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Commentary — From the Margins

*The Politics of Priorities*

More Soiled Clothes

Port Austin Sunday, 12 June 2005: Despite the Internet chatter of the past few weeks, not much has been happening here at Port Austin as open discovery for court cases proceeds. Yesterday, on the Sabbath, Norman Scott Edwards attended the business meeting to reform and bring current the Hillcrest Condominium Association. I didn't get a report of what happened at the meeting until 10 a.m. this morning. But then, the funny religion of the Sabbatarians here at Port Austin that causes them/us to shun a transgressor in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:11 also questions whether attending an organizational business meeting on the Sabbath is appropriate behavior. It is certainly acceptable for an unBeliever. And if that is how Edwards now identifies himself, maybe we should stop shunning him. For the Apostle Paul writes, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with...the greedy and swindlers [of this world], or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world" (1 Cor 5:10).

It was, of course, very important that Edwards attend the 11:00 a.m. organizational business meeting of the condo association. Until the real property is returned to Terry Williams, Paul Drieman, and Phil Frankford in conjunction with Edwards, as will happen—the three of them will not have Edwards as part of any ministry they do; thus, Edwards will be evicted just as he has evicted them—Edwards possesses the indebtedness for nine condo units, several of which are in sufficient disrepair that the association's bylaws allow the association to condemn and confiscate them. Therefore, it was important for Edwards to nominate himself as Association President. When that wasn't accepted, he nominated himself to be the Director. That also wasn't accepted. So really, he didn't get much from attending this meeting scheduled for the Sabbath because the attorney who was to be there would not attend a meeting on Sunday, his day of rest.

Phil Frankford was here in Port Austin for the weekend, but he gave proxies to his neighbor, with some specific instructions concerning Edwards, for Phil would not attend this business meeting on the Sabbath. Phil and I have known for some weeks that Edwards planned to attend—Edwards told the court that he planned to attend, the meeting being of such importance to his court claims. And this is in a suit against me for less than two hundred dollars (\$200), but a suit that challenges his authority for being trustee sole. Edwards believes he will win; I know that he will not. The trial is scheduled for August 10th and 12th, but will most likely be delayed, for Edwards doesn't believe that he has to comply with discovery.

Herein is where the politics of priorities governs the walk of a disciple: The Apostle Paul asks, "Why not suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" (1 Cor 6:7). Phil Frankford doesn't want to sue Edwards. He would rather walk away, suffering wrong, suffering a

financial injury that he can absorb over a period of a few years. He earns a reasonable income, and has another decade and more of working years before him. If the economy continues as it has, five years from now he will be whole.

I received an injury on the Kenai Peninsula from which I walked away and recovered in a few years—and I believe this is what the Apostle Paul means for disciples to do. But Terry Williams has retired. His working years lie behind him. Nevertheless, he loaned money to the Port Austin project on what he believed was Edwards' good-faith assurances that other investors would become involved. He didn't want to go forth with the project with him being the primary source of funding, but he was lied to. He was swindled, a statement I can support from Williams' handwritten notes and the prospectus given him. And a statement I would relish supporting in court.

The question before Williams right now as a suit for fraud against Edwards waits being filed is what should he seek: monetary damages? Control of the property for which his money went? Should he sue in his name, or with Drieman? The real property is not in the same condition this year as it was last when the four men purchased it from Eternal Life Bible Institute (ELBI). Edwards has let it deteriorate. It might well not be worth going after. But last week Edwards told Williams' attorney that he could not repay Williams the money Williams invested. Some of these moneys were borrowed as short-term loans that have become due and payable, thereby causing Williams considerable financial distress. Williams really cannot walk away without experiencing near bankruptcy.

Does the answer to the question the Apostle Paul asks about being defrauded include bankruptcy? Should Williams, who as a former insurance executive had modest retirement savings, let Edwards have those savings? What about the money he borrowed when his savings were not enough to cover all of the Port Austin expenses? Should a disciple undergo bankruptcy rather than sue? Especially a retired and somewhat disabled individual? The person who would defraud such an individual is not a brother in Christ, but is a scoundrel, a scallywag of the worse sort. Edwards is this rascal, and this so-called bun fight is about justice, and righteousness, and rooting corruption out of the Body of Christ as a person would pop a pimple.

What would a thief teach a young person under his tutelage? How to steal? How to defraud brothers in Christ? Maybe the thief would explain to the young person when it was acceptable before God to break the Sabbath, suppose? For certain, the thief would say that those who are shunning him have a funny religion. Indeed, they do, for they are out-of-sync with the world.

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