

Department of Family Services

A WEE LITTLE PROBLEM WITH THE PLAN

WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GET ALL THOSE NEW STAFF?

BY GLENN CAMPBELL

We now have a plan for improving child welfare in Clark County. It's called "Safe Futures," and everyone seems to be on board. First unveiled on Sept. 19, it is supposed to cost \$25-30 million and require 150 new personnel, mostly caseworkers. A large portion of these positions are supposed to start Jan. 1, about 40 days from now.

Family Court Chronicles does not oppose the plan—It is a nice Christmas list of things we would all like to see happen.—but we've started having nightmares about implementation. We know nothing about how the recruiting effort is going, but we are terrified by certain theoretical concerns.

Has any child welfare system in the country ever tried to take on this many new employees in such a short period of time? We all know that caseloads need to be brought down, but there is also the chaos factor of trying recruit and absorb too many new staff at once.

Just because you create the positions

doesn't mean you can fill them with qualified people, or adequately train them, or efficiently integrate them into the whole.

A movie director can call for 150 dancing bears for tomorrow's shoot, but that doesn't mean the casting director can produce them. That kind of talent takes time.

Who in their right mind wants to move to Las Vegas right now? Few people want to join a "troubled" system, and local housing costs are still high (until the Crash kicks in). It is like trying to attract good teachers here—a somewhat futile exercise in the current environment.

The best we may get is a lot of fresh-out-of-school greenies, who will require huge resources to train and integrate. When you bring them into a DFS unit, its productivity may initially drop, as existing workers take time to bring the new ones up to speed.

Creating the positions also creates psychological pressure to fill them. If enough talent doesn't walk in the door, then we may start accepting mediocre applicants, who **WILL BE WITH US FOREVER** since we all know how hard it is to sack people without "cause."

Let us not forget the wisdom of the Ancient One....

Thom Reilly is gone, seduced by the Dark Side. A trained social worker, he left

the county to pursue his civic interests at UNLV but resigned there three weeks later to join the philanthropic division of a large casino company (helping the widows and orphans of gamblers). In doing so, he answered a question we have all pondered—namely, what is the market price for selling your soul to Satan? In Reilly's case, it was reportedly half a million a year.

Anyway, County Manager Reilly, back when he had a soul and was taking his ADHD medication, used to have a certain organizational philosophy, expressed to leaders in Family Court: "You can ask me for money, but don't ask me for new positions."

Reilly was apparently concerned about pension costs, but there are many other burdens associated with each new employee, not the least the chaos of their arrival.

Money, on the other hand, can buy an array of outside support services that the system is sorely lacking. We should take whatever talent the job market gives us, but if some unfilled positions were converted into money, we might do better, quicker.

Thought of the Day: If you have a bunch of chickens running around with their heads cut off, you don't necessarily get more done by adding more headless chickens.

—GC