

Gambling Monopoly, Tax-Free Zone in Our Midst Stifling Niagara Falls

In struggle for survival, 'Equality with Seneca' is our motto

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They're going great guns. Astonished, the locals ask, "How do they do it, these Seneca gods?" "Without taxes" — that's the answer.

Another question: If it was bad for the goose — ordinary Americans — why is it good for the Seneca? Why, instead of American, do we have a Native-American casino and tax-free zone in Niagara Falls?

And why has a "Sovereign Nation" made more than a billion dollars from gambling, while we struggle to keep our libraries open and our children from leaving Western New York?

Albany — that's the answer.

Albany hath ruled: gambling is profoundly evil; it's something for nothing, its profits predicated on the painful losses of ordinary people. Since 1821, gambling has been banned by state constitution. New York residents cannot make money from it — but it is fine for Seneca to profit.

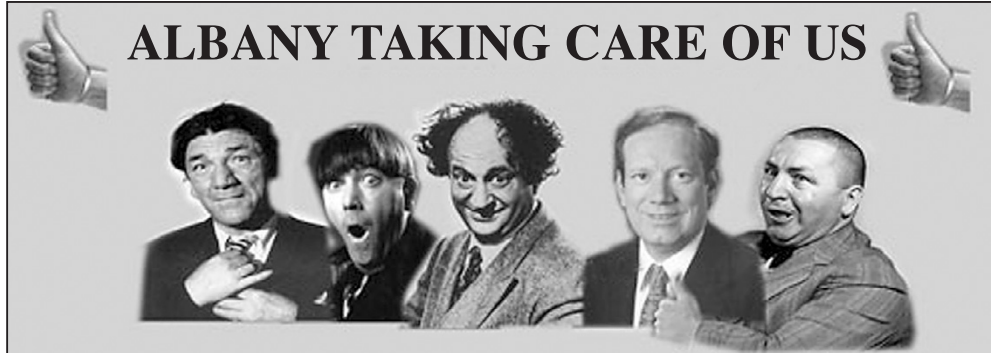
Hence, Albany created a nation called Seneca — a 50-acre "country" with its own casino, tax-free hotel, tax-free souvenir, gift, and clothing stores, and tax-free restaurants on former U.S. land — in what was once downtown Niagara Falls.

Skip the tricks of truth and the legal fictions which shoddy government foists upon its people; why didn't the opportunity go to New Yorkers first? Good government secures the rights and preserves the prosperity of the people they are elected to serve.

But Albany, claiming the latter, said their plan would encourage development and make Niagara Falls a boom town.

Six years later, Seneca is gleaming, but, in its wake, dozens of local, American businesses collapsed. Hotels closed. The ice rink closed. The Convention Center lost. The area adjacent to Seneca plunged into desolation. Millions in taxes lost. Crime, bankruptcies, social welfare — costs associated with gambling, all on the rise.

It began at remarkable cost: Albany gave away our only convention center. Out-of-town people could convene here, and historically did and then went to hotels and restaurants and spent money. It became a foreign casino, to which tourists hardly come. The gamblers — by design — are mainly middle-income, regional people who rarely venture out to shop or



An Albany official, fourth from left, explains to happy Niagara Falls officials how creating a tax-free nation (Seneca) in the midst of their tax-paying businesses to compete against them will be really great for them.

dine in American-owned businesses. If they stay in a hotel, they stay in Seneca.

Ironic: The Convention Center made money for locals from out-of-town people; the Seneca Casino makes money for out-of-town people (Seneca and Albany) from mainly locals.

More ironic: Seneca is planning to open its own convention center.

More significantly, the compact Albany settled with Seneca requires Seneca to pay Albany on slot machines only. Everything else is 100 percent tax-free. Seneca opened a buffet, a pub, a steak house, an Italian restaurant, an Asian restaurant, a glamour spa, a conference center, a bistro, a coffee shop, a nightclub, a 26-story, 604-room hotel, and retail stores galore — all tax-free.

While Americans in Niagara Falls pay among the nation's highest state income, sales and property taxes, Seneca pays none while operating similar retail businesses in direct competition with American-owned stores.

Seneca sells clothing, sporting goods, jewelry, toys, household goods, art, electronics, TVs, cameras, souvenirs, and more — tax-free. A smoke shop, a gas station, a car dealership next? There's nothing in the compact to prohibit it.

If people drive miles to rural reservations to save a few pennies on cigarettes and gasoline, how far will they drive when Seneca has as many stores as the Outlet Mall?

Intelligent people know this lopsided advantage is unfair and probably illegal. Unconstitutional.

If every business person in Niagara united, we could make a city-wide challenge to Albany's treasonous conversion of New York's land to sovereign territory and it would collapse.

But public relations would be a challenge. The uneducated, but politically correct apologists claim we stole Niagara Falls from the poor, now rich, Seneca. The historical facts, however, are quite different: Seneca stole Niagara Falls from the peaceful Neutrals' tribe — by exterminating them — in the mid-18th century. Seneca squatted here briefly, a mere 50 years, until early Americans threw

Seneca off, like they did the British and Niagara Falls became part of America.

Still, let us not blame Seneca for their gleeful acceptance of untold billions and the chance to capture Niagara Falls again — permanently. Who amongst us would refuse Albany's capricious and self-serving generosity (made with our resources)? Albany is persuasive, relentless and voracious.

Consider: while shamelessly taxing us to near extinction, Albany simultaneously ate the lion's share of our tourism by their pro-Albany management of the state park, surrounding our world-famous waterfalls, and hogged all of our lucrative hydro-electrical power profits, generated from the descent of the Niagara. It is merely the gnawing on the bones in the coffin this: of Albany creating a tax-free zone placing Seneca in advantageous juxtaposition to compete and rule over whomever here has managed to survive the all-devouring Albany rule.

Meanwhile, Seneca is expanding. More stores, giant hotels and elegant restaurants are coming.

It's a peculiarity of the Falls that we understand neither good government, history or economics. Consider a landmark and truly excellent Italian restaurant, The Como, owned by the same family since the 1920s. Over the decades, they paid, literally, millions in combined property, state income and sales taxes to this city and state.

Seneca, on the other hand, recently opened an Italian restaurant, built it with tax-free materials; pays no property tax; no income tax, and, unlike the Como, Seneca does not have to charge its customers an extra 8 percent sales tax on every dollar of food and beverage sold.

Do the math: If the Como pays \$300,000 in combined taxes annually, and Seneca pays zero, how many bowls of spaghetti does the Como have to sell before achieving the same profit, or to say it bluntly, to get equality with Seneca?

Or take the Red Coach Inn. Established in the early 20th century, customers in search of fine steaks, chops or seafood can choose to dine there, or go to the

neighboring Seneca (tax-free) Western Door. Isn't it ironic that two of the oldest and most famous restaurants in Niagara Falls are now directly, but disadvantageously, competing against the tax-free Seneca?

And what of dozens of less well-established restaurants, stores or hotels which have to compete against what Seneca opens tax-free? This is not merely competition — for competition is what America was built upon. This is a new kind of un-American competition — with a huge advantage given by Albany to favor Seneca (and Albany) to the monstrous detriment of Niagara Falls.

Now some may vehemently object to calling Seneca non-American, but kindly remember they are, by their own acclamation, a sovereign nation — separate from the laws and rules of the United States. You can't have it both ways: American, when it suits you, and a sovereign nation when it helps you.

We need to halt this tax-free usurpation, or, alternately, make the whole city tax-free. Then we'll see how Americans can compete with a sovereign nation on an even playing field in the USA, in New York, in Niagara Falls.

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Paid for by the Committee to Suspend Albany's Stranglehold on Niagara (SA-SON)