



20

Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

Kiwi Kafka

The principal asked: 'Why have you stopped talking to me?'

And the reply: 'I don't know what you've done.'

And there is the terrible Kafkaan truth of it:

The principal had done something, that was now a given; that it was something pretty wrong, was also a given; how serious that wrong was, no one could be sure; but it must have been something serious or why was she suspended? And there was that thing on TVNZ about financial mismanagement and no clarification or denial, all very dodgy. That was the situation of helpless horror a New Zealand woman – a distinguished professional woman, a wife, mother, and grandmother – lived in for months. Guilty of something unnamed, largely bereft of support, and unable to respond. Things have picked up a bit for her, but they are still dire.

The Trial by Kafka acts as a secular bible for me; the final paragraph has the innocent Josef K. being made to die – to die, as one of the participants observed, 'Like a dog! ... It was as if the shame would outlive him.' [The version referred to is *Penguin Modern Classics*, 2015.] In New Zealand, dozens of principals, just as innocent in behaviour, have their vocations made to die, 'Like a dog!' with the shame to outlive them. And the principal of Kiwi School is on the brink of just such a vocational death.

The first sentence in *The Trial* begins with: 'Somebody must have made a false accusation against Josef K. for he was arrested one morning without having done anything wrong.'

This posting could well begin with: 'Somebody must have made a false accusation against a New Zealand principal for she was threatened one day with a series of wrongdoing when she had done nothing wrong' ... indeed, was a brilliant principal, highly respected, and could be seen to have done a power of good.

It is an understanding of this posting that organisations should be viewed as having minds, and in having these, the ability to develop organisational narratives on matters large and the small, sometimes to devastating effect on individual rights and freedoms. It is the organisational mind that allows the education bureaucracies to act with such singularity and cruelty, enabling individuals to do terrible things in the name of the organisation they wouldn't otherwise contemplate as individuals.

I know a long quote tempts the reader to skip over, but I earnestly request you read the following paragraph quoted unchanged from *The Trial*, first published in 1925. The questions I place in your mind as you read: Is this not an exact description of how the ministry works today? and, if so, what are we to do about it?

Josef K. is advised that (p. 96):

The only right thing to do was to come to terms with circumstances as they were. Even if it were possible to rectify certain details – but that was just a senseless delusion – the best one could hope for would be to achieve something for the benefit of future cases, but that would be at the expense of doing oneself immeasurable harm through attracting the particular attention of a bureaucracy which was always vengeful. Just never attract attention! One had to keep quiet, even when this went against the grain! And try to see that this great legal organism was always in a state of equilibrium, so to speak, and that anyone who independently made an alteration in his own area would be cutting the ground from under his feet and could come coming crashing down, while the great organism itself compensated for a slight disturbance by easily producing a replacement at another point – everything was after all connected – and remained unchanged, assuming it did not become (and this was probable) even more secretive, even more observant, even more severe, even more malevolent.

The following quote is one of my all-time favourites (pp. 116-117):

'That still needs a bit of work,' answered the court painter, and he took a pastel from a side-table and sketched with it round the edges of the figure, but K. found it no clearer. 'It's Justice,' said the painter at last. 'Ah, now I recognise it,' said K., 'here's the bandage over the eyes and these are the scales. But aren't these wings on the ankles and isn't that a figure running?' 'Yes', said the painter, 'I was commissioned to paint like that. Actually it is Justice and the goddess of Victory in one.' That's hardly a good combination,' said K. with a smile. 'Justice has to be motionless or the scales will waver and there's no possibility of a correct judgement.' 'I'm only following the instructions of the person who commissioned me,' said the painter.

[And then followed many instances of Kafka horror.]

The Kafka power of the intervention process is such that there is rarely a genuine problem beyond that manufactured by the intervention process itself, meaning that those complaining only need to keep complaining for the intervention process to produce the Kafka situation of irrationality so deviously favourable to their ends. Once the intervention is in place, the question becomes not what the problem was, but whether the principal is perfect in every respect? And the principal, no matter how insignificant the imperfection revealed or how irrelevant to the initial 'problem', is always caught out, and much is made of that, and is a goner. After all, those making the judgement are those arrayed against the principal from the beginning. It seems the advice given by a character in Kafka should have been heeded: 'The only right thing to do was to come to terms with the circumstances as they were.' As such principals should ready themselves to have their vocations made to die 'Like a dog!' with the shame to outlive them.

The institutionalised lying, the organisation for cheating, and in this case, the endemic bullying – it's the system stupid.

