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## ***CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR***

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I admit it. There is a dark, twisted and ironic side of me that would very much enjoy seeing Phil and Carolyn Berlin elected to Burbank's city council. Why would I say that when I know they are precisely the sort who would (and have previously) sliced and diced a sentence like that one to invent an endorsement, or a criticism of their opponents, for campaign literature? Well, as I said, it's a dark, twisted and perspective.

Forget the obvious, the folly of simultaneously electing any married couple, regardless of their stands on the issues, or their records. With the city having been subjected to THIS particular pair for 15 years, it might be delicious to, once-and-for-all, stick them on the dais and let them, with councilman David Gordon – Baby Huey to their Dewey and Louie, accomplish all the miracles they've demanded of others.

Let them show how they can bring a halt to all development that displeases anyone, and simultaneously add police officers to the force.

I want to see how they accomplish what they claim any willing official could have for years now; Maintain and even improve basic city services like fire protection, street sweeping, park development and tree trimming; this while helping the school system, giving city employees the generous pension and other benefits they demand; and all while reducing traffic, putting an end to business development in the city, and protecting all residents from virtually any tangible or perceived impact imposed by proximity to anything that isn't an R-1 residence.



*Philip & Carolyn Berlin, candidates for city council.*

Let them impose the design restrictions that will meet with the near unanimous approval of all residents, rest comfortably within the bounds of the U.S. Constitution AND win even modest support from prospective builders and remodelers, whether in residential, commercial or manufacturing projects.

I quiver with excitement at the prospect of the Berlins and their cohort using a new-found majority bloc to impose council meeting rules their supporters have demanded for years; Much more, if not infinite time for public speakers, with time limits imposed on the windy, self-important city officials. (Betcha my house

they'll lose interest in that big idea first. Or, more likely, the always cooperative coterie would simply abandon that long-standing demand.)

Let them sway federal law and the federal aviation system, neuter the influence of the airline industry and overturn every relevant legal precedent by immediately imposing a mandatory curfew on all night flights at Bob Hope Airport.

What they'd do their second week in office remains up in the air.

Of course, the unaware and uniformed – the voting bloc upon which the Berlins and their crowd have always relied – may believe one of the Berlins has already won that curfew. The Berlins' joint web site boasts Phil “worked tirelessly to achieve a mandatory curfew [at Bob Hope Airport] and to eliminate the unfair noise easements on nearby homes.”

Some who support the Berlins might be surprised to see them take office, then come to learn there is no mandatory curfew today, and the easements – fair or otherwise – are still demanded of homeowners who accept tens of thousands of federal dollars worth of sound insulation work performed on their homes.

During her first campaign in 1993, Carolyn issued snarky accusations in her literature charging the city didn't even receive property taxes from the airport located largely in Burbank. In fact, even then the city was receiving revenues in the millions from taxes paid on property at the airport.

In the run up to the last regular municipal elections, she came as close as she ever has to conceding the point, estimating then that Burbank receives between \$400,000 and \$750,000 in airport property taxes annually. She was off by only a minimum of \$8.25 million for that year alone. But in Berlin's world, that practically constitutes a humble correction and an apology.

Yes, it's natural to speculate on how the Berlins and their supporters – a bundle of characters that noticeably recasts itself every election cycle - would respond to any other candidate claiming they worked to “achieve” something that didn't happen. It's a reflex to imagine the accusations they'd level at anyone with a similar decade-plus record of pronouncements that were just flat wrong.

It can't be helped because, throughout those years, the pair has portrayed as proof of corruption and deceit all around them their contortions of what others supposedly said, often even announcing what their targets think. But they maintain a perfect record of never coyly dipping a chin, grimacing a bit regretfully and admitting, “Boy, did I get that one wrong. Sorry.”

The Berlins have personified the term “double standard.” Every waiver or exemption of a zoning restriction or building code supported by others is a

**“giveaway” serving cronyism or payoffs. They demand strict enforcement without waivers, except when doing so inconveniences THEIR supporters. In those instances, code enforcement efforts are decried as draconian.**



*Burbank forced a Gordon/Berlin supporter to trim the hedge as shown. Political payback, they say.*

**An especially illustrative example is the Berlin pal whose hedge blocked a neighbor’s driveway view of oncoming street traffic. He’d only exceeded the city’s 4 foot limit by 16 feet, and so citations for the 20 foot barrier were decried as political retribution. But let another council member or candidate get involved in supporting waivers, even for complete strangers, and they’re lambasted as crooks serving cronies.**

**Waivers for their targets? Proof of corruption. Exceptions for the Berlins and their backers? Friends helping neighbors.**

**The Berlins’ campaign web site offers a supposed debunking of “rumors” about them, including one that inspires fits of the giggles. They brand a report they are “political operatives” as “FALSE!”**

**I suppose one can quibble over the definition of political operative. But if it means one is often, over a period of years, involved in creating, advising or directing groups that take political positions and promote or oppose candidates for office, there is no worry over the specter of libel when I say that, in dismissing the “political operative” label as “FALSE,” the Berlins are lying.**

**On my attorney’s advice, let me temper that a bit: The statement on the Berlins’ campaign website is a lie. We’d have to know who wrote it to positively identify the liar.**

**From an organization that years ago advocated a boycott of businesses in Glendale to compel that city to be more helpful in airport debates, to Carolyn’s “Burbank Voters and Taxpayers” - a group disseminating news and letters to the editor supporting the Berlins’ point of view, through to their role in David Gordon’s council campaign, and with many similar efforts between, the Berlins have been political operatives without a noticeable break for 15 years. And that’s without counting the anonymous fliers and like pursuits attributed to the Berlins by disillusioned cohorts and vendors they’ve employed over the years.**

**Of course, except for the unsigned work, in Burbank there are dozens who’ve been active politically over the same years. But it’s another example of the omnipresent double standards. The Berlins describe what they’ve been doing as**

helping neighbors. What all others do is characterized as craven selfishness to serve nefarious masters.

Demonstrating another hallmark of the Berlins' shameless hypocrisy, in debunking the "rumor" they're political operatives, the web site attributes the original charge to a letter published in a local paper, a "letter from a friend" of a sitting councilman they don't like.

Throughout the campaign leading up to the primary election, that same newspaper published in virtually every issue multiple letters supporting the Berlins and attacking other candidates, all from the same handful of Berlin friends. Several are reproduced on the Berlins' campaign site.

Berlin friends who support them and attack opponents are impartial arbiters. But the opinions from friends of those targeted by the Berlins don't count. They only prove that cronyism is rampant. The Berlins have neighbors. Everyone else has cronies.

As I said at the start, it's devilishly tempting to hope the Berlins win. Alas, there are two drawbacks to the idea.

The first is that there is no Felliniesque contingent of retirees, ne'er-do-wells and flat-out whack-jobs with the time or inclination to attend every city meeting to rail away at the Berlins and Gordon, to decry literally every proposal, and to rephrase everything the trio says to reveal to the public what they "really mean."

Those who'd love to dish out to the Berlins and Gordon some of what they've been dishing for years are busy with their families, their homes, their jobs and the multitude of service clubs and charitable groups they serve. Between time constraints, and integrity that won't allow many who've been victims of the Berlins to stoop to the pair's tactics, electing them isn't likely to provide the joy of seeing the geese basted in the same sauce they've applied to so many ganders.



*Councilman David Gordon. he endorses the Berlins, as they did for him; Another "neighbor" helped!*

The second drawback, of course, is that my family and I intend to live and work in Burbank well into the future.