ralph Nader," Sanders said.

"And he's not wrong," Hedges reflects. "The Democrats would have destroyed him if he had challenged the Democratic Party. The corporate media would have ignored him. So he'll keep his Senate job. He'll keep his seniority in the caucus."

Bernie, like our secret reader, understood.

It would have been a bad look for his future career aspirations. **CHC**

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE CITIZEN
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