

**Speech Made by**

**A. Woodrow Carter, Superintendent**

**before the Trustees of the Capistrano Unified School District**

**Meeting in Public Session – December 18, 2008 – 1 PM**

*with analysis*

Statement of Release

*A Freudian twist of phrase. Mr. Carter wants to get something off his chest, i.e., to “release” his demons.*

With a sense of regret and bewilderment, I stand before this audience awaiting my fate in closed session, which almost assuredly spells my removal from this District.

*Neither regret or bewilderment could produce the speech that follows. This is a calculated political statement.*

This is what we were supposed to do this afternoon. Under the guidance of a nationally recognized mediator, Dr. Harry Wineberg, we were going to establish protocol, procedure, roles and responsibilities of how we would perform as a team. This process is much-needed, and the sign of a district that is trying to work in harmony for the sake of children.

*Of course, the workshop was planned. The idea of a “mediator” originated with Mr. Carter. One can assume that he believed such a mediator was necessary to actually talk to the Trustees. Why would that be? Could it be that he has spent so much time in the past year trying to undermine the Board that he has developed a sense of alienation? Why would an experienced \$325,000 per year executive need a mediator to talk with his Board of Directors?*

*Dr. Harry Weinberg, retired Superintendent of the San Diego County schools does not hold himself out to be a mediator. His usual role is to make motivational speeches to teachers and staff. His “national recognition” is questionable.*

This of course was irretrievably altered Monday morning when President Addonizio changed the agenda to include my evaluation, which is not due for another 6 months, and of course dismissal, release or discipline of the Superintendent.

*Since the workshop itself is a full meeting of the Board, and subject to the Brown Act, and the relationship and roles of the Board and Superintendent were to be discussed, this isn’t remarkable. What if, despite the efforts of the mediator, the Board majority and the Superintendent reached an*

*impasse? Without the agenda items, no resolution would be possible. In fact, without this agenda item, there is no motivation for Mr. Carter to even meaningfully participate in any portion of the discussion with which he disagrees.*

*Without this agenda item, Mr. Carter knows the Board is legally powerless to enforce its will. He learned this four months ago when the item "Superintendent's Evaluation" appeared on a closed session agenda without the "dismissal, release or discipline" language. As a result of that meeting, it is alleged by CUEA that a Board discussion and vote on terminating Mr. Carter was a violation of the Brown Act. The CUEA has filed a lawsuit against the district containing this very claim.*

*There is no "due date" for the Superintendent's evaluation. It is a past practice to evaluate the Superintendent at last once per year, during the summer. However, the Board is free to have this item on their agenda for every closed session, if they choose to do so.*

For the past few weeks, even before the elections were held, I regularly heard from very reliable sources that this newly seated group of trustees would have to remove me from my position, a role that I have grown to love in this superb school district. The obvious question is why? What have I done that is so egregious, so felonious in nature that I have to involuntarily dismissed, and above all, without any dialogue or discussion, without an opportunity to improve, and as a side note...the week before Christmas? Further, what have I done to deserve this demeaning treatment? Nothing comes to mind. I asked this very question of board president Addonizio yesterday when she gave me my 24 hour notice that the trustees may hear charges and complaints in closed session today. For the sake of keeping my own decorum, I will not share the responses she provided me. Suffice to say that I anxiously await the "charges and complaints" which I am about to receive. Also of particular note, I discovered last night to my amazement that my firing was originally being planned over the holidays, while I was on vacation. This can only be characterized as a cold, calculating and unfeeling act.

*Mr. Carter's "very reliable sources" should be named. Who are they? Are they reliable, or merely partisan?*

*Mr. Carter's love for CUSD might have something to do with his pay grade.*

*The Board need not have evidence of "egregious" or "felonious" acts by Mr. Carter in order to remove him. Nobody has accused him of such acts. He can be dismissed without cause, subject to the provisions of his employment agreement. The concern regarding the proximity to the holiday is a tear-jerker. Carter knows that he will receive a generous severance package if he is asked to leave.*

*Mr. Carter's knows that if he revealed the details of his conversation with the Board President, he could be terminated for insubordination. Whatever his "decorum" may require, it does not include twisting facts to make a political statement.*

*Mr. Carter's claim that his "firing" was originally planned for the holiday period is not supported by any fact. He cannot be fired without a meeting of the Board — not an easy thing to organize over the holiday period.*

For the second time in a 4 month period these same agenda items have been put forward. It is in fact a ruse, an opportunity to ruin my reputation, to force me out of the district, and to bring in someone to run the district that has the same agenda, whatever they may be, as the new majority of trustees. Even if you do not vote to fire me today, you have made me a lame-duck; you have mortally wounded the position of superintendent in this District. You have shown a clear contempt and disregard for the office, have violated civility and courtesies, and done so in a classless manner. My comments do not apply to every trustee on the board, just those who are determined to micro-manage and usurp the authority of the office, and ultimately preside over the ruining of this district as we know it today. I am only the first to go.

*Here, Mr. Carter is not factual. During the Board meeting four months ago, "Superintendent's Evaluation" was discussed. The dismissal/release/discipline language was not on the previous agenda. A lawsuit from the teacher's union was the result.*

*It is this speech has made Mr. Carter a lame duck. Had the speech and the public demonstrations that accompanied it not occurred, then Mr. Carter would have left the closed-session discussion with his job intact and without the impression of having further undermined the Board.*

*The position of Superintendent is not a public "office". In fact, it is a position of public employment. Mr. Carter is seeking to claim the respect one might owe to an elected officer, such as a Mayor, Governor or President.*

Administrators and other staff are vulnerable as well. No matter what the vote is today, you have created a hostile work environment that no single administrator in this district can endure. The unbearable stress that you create in the daily course of our duties is unlawful, and I have repeatedly reminded trustee Addonizio that these actions deteriorate working conditions, and ruin morale of this entire 4500 hundred person district, but to no avail.

*This statement seeks to undermine the authority of the Board. As such, it is insubordinate. If Mr. Carter cannot subject himself to evaluation by the Board that hired him and defend his actions, then he should resign. He cannot claim that the job is too stressful because some member of the Board (or the public) disagrees with his decisions.*

I have tried to not take this personally, but that is difficult. Here is why. I have formed strong bonds and friendships with many of the employees in the district. Not only do I have a strong admiration for the administrators I serve with, but also the support staff and especially the stellar teachers who day in and day out move student achievement unlike anything I have witnessed in my 8 ½ years as a superintendent. I have observed, admired, and even participated with them in countless hours of ACE time and collaboration. Their dedication will continue regardless of what you do to me. They are that good!

*This is a nice comment about the staff, and many are deserving of it. However, it exaggerates Mr. Carter's experience.*

A superintendent must work in an atmosphere where he has freedom of thought and action, not constrained, nor told what he can or cannot say in public, or constantly criticized for the most minor of issues. I handle dozens of issues, make decisions constantly, and need the support of a helpful and constructive team in order to meet the challenges we have. To the contrary, I am sad to say this support has been non-existent since June,

and I have been subject to demeaning comments and behaviors at board meetings as well in daily exchanges with some of these trustees. Your actions have undermined my authority and ability to run this district. Dead man walking comes to mind. But this isn't about me. I knew it was highly political when I took the job, but this is ridiculous. I am merely a pawn on the chessboard that has to be removed.

*This whole statement needs to be considered carefully. First, the Board is not a part of Mr. Carter's "team". They employ him to run CUSD according to their policies. If he starts making or changing district policy without their consent, he has exceeded his authority. Mr. Carter has the opportunity to create a helpful and constructive team — of subordinates — among his staff. Sadly, most of his senior staff are unchanged from the days when Jim Fleming improperly ruled over his Board.*

*Mr. Carter suggests that he lost support in June. That might coincide with the moment that he sought the political support of CUEA to oppose the last recall election.*

To those who have shown up this afternoon to support me, I apologize for my shortcomings, for my inability to harmonize this group of trustees into a cohesive unit that will support student achievement. The administrators present today will remember my caveat at our professional development retreat in August this year... "adult-centered issues will continue." Little did I know how prophetic those words would become. In an era of state-wide, nation-wide, and even world-wide economic crisis, you trustees have chosen to create yet another crisis, a personnel matter that is totally unnecessary.

*This whole paragraph would be insubordinate, if it were not true. Mr. Carter has many shortcomings. It is not his role to harmonize the Trustees into a cohesive unit. It is not the Trustees who have created another crisis, but in fact, Mr. Carter and his supporters who have done so. As the most senior executive in CUSD, he should be ashamed.*

Finally, since you have chosen to discredit the position and me in the process, and to tarnish my reputation as well as my ability to pursue my passion to be a superintendent, I now respectfully request you honor my contract and other reasonable requests that I will make to minimize the damages I will suffer. I urge you to take control of your district, and keep it the number one academically achieving large district in the state. Do the right thing for kids, the children of these communities, and avoid the adult-driven issues that are so divisive. As for me, I depart with my integrity intact, with fond memories of watching our students, our teachers and staff, represent our district in such a commendable fashion. You can question my integrity, you can challenge my integrity, but you cannot take my integrity. Only I can surrender it, and I refuse to do so to this board of trustees. To those of you who care for children, I will see you on the high ground. Merry Christmas.

*Nobody has discredited the position of Superintendent, except perhaps Mr. Carter himself who has made this inappropriate speech. Still, it serves to discredit his person more than his position.*

*It is only Mr. Carter who has chosen to make his integrity an issue. The remainder of this statement is dramatic flourish.*