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IN OTHER NEWS

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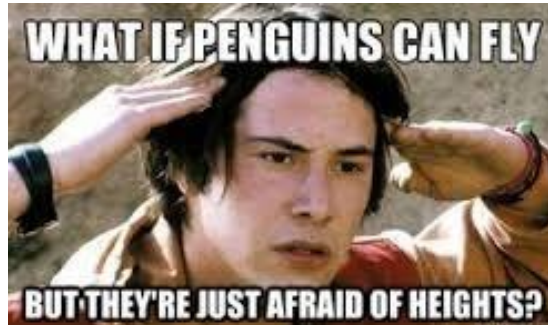


The Federation got involved with Paul Gee not long after the Federation started and its involvement was the result of a Federation member contacting the executive committee saying Paul was in need of help, and that the professional organisation he belonged to would not offer any assistance.

Even at that early stage of the Federation its stance was "do the crime do the time" as long as the process was fair and reasonable, but when Paul's case was reviewed by an experienced investigator, the Federation was gob smacked at the issues that arose.

The Federation's support continued on throughout the disciplinary process, including the hearing, and

Conspiracy Theory



No matter what happens there is always a conspiracy theory - so do conspiracy theorists think everything is a cover-up, or do they question everything, do they

research and come to conclusions that can scare you?

A conversation this week brought to light a conspiracy theory. We have all noticed that compliance costs are increasing for everyone in business, especially those in industries where they are regulated and are high risk with regard to occupational safety and health.

The conspiracy theory voiced to us was that the Government and large organisations were conspiring to put small to medium sized businesses out of business by increasing regulation and compliance costs to a level that only large organisations can afford to pay them or support the intent of the legislation.

With the latest round of health and safety at work we can all see the reasons behind the Act, but who are the ones who are paying the most in lost revenue and equipment costs? It's the small businesses that don't have, or can't afford, the resources and equipment required to do certain types of work such as edge protection for roofing or installing vents. The cost of hiring such equipment generally outweighs the cost of doing the actual work, hence doing the work legally becomes cost restrictive for the consumer.

When the consumer sees that health and safety costs outweigh the cost of their work they look for alternatives. This opens up the market to those willing to operate unlawfully and take the risks (and there are plenty of these type of people operating in the market – more than Worksafe can catch!)

Using edge protection as an example - a large organisation can purchase the equipment and get daily use out of it spread out amongst their staff - but a sole trader might only use it twice a month so it's not worth purchasing it and they miss out on those jobs, or a "cowboy" gets it.

It may not be a conspiracy but the facts remain that the result of the regulation and legislation imposed on small to medium sized businesses have a huge impact on their survival.

subsequent appeal to the High Court to have the two charges Paul was found guilty on overturned. The appeal was successful based on what was presented at the initial hearing.

Hundreds of hours were freely given by Federation members to help Paul present his defence and to support him and his family.

This included work when times got tough for the family. The support to Paul and Emma continues, all be it at a slow pace, with the review of the entire case, charges and procedures.

The review is to help lawyers get a full picture of what happened and the processes and procedures that Paul encountered.

This is no small task and there are thousands of pages to be reviewed and commented on.

Various comments have been made about moving on from this case and not opening old wounds, but the reality is the wounds have never healed and are going bad.

Paul deserves to have this case reviewed and what is disappointing for the Federation is that the Board have taken no action.

There have been some good things out of the Board in recent months and obviously they don't want the past haunting them, but this is one case that isn't going to go away until it is reviewed.

Sometimes people don't

## From the Media



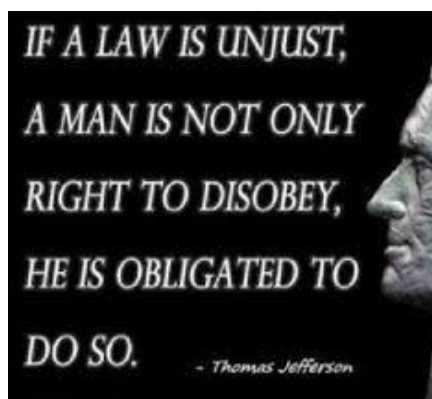
creativity. The second article we picked up on was about an Auckland aircraft restoring company who have billionaires approaching them from overseas to rebuild aircraft. One billionaire stated he went to the company because of their craftsmanship and skills.

We have the skills in New Zealand, but it seems to be the Government that has lost its respect for the "hands on trades" and is throwing everything at higher education and bureaucracy. Perhaps this is happening because in reality, anyone could go to university and get a degree, but not everyone has the skills to do hands on jobs safely, as well as applying themselves to the common sense knowledge needed to do the job.

We heard on the news that it appears it is hard to get people to take on construction jobs because of the stigma associated with doing a trade rather than going to university. Very much a "them and us situation". It may frighten the Government to know that there are plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers that have university degrees and thousands of other skills!

We believe there are perceptions to be changed and we believe the Government needs to change the way it deals with tradespeople and the issues of retaining the knowledge and skills.

## In Search of Answers?



investigation".

Paul Gee and his family have endured a great deal over the seven years including the sale of their home, the closure of their business,

Last week we mentioned about creativity and skills being lost from our industry. What a ray of sunshine it was to see two industries thriving in New Zealand, that being the film industry which is developing because of its

Last week was the seven year anniversary of the fish and chip shop explosion in Nelson which resulted in a number of livelihoods being ruined. One person who had warned the Government of issues in his area stepped forward after the explosion and then found himself the subject of what could be referred to as a "targeted

want to hear the truth because they don't want the decisions questioned, but this case is one where it was wrong and nothing has been done about it.

No one has been held accountable for falsifying documents, or for doing the illegal work Paul Gee was accused of so we fail to see why the Board doesn't want to protect the public by searching for the truth.

The Board is effectively putting a price on the truth - and that price is the \$200,000 spent attempting to prosecute Paul Gee.

As an industry we should be wary of this as it could happen to ANYONE but the Federation does concede it is unlikely to happen under the current investigative regime but who's to say in the future, after a change in personnel that it reverts back to the days of old.

For real progress to be made in the industry the mistakes of the past need to be identified and acknowledged.

This will require acceptance by all parties.

If you think back to the historical investigations conducted as a result of the Auditor General's report you will find the Board claimed the issues had been resolved, but we have firsthand knowledge that yes the issues had been investigated - but were not RESOLVED to the satisfaction of the complainants.

Recommendations were made but were rejected by the Board and most of the

the family divided whilst searching for employment and disciplinary proceedings and defamatory letters.

Paul and Emma have been stonewalled and dealt with in a type of smug attitude by previous administrators of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. Not getting answers to questions Paul has started a "Give a Little" page to raise funds to get answers.

Found on the Give a Little website titled Justice and full disclosure 4 NZ it outlines some of Pauls issues.

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/justiceandfulldisclosure4nz>

What went so horribly wrong that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board investigation cost over \$200,000 resulting in the laying of 44 disciplinary charges against Paul Gee, **42 of he was found not guilty.**

Now don't get us wrong, the Board did the right thing by finding him not guilty on those charges, but it's the actions of the administrators and investigator of this particular case that are placed into question both before and after the disciplinary hearing.

It appears the previous administrators and Board have investigated themselves and have concluded they did nothing wrong and no further action is required.

Soren Kierkegaard is quoted as saying **"There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; The other is to refuse to accept what is true."**

Is it so wrong to want to know why evidence was withheld, why charges were laid for installing items that hadn't even been manufactured on the alleged install date, why charges were laid prior to scene examinations and the recording of statements from so called witnesses - and that's just to name a few of the minor items of concern.

The more serious issues such as why were defamatory letters sent to Paul's customers by the Board (later being called an administrative mistake), and why weren't the real offenders not held accountable after Paul was found not guilty - these have never been appropriately addressed.

We find it very disappointing that Paul, Emma and their supporters are having to spend money to get accountability. Perhaps if the Board was to approach this as a "lessons to be learnt" scenario rather than a "defend our stance" scenario a lot more may be achieved.

Perhaps with today's more skilled investigators and different procedures, a different administration and Board – this may not have happened, but the fact is it did happen. The fact is that a shop exploded and no one has been held accountable, that fact is that there were several installations that Paul was charged over that he was found not guilty of that were done by someone – WHO and WHERE is that someone? We have to ask about the quality of the investigation itself when 44 charges are laid, but the Board can only

cases ended up with the complainants being told yes the Board got it wrong but protecting the public is more important than any wrongdoing, so as the complainant you'll just have to accept the wrong doing.

Things like that never get forgotten so that's one of the reasons we feel Paul's case needs to be reviewed. There needs to be an agreed outcome not a dictated one.

As always your views are welcomed.

find someone guilty on 2. How can an explosion see no one held accountable?

If you can help Paul and Emma get peace in their lives and move on then please make a donation.

The Federation has continued to support - Paul have a look at the side column.

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