

Detroit's Bitter Irony

There are no jobs to be had in Detroit these days. In addition to the standard list of urban problems - crime, poverty and decay - it is faced with a sluggish national economy and an automobile industry that expands only into lower-cost labor markets. Last year when the Post Office offered three hundred new jobs, people camped out and waited in two-block long lines. This November 11th, reported the *New York Times* on November 12th, 11,000 citizens of Detroit filled out applications for jobs in a brand-new casino.

The promised 4,000 jobs may never materialize, however. The want-ads warned that no one would be hired **unless the casino project was approved**. That would seem unlikely, since the citizens of Detroit have repeatedly voted against having casinos in the city. So why were hundreds of people waiting in line to apply?

An odd consortium of Greek-American businessmen and Chippewa Indians from Northern Michigan have hit upon a way to open a casino despite Detroit's legal objections. For this to happen, the site would have to be under some jurisdiction other than that of the City of Detroit. It could be granted in trust to its original owners: the Chippewa. Specifically, the casino site would become part of a reservation, the main body of which is 350 miles away. The businessmen would operate the casino; the Chippewa would collect the rent - and provide the all-important sovereignty needed to make the casino project legal.

Mayor-elect Dennis Archer opposes the plan, and said that the job offer was cruelly raising false hopes. Nevertheless, the plan sounds attractive in a city where little else is happening. It calls for the Chippewa to administer only the casino site itself; surrounding services, which could spawn an estimated 11,000 jobs, would be run by local businesses.

The bottom line: some 15,000 more people will be employed in Detroit, over the next two or three years - but only if some of the land is returned to the Chippewa. - L. D.