Written by Charles Jay
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Ken Nahigian, the latest self-styled boxing "expert" in these United States, has a little list he carries around in his back pocket. Written on this piece of paper are the names of his preferred candidates to take the role of "national boxing administrator" (otherwise known as the 'boxing czar'), a position that would be created if the "Professional Boxing Amendments Act of 2002" is passed by Congress.

It exists so that Nahigian, a lawyer working on behalf of John McCain, can show it to staffers who represent United States Senators, with the intention of soliciting support for the legislation (Not that too many of the names are going to mean anything to anybody).

The list is not about producing the best qualified candidates, or in fact to arrive at anyone qualified at all. Getting the "best and the brightest" does not enter into the equation. Neither does the reality that once someone is actually nominated, they'd actually have to have the capacity to PERFORM the duties required for the job.

Forget all that. Hey, it's not like we're trying to educating people on ISSUES here. We're selling. Don't you realize that A-B-C stands NOT for Association of Boxing Commissioners, but "A-Always B-Be C-Closing"?

This is a shell game, more than anything else - it's about the art of deception. Let's point someone in THIS direction, so they won't see what's really happening in the other direction.

Nothing like a good ol' "dog-and-pony show" right? I mean, it's not as if the May 22 Senate hearings were about gathering input for the purposes of constructing a useful piece of legislation. After all, for all intents and purposes the bill had already been written BEFORE the hearings. But wasn't it cool having Muhammad Ali there?

I don't know; maybe I'm naive. Maybe the entire list, in and of itself, is an exercise in deception. Maybe there's a better list, with more serious names, sitting in a safety deposit box somewhere. It must be, because I can't help wondering just how in the world Ken Nahigian honestly believes he can sneak some of these people through a Senate confirmation hearing.

Do you think Nahigian can get enough United States Senators to look the other way for that long?

Hmmmm.

It may be time to introduce Mr. Nahigian to two words that should undoubtedly be part of his vocabulary:

DUE DILIGENCE.

Thankfully, most of Nahigian's candidates probably wouldn't get far past the mountain of paperwork anyway. One of the forms any nominee for a Senate confirmation must complete is the "White House Personal Data Statement". Here are two of the questions that appear on that form:

"Do you know anyone or any organization that might take any steps, overtly or covertly, fairly or unfairly, to criticize your appointment? If so, please explain."

"Is there any other information, including information about other members of your family, that could be considered a possible source of embarrassment to you, your family, or the President?"

If I can be so bold, allow me to help some of the potential nominees with those answers.

"Yes", and "yes".

Please take my word for it.

Let's review the list one-by-one, in alphabetical order:

TEDDY ATLAS

-- Trainer of heavyweight Michael Grant; former trainer for Michael Moorer, others. Personally, I like Teddy, and think he has something valuable to contribute in the way of training fighters, and as ESPN's color commentator who has "been there". But I'm not sure that contribution should manifest itself through a role as the national boxing administrator. After all, whether it's fair or not, Atlas is identified with ESPN, the sports "monster" documented in several chapters of the series as being engaged in business practices that are contrary to the best interests of boxing and quite possibly in restraint of trade. Then, there's that Thomas Williams thing, which still bothers me a little. And if McCain's people have assured him, as is the rumor, that he can have the position in Washington AND keep his job with ESPN - an entity that should be a subject of regulation and (in my opinion) very close scrutiny, then it would reaffirm that the "reform movement" of McCain and government Nahigian is a complete and total sham.

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DICKIE COLE

-- Currently runs Texas commission. Formerly an all-around political operative of Jose Sulaiman and the World Boxing Council, not to mention its "junior organization", the North American Boxing Federation. Served as ratings chairman of both the WBC and NABF. During this period of time, operated an insurance company in which he accepted money for boxing insurance policies from clients who were also boxing promoters. These promoters would, in the normal course of doing business, lobby him and his colleagues to have their fighters rated favorably. That's a conflict of interest, but seemingly nothing that was ever self-policed. His son, Lawrence Cole, a referee who inherited the agency and who also accepts money from promoters on whose shows he officiates, and who aspires to some day run the NABF (maybe it's his birthright), is perfectly ready, willing, and able to carry on the family tradition. Dickie have a powerful ally in his corner, as he was appointed to his current position through the administration of then-Texas Governor George W. Bush.

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JOE DWYER

-- Chairman of the IBF's Championship Committee. Former judge and chief inspector in New York. Former police officer in New York City. Dwyer helped to supply some much-needed credibility to the IBF in the wake of the Bob Lee scandals. That was no small feat. However, he comes from a sanctioning body, and in this atmosphere, where everyone in Washington and in the ABC seems to be decidedly "anti-sanctioning body", that could work against him. Also, Dwyer makes it clear to anyone who asks that he was not put on this earth to be manipulated. While that may be a great quality for the purposes of "Operation Cleanup", it may not be what the Ken Nahigians of the world are looking for. Understands that the concept of selecting officials for championship fights can work effectively as a "give-and-take" process. Dwyer is the only candidate on this list I could possibly recommend. I hope that isn't the kiss of death.

TIM LUECKENHOFF

-- Current president of the Association of Boxing Commissions. Known associate of Kentucky's "Minister of Maim", Jack Kerns, with whom he serves on the ABC Board of Directors. Supported Kerns' inclusion on the board, and his retention even after evidence

surfaced about Kerns' disregard for safety and possible criminal neglect in the Greg Page case. No word on whether he would continue to consult with Kerns if he assumed a new office. Opposed to the concept of neutrality in officiating. Nice guy. Law enforcement investigator. Another one of those commissioners, though, who agreed that it is was "financially inconvenient" to have ambulances at fights - the result was a $13.7 million judgment in compensatory damages for a fighter against a Missouri hotel when he suffered brain damage as a result of the lack of available ambulance service. Only afterward was Missouri law changed to require ambulances. Learning on the job. Did an admirable thing standing up to WBC in the Indiana matter. But has taken it to the other extreme, threatening fairness in the officiating of championship fights. An increasing number of fighters and fighter advocates are unhappy about his seeming indifference toward taking on possible Ali Act violators. Could have taken more of an activist role, but hasn't. And Kerns hangs around his neck like an albatross. Hasn't been around the game that long.

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DR. JAMES NAVE

-- Was on Nevada State Athletic Commission for years. Also served as its chairman. Was known as an extremely "hands-on" commissioner, although we don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. Former president of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Notable, in that he was the only Nevada commissioner to vote against Mike Tyson when the state reinstated Tyson's boxing license in 1998. Very political. Also reportedly very cozy with Jose Sulaiman, president of the beleaguered WBC. Some may view him as being too close to the culture of sanctioning bodies, which as we mentioned, doesn't work well in this atmosphere. McCain, Nahigian & Co. really don't want him, but his appearance on this list no doubt reflects an attempt to include a "compromise candidate" to appease Nevada Senator Harry Reid, who can effectively stand in the way of the passage of McCain's legislation. Whether Nave is a "knave" remains to be seen. Let's see - do I want a veterinarian or a boxing guy to be the national boxing "czar"?

GREG SIRB

-- Administrative head of the Pennsylvania commission. On the positive side, I like his practice of conducting an "interim" weigh-in between the official weigh-in and the fight, as a way to prevent fighters from putting on too much weight during that period. "Past President" of the Association of Boxing Commissions, a position that was created for him, seemingly out of thin air. Known associate of Kentucky's "Minister of Maim", Jack Kerns, with whom he serves on the ABC Board of Directors. Did not contest Kerns' retention on the board, even after evidence surfaced about Kerns' disregard for safety and possible criminal

neglect in the Greg Page case. Though he controlled the floor, did not voice an objection or even a caution about Kerns' candidacy for First Vice-President of the ABC at the 2001 convention. Has demonstrated a tendency to misinterpret the federal laws governing boxing, and has also circumvented them on occasion (okay, we're getting a little ahead of our story 'queue' there). Opposed, strongly, to the concept of neutrality in officiating. To this day, is the only commission director I've ever seen who has actually hugged the hometown fighter in the ring after a fight (what kind of message does THAT send?). Cozy with Russell Peltz, the ESPN operative/promoter engaged in very questionable business practices at the network. Has Ken Nahigian's ear, which may explain why nothing in the new legislation has offered anything in the way of a check on the activities of Peltz or others like him. Very political. Insiders associated with the ABC are concerned that he vacillates on too many issues.

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Good thing for Nahigian - his bill won't likely pass too soon, so he'll have a lot of time to get it right.

And if it's any consolation to him - we only have about 40 more chapters to write about it :))

fightpage@totalaction.com

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