

TARIK ABDELAZIM

(continued from page 3)

going to have a boom and a bust. That's the economic model for this industry. I think right now the technology has much to be learned. I think the risks still outweigh the benefits. We know this is an industry that is not honest. It's the wealthiest industry in the history of human civilization, the gas and oil industry. In Pennsylvania, the governor is bought and sold by the gas industry. He passed a rule that gags all the medical professionals. So if someone comes in with a sickness that might have something to do with the gas industry, the doctor can't tell them what caused it. When they passed a "well fee"—since Republicans don't pass taxes—they sold it by saying they would commit a large portion of the revenue generated toward county and state public-health agencies. As soon as it was passed and money started coming in, they zeroed the line out. Any time an industry is trying to prevent you from learning more about public-health impacts it should raise a red flag.

A lot of people, particularly in the rural areas, who are hurting financially and maybe have been for a long time see these gas companies as a Godsend. Just lease your land to them and finally start making some extra money. If fracking is not allowed, what alternative would you suggest for people in that position?

First, take the Town of Chenango, for instance. Concerned citizens from the Town of Chenango went door to door, had contact with almost 1,000 people, and 80% of them want a ban or moratorium. A Republican woman explained it to me perfectly. She said "I'm not ready to risk the health of my child to possibly give my cousin a job." And as we're seeing in Pennsylvania, the reality is a lot of the jobs are coming from Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming to do the rigs. It's very specialized, dangerous work. The poverty in the rural towns is largely due to years of failed agricultural and farming policy from the feds and the state. It favors the large agribusinesses, squeezing the family farmers all the way down at the bottom. I've heard people say "We've had this farm for seven generations and I don't know if I'm going to be able to pass it on to my kids." That's an incredible tradition that needs to be respected. There's never been a county executive that's put forward an agricultural plan. In my economic plan I'm going to have an aggressive agricultural piece. I speak to a lot of farmers and they just want that choice. If they see an opportunity where they can generate some revenue without the kind of risks that are known with the gas industry I think the overwhelming majority would take it. Broome is ideally located to be a food distribution center. We just need the infrastructure to make it happen. I find most of the people who are for gas leasing are not farmers and have maybe moved onto the land recently. When asked what they'll do if something goes wrong, they say "I'll just leave." Every person who is fighting this or calling for a moratorium, it's because they call this place home.

On another potentially economic subject, are you a believer in global warming?

Yes. I think when you have 99% consensus among all of the expert scientists in the world you can probably feel comfortable getting behind that. **If areas in the south and west become unlivable because of heat and drought, it would make an area like ours very attractive and could be a big opportunity for Broome County. So you must be for global warming.**

I'm not actually advocating for an acceleration of global warming! But a lot of people say one of our greatest resources in this area is water. The experts are telling you all over the world that either the next great conflicts will be over water or there will be mass migrations. Whether that's going to be 30 or 60 years, who knows. But that's



Tarik Abdelazim photographed in his secret lair in August. Read the exclusive *Police Gazette* interview with Abdelazim beginning on page 3.

definitely going to be a problem. **But flooding has been a problem here. What would you do to handle future floods?**

First, stop lying to the people that dredging is going to be a solution. I heard another elected official say we just need to build the flood walls two feet higher. What you see of those flood walls is just the tip of the iceberg. Those structures go way down; they're huge. It's not like Legos. You can't just add two feet on top.

So you'd have to tear them down and start again?

Yeah. But now when the Feds have drastically reduced funding for all infrastructure—we can barely keep up with our road repair, maintenance of lights. That's not just Binghamton; that's everywhere across this country. To suggest that we're now going to go through, tear up those walls and rebuild them two feet higher is insane. It's not going to happen. There's no money. We have to look at some cost-effective solutions. We have to make sure people stop building in flood plains. And if they do, that they're building consistent with flood-plain provisions. Then we have to restore a lot of our watershed. This is a huge system, so you can't just look at how do we fix the Susquehanna in Binghamton? You have to look at the whole system. We have to bring back a lot of our ecological systems that provide a lot of value to our community in regards to flood mitigation.

One last question. Running for office involves a lot of show business and superficial perceptions. So even if you can convince voters you're not a terrorist, you might still come off as some kind of granola-head. Any plans to shave the beard, use more hair product? What are you going to do?

There was this discussion in the campaign in the beginning and I said I'm not shaving my beard. I want to be able to put my head on the pillow and sleep well every night. And that means I'm going to be genuine, who I am. I'm going to be sincere. And I'm going to stay consistent with my values. If in the end that doesn't get us the win, that's okay. Because I'm not going to compromise any of that. I'm not going to play the smoke-and-mirror politics. I'm not going to pretend to be someone I'm not. It's not worth it. That's what's frustrated me about the current administration. It's been an

eight-month campaign commercial. She's basically running the re-election out of the sixth floor of the county office building. Her deputy county executive is her campaign manager. All she's done is take credit for the work of others. But she's got as her right-hand man a Libous-trained PR director. So, like somebody who is expert in the art of illusion, he just stands up and says they did it anyway. I learned that on my second job when I was 17 years old, from my supervisor who kept taking the credit for the work of me and my colleagues. And it pissed me off. And I said I will never do that. But that's what she does. So I think you can tell a lot about the person and how they lead, by whether they're honest and who they surround themselves with. When you get a better understanding of that with Ms. Preston, it's great reason to fear another four years of her leadership.

PAUL JUSER

(continued from page 3)

lunches are the only time we can get together to lose ourselves in our youth, rapping about music and movies. I still drink Guinness at these lunches, but he has switched to water, at least while on the public clock. Like all Preston's people, Datta drives his own car, making good the example she set by seizing hundreds of vehicles misused by County employees. Whoever sits in the County seat this time next year, these are the exact measures that need to be taken before we all must sell everything we own and move away. However, I would never vote for a pro-hydrofracking candidate.

Bijoy's life isn't all photo shoots like the Libous days. He's organizing emergency services and milking a few more dollars out of a strained budget to keep Broome County afloat. I could see boiling in his eyes that no one had been willing to talk Batman with him since he'd seen the new film. Few know under that finely pressed suit and bold tie is a bat tat on his shoulder. I won't bore you with details on the Bale v. West for worst Bat argument. As we chatted, the Party Mayor and Tarik burst forth from the bar into daylight. Bijoy waved. They went back to work. I couldn't tell you what either drank.