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Fremont County is awirl with intrigue. The parents of that county have demanded that the County Commissioners authorize an investigation into the Department of Social Services (DSS) a.k.a. the Social Services Gestapo (de SS). I have personally met with the commissioners on this issue in December, along with a member of the group known as 'Parents With Rights' (PWR). It seems my continuing presence in Fremont County has many agents of the state frantically trying to discover just who I am.

I have been falsely tagged as a 'leader or major influencing member' of this activist group by a certain Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in a case pending before the court. This particular GAL, Jolene DeVries, has also falsely accused me in writing before the court of 'drafting Motions and/or Affidavits,' and has expressed some concerned about whether I have a license to practice law. It is amazing that these people would go to such lengths to present someone in as bad a light as possible that they would forsake fact-finding in favor of rumor and innuendo. While I have made vain attempts to speak with various agents of the state in Fremont County on more than one occasion, not a single one has contacted me to verify any of their claims against me.

DeVries clearly has it in for PWR. She collaborated with the attorney for DSS, Rocco Meconi, in interrogating a hapless father - while he was under oath and without benefit of Counsel - about the membership of this group. It apparently didn't occur to either one of these esteemed lawyers that such questioning, being irrelevant to the issue before the court, might be slightly unethical. It also seems to have escaped their notice that this is America, and freedom of association as well as knowing and asserting your rights under the law is an acceptable and perfectly legal practice.

Members of this group report that they have been targeted by DSS, and by others working on behalf of 'child protection.' They cite increased pressure from DSS and others, including abusive tactics such as threats of terminating parental rights.

DeVries has reportedly 'bargained' with more than one family on behalf of her own interests rather than in the best interests of the child as required by law. Meconi has railed emotionally against this parents' rights group in at least one court hearing that I attended.

Then let's look at Steve Clifton, director of Fremont County DSS. I have learned from two separate sources that his previous job was as the head of Teller County DSS where he was allegedly forced to resign over a reported shortfall of about \$120,000. It makes one wonder if whoever hired him for Fremont County needed some funds misappropriated.

Clifton has also stated publicly that he has never met with anyone about these complaints before this recent commissioners meeting. That's not true. He was at the meeting with the commissioners that I attended in December. I tape-recorded that meeting, Mr. Clifton, remember? Is this indicative of the way you run your agency, sir?

The major provider for Fremont County DSS court-ordered therapies is Rocky Mountain Behavioral Health where Clifton's wife, Judith Bridgeman, is reportedly the director. When parents want to chose their own therapist, DSS fights it in court and accuses them of not complying with treatment plans.

Why should they comply when they send non-drinkers to alcohol classes, non-drug users to drug therapies, non-abusive parents to domestic violence classes? Parents are often ordered not

to spank their children, in spite of the fact that spanking is legal in every state, including Colorado.

The crux of these classes is that you must often acknowledge guilt in order to complete treatment. What if you don't think you're guilty? The parents who refuse to admit guilt find their children held hostage to the demands of DSS. The ones who do admit guilt get their children back. What kind of logic is this, that they return abused children to abusive homes while retaining custody of non-abused children?

Alternatively, complaints of children in truly abusive homes fall on deaf ears. While the abused children and others plead for protection, DSS is rabidly snatching happy kiddies from non-abusive homes and pooh-poohing the reports of real abuse.

And then there's Commissioner Jim Shauer, wringing his hands and whining about not having the money to conduct the investigation. Mr. Shauer, are you really saying that the children of Fremont County aren't important enough to justify the expense? I say, take it from the DSS budget. It is after all, their responsibility to conduct themselves to the highest standard of ethical behavior and to obey the law. Since they aren't doing that, make them pay for it.

Then Commissioner Joseph Rall, who said during the December meeting that he would 'rather err on the side of the child.' What a cop-out. I would rather you didn't err at all, or at least make the effort not to err. This statement is often used to justify a slipshod investigation and to encourage lazy case workers and arrogant courts to take children willy-nilly while assuming a self-righteous aura of 'protecting the best interests of the child' regardless of the trauma they inflict on these innocents by tearing them out of their loving parents' arms. I say; do your job, man, and do it right. That's what you get paid for. But really, it hardly seems likely, being that his wife, Brenda Rall, works as a supervisor for DSS.

And the coup de grace: I have been informed by one of the speakers at the recent BOCC meeting that he was phoned by the commissioners' representative and *ordered* not to attend another meeting because he was too disruptive. I was at that meeting, and many have seen it on television. Nobody was disruptive. If you gentlemen can't stand the constituent heat, then get out of the commissioner's kitchen.

What unmitigated arrogance! Who do these men think they are that they can dictate who can and who cannot attend any public meeting! Hello!? Are we still in America? Do we not have freedom of speech and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances? The aggrieved speaker, who happens to be a member of the press, will be at the next meeting. Let's just see if the commissioners come up with some pretext to eject him, or anyone else, from their public meeting.

So, who am I? I am a genuinely concerned citizen who has petitioned the court to advocate on behalf of some of the affected children. I am being denied because of false representations and other obfuscations. My message to the Courts, to DSS, and to GAL DeVries is this: Perhaps you would be better off letting me advocate, because then I would be bound by confidentiality laws. Otherwise, I am free to publish anything and everything I find. You see, I am a writer, and I see a fantastic story, and I'm dying to write all about it. It's all up to you. See you in the papers.