May 20, 1998 N.G.I.S.C. Chicago Meeting

DR. GERALD FORSHEY

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Dr. Gerald Forshey.

DR. FORSHEY: My name is Gerald Forshey and I'm a retired professor of philosophy in the humanities in the City Colleges of Chicago. One night I heard my State Senator explain that gambling expansion was inevitable and if we wanted to prosper we needed to get a boat in our district.

I grew up in Reno, Nevada, graduated from high school there. We were there right from the beginning. My father was working aboard a gambling ship off Long Beach when I was born. Bill Harrah was living in a motor court on South Virginia and running a bingo joint when I was in the fifth grade. Ray Smith's dad had the biggest gambling operation in the nation. I think of Don Turano as a running back at Reno High School, not as the owner of the Eldorado and Legacy casinos. But how did that all become inevitable, the wave of the future?

I left Reno because Miss Boomer and Mr. Finch taught me about Shakespeare and Moliere and the Reno Little Theatre never played them. I went to UCLA to watch great football games, hear great minds give lectures and walk around with my eyes, looking in the sky looking at great architecture. I spent last Christmas in Reno with family and while that phoney battery of neon lights may impress some, they depress me. If that's the wave of the future, God pity us.

So when someone convinced our legislators it was the wave of the future, it looked like a tidal wave of destruction to me. When people talk about good jobs, I remember by dad taking unpaid vacations in February when Donner Pass was closed off,
working his days off for Memorial Day to Labor Day to earn extra money and retiring with only Social Security as his pension.

In War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy tells a story of another inevitability. For 15 years Napoleon mastered Europe. His grand plan to unite Europe was inevitable. Russia was to be his great victory. But what was inevitable did not come to pass. The French occupied, then abandoned Moscow. The army followed them back like a rear escort. Russian soldiers began to raid the rear flanks and were joined by villagers, farmers and merchants and craftsmen, falling on the French from everywhere.

What's so inevitable about gambling? They belly up in New Orleans, in Davenport and on the Mississippi. State after state turn them back. And there's the army of little people who choose not to go on board the gambling boat. In a Vermont countryside a mother pushing her infants in a stroller goes to war. Other mothers in California fought an Indian casino which wanted to use their children's school bus road as an access road. A businessman in Missouri started a statewide campaign. A former Chicago mobster visits college campuses to tell students how they are targeted. They rise to attack the inevitable and I choose to be on their side. I think my father would understand.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you very much.