

Setting aside \$500,000 to protect Seneca?

Mayor Dyster determined to serve All-Albany interests

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Mayor Paul Dyster, vastly perceived as different from his City Hall predecessors, was elected over candidates whom, like him, had long been involved in city politics. A long-time politico appearing as an outsider is an art form in itself.

True, the artistic Mr. Dyster had been out of City Hall since 2003. But he was continuously involved in politics, significantly, as chairman of the Albany-controlled (fictional) Niagara Experience Center (NEC).

Some might believe the NEC is a real development, but the NEC, primarily, provides pork to politically-connected consultants, designers, planners, engineers and what not, of no particular qualification other than they gave somebody some money in the Democratic or Republican parties.

By the way, the NEC — though nobly conceived by historian Paul Gromosiak — simply got into the wrong hands: Albany.

Which reminds me of a story: There was a malodorous, brown object in downtown Niagara Falls, and several Albany politicians, with their noses, naturally, held high up in the air, accompanied by their faithful, local skills from City Hall, were passing by, and smelt the stink from the brown, moist object lying on the ground. Of course, they held their collective noses.

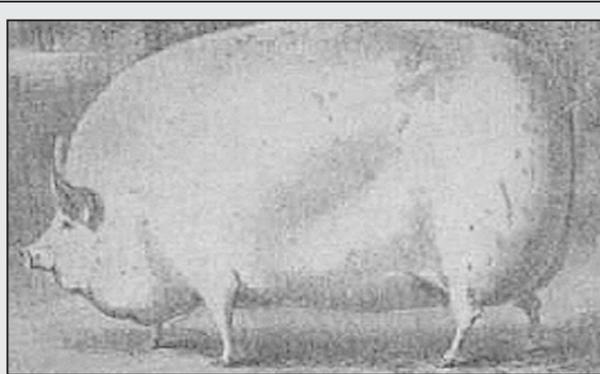
The brown, smelly object, however, was offended, and spoke right up to the Albany high-ups. "You hypocrites. You turn away in disgust from me, but it is rather I who should turn away from you. For, once I was a beautiful cake — gorgeous, refined and beautiful to look at and taste. Then I came in contact with you — and you devoured me — and sated yourselves upon me, sharing me with your fancy friends in New York City, and, then, as the result of coming in contact with you — after you digested what you could of me — you left me in this condition, and look at what I have become."

The cake turned to dung, of course, was Niagara Falls.

But I digress.

In six years, perhaps millions have been spent on the NEC and nothing has been done except slick brochures, slicker Web sites, thick studies and endless billable consultations, plus meetings and dinners and trips and nothing; just nothing.

More than two years ago, the Dyster-led NEC hired politically-connected site experts and consultants to select a site for the NEC. After long and expensive studies, they selected One Niagara. But, they could have saved the money: Three years earlier, they hired (politically-connected) design consultants whose renderings — pretty, little artist sketches one could make on a computer program in two or three hours but billed to the Albany/Dyster pork-distribution center at about \$25,000 per sketch — already showed the location for the NEC to be: One Niagara.



ABOVE — Pork is taxpayer money allocated by politicians for a single politician to spend as he sees fit — which, in turn, is used solely to help people who help him politically.



LEFT — Fighting for Seneca: Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster is ready to fight for Seneca preferences over Americans.

RIGHT — TOURISTS COME TO ONE NIAGARA, SOMETIMES SPENDING MONEY OUTSIDE THE PARK! "Selfishly," Albany says, "Frank Parlato is taking customers away" from the Albany-controlled State Park. "Those are our tourist," said one Park Ambassador, "and instead of them spending money in the park, because of Parlato, local businesses are cutting into our tourist pie. Doesn't he realize the money we make in our most profitable and most visited park helps support other parks around the state, particularly in New York City?"

The point is: Mayor Dyster is hardly a political outsider.

For my part, I manage what is, arguably, the gateway property in Niagara Falls. It warrants communication with the mayor because what happens at One Niagara might impact the city.

Nevertheless, it's in his interest not to talk to me, a local developer who has disturbed the flow of tourism in Niagara Falls. Every person who eats, parks or buys a tour or souvenir at One Niagara does not spend money at the state park. Mayor Dyster opposes that: for dollars spent in the State Park help support Jones Beach and other important New York City parks.

Don't blame Mr. Dyster for supporting Albany. Pragmatists know he requires Albany to procure "pork," and support his run for higher office. (It is said he covets a Congressional seat). To serve Albany, Mr. Dyster must ignore or fight me. He's done both.

That's politics. And it's politics, too, to persuade the public that one is above playing politics.

Consider: Allegedly searching the nation — "free from politics" — for "the brightest and best" to work in City Hall, he selects Donna Owens of Atlanta to serve as city administrator at \$110,000 per year.

Forget that it's insulting that he believes no one in Niagara Falls is bright enough to manage the city. Consider: \$35,000 of her salary will be paid by a secret "Building a Better Niagara Falls Fund." Interestingly, the mayor refuses to identify donors paying the salary of a top public official.

If donors are revealed, I believe, some will be seen to have pro-Albany (and pro-Seneca) agendas.

Meanwhile, the mayor informs that a woman who never lived in Niagara Falls is best to manage the city. Like secret donors, it suggests a political agenda. And that's politics.

Around here, it means: 1. We are not less intelligent or less moral than people elsewhere. 2. We have more assets than, perhaps, any small city in the world. 3. We are broke.

How do we reconcile this? State politics abide this dictum: All must support NYC.

Albany is the broker.

Binghamton, Elmira and Schenectady, for example, support NYC. But the stakes are not high. They don't have billion-dollar hydro-electric or tourism industries.

Upstate politicians simply obey Albany, if they want to make a career of it — as opposed to merely coming for a season to serve; mindful they return, soon, as one of the people.

Mr. Dyster appears career-oriented: Consider his move to set aside \$500,000 of city money for a defense fund to preserve the Seneca giveaway.

It may be unique in American history — the ceding of American land to a foreign nation in a downtown, American city. Now there are serious challenges to Seneca preferences, including my plan to bring slot machines to American-owned businesses. Rather than fight the uneven playing field, Mr. Dyster wants to protect it.

Why? Seneca is an ultra-rich, tax-free nation competing against struggling U.S. businesses in one of the highest taxed places in the USA. Seneca has Albany approval, unlike Americans, to operate gambling casinos. But Seneca pays Albany on slot machine revenues. These monies go mainly to help NYC.

Of course, 25 percent of what Albany gets supposedly goes to Niagara Falls. Most of that, however, stays under Albany control through USA Niagara, a state agency. Some also goes to the hospital and airport — also under Albany control, for they control appointments to the board.

The city doesn't get 25 percent. But a pittance does go to Niagara Falls for the mayor's pork. That, plus deference to Albany, is why Mr. Dyster would spend \$500,000 to protect Seneca.

Instead of trying to end the unpatriotic, racist idea that Seneca should have more legal rights than Americans, Mr. Dyster utilizes his thin slices of Seneca pork: Seneca makes more than a million per day; Albany gets as much as \$10 million a month; Mr. Dyster, with his pittance, approved a \$55,000 grant for Michael Kraus to open a cafe on Third Street;



DEPRIVING THE CHILDREN AT JONES BEACH? — Every car parked at One Niagara is a car that does not park at the Albany-run State Parking lot where the profits help support parks in New York City. Conversely, the people who park at One Niagara tend to patronize local businesses within it.



RIGHT — TOURISTS COME TO ONE NIAGARA, SOMETIMES SPENDING MONEY OUTSIDE THE PARK! "Selfishly," Albany says, "Frank Parlato is taking customers away" from the Albany-controlled State Park. "Those are our tourist," said one Park Ambassador, "and instead of them spending money in the park, because of Parlato, local businesses are cutting into our tourist pie. Doesn't he realize the money we make in our most profitable and most visited park helps support other parks around the state, particularly in New York City?"

\$20,000 for new booths and improvements at Michael's Restaurant; \$20,500 for DeFazio's Stadium Grill; \$30,000 for the Como Restaurant; \$50,000 for Advance Care Physical Therapy; and \$30,000 for Players bar.

It's great to help struggling businesses. If you add them up — owners, employees, friends and family — it amounts to lots of votes. And all he gave out was a paltry \$210,000.

However, if we had a level playing field with Seneca, local restaurants wouldn't need welfare checks from Mayor Dyster. They would buy their own booths and start their own cafes.

This autumn, Albany, with Mr. Dyster's support, plans to tear down the former Wintergarden and eliminate the pedestrian walkway next to the State Park to make a vehicular road that leads directly and solely to Seneca. This plan will close more than a dozen American businesses, including the famous Tommy Ryan's, eliminate the popular walkway and ensure more people are routed from the Albany-controlled park to the Albany-profiteering, foreign-nation Seneca Casino and tax-free hotels, stores and restaurants.

Less people will spend even one minute walking in the city. Vastly stupid.

For those still unconvinced about Mr. Dyster, consider: He's planning to limit the height of American-owned buildings surrounding Seneca — so there will never be an American building in Niagara Falls tall enough to block the Seneca skyline.

That's right: The mayor wants a legal limit: No American-owned building may be built higher than the foreigners, and, especially, none high enough to block the views of the foreign nation conquering our town.

And that's politics.

And that's why this place looks the way it does. We keep electing politicians instead of men and women who put the public interest above their own in this impoverished and tormented by its government town.

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