

From: Joan Bien <joanbien@...>  
Subject: Re: Michael Collins aka KeenObserver  
To: "Christina Walsh" <cwash@...>  
Date: Monday, September 13, 2010, 12:57 PM

Christina:

I understand that you and Michael are not friendly. I respect Michael enormously and his articles about SSFL over the past 20 years have documented the events and clean-up controversies with accuracy and passion. He has also proven to be the most loyal of friends to me. I fell into this dispute ass backwards, having read about the events of 1959 and wanting to participate in letting the public outside of the local area know what had happened. I was very late to the party but have listened to various opinions and came to my own opinions without undue influence by anyone at all. His articles have been award-winning simply because the people who decide those things judged his writing and reporting to be outstanding. Not a political issue, despite your disagreement with those conclusions. Not everything is about you. There can be objectivity and excellence in journalism that is acknowledged, even when you don't agree with it.

As for what happened to Norm Riley, he was responsible for his own fate. I was interviewing him on the record, as all interviews are unless otherwise specified, and I asked him about SB990. His reply came from him alone. He chose his words carefully throughout the interview. I assume he chose those words just as carefully. My reporting about him was factual, unbiased, and straightforward. I was surprised by his responses but it was I used his words entirely in context. He certainly could have used the old saw of "no comment." I am a journalist, not an environmentalist, not an advocate, and I write about many, many different topics and people and events. This was just one story among dozens that I wrote that year.

As for your false accusation that Dan had influenced my article and my approach to Riley, just for your information, that is absolutely untrue. I did not know what either man would say. That is why I interviewed them. I had never spoken to either of them prior to the interviews. Your declaration that my reporting was intentionally biased and untruthful also condemns my high-regarded and very talented editor at Miller-McCune. Your accusations go far beyond the realm of fair comment. If they were shown intentionally to any other person, then you have walked the line of libel per se against me.

I respect your deep and abiding concern about SSFL and that is why I have taken the time to explain my position. You are referring to an article that was published more than a year ago. If I choose as a private individual to stay involved with Michael and his website, that is my right. I will help him in any way that I can, just as he would be there if I need his aid. By the same token, you have your friends and those who agree with you.

What you have chosen to write to me is, in fact, libel in regards to Michael. You have satisfied the elements of intent, of libel per se, and of publishing to a third party. Truth will not be a defense because you have chosen to stray from the facts. Whether Michael intends to pursue this tort is up to him.

Therefore, I strongly suggest that you cease communications with me. Whatever your goal, it clearly was not accomplished. This is excellent legal advice and I recommend that you follow it.