

Bloomberg Can't Manage!

By Judy Richheimer, CRDC Acting President

Last month I made the case that, despite a decent record on public health, Michael J. Bloomberg cannot — and should not be allowed to — lay claim to the province of democratic virtue, both the small and large “d” varieties. We Democrats belong to the party that promotes civil rights, general welfare, economic justice and government inclusion. And Michael J. Bloomberg does not represent this party.

Well, in stressful times even a good progressive might be tempted to trade principle for security. Last year Mayor Bloomberg made his case for another term by stating, “...we may well be on the verge of [an economic] meltdown. It's up to us to rise to the occasion.” He added that he wanted to meet this challenge by offering himself as a candidate for a third term. Many New Yorkers agreed with this highly personalized take on the city's future, claiming that Bloomberg — and only Bloomberg — could manage us away from the brink of disaster.

That assertion is very close to the old “at-least-Mussolini-made-the-trains-run-on-time” argument. And no, let me hasten to assure you, that despite an increasingly autocratic cast to the Bloomberg style, I am not saying he is a fascist. In fact, one reason so many were lulled into Bloomberg-philosophy, is that his predecessor, Rudolph Giuliani, came much, much closer to that description. With Bloomberg's initial seeming reasonableness, he was nothing if not a relief from Rudy's mad dog style of governance.

But back to that train argument: Despite that famous formulation, Mussolini did not in fact straighten out Italy's transit system. And in addition to his now evident disregard for civil liberties and the plight of the disadvantaged, Bloomberg has not improved our economy, school system, and infrastructure in any appreciable ways.

Here are a few of many examples of our C.E.O. mayor's bad record when it comes to the nuts and bolts of running the city:

False Arrests (and their financial blow back): Most of us are — or should be — members of the choir when it comes to the sermon on unbridled police power. What is less obvious, though, is how expensive it can be when a) police behave badly, and b) the courts redress that behavior. Consider the ramifications of arrests made on April 7, 2003, during a protest against the invasion of Iraq. The city paid out over \$2 million to fifty-two falsely arrested people and their lawyers. This figure does not include the estimated \$1 million the city spent in its defense. Similar outlays are linked to settlements stemming from false arrests and unlawful detentions that occurred during the Republican National Convention. Justly inevitable lawsuits from middle-aged gay men arrested last year on ludicrous charges of prostitution will no doubt prove equally costly to the City of New York.

Management of Schools: Bloomberg famously eradicated the Board of Education, replacing it with the

GENERAL MEETING

**THURSDAY OCTOBER 22
7:00PM**

Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St.
(btwn. 9th and 10th Avenues)

ON THE AGENDA:

Mario Mazzone, organizer for Metropolitan Council on Housing

Mario is longtime community activist who has been very active in the struggle to protect and strengthen tenants' rights. He is currently an organizer at Metropolitan Council on Housing. Mario played a major role in the recent fight to get pro-tenant legislation passed in Albany's spring session. He will address the current outlook on upcoming struggle for tenant's rights.

Department of Education (DOE), answerable only to the mayor. Subsequently, Bloomberg crowed over miniscule improvements in the areas of testing and graduation rates. Given that fact, he should be held accountable for the system's shortfalls as well. To name just two examples regarding meeting minimum standards, both uncovered by the public advocate's office, the DOE routinely flouts state regulations regarding requirements for physical education and the arts.

Class sizes soar despite promises from the DOE that this problem is on the verge of being tamed. In 2008, 5,913 classrooms were overcrowded; this year the number is 6,749. Another

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growing problem is that of finding spaces for thousands of prospective kindergarten students in any classroom, crowded or not. And what is the DOE's excellent solution to their space issue? In one notable instance, the city shelled out \$250 million on a thirty-year rental and \$21 million in renovation costs, when it could have saved untold millions had DOE put these funds toward construction of a new school.

Planning and Rezoning: Bloomberg has staked his legacy on building, building and more building — for the rich and for wealthy sports teams. An argument could be made that although this strategy robs New York of its working and middle class and bohemian cultures, we gain from an increase in our tax base. Not necessarily: in our economic downturn, luxury housing is a glut on the market, and we are currently considering a scheme to bail out residential real estate with our tax dollars. And talking about dollars, in 2005 Bloomberg the hardnosed businessman approved the sale of a prime Manhattan parcel, 42nd Street between Dyer and 10th Avenues, for a sum that was far below market rate. Some linked this transaction to the fact that the purchasing developer, Steve Ross, is a longtime friend of then deputy mayor, Daniel Doctoroff.

Deutsche Bank (the saddest Bloomberg dereliction): Loss of revenue, even loss of educational opportunity, pall when compared to unnecessary loss of life. Bloomberg's worst scandal cost us the lives of firefighters Robert Beddia and Joseph Graffagnino, who died on August 18, 2007 in the notorious Deutsche Bank fire.

The 42-story building was damaged in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; work on the building was deferred for over two years. Eventually a decision was made to demolish the structure, with Bovis Lend Lease named as the demolition contractor. When Bovis insisted on making the John Galt Corporation, an accident-prone and Mafia-related firm, its prime subcontractor at the Deutsche site, Dan Doctoroff bowed to the selection over the howls Rose Gil Hearn, commissioner of Bloomberg's own Department of Investigations (DOI).

Gil Hearn's fears were more than realized. Among many other reckless actions, Galt destroyed a significant length of water-supply pipe, effectively rendering the building a death trap on August 17.

(Any number of smaller fires had taken place before that date.) Both the Fire Department and the Department of Buildings were derelict in their oversight of the Galt Corporation.

The principals of the Galt Corporation are currently under indictment for manslaughter; many wonder why the Bloomberg administration has not come under serious scrutiny for its role in this tragedy.

On November 3, 2009 you will have the chance to "fire" our C.E.O., the vastly overrated Michael Bloomberg by making William Thompson — yes, somewhat charisma-challenged, but decent and competent — the next mayor of New York.

Hudson Yards Hearing (for the hard of hearing?)

By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Housing Chair

There was, indeed, a hearing September 9th at the New York City Planning Commission. It was packed with people from the Chelsea and Clinton (Hell's Kitchen) neighborhoods all of whom will feel the impact of this huge, high and dense development currently in the planning stages.

I was one of many people who testified that day. Here is my testimony.

"Good morning...my name is Gloria Sukenick, I serve on the board of Metropolitan Council on Housing.

"The asks have already been asked ... first and foremost, more permanently affordable housing ... addressing the problems of increased traffic, and the resulting increased pollution... provisions made for the schools ... the additional infrastructure that will also be needed ... the hospitals and on and on. So I will be brief and will not go over issues that have already been addressed by other speakers.

"I would like to point out the experiences I have had in past years when I have testified at The City Planning Commission. My experiences lead me to the conclusion that the Planning Commission is deaf to the concerns of people who appear here with the intent of trying to save their neighborhoods, their homes... the small stores that have served their communities for many years.

"In all of these years I have watched the disruption of my Chelsea neighborhood. Remember the Barney's

battle in the 80's - the displacement of long time tenants' — whose homes were replaced with a high end women's store — and three decades later the rezoning of far West Chelsea where I listened to the impassioned pleas of my neighbors asking for 30% permanently affordable low and moderate income housing to be included in the new developments

“Were the concerns of my neighbors ever heard by the City Planning Commission? Possibly heard, but to no avail.

“Will this be yet one more time that community voices go unheard and the call for more huge, outsize buildings for those with deep pockets --- bringing more cars, more pollution, more crowding. Will this once again carry the day?

“Prove me wrong....please!”

Anyone taking any bets?

Keep Fighting!

Doma Repeal Resolution

WHEREAS, The dishonestly named Defense of Marriage Act or “DOMA” was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton in 1996, barring same-sex couples from any Federal recognition or recognition by non-marriage states in direct violation of the Equal Protection and Full Faith and Credit clauses, respectively, under the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Granting same-sex couples the right to marry and receive Federal benefits afforded to opposite-sex couples does nothing to harm or undermine heterosexual unions; and

WHEREAS, Married heterosexual couples receive tax benefits that gay couples do not receive, and differential taxation and unequal federal benefits financially discriminate against same-sex couples and their children; and

WHEREAS, There are over one-thousand (1,000) Federal rights, benefits, protections and responsibilities of marriage that are denied same-sex couples and their children including crucial family protections and safety nets such as Social Security, pension benefits, hospital visitation, guardianship rights, health insurance, veterans benefits, immigration rights, and retirement account and tax benefits and deductions; and,

WHEREAS, President Obama promised during the campaign to repeal DOMA; and

WHEREAS, We are deeply disappointed at the Obama Administration's failure to take any steps to repeal DOMA, and were appalled by the Administration's gratuitous libel leveled against the gay community during litigation defending DOMA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the members of the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club call on President Obama and the entire United States Congress and Senate to act immediately for the repeal of the inaccurately named and highly-discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act.

Submitted by,

David Caraway, CRDC Executive Committee Member

Approved by CRDC Membership

on September 17, 2009

Give NY Back to New Yorkers

Donathan Salkain, CRDC member

Starting in 1994 with Guiliani, I have equated the city much like the new Yankee Stadium. It has become new, shiny, and exciting, and yet so out of reach. Like at the stadium, the everyday person has to experience it from afar. Only a select few can afford the good seats. And the mentality that brought us five dollar hot dogs and eight dollar beers has spread all over.

Is the city better? In a lot of ways it is. It's safer, it's smarter, and newer. But is it better? In a lot of ways it isn't. Many native New Yorkers have had to leave. And a whole crop of developers must have read Donald Trump books because they came here and have renovated affordable housing which are now luxury housing. They tore down affordable housing and built luxury towers. They condemned affordable housing and built anything they wanted.

This city isn't Yankee Stadium or some amusement park, where eminent domain just clears the way to put up another attraction, mall or Java supermarket. And don't get me wrong. I'm not against construction workers. But they need to be building housing for those that actually work here—and the artists too! Build the Freedom Tower as an affordable housing project, offering those who live elsewhere, but still work here, a home. The many carbon footprints saved would walk the blood back.

We need a future that brings New York back to New Yorkers!

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Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



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