

Tribe; state effort on tax will harm NNY

By Tom Wanamaker
Watertown Daily Gazette

ALBANY, N.Y. — Leaders of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe say a renewed state effort to force collection of state sales taxes on reservation tobacco sales will harm the regional economy.

On Aug. 8, the state Senate passed legislation to ban manufacturers from selling tobacco products to anyone who does not certify that taxes will be collected on their retail sale. The idea is to force the state’s Indian nations to collect state sales taxes on tobacco sales to non-Indians.

“This bill, like similar legislation proposed before it, will harm the Northern New York economy, not help it,” said Chief James W. Ransom, citing a 2003 study performed by Regional Economic Models Inc. “The economic impact could be greater than \$2 million per year.”

“We already collect fees from tribal businesses that would be harmed by this legislation and that will hurt our ability to deliver essential governmental services,” said Chief Barbara A. Lazore. “It will also result in a loss of jobs that no one in the state is even considering.”

The St. Regis tribal government says it takes in approximately \$4 million annually in licensing fees from businesses operating on the reservation, which it uses to fund programs in education, health care, law enforcement and services for the elderly. The tribe also employs hundreds of non-Indians.

Tribal leaders do, however, welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue with Gov. David A. Paterson. Last week, Gov. Paterson expressed his willingness to talk with Indian leaders from around the state on the taxation issue.

“We commend the governor for taking the position he would like to meet with the Indian nation leadership in the state to discuss this issue,” said Chief Monica M. Jacobs. “The tribe has always been open to having such a dialogue.”

Previous governors, notably Republican George E. Pataki and Democrat Eliot L. Spitzer, have come into office intent on forcing tribes to collect state sales taxes, something the tribes — citing treaty rights and sovereignty concerns — strongly oppose.

After Mr. Pataki mobilized the state police to enforce tax collection on Seneca Nation lands in Western New York in 1997, Indians responded by blocking the Thruway with burning tires. Mr. Pataki eventually backed down, but subsequent negotiations with tribes over tax collection and the awarding of three casinos in the Catskill Mountains failed to yield fruit. In 2006, Mr. Pataki vetoed legislation similar to that which passed the Senate earlier this month.

After tough talk on the campaign trail, Mr. Spitzer toned down his tax-collection rhetoric upon taking office in 2007.

Last Friday, the St. Regis Tribal Council sent Gov. Paterson a letter, commending him for “taking the initiative to open a dialogue with tribes/nations. We believe that building a positive relationship is the key to resolving many of the differences between the state and us.” The council also requested a meeting with the governor for “an open and frank discussion” on taxation issues. No date has been set for such talks.

One possible outcome of tribal-state negotiations could be a tax compact — an agreement defining the taxation relationship between the two parties. Such compacts can offer predictable revenues for both sides while allaying competition concerns of non-reservation businesses.

Several states — Washington, Oregon, Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Arizona and Oklahoma — have negotiated tobacco tax compacts with their resident Indian nations. Fifteen states, most of them west of the Mississippi River, have negotiated fuel tax compacts with various Indian nations.

Jackson—Sioux nickname: ‘Do the right thing’

Chuck Haga
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — Alumnus and legendary NBA coach Phil Jackson urged the University of North Dakota on Monday to “do the right thing” and resolve the emotional Fighting Sioux nickname controversy.

“We have to rethink probably our nickname and moniker,” he said during the second of two public appearances at the university, where he wore the Sioux name and logo as a star basketball player more than four decades ago.

Use of the symbols is “not beneficial” to the Lakota people, he said.

“I think ... we can make this change gracefully,” Jackson said, adding that he and other former UND athletes “don’t feel there’s any decrease in our spirit or our enthusiasm” with a name change.

Earlier Monday, at a convocation where he received an honorary doctorate, Jackson said that “objectification of people is limiting to ourselves” as well as to the people objectified.

He said he had “been asked by my Lakota friends to speak out” on the logo issue, which has steeped the university in controversy in recent years. In a legal settlement last year with the NCAA, which had threatened to punish the school if it didn’t change the nickname, UND agreed to drop it if it is unable to reach an understanding with namesake tribes in North Dakota within three years.

Reaction to Jackson’s logo comments appeared mixed, with some in the audience applauding and cheering but many sitting on their hands. (About 750 people attended the honorary degree ceremony, according to a university spokesman, and the audience for the question-and-answer session appeared to be about twice that.)

“I thought he was eloquent, courageous and gracious,” said Tim O’Keefe, UND Alumni Association executive vice president, after Jackson’s second appearance, a question-and-answer session that was part of UND’s yearlong 125th anniversary observance.

The alumni group, representing as it does people on all sides of the logo issue, has not taken a position on how it should be resolved, O’Keefe said.

“What I heard him clearly say is ... that if we can’t find ways to come together on this and find a solution we all can embrace, we all will lose,” he said.

Two students who attended the discussion together, one an advocate for retaining the nickname and one who said he’s prepared to see it go, both praised Jackson’s handling of the subject.

“I really like that he was man enough to come out and speak his mind,” said Casey Neale, 21, a senior from St. Louis, Mo. “I liked how he stood up to give voice to a small minority that doesn’t always have a voice.”

Michael Johnson, 20, from Eden Prairie, Minn., said that he still favors holding onto the Sioux logo — he wore a logo sweater — but Jackson’s words “almost got me to the point where I think he’s right.”

Johnson said he believes the logo is meant to honor the Sioux, or Lakota, but the issue “is not worth fighting for if the people you think you’re honoring don’t want it,” he said.

“I still love the name, and I’d still like to keep it. But maybe it causes too much trouble.”

Avis Skinner, a retired Grand Forks teacher, said that she’s getting to the same place. “His message was to move on, and I think we need to move on,” she said.

Added Susie Shaft, a UND graduate and longtime employee in the registrar’s office, “To me, he didn’t injure either side. He did it very graciously. And I think that if he could accept (a change) this graciously, we should be able to.”

Jeanie Buss, a Lakers vice president and Jackson’s companion, said that Jackson “spent a lot of time writing” his remarks. “He’s a writer, and every word that he chose to speak was meaningful and special.”

Coach of nine NBA championship teams, six in Chicago and three in Los Angeles, Jackson starred as a UND basketball player in the mid-1960s before embarking on a professional playing career, during which he won two championship rings with the New York Knicks. As a coach, he won six NBA titles with the Chicago Bulls and three more with the Los Angeles Lakers.

After receiving the degree, Jackson talked about his life since his days on campus, living up to one of his own nicknames — the Zen master — by quoting, among others, the philosophers Plato and Soren Kierkegaard, the poet A. E.

Housman, the singer Bob Dylan and Buddha.

“For the son of a minister, those college days were mind-opening,” he said, and they set him on a life course that embraced meditation, spirituality and change. He spoke with pride of advances in civil rights and the status of women — changes that came because individuals and groups raised their voices and brought light to difficult issues.

And it is time, he suggested, for resolution of a nagging issue “in our own backyard,” at UND.

“What is to be gained by keeping the Fighting Sioux” name and logo, he asked, and what is to be lost by giving it up?

“We have a chance to do the right thing,” Jackson said.

Earlier, Jackson mingled with students at the UND Indian Center, where he was greeted with an honor song and received gifts — a blanket, sage and sweet grass and a beaded medallion in the Lakers’ colors of purple and yellow.

“My wife, Deanna, was up till 4 a.m. making it,” said B.J. Rainbow, president of the Indian students group, which opposes retention of the Fighting Sioux nickname.

“He said we need to move on together” and leave the nickname issue behind, Rainbow said. “It was good to hear from someone of his stature, an alumnus.”

Jackson, who as a young man spent several summers as an Upward Bound counselor on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, was given the name Swift Eagle in a naming ceremony there. He said his continuing associations with American Indians and their culture “has been a real spiritual assistance to my life.”

About 750 students, faculty and others heard Jackson speak at the first convocation, including Gov. John Hoeven and former Gov. Al Olson.

Olson said he was a counselor at Boys State when Jackson attended as a high school senior, and UND Coach Bill Fitch asked for his help in getting Rugby, N.D., basketball star Paul Presthus to consider attending UND. Presthus indicated he was sold on going to Minnesota, Olson said, and he reported that to Fitch.

“He said, ‘That’s OK. I’ve got Phil Jackson.’”

Hoeven introduced Jackson. After the traditional, formal opening to the convocation, with deans and other UND leaders marching into the auditorium in their academic robes, Hoeven strode to a microphone and hollered, “Let’s make some serious noise for Coach Phil Jackson! Whaddya say?”

After a full minute of whoops, hollers, whistles and foot-stomping, the governor said, “You were just waiting to cut loose with that, weren’t you?”

Hoeven said Jackson deserved recognition not only for his athleticism but also for his intelligence and humanity.

“He is somebody who cares about people and takes the time to learn about them as individuals so they can realize their potential,” he said.

Hoeven presented Jackson with a North Dakota license plate, “LUV ND,” to take back to Los Angeles.

Peace pipe ceremony



Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, poses with unidentified members of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, of Minnesota, Sept. 17, 1987, in his Capitol Hill office, Washington. The Indians met with Inouye for a peace pipe ceremony to thank him for introducing legislation honoring their tribe.

Tribe’s casino means road work in Mo., Kan.

Fort Mills Times

COLUMBUS, Kan. — An Oklahoma Indian tribe whose newest casino occupies that state’s farthest northeast corner is planning road projects in Missouri and Kansas to accommodate the business.

The Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma’s Downstream Casino Resort opened July 5 along Interstate 44 at the juncture of the three states. Its parking lot sits on land owned by the tribe in Cherokee County, Kan., and motorists heading for the casino from the east exit I-44 in Missouri.

Alan Mauk, traffic consultant for the casino, said the

work was needed to accommodate delivery trucks turning from the Kansas roads toward the Oklahoma casino. Also, a double culvert on one of the roads has collapsed and needs repair.

“We are willing to do that immediately,” Mauk told the county commission. He said the tribe expects to spend about \$18,000 on the work and will hire the contractors.

Members of a Galena church located on an intersection used by the delivery trucks were concerned that the heavy vehicles might be driving by during church services.

Mauk said the casino could inform delivery companies to avoid the intersection during services and could ask casino employees to do the same. But Commissioner Pat Collins said that wouldn’t be necessary.

“We appreciate you hiring people out of our county,” Collins said.

Mauk also discussed with the commissioners the tribe’s plans for road and appearance improvements in the area around the Tri-State Monument on State Line Road - the boundary of Kansas and Missouri.

He said Newton County, Mo., has transferred its half of the road to the tribe, and that the tribe has a covenant with the county to ensure that

the site remains open to the public.

Plans include a three-lane road around the monument, the location where Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma meet.

“We’re committed to spending \$800,000” in the monument area, Mauk said.

Commissioner Charlie Napier said Cherokee County didn’t want to fully relinquish control of any roads.

“What we’re asking is to use it and to maintain it, and that’s all,” Mauk said. “No ownership.”

Commissioner Rodney Edmondson asked County Counselor Kevin Cure to review the tribe’s covenant

Three burned at Schemitzun Powwow

Norwich Bulletin

NORWICH, Conn. — Three people were burned in a propane accident at a food vendor station Sunday during the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe’s Schemitzun festival in North Stonington.

The incident occurred at 6:30 p.m. when a propane tank ignited because of its proximity to a deep fryer, said Ledyard Resident Trooper John Rich. The tank had tipped over, Rich said, knocking a gas line connection loose from a tank in use while food was being prepared.

Nelson Hazard, 55, of Peace Dale, R.I., and Charles Babbit, 49, of East Providence, R.I., were taken to The William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich for treatment of burns. Ann Thomas, 64, of Providence was treated by emergency personnel at the scene.

Hazard later was transferred to the burn unit at Bridgeport Hospital where he was listed in fair condition Monday. Rich said Hazard sustained burns to his arms and legs.