

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

I know of no other way to put it than simply to say:

There are some very mean-spirited people in this industry who would much rather spend their time, energy, and money attacking those who are honestly trying to improve the business, than to try to work together, for the good of all.

Thankfully, I have not personally suffered the experience of being on a sinking ship. Though, like most of us, I have watched Hollywood film portrayals of what it must be like in those last – undoubtedly – terrifying moments. Desperate to survive, passengers and crew fight for the few remaining life preservers. Lost in the consuming fear is any regard for long-revered and noble notions of “saving the women and children first!” We see human nature at its very worst, yet find ourselves fixated – in horrified recognition – on the consequences of their “me first” and “the hell with others” attitude. In the end, they all die...

Uh, excuse me, but has anyone else recognized that the ship we’re on is – metaphorically speaking – sinking!

That’s right, just about everyone involved in racing has figured this out, yet so many within the industry are seemingly content to fight for life-jackets, and to beat down anyone advocating order and calm in the face of such danger. For them, it’s not about saving the boat, nor the women and children. No, it’s about protecting their own self-interests, be it for profit or convenience.

Occasionally, there are moments in which I am embarrassed to admit that I am part of this industry. I am ashamed to watch good people – and organizations – be slandered and wrongfully accused of improper deeds and objectives. They are made targets, not for any actions they have taken or failed to take, but because those who choose to attack find it personally far easier to assail others than to look critically at and honestly assess their own actions and motivations.

It’s an old ploy by those who choose not to deal with issues on their merits, but elect instead to attack others whose views differ from their own. Such tactics are more than intellectually dishonest; they are terribly harmful to this industry’s viability here in the State.

In recent months, certain members of TOC’s Board and staff have been the targets of an effort to cast their actions as something other than in the best interests of owners, and the industry in general. At the heart of the effort is a thinly veiled desire to curtail TOC’s efforts to identify and evaluate the most appropriate future racing venues in the State, from the owners’ perspective.

Much is at stake for owners, and for track operators not truly committed to continued California Thoroughbred racing. You see, for them, its about self-interest and profit. For us, it’s about principle, duty, and candor. After all, TOC Directors and staff can stand before all California Thoroughbred owners and truthfully say: *Not one of us will personally profit by the decisions we make! Not one of us has a financial stake in any decisions relating to the location of future California racing venues!*

While others are fighting – by any and all means possible – to secure that metaphorical “lifejacket,” I am quite proud to report that owners will find TOC Board members and staff directing our energies toward saving the boat, including the “women and children” onboard, as well as even those unscrupulously fighting against us.

TOC members can be assured: *This ship will not sink on our watch!*



Drew J. Couto

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew J. Couto".