

## CASINO

Continued from page 1

## 'Bigot's' words cause waves

By CHARLOTTE WEICK  
crwelck@penasee.com

It may not come as news, but 23 is Enough and officials from the Match-She-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Potawatomi Indians are butting heads once again. The latest controversy revolves around an e-mail from the anti-casino political action group, 23 is Enough, that contains the writings of Frank Parlato Jr.

*"We denounce Parlato and regret having ever used his letter..."*

**John Helmholdt,  
Spokesperson**

Tribal officials were deeply disturbed when they learned that Parlato Jr.'s Web site features a graphic image of a fierce looking Native American male, brandishing the scalp of a Caucasian man. The caption of the image is: "Seneca servicing local patron at casino."

The Match-She-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Potawatomi Indians, also known as the Gun Lake Tribe, plans to build a casino at the former Ampro building in Shelbyville. The tribe is opposed by 23 is Enough and MichGO, another anti-casino political action group.

The 23 is Enough e-mail states,

"The article below is a must read for citizens, lawmakers, media, and community leaders about the empty and failed promises of casino gaming."

The reference material by Parlato Jr. is called "Advantage lopsided for tax-free Seneca Nation." It's author claims it was published in the Tonawanda News.

Parlato Jr. writes on a topic that many anti-casino proponents agree upon — that casinos breed pathological gambling, increase crime and bankruptcies, and force the closing of local businesses that cannot compete with the amenities the casinos have to offer. He claims that the Seneca Nation of Indians built a casino in downtown Niagara Falls, which lead to the loss of "up to untold millions."

On Aug. 7, the Gun Lake Tribe issued a press release, titled "23 is Enough Uses Bigot as its Source in Latest Attack on Gun Lake Tribe's Rights."

"We are now convinced that 23 is Enough will stop at nothing to advance its own agenda," said James Nye, tribal spokesperson. "These millionaires and billionaires have now stooped to a new low in aligning themselves with a hate-monger like Frank Parlato Jr."

The tribe asked 23 is Enough to apologize for the e-mail and urged all elected officials to disassociate themselves with the group.

23 is Enough has many prominent names, legislators, and local officials on their membership list.

According to 23 is Enough Web site, former U.S. President Gerald R. Ford and Amway co-founder Richard M. DeVos serve as honorary co-chairs. Michael Jandernoa serves as chair, and Peter F. Secchia, vice-chair. Members' also include Michigan State Senator Patricia Birkholz, Michigan State Representative Fulton Sheen, and Daniel and Doug DeVos.

Another prominent member of the group is Michigan's Republican gubernatorial candidate, Dick DeVos Jr.

Press Secretary for DeVos Jr., John Truscott, said that DeVos Jr. joined the group early in its formation but is not active in 23 is Enough.

An e-mail from 23 is Enough states, "This editorial (by Parlato Jr.) should serve as a shocking warning of how an article could read in Michigan newspapers years from now if the Las Vegas stakeholders (Station Casinos, Inc.) and the Gun Lake Tribe succeed in their attempts to bring an unwanted, untaxed, and unregulated casino to West Michigan."

Parlato Jr.'s Web site contains "published articles," listed with the newspapers they appeared in, including the Tonawanda News and

Niagara Gazette. According to Aaron Besecker, reporter for the Niagara Gazette, Parlato Jr. often submits opinion pieces, but is not a correspondent for the paper.

Nye said the Web site also smacks of bigotry.

"It disparages Native Americans, and even patrons of Indian casinos, as 'shabbily dressed, unglamorously inelegant, grotesquely unlearned, often unshaven, sometimes unwashed,'" he said.

Members of the Gun Lake Tribe are not the only ones upset by 23 is Enough's quoting of Parlato Jr. State Representative Mary Waters and Senator Mark Schauer wrote letters criticizing 23 is Enough. The letters were written to 23 is Enough Spokesperson, John Helmholdt.

"This e-mail, designed to incite anti-Native American sentiment is a bright and shining example that racial prejudice still exists in our society today," Waters' letter states. "Racial intolerance has no place in American society. Your organization should be ashamed and should apologize to the Gun Lake Tribe immediately."

Helmholdt said that he was on vacation when the email fracas erupted and was shocked when he realized what happened.

"I personally called (Tribal) Chairman (D.K.) Sprague and apologized to him and the entire tribe for this unfortunate oversight," Helmholdt said. "We truly and honestly were not aware of Parlato Jr.'s views and the letter we referenced made no reference to his Web site or his inappropriate views."

"We denounce Parlato Jr. and regret having ever used his letter to draw attention to the facts relating to the negative economic and social impacts of the Niagara Falls casino."

While researching the Seneca Tribe's casino, a 23 is Enough member pulled up the opinion piece by Parlato Jr., unaware of the controversial Web site, Helmholdt said.

"23 is Enough does not hold, nor do we condone the same cultural or racial views, attitudes, or values of Frank Parlato Jr., and we denounce any and all of his culturally insensitive comments, photos, or remarks," Helmholdt said.

Nye said the tribe has not accused 23 is Enough of being a racist organization, "but, we are educating the public and lawmakers of the fact that it is using a racist to carry its message," he said.

Helmholdt said that he was deeply sorry about the incident, and that his apology was accepted. At the time of publication, Nye said that he was not aware that Helmholdt had made an apology. Sprague and Shagonaby were unavailable for comment.