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Ice Follies

By SCOTT SULLIVAN
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Critics say a trained chimp could do my job. "Why would it need to be trained?" say others. Now my hopes I could dupe my daughter have withered too.

While sweeping my den floor the other day, I put a wastebasket on the desk chair Flannery, 6, thinks of as my workplace. "The garbage is taking over your job," she said.

Her assessment mirrors my employers'. When I asked whether they'd replace me with trash, they said garbage is overqualified. At least I have job security.



Still, it's chastening what escapes from your child's mouth. I tried to recoup by pontificating. "Flannery," I told my daughter, who was rapt watching the Olympics, "real men don't figure skate."

"Huh?"
"It's true. There was a time, before you were born, when the test of testosterone levels was whether a guy ate quiche. But even then, manhood was declining."

"The change came when guys-in-disguise began figure skating. Put a real guy on ice and he naturally grabs a hockey stick, slams you into the boards and socks you."

"When I was a boy, back when men were really men, hockey players didn't wear masks or helmets. None had teeth and their faces were scarred like Freddie Krueger's."

"Hockey was a man's game. Players came from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, or Medicine Hat, Alberta, with all extremities, including their brains, half-frozen. They'd rip you a new triple Axel if you asked them to do a toe loop."

"Now everything's gone to heck. Girls play hockey and boys ice dance to 'The Love Theme from Tutti-Frutti ...'"

My daughter looked at me as if I might be on drugs. "That's it!" I thundered. "We've all heard of 'women' athletes who take testosterone for strength. Figure-skating guys must be taking estrogen! When they're tested for drugs, watch the way they urinate!"

"What are you doing?" my wife asked.
"Brainstorming."
"No severe-weather warnings ..."
"I've figured everything out!" I cried. "Why we don't know who we are any longer! Why girls will be boys and boys will be girls; it's a mixed-up, muddled-up, shook-up world, except for Lola ..."

"The Human Identity Crisis summed up in a Kinks song?" my wife asked.
"Lola? The Kinks?" asked Flannery. "Daddy, your chair is rolling."

I'd gestured so wildly I'd struck my chair, which was gathering speed as it neared the staircase. Down it tumbled, the wastebasket overturning to spill dead fish heads and deader paperwork.

"You emptied the trash! That's Olympian," said my wife.
"Maybe someday you'll do a job right," she said.

FOGLI, Tribe fight discrimination

Dear Editor:
Michigan Gambling Opposition Chairman Todd Boorsma's Feb. 20 letter, "MichGO: The good fight lives" sounds to me as if it were written by an attorney rather than Todd

Boorsma, the car salesman. He states MichGO has overwhelming community support, including gathering 10,000 signatures for a petition. I would like him to tell us where all his support was at MichGO's last public meeting, which according to the Grand Rapids Press had 25 to 30 people in attendance.

He seems to brag about the Michigan Senate's revocation of the

MichGo celebrates 5 years of deceit

Commentary by JAMES NYE

Having been part of many public policy campaigns involving gaming, including Proposal 1, I refute many of the assertions in Todd Boorsma's self-congratulatory letter ("MichGO: The Good Fight Lives, Feb 20).

Michigan Gambling Opposition (MichGO) has nothing to be proud of. They have served only as a front group to delay the Gun Lake casino from opening - big money interests have paid the bills, and MichGo knows whom I'm talking about.

MichGo has a credibility problem due to its past. Numerous times MichGo has been aided by casino owners seeking to prevent competition in the gaming market. That assistance has come from a law firm in Grand Rapids, a public relations firm in Chicago, and a lobbying firm in Lansing, all of which are tied to the Blue Chip Casino in Indiana. For being a local "grass roots" organization, MichGo certainly has a lot of high-profile connections.

If they have nothing in their past to hide, MichGO should reveal how they are funding an expensive lawsuit out in Washington, D.C. In a recent news report, Boorsma was quoted saying, "we operate on a paper-thin budget."

Michigan casino owners have also aided the efforts MichGO. They and the 23 is Enough political action committee have shamelessly taken credit for the passage of Proposal 1, and attempted to spin its real purpose against Gun Lake. Proposal 1 was not, as they commonly suggest, a referendum on Indian gaming. That is a blatant insult to the intelligence of every person who voted for the measure.

The ballot language was crystal clear. It stated that Proposal 1 does not apply to Indian gaming, which is regulated by federal law. (The language also explicitly exempted the three commercial casinos in Detroit.) You may have even heard the ads, "A yes vote on Proposal 1 will not stop Gun



JAMES NYE

Lake!"
I know the facts because I was a part of the effort long before it was called Proposal 1. In 2002 racetrack owners began to lobby the Legislature to approve slot machines at the tracks. They were ultimately successful in convincing the Legislature to allow the Lottery to run the machines.

During this process, MichGO was not focused on racinos, rather the Gun Lake compact. Neither was 23 is Enough, although the group operated then under a different name. They could have cared less about the expansion of gaming into racetracks.

Indian gaming tribes and MGM Grand Detroit formed the "Let Voters Decide Yes! on Proposal 1" campaign in spring of 2004. After collecting more than 500,000 signatures, the Board of Canvassers placed Proposal 01-04 on the November ballot. Still no sign of 23 is Enough or MichGO.

As the campaign picked up steam in the fall of 2004 it became one of the most expensive ballot measures in state history. By Election Day competing gaming interests poured \$27 million into the Proposal 1 campaign.

23 is Enough and MichGO didn't contribute financially, but they had no problem standing in front of the

cameras to promote the measure side-by-side with the paid representatives of gaming tribes and MGM. They are quoted numerous times saying Proposal 1 "doesn't apply to Indian casinos."

I played an integral role in the Proposal 1 campaign. It was critically important to the future of Indian tribal governments in Michigan. Working with tribal leaders, elected officials, school administrators and business leaders, we formed a solid base that helped pass Proposal 1 by a margin of 58 percent to 42 percent. I can assure you, MichGO and 23 is Enough participated in name only, and had no problem with the fact that dollars derived from slot machines and table games were financing our common cause.

Proposal 1 is yet another example of MichGO and 23 is Enough's dishonest behavior. Everyone understands the purpose of Proposal 1. It was done to preserve the right of the voters to decide "commercial" gaming expansion because the Legislature approved nine new racetrack casinos over well-documented public opinion against this tidal wave of expansion.

The fact of the matter is, MichGO and 23 is Enough were nothing but freeloaders, who supported Proposal 1 simply to use it against Gun Lake. These groups had no role at all in actually running the campaign. They take credit for the win, when they did nothing to contribute to the effort besides fill out a form to be listed as supporters.

Proposal 1 is another spin used by Gun Lake opponents in their orchestrated campaign of misinformation, fueled by greed, and lust for power and control.

James Nye works in public relations for the Gun Lake Tribe.

READERS WRITE

We welcome letters and comments from our readers. Only signed letters will be printed, and lengthy letters may be edited for space. Fax letters will be accepted only when a phone number is supplied for verification of authorship.

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land-into-trust process delayed because of unethical lobbying involving Jack Abramoff.

I mention discrimination because that's exactly why Friends of the Gun Lake Indians (FOGLI) was formed

Gun Lake Tribe's compact with the state. I saw this measure as discrimination. How could the Senate revoke an opportunity for this tribe, then turn around and set up Keno in bars all across the state?

Then Boorsma has the nerve to mention Jack Abramoff. The Gun Lake Tribe was adversely affected by Congressional Republicans and the Bush Administration, having their

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in 2001.

When the Tribe first announced its plans for a casino during a meeting at Wayland High School, there were discriminatory remarks made. I was not there, but I heard about it from numerous individuals. I was appalled and called the tribal office to see what I could do to help.

I ended up going to Lansing to try to testify at a state committee hearing, but Boorsma and his group took up all the time and I could not add my comments.

FOGLI was formed with a few individuals; now we have

more than 10,000 members. At our last public meeting we had approximately 3,000 supporters (not the 25 to 30 that MichGO had).

Boorsma states the federal government is ignoring the concerns of individuals who oppose this casino. I say there are just as many or more people who are in favor of this project. It's discrimination to say to one tribe, "You can have a casino," then tell another tribe it cannot.

FOGLI, a totally grassroots organization, is committed to dissecting information such as that provided in Boorsma's letter, and to give another side.

If Indian gaming laws are to

change, the new legislation should "grandfather" cases already in the process. The Gun Lake Tribe received federal recognition in 1999 and has struggled with much dignity in its quest to become self-sufficient.

Judith A. Bott
FOGLI Council Member

MichGO misspends bucks

Dear Editor:

If Michigan Gambling Opposition and its supporters used the money they've spent trying to stop the Gun Lake

Tribe from building its casino on creating jobs in Allegan County, we would all be further ahead.

In the meantime, we need these jobs. Our county is not as fortunate as Grand Rapids to have the DeVos and VanAndel families paying for continued growth. We have the Gun Lake Tribe, which has been denied its right to build a business that could help all of us.

If the casino doesn't work, at least the Tribe will have been given a fair chance. If it does work, it would be great for all of us.

We don't appreciate MichGO Chairman Todd Boorsma claiming he voices the opinion of the majority of residents; he doesn't and never will.

It amazes us how he can say the casino will not bring jobs and revenue to our county, when a gentleman from Blue Chip Casino in Indiana was

paid \$5 million to try to stop the Tribe's effort. Why? For fear of what Blue Chip would lose from Michigan citizens going elsewhere. Gee, what a shame it would be to keep revenue here, instead of it going to Indiana.

We say give the Gun Lake Tribe a chance, and ask opponents to put their money where their mouth is and start creating jobs here, instead of wasting it on lawsuits and other delay tactics doomed to fail.

It may take years, but this casino will happen one day.

Richard and Patricia Drury
Dorr

Labor backs casino

Dear Editor:

On the five-year anniversary of the Friends of Gun

Lake Indians, I would like to congratulate the Tribe and the FOGLI for fighting the good fight, and winning.

Labor unions in the region met the Tribe years ago after its leaders knocked on our door to introduce themselves as good friends and neighbors, and to ask for our support. Because the Tribe is sincere about becoming a top-notch job provider, we have supported them ever since.

Over the last five years the Tribe, labor unions, FOGLI, elected and school officials, and the business community have come together in support of two fundamental goals:

1. Fairness for the Gun Lake Tribe, and
2. Jobs and economic development in West Michigan.

Together we formed the West Michigan Economic

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Alliance and have made our voices heard. More than 35 organizations and over 10,000 FOGLI members support the casino. Put together, MichGO and its financiers from Grand Rapids couldn't fill a room.

The reason for the disparity is simple: our goal will benefit the masses by providing thousands of jobs, millions of dollars in construction and purchasing, and millions in revenue sharing to governments. The goal of the opposition is to benefit about 20 rich guys sitting on mounds of cash in the "River City."

That's why labor supports the project wholeheartedly. We support the creation of jobs for our members and the community at large. When people are working, everyone benefits.

We support a compact to maximize the economic impacts for the entire region,

and the Governor has heard the message from thousands of voting tradesmen. We need only look to other regions where Indian casinos have been in place for decades to know we all stand to gain from this project.

I urge you not to be persuaded by moral arguments either. Everyone has a right to their beliefs and they should be respected. But gambling is a reality in our society. We have an ever-expanding, pervasive state lottery, bingo and horse racing, all of which can be found within minutes of any location in West Michigan.

Furthermore, because the Pokagon Band had its land taken into trust, our region is going to have Indian gaming too.

It's time for the zealots to pack it in. If you don't want to gamble, don't. But let the rest of us living in the real world, who have families to feed, ben-

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efit from the Gun Lake casino.

Patrick Klocke
Secretary/Treasurer
Southwest Michigan Building Trades Council

Tired of MichGO

Dear Editor,

I have just a couple of comments in response to Todd Boorsma, Gloria Wobma and MichGO:

You are celebrating and I am tired. I'm tired of local friends and neighbors being out of work, losing their homes or not being able to pay their heating bills or provide for their families.

I'm tired of our school districts being so broke that students have to pay to participate in sports, get updated technology and share textbooks. I'm tired of paying high taxes for quality water, sewer, public safety and road improvements.

I'm tired of Allegan County cutting senior services and contracting private businesses to provide essentials such as transportation because they have no monies to provide it to taxpayers.

I'm tired of local municipalities comprised of vacant storefronts and businesses that have moved from the area. I'm tired of hearing how Grand

Rapids is "local" and having powerbrokers there decide what is right for OUR community.

I'm tired of the unfair treatment of the Gun Lake Tribe. The fact remains that there are 12 federally-recognized tribes in Michigan and 11 of them have compacts to operate a casino. Only the Gun Lake Tribe has been denied.

I'm tired of MichGO wasting my valuable tax dollars with a lawsuit against my own government and the Bush Administration. I'm tired of its members portraying themselves as saviors of "family values." How dare they decide for everyone what is good or bad, right or wrong?

Family values include not only strong faith in God and the religion of our choice, but respecting the rights of others, loving and providing for our family members, and building strong communities by working with our neighbors through understanding, communication and, yes, growth!

Mary Ward
Martin

Gambling is opportunity – and choice

Dear Editor:

I don't know where MichGO Chairman Todd Boorsma lives, but as an Allegan County resident I can tell you wasting taxpayers' money on frivolous

lawsuits is not benefiting local families.

Recent years have put us in a tailspin. Our taxes keep rising while our services are cut – especially for senior citizens.

The Gun Lake Tribe is offering this area a new resource for revenue – for the state, county and local townships. This much-needed revenue could help restore and enhance services to our communities.

I am in my seventh decade and can assure you I've seen much change. What keeps our area desirable is friends and neighbors who respect each other, not those who hold themselves above others in judgment of how they should live their lives. I am adult enough to decide those things for myself.

As far as MichGO's self-appointed crusade to block the casino goes, I say mind your own business. Let the Tribe better life for its members and their neighbors, and welcome visitors to our community who *choose* to partake in a little gaming.

After all, it is not illegal – and I bet you have even bought a raffle ticket or two.

Leone M. Smith
Hopkins

There he goes again

Dear Editor:

Oh Mr. Boorsma. There you go again.

In his letter last week, MichGO Chair Todd Boorsma again demanded a thorough environmental impact study be conducted to determine the environmental, economic and social repercussions of the proposed casino.

What on earth does he think the Gun Lake Tribe provided to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) when they asked for their land to be put in trust?

The Tribe produced a thorough report, taking years to formulate and perhaps millions of dollars to produce, with the expert advice of legal consultants and environmental specialists alike. And that's why the Bush administration approved the application request.

It included everything the BIA requires under federal law, and then some. It met with their approval, passed public scrutiny, and far exceeded regulations set down by the federal government.

Now here goes Mr. Boorsma again, alleging that somehow his concerns were ignored, although failing to mention that not only his but all other such concerns were already collected (during the required public comment period) and that any and all those concerns were given the scrutiny required by law to assess the impact of the casino proposed for Bradley.

The fact of the matter is this: Our friends and neighbors, the members of the sovereign nation of people known

as the Gun Lake Tribe, deserve and are at long last entitled to have their land placed in trust.

The Pokagon Band in New Buffalo were victorious in their battle, and the Gun Lake Tribe will be in theirs. Again.

Jeff Salisbury
Wayland

System works, politicians don't

Dear Editor:

In his Feb. 20 letter, MichGO Chair Todd Boorsma gives himself and his group much credit for delaying the Gun Lake Tribe's planned casino for the past five years.

The Friends of the Gun Lake Indians group was also formed five years ago, immediately after a public meeting during which racial slurs were thrown at Tribe members.

I have known Tribe members for many years and will witness to the fact they are moral, honest and community-spirited. They have always been generous with their time and resources to help individuals, churches, organizations, chambers of commerce, etc.

Tribal casinos are governed by the federal government. The federal gaming process does work; it's the public officials themselves who are abusing the laws to pay back favors owed. Illegal actions such as those prevent the process from

working as it should.

The Gun Lake Tribe is asking to be treated the same as the other Michigan tribes that have sought to develop gaming enterprises as a means to self-determination.

MichGO, teaming with wealthy Grand Rapids businessmen and lobbyists paid by competing casinos, have only delayed the Tribe. The courts will make the final decision.

If you trust our justice system, you have to trust that the right decision will be made "for the greater good" of all involved.

Marcia Halloran
FOGLI Council member
Dorr