

Monopoly Makers Defend the Game's Cheap Streets – New York Times 9.1.1973



Rushing to the defense of “American tradition” and legions of play-money millionaires the makers of Monopoly have fired off an indignantly worded protest to Atlantic City against a proposal to rename Mediterranean and Baltic Avenues.

Like many Atlantic City thoroughfares after which the game's properties were named, Mediterranean and Baltic Avenues have been deeds in the clutches of millions of counterfeit capitalists since Parker Brothers began selling Monopoly games 37 years ago.

Mediterranean and Baltic —the cheapest properties on the game board and, in reality, somewhat rundown avenues that run parallel to the Boardwalk — are continuations of streets with other names, a circumstance that Atlantic City's Commissioner of Public Works, Arthur W. Ponzio, says is confusing to tourists.

So at a meeting of the five-member City Commission a month ago, he proposed an ordinance that would change Mediterranean into Melrose Avenue and allow Baltic to be swallowed up by Fairmount Avenue, preserving the names of the lengthier but nationally less-known thoroughfares.

Responding to the suggestion in a letter to Commissioner Ponzio, Edward P. Parker, the president of Parker Brothers, asked: “Would you like to be the man to tell a Monopoly fanatic from California that the street she came to see no longer exist? Would you be willing to take the responsibility for an invasion by hordes of protesting Monopoly players, all demanding that you go directly to jail, without even the dignity of passing ‘Go?’”

Mr. Parker, noting that Monopoly devotees had purchased 70 million sets of the game since 1935, also wondered: “How can you, in good conscience, even consider for a moment the plan you are about to adopt?” He added: “While I certainly agree with the logic of having a street name remain the same for its entire length, I feel that this is a special case whose repercussions could possibly shake the very foundations of American tradition —and in particular a tradition that has . . . brought fame and fortune to your fair city.”

Commissioner Ponzio, who received the Monopoly-maker's letter of protest yesterday, said he was “certainly cognizant of the publicity” Atlantic City had received from the game, but added: “Unfortunately, many of our citizens feel that both Baltic and Mediterranean should be eliminated as names in our city.” He praised the “beautiful phraseology” of the letter, and said he would “give weight” to the protest, but he indicated that he was still committed to the name change.

Since he first proposed the changes last September, the Commissioner said he had received “a couple of hundred” expressions of support from Atlantic City residents. I just want to do what's best for the public interest,” he said.

Atlantic City's Mayor, Joseph F. Bradway, said he personally was opposed to the name changes. “There appears to be no beneficial reason to do it,” he said, adding that it would “create hardship” for businesses along the avenues, which would have to “change their stationery,” and that, in any case, he did not think tourists were confused.

Vote Set Thursday

The names of Mediterranean and Baltic Avenues will stand or fall on Thursday afternoon, when the City Commission has scheduled a public hearing at City Hall and a final vote on the question. With Commission Ponzio in favor and Mayor Bradway opposed, the fate of the names rests on the votes of the three other members of the Commission — Horace Bryant, in charge of revenue and finance; Joseph Lazarow, of parks and property; and Mario Floriani, of public safety, whose sentiments were unknown yesterday.

No matter what the outcome of the vote, Mr. Parker made it clear that “under no circumstances” would the names of Mediterranean and Baltic be changed on the Monopoly game board. “Ner do we intend to change the spelling of the Monopoly property ‘Marvin Gardens’ to Marven Gardens, although we recently learned that we had been misspelling it,” he said. “Perhaps the real Marven Gardens should consider changing its spelling.”

Noting that Monopoly's inventor, the late Charles B. Darrow of Philadelphia, had chosen Atlantic City street names for his game as an expression of gratitude for “providing him with the memories of pleasant vacations there,” Mr. Parker insisted that Baltic and Mediterranean “are not just local street names.” “They must be included in the category containing such thoroughfares as Broadway, Trafalgar Square and the Champs-Élysées,” he said, adding: “Who would ever suggest changing their names?” “Baltic and Mediterranean Avenues belong to America,” he concluded.

By Robert D. Mc Fadden

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