

## **Nobody Asked Me . . . But — SSQwikiLeaks: you heard it here first, folks** - By Shilo Zylbergold - Gulf Islands Driftwood

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You've been hearing and reading about it for weeks now. Whether it's been across the air waves on radio and television, through the print media in newspapers and magazines, or over the internet, WikiLeaks has become embedded in our public consciousness.

You may believe Julian Assange, the Australian behind WikiLeaks, is a hero for releasing classified material that brings to light many of the nefarious activities perpetrated through American foreign policy. On the other hand, you may consider him a criminal for endangering U.S. national security and compromising international diplomacy.

It may interest you to know that WikiLeaks has recently released a number of previously classified files regarding volatile political issues right here on Salt Spring Island. Codenamed "SSQwikiLeaks," these formerly suppressed files have fallen into the possession of your intrepid local columnist (me), and I am determined to "go public" with them.

As with Assange, whose name has been sullied by what is probably a trumped-up scandal involving allegations of sexual assault in Sweden, I have also been smeared with rumours and innuendo involving certain photographs linking me with a couple of aardvarks frolicking on the beaches of Pago Pago. I can assure you that these rumours are completely unfounded (and even if they were true, which they're not, the participation of said aardvarks was completely consensual).

The secret SSQwikiLeaks deal with a diversity of subjects, ranging the spectrum from affordable housing all the way to the hot dog wars in Fulford. There are shocking revelations regarding library expansion, the coffee fiasco, Save Our Surgery, the Olympic "No Fly" zone, face of downtown, Islanders for Self-Government, Friends of the Islands Trust (and the even more elusive Friends of Friends of the Islands Trust), and a myriad of other hot issues.

Rather than open myself up to legal action involving accusations of defamatory libel and slander, I will not divulge the sources of the following direct quotes, or even imply to which issue each blurb refers. This, dear readers, is your job. You complete the picture. You connect the dots. Ready? Let's go.

"... what we're looking at is a completely innovative approach. Something totally outside the box. We've got volunteer firefighters, volunteer search and rescue, volunteer librarians. Why not a volunteer surgical team? As we speak, we've already lined up two plumbers, a drywall, and one of the apprentices from the deli department at Thrifty's."

"... why look backwards? Do we really want main street to look like one of those old photos of Barkerville, or would we rather be looking at something like West Edmonton Mall? We have a choice here to move forward, an opportunity to turn Ganges into a Strip Mall World theme park."

"... some look at the problem of affordable housing and see the solution as providing rental units at lower rates. We envision a different approach. We propose the problem can be solved by raising the rental costs and upgrading the population so everyone can afford the housing that is already available."

"... it's not that I'm against video tapes, per se. I love videos. Personally, I've watched Wee Willy Wonka at least a dozen times. What I'm objecting to is the fact that having a camera in the room makes some of our personnel go 'drama queen', if you know what I mean."

"... we would probably have met with less official opposition to finding a suitable location for our business if we had been proposing building a nuclear generating plant run by crack addicts recovering from leprosy."

"... it's about time Salt Springers made decisions for Salt Springers. It makes no sense for us to be governed by laws and regulations that are made by and meant for others. Independence means having the right to break and ignore your own laws."

"... many of our critics accuse us of waffling. They claim that one day we were in favour of the park, and the next day we terminated the proposal. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are still 100 per cent in favour of sports and recreation and 100 per cent pro agricultural land. We are behind waffles 100 per cent as well."

"... what do you think will happen if we start making exceptions? Next thing you'll know someone will think it would be a good idea to sell pizza from the back of their station wagon. Then someone else will figure that if that's okay, then why not walk up and down the ferry line-up pouring margaritas out of an iced pitcher. The point is we have to stop this free-for-all entrepreneurism before everybody gets the wrong idea that they have a right to make a living."

"... actually, it wasn't a safety issue at all. We didn't really believe there would be a threat to the games from the air. But look, when you are hosting an international event like this, when you are centre-stage and the whole world is watching, do you really want a bunch of gumbooted Gomers flying into your city from some slimy rock out there in the Gulf and asking, "Hey, where's the party?" I don't think so."

There you have it. This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. Nobody asked me, but by the time all the SSQwikiLeaks are revealed, there will be more people wearing egg on their faces than you'll find at an All-You-Can-Eat-Quiche contest. But not to worry. This kind of stuff is just grist for the mill here on Salt Spring. No matter how gruesome the details get on SSQwikiLeaks, they pale in comparison to our daily chain of juicy rumours. Did you hear the one about . . .

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