

PALADINO WRITES

EPISTLE TO
BRUCE
JACKSON

BY BRUCE JACKSON

The only Buffalo businessman regularly quoted in the *Buffalo News* as supporting the proposed Seneca Creek casino is Carl Paladino, a developer. Paladino partially underwrote the campaign to reorganize the Buffalo Common Council, which resulted in replacing as council president the independent James Pitts with David Franczyk, who is generally regarded as Paladino's cat's paw. Paladino largely underwrote the lawsuit that kept the casino from being located in Cheektowaga after negotiations to locate it in the Buffalo Convention Center fell through. Paladino then sold the Senecas the largest portion of the nine acres they currently hold in downtown Buffalo.

Every other businessman of substance in the city, the Episcopal and Catholic bishops, religious leaders in the African-American community, educators like former SUNY Chancellor Bruce Johnstone, scientists like Nobel Prize-winner Herbert Hauptman, trustees of the city's major public foundations and many others have argued that the proposed casino would bring Buffalo nothing but harm.

Nonetheless, Paladino continues his public opposition. I wondered why he continued to bother, since he had already made his money on the land deal. What was still in it for him? I didn't want to keep speculating, so, in the early morning of August 5, I wrote him directly. We had never met, but I thought I could take the liberty because we'd both written about and commented on one another in public so often it was almost as if we'd known one another for years:

From: Bruce Jackson

Sent: Saturday, August 05, 2006 2:19 AM

To: Carl Paladino

Subject:

hey carl,

I'm trying to figure out why you keep pushing the casino so aggressively. I would prefer not to keep speculating. You can count as well as Mark Hamister, Herbert Hauptman, the bishops, Bruce Johnstone and all those other guys, so you have to know what a dog it is for the city's economy. Two people have told me that if the Senecas' plan collapses you have to pay them the selling price back. Is that true? Is that all it is? Is there other land around the current site you're planning on selling them? Is that it? If not, what? Your position on it just doesn't make any sense if you don't have bucks involved.

Bruce

When I logged on again the next morning, I found a response not from Paladino but from his server. It was an error message telling me that the recipient had issued an instruction to reject all email from my University at Buffalo email address. I couldn't remember ever having sent anything to Paladino previously, so I thought it odd he would have gone to the trouble of making sure no email from me ever reached his screen.

The Internet is nothing if not a world of options, so I resent my email that afternoon from my Gmail account. I don't think I'd ever written anybody from my Gmail account, so it was unlikely the digital guard dogs had been alerted to that threat.

There was no response Sunday but there was no error message either, so I knew Gmail had gotten through. Paladino responded at 8:44pm Monday night.

I should point out that my email had been from me to him; no copies, blind or otherwise. He copied nine other people on his reply: three at his office, a vice president at M&T Bank, a WKBW-TV reporter who has done favorable pieces on him, a lawyer at a Buffalo law firm I'd never heard of, a lawyer at the Phillips Lytle law firm, the editor of *Artvoice* and someone with an AOL address.

From: CPaladino

Subject: RE:

Date: August 7, 2006 8:44:48 PM EDT (CA)

To: bruce

that's an impressive list of people who know what's best for us. get real; you and your limozine liberal friends think we need you to control our lives. we already have all of the possible downside and none of the benes of gambling. before casino niagara i would have opposed the indians but now with all the venues its crazy to deprive our city of at least some upside. no., my deal is finished. i owned one sixthof the property and made 47k on the deal which doesn't begin to offset the 150k fee for the cheek. lawsuit. the seneca's are only doing buffalo to block out competition. its stupid to run 2 expense lines against the same stream of revenue. the next time your imagination gets the best of you call me and i'll give you the facts asshole. sorry about the bad typing but i'm compelled to respond to your idiocy. you should get off the public tit and get a day job. maybe then you'll appreciate the plight of the everyday joe in this town. its elitists like you who contribute to the community's paralysis when it comes to moving ahead. you have a negative approach to everything. watch out for the boogeyman bruce.

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On August 17, 1998, Bill Clinton became the first sitting US president to tes-

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Several things in his email deserve glossing.

First, transportation issues: Neither I nor any of my friends owns a "limozine." My wife and I drive a seven-year-old Volvo with dents on most vertical surfaces. We also have an 18-year-old Cadillac that I got a year ago in trade for a photograph of Delaware Park in winter. We don't drive that car much because of the gas prices and because the air-conditioner doesn't work and you know what kind of summer this has been. Carl Paladino, I hear, drives a recent Jaguar. I don't know what his second or third cars are or what he paid or traded to get them. In any case, how Carl and I get from one part of Buffalo to another doesn't seem to me to have much to do with our positions on a downtown casino, so I'll say no more about it.

Next there is the "47k" he "made on the deal." From the tone of his letter, that's small potatoes to him. I've never made "47k" on a deal so I have nothing to offer in comparison. "47k" is about half the price of a new Jaguar XK series sedan, so I guess it would be, to him, a minor matter. He says he spent "150k" on the lawsuit that kept the casino from locating in Cheektowaga, which means he lost 103k on the deal, or, \$103,000 in our parlance, in which case he's not as good a businessman as I've always thought he was or there's something else he forgot to mention, like who the other five property owners were. Were they, say, his partners or members of his family? If that's the case, then the puny "47k" he made on the Seneca deal is what some people would call a fudge. I don't know what a businessman would call it.

get off the public tit and get a day job: I suppose he's referring to the fact that I've been a schoolteacher for over 40 years. Perhaps if Paladino had spent more time on or near the educational tit he'd know how to spell the plural of Seneca or the name of long cars or the contraction of "it is." I wonder how the "public tit" of a schoolteacher's salary compares to the public tit he sucked on when he got ownership of a huge downtown city building from the mayor's office for \$1, or to the zillions of dollars of Empire Zone tax credits for moving workers from one part of Buffalo (where full taxes were paid) to another (where they are not). Or maybe he's just trying to tell me that he's got bigger sugar tits to suck on than I do, which I wouldn't dispute.

we already have all of the possible downside: No, we don't. We're not close. We have the

downside of having casinos in Niagara Falls and slots at the racetrack in Fort Erie. We do not have the downside that would come from having another \$160 million per year drawn out of Buffalo's fragile economy, or the downside resulting from having Buffalo's taxpaying shops, bars, restaurants, hotels and theaters competing with a casino's shops, bars, restaurants, hotels and theaters that pay no taxes, allow smoking, and offer free drinks, food, entertainment and hotel rooms.

elitists like you who contribute to the city's paralysis: Helping the city avoid doing stupid things that will cause its citizens great harm is not contributing to paralysis. It's more on the order of suggesting that a drunk friend not drive himself home.

Well, enough of that. You can gloss the rest of Paladino's email as well as I.

Perhaps you noticed that in all of it he never answered the question I asked him; he just railed at me personally. So I sent him a second email, in the hope he'd get back to the issue at hand:

From: Bruce Jackson

Sent: Monday, August 07, 2006 10:24 PM

To: Carl Paladino

Subject: Re: RE:

You didn't answer my question. I know why they're doing it. Why are you doing it?

Carl Paladino, the businessman quoted more than any other about casino matters by the *Buffalo News*, replied the next afternoon, with copies to most of the people in his first email, plus a reporter at the *Buffalo News*, an executive at the Buffalo Sabres, a developer in Arizona and several other people, 14 of them in all:

From: CPaladino

Subject: RE: RE:

Date: August 8, 2006 1:52:19 PM EDT (CA)

To: bruce

because someone needs to do it. does that help with your sinister motivation theory, asshole

As the lawyers say, res ipsa loquitur: The thing speaks for itself.

Bruce Jackson's Artvoice articles on the Peace Bridge affair were collected in The Peace Bridge Chronicles (2003). He is SUNY Distinguished Professor and Samuel P. Capen Professor of American Culture at UB, vice president of the community advocacy organization Citizens for a Better Buffalo and editor of the Web journal BuffaloReport.com. av