

Political fallout continues for Dufault as complaint filed, TV show dropped

A citizens' group raises allegations that the lobbyist forged a signature on election documents, UPN 28 cancels The Real Deal, and Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty returns a \$1,000 campaign contribution.

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PROVIDENCE -- The world of Guy Dufault, the former state Democratic Party chairman who until days ago was one of the leading casino and organized-labor lobbyists at the State House, continued to unravel yesterday.

As new details began to emerge about the botched television tape -- aired Sunday -- in which Dufault crowed to a fellow casino lobbyist that he had the "stuff" to bring Republican Governor Carcieri down, there were these other developments:

A citizens' group went to the state police with allegations that Dufault forged a signature on 2004 election documents filed by yet another group known as Citizens for Representative Government that led the fight against a proposed Constitutional Convention last year.

Julio Marengi, president and general manager of Viacom television stations in New England served Dufault with notice that UPN 28 had canceled Dufault's now-infamous Sunday morning TV-show: The Real Deal. After being on the receiving end of another of Dufault's televised barbs, the Democrats' own likely candidate for governor next year -- Lt. Gov. Charles J. Fogarty - - returned a \$1,000 campaign contribution to Dufault.

Not happy with what Dufault had to say about his campaign, Fogarty said he also thought it "appropriate" to return Dufault's money "to make very clear that there is no support from me in any way shape or form of what happened with respect to the governor."

In a related development, state Republicans last night unanimously approved a resolution chastising Dufault's fellow casino lobbyist and sidekick in Sunday's TV debacle: former state GOP chairman J. Michael Levesque.

GOP Chairwoman Patricia Morgan said the resolution, adopted by the Republican State Central Committee, "completely disavows the inflammatory comments and behavior of J. Michael Levesque and specifically states that he is neither a representative of or spokesperson for the Rhode Island Republican Party."

"He can always register as a Republican, . . . but as far as allowing him to be a spokesman for the Republican Party . . . we've excommunicated him," she said.

The focus so far has been on the exchange that took place between Dufault and Levesque during what they evidently thought was an off-camera, pre-show soundcheck.

After slamming Democrat Fogarty as a lifeless candidate, Dufault said: "The only thing we can do is bring the other guy down. I can bring Carcieri down. I got stuff . . . If nothing else, I've got the names of the past comattas. I just gotta throw them out there."

After joking about sending the information out in a little brown envelope, Levesque said: "Well, ya, you know, I told you when he first popped on the scene that that was the big worry."

Edward Catucci, the president of CRI Communications, the local production company that filmed and shipped the tape to UPN 28 in Boston last Friday, blamed the open-mike gaffe on the station's failure to heed a sticky note that said: cue the tape here.

But Carcieri chief-of-staff Kenneth K. McKay produced his own videotape of the show that went out on the airwaves Sunday and it clearly shows that what aired was raw tape, with several more unscripted exchanges between Dufault and Levesque at breaks where ads for Dufault's various clients usually run.

At one such break, they took turns slamming the Rhode Island PBS show Lively Experiment on which they have both appeared as partisan advocates for their respective parties.

Levesque is heard saying: "This does zip by doesn't it?" Dufault: "Oh God, it goes so fast." Levesque: "It does. It really does . . . You move it though. (Inaudible) like on 'Lively.' She's awful." Dufault: "Oh, I know. It's deadly." Off-camera you hear: "9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2 . . ."

Later, as he gets up to leave so Dufault can give his closing monologue, Levesque says: "All right buddy, I'll wait for you over there." Dufault says: "Thanks, Mikey. I appreciate your (inaudible) this out for me." Moving on to the monologue he calls -- "Guy's Gone Wild" -- Dufault inexplicably says to the cameraman: "I'm ready . . . I'm going to do the same one I did last night." After a botched start, he begins again: "You know what makes me wild? The excess profits of the oil companies in America . . ."

The tape ends with Dufault saying: "That's it for this week, but we'll be here every Sunday at 11 a.m. on UPN 28 . . . and remember: if you want to know how it really works, you tune in here and you'll get the real deal." Yesterday, in response to Journal inquiries, Ro Dooley Webster, director of communications for Viacom's New England stations, fast-forwarded through the tape that CRI Communciations sent UPN 28 by courier on Friday.

After doing so, she said, it was evident "there was a complete show on the back end of the tape," including ad-plugged commercial breaks. But, she said that is not how broadcast-quality tapes are supposed to be delivered: "The beginning of the tape is to be the beginning of the program." She denied -- as she had before -- that the tape arrived at UPN 28 with the cue-here "sticky note" that Catucci said he attached to it, and Christopher Halkyard, vice president of NOW Courier yesterday avowed was on it.

She said: "the important point here is -- knowing the explosive nature of the comments at the beginning of the tape and not taking steps to remove it from the tape and relying on a sticky note to communicate that there's a problem with the tape, is unacceptable."

"Don't shoot the messenger," quipped Halkyard. "There is only one 'guy' at fault here." In responses to questions left on his own voicemail, Dufault yesterday left this message for a reporter: "As to the taping, I was told by CRI that there was a cue mark for the show and there was a show on that tape that was completely edited and, if nothing else, it should have been checked by others."

In response to a query about whom he held responsible, he said: "I am reviewing all my legal options right now. Other than that I have no other comment."

But he labeled the complaint that Operation Clean Government lodged with the police: "absolutely ludicrous."

In the affidavit they delivered to the state police yesterday, Operation Clean Government chairman Robert P. Arruda and board-member Beverly Clay said a Texas-based forensic document examiner, Roxi Phipps, did a handwriting analysis at their behest. Her conclusion: Dufault signed and notarized the name of Edward O'Brien, the purported treasurer of the group fighting the proposed Constitutional Convention. They credited a January 2005 Edward Achorn column -- titled "Hiding Behind Mr. O'Brien" -- in The Journal for their investigation.

In response, Dufault said O'Brien "is my best friend in life . . . He lives in Florida . . . [but]he stays with me when he comes up and he worked with me on that project."

Dooley Webster yesterday said Dufault's contract with Viacom requires four-weeks' notice by whichever side seeks to cancel, but the point may be moot in light of Dufault's stated intent to suspend the show "indefinitely."

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