

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Bob Botfeld
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State Committee

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NOVEMBER 10, 2010

FEATURED TOPIC & SPEAKERS: RESCUING PUBLIC EDUCATION: Leonie Haimson, Exec. Dir., Class Size Matters; Brian Jones, Teacher & Activist, P.S. 30, East Harlem; Noah E. Gotbaum, Pres., Community District Education Council 3; ELECTION UPDATE

DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10th

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLACE: The Youth Hostel
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

ROOM: Chapel/Ballroom

AGENDA

7:45 PM Sign-in
8 PM Call to Order

1. President's Report & Announcements
2. District Leaders' Reports
3. Rescuing Public Education
4. Election Update

5. New Business
6. Adjournment

CALENDAR

Wednesday, November 17, 2010
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

SUNDAY, December 5
HOLIDAY PARTY, 5 to 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, December 15, 2010
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, January 12, 2011
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

As we go to print, the General Election of 2010 has not yet occurred, so Three Parks cannot report on its results. By the time you receive this newsletter, however, plenty will have been mulled over; this month's meeting will include an election update.

October's meeting was a great success, with a thorough overview of labor and the economy provided by Arthur Cheliotis, President of Local 1180, CWA, AFL-CIO. Our thanks go out to him, especially for patiently answering so many questions from the membership. We were also lucky to hear from Julie Menin, Chair of Community Board 1, regarding the proposed Islamic cultural center downtown. Three Parks thanks her for the leadership she and her board have shown on this issue.

Our November meeting features a panel on "Rescuing Public Education," which will cover charter schools, high stakes testing, Race to the Top, ensuring equity in schools, and supporting effective teaching. Speakers will include Leonie Haimson, Executive Director, Class Size Matters, a clearinghouse for information on class size and the proven benefits of smaller classes. They advocate for class size reduction in New York City, where students continue to be taught in the largest classes in the state and some of the largest in the nation.

Noah Gotbaum, President of Community District Education Council 3, will provide an update on overcrowding in District 3 (West Side, 59th Street to 122nd Street), especially at the southern end of the district, and the need to maintain available space at schools in the northern part of the district, including P.S. 145. (See Elizabeth Kellner's article in this issue.)

We will also hear from Brian Jones, an activist and second grade teacher at P.S. 30 in East Harlem, whose writings have appeared in the Huffington Post and who recently participated in a panel discussion with Michelle Rhee, Geoffrey Canada, Steve Brill and Randi Weingarten.

As always, December brings the fabulous Three Parks Holiday Party, a sure crowd pleaser where you can eat, drink, dance and be merry to your heart's content with your fellow members and friends. Please put Sunday, December 5th on your calendar now, and be sure to join us from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Youth Hostel.

District Leader Report

Three Parks Blankets Neighborhood & Turnout & the Not So Clever Support for the Working Families Party

By Bob Botfeld

By the time you receive this newsletter, the November 2 election may well be in progress. Let's hope that the Democrats fare better than the latest pre-election polls suggest. The election result will be determined by turnout. Proudly, Three Parks Independent Democrat members will have done so much to maximize turnout. For the past few weeks, dozens of Three Parks' members have blanketed the neighborhood with the ubiquitous Three Parks palm card. We will have distributed over 9,500 red, white, and blue PLEASE VOTE Three Parks' candidate endorsements cards reminding our neighbors that the Westside can make a difference.

So many club members and friends have helped that we had to re-order additional palm cards. Club members have also traveled to Rockland County to help the progressive Representative John Hall get re-elected in the NY 19 congressional race. At the same time we've continued our campaign against hydrofracking and collected hundreds and hundreds of letters to extend the moratorium against drilling in the NYC watershed and western New York.

Turnout is critically important in our neighborhood this year for two reasons. First, it will help our statewide candidates that are in close races – Eric Schneiderman for Attorney General and Thomas Di Napoli for Comptroller.

The second reason is unique to gubernatorial election years. In this year's election, the vote for

Governor on the Democratic line determines how much influence or weighted vote each of our party officials such as county committee and state committee members, have within the local and state democratic party. For example, in 1992, following Congressman Ted Weiss's death, the county committee met to select his successor. Each county committee's member had a different weighted vote which depended upon how many voters in that county committee member's election district voted for the Governor on the Democratic line. Similarly, our state committee members, Lynn Thomas and Dan Cohen, have weighted votes at the state democratic nominating convention in which they nominate candidates for the state wide offices of US Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Comptroller, and Attorney General. The number of judicial delegates assigned to Three Parks is also determined by this year's vote.

Unfortunately, this year Democratic voters in the 69th AD have been barraged by emails and mailings from the Working Families Party (WFP) suggesting that Democrats should vote for Governor on the WFP line. At the time the WFP was established, about a dozen years ago, the professed rationale for the creation of the WFP was to provide an alternative ballot line for voters who habitually voted on the Liberal line. To get a ballot line, the WFP needed 50,000 votes on the WFP line for Governor. In the past, most voters who voted on the Liberal line assumed that their candidates were small 'l' liberal. But by the 1990's, the Liberal party had been a boss driven party for years which supported whichever candidate, Democratic or Republican, would give the Liberal party leaders the most patronage.

A second stated justification for the WFP was to provide a line for voters who had liberal/progressive politics but did not like their local Democratic party or candidates. The WFP supports most causes that progressive Democrats also support and we should and will work closely with them on our many common issues. However, in recent years, instead of targeting formerly Liberal voters or progressive Democrats in swing districts, the WFP has targeted progressive districts such as the 67th and 69th Assembly Districts in order to more easily mine for

additional votes. This recent emphasis is harmful to a progressive Democratic state party by diminishing our numbers and vote within the party. Unfortunately, a number of Democratic elected officials have also sent emails urging Democrats to vote on the WFP line. This is harmful and I have sent the following email to them to these Democratic officials.

**An Open Letter to Our
Democratic Elected Officials
who tell DEMOCRATS to vote for
the WORKING FAMILIES PARTY**

Dear Progressive Democratic Elected Official,

I should not need to remind you that the original rationale for the WFP, was to eliminate the Liberal party line on the ballot - which you do not explain in your email to the voters - was accomplished years ago. The WFP is in no danger of losing their line. They received over 155,000 votes in 2006. In recent years, the WFP has targeted as many progressive Democrats as possible in progressive districts thereby reducing the influence of progressive Democrats within the Democratic state party.

The problem is far more serious than the potential reduced 69th AD representation at state committee conventions or the loss of single judicial delegate. Democrats in progressive areas are receiving multiple emails stating that the WFP, and only the WFP, will - as you state in your email - fight for:

"Common sense things, really. Living wage jobs. A fair tax system. Good schools. A well-run transit system. Health care that is affordable and accessible."

or as other Democratic elected officials have emailed that:

"by voting on the WFP line you will send a strong message that New York State's leaders need to fight for the issues and values that matter to us: good jobs, honest government, a clean environment, and better schools, health care, and public transportation."

For the voters reading repeated emails like this

from respected Democratic elected and party officials, the message is clear: Democrats do not fight for the issues and values that matter. Democrats do not care about good jobs, clean environment, better schools and public transportation."

How many disparaging emails from Democratic officials do you think Democratic voters can read before they begin to believe them? The problem with the voters is not that they don't listen but that they do. Every active Democrat now receives numerous emails telling us that only the WFP supports progressive policies.

And if the voter somehow misses this message after receiving a dozen emails from the WFP and their Democratic elected official friends, the WFP makes the message explicit. On the main page of their website the WFP states the following reason for the WFP's existence:

"This problem — Democratic weakness and bowing to corporate interests — is why the Working Families Party exists. And it's why we're asking you and everyone you know to pledge to vote on the Working Families ballot line today. " <http://www.workingfamiliesparty.org/>

I do not think that I or most of my fellow Manhattan activists are weak or bow to corporate pressures in our advocacy. Get this pro-WFP message out of our district.

Your error is not unique. For most of Obama's first two years in office - President Obama had been telling the voters that the problem is "Washington", including both Democrats and Republicans. On November 2, the voters may have listened. For too long, they were given too little reason to vote to maintain the Democratic majority. Your action is repeating this error at the state level. Let us not do this anymore.

Sincerely,

Bob Botfeld
Demcratic District Leader - 69th AD Part A

P.S. 145 Threatened with Loss of Space to Charter School

By Elizabeth Kellner

On October 27 SUNY Trustees approved the application of Harlem Success Academy (HSA) to open a new charter school in District 3. The proposal is very controversial, faces strong community opposition and has received considerable media coverage -- reports on the protests as well as planted op-ed puff pieces. The new charter, called Upper West Success, has been soliciting applications via its website and conducting a slick and expensive marketing campaign since well before the SUNY vote.

There is no definite site for the proposed charter, but both HSA and the Department of Education (DOE) have been quite clear that they expect to locate the school in PS 145 (The Bloomingdale School, on 105th just east of Amsterdam). The DOE's stated rationale, which has become the marketing mantra of the HSA juggernaut, is that 145 is underutilized, and the charter will help solve the overcrowding problems in District 3. But while the overcrowding is real, DOE itself is the source of the problem. It has been deliberately dragging its feet on releasing to the district's Community Education council (CEC) a proposal for the required rezoning of schools in District 3. The southern schools want to shrink their zones, while the northern schools need to expand theirs.

While it is true that 145 has approximately 300 vacant seats, they have plans and money in place to grow. Moreover, there is severe overcrowding at the southern end of District 3 because of all the new residential construction. Those school communities, two of which have no permanent home, are desperate for 145's space. Timely rezoning, which is DOE's legal responsibility to propose, would undoubtedly result in the reallocation of 145's excess space to other needy high quality District 3 education programs.

District 3 has also secured a three year \$11 million magnet grant, in which 145 and seven other District 3 schools will participate. The grant is intended to enhance programs and promote ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in the eight participating schools. Losing 145's capacity to a

charter, which proposes to grow to 700 students, could doom not only 145's future but receipt of the grant for use by the other schools.

The 145 community (parents, teachers and administration) is opposed to co-location with a charter. The representatives on the Community Education Council from the rest of the district's schools also desperately want to preserve access to 145's excess capacity for use by District 3 schools. District 3 has no failing schools, and many fewer English language Learners than other districts. Even with a lottery charter admission process, priority would have to be given to students in those categories (from failing schools and ELL's) which means very few of the "new" charter seats would be available to District 3 students. Offering the charter as a solution to overcrowding is, to be charitable, disingenuous at best, and cynically manipulative and misleading at worst.

Noah Gotbaum, President of District 3's CEC, is coordinating the opposition. CB 7's Youth, Education and Libraries Committee is presenting a resolution at their November 3 meeting. TPID will provide a status update as part of our November 10 meeting on education. In the meantime, if you are concerned, let all your elected officials know (Perkins, O'Donnell and Brewer have been personally involved to date). If you are UFT, let your union know they should be involved, If the charter movement succeeds in taking over District 3 space, this is a sign from the powers controlling the DOE, the charter movement, their bankrollers in finance and fans in big media that no school or community is safe -- they are "corporate raiders" of a different sort, perhaps not quite "Barbarians at the Gate", but close enough that we should worry and act.

Promises, Promises

By Steve Max

"Jobs" was no doubt the single word most frequently heard during the recent campaign. Every candidate of every party for every office promised to bring back jobs and strengthen the economy. It would have been far better had they all stuck with fighting corruption, which they might actually do, rather than raising false hopes

about jobs. Given their faulty understanding of the jobs problem, there is little they can accomplish.

The Cuomo vs. Paladino race is a good example. Both candidates featured essentially the same economic program in their TV ads. Cuomo said cut state agencies by 20 percent and balance the budget, which will bring back jobs. Paladino said cut state workers by 20 percent and balance the budget, which will bring back jobs. In effect, both promised to fire 26,000 people in order to bring back jobs--demonstrating that the fallacious Republican economic ideology is now infecting some Democrats. Throughout the country, many candidates connected jobs to budget cutting.

The two underlying components of this view are simply wrong. First is the belief that when individuals and corporations spend money, that is good for the economy, but money taxed and spent by government is simply lost. It should be obvious that money spent by government stimulates the economy just as much as private spending, particularly since most of it goes first to payroll on the state and local level, and then to the grocery store.

Second, the Right believes that while private spending is good, investing is better, and that wealth taxed from the rich won't be invested. Actually, there is no shortage of wealth for investment. The truth is that as of the end of March 2010, U.S. venture capital firms were sitting on \$81.6 billion of uninvested cash. Private equity funds were holding \$485 billion in uninvested cash, much of it destined for speculation. Indeed, 2009 saw the lowest investment in the past ten years, showing that in recessions when investment is most needed, the rich quite logically hoard their money. Corporations are doing something similar. *The NY Times* (10/3/10) reports that companies such as Johnson & Johnson, PepsiCo and IBM have been borrowing huge amounts of cash at low interest rates but not spending it:

"Corporations now sit atop a combined \$1.6 trillion of cash.... When will they start spending that money — in particular, by hiring? That is part of what has become the great question of this long, jobless

recovery: When will corporate America start to feel confident enough to put its cash to work, building factories and putting some of the nation's 14.9 million unemployed to work?"

It is simply untrue that rich individuals and corporations are starved for cash and that public policy should be aimed at enriching them still further. Indeed, government has an obligation to tax not only this inactive wealth, but also wealth tied up in financial speculation that adds nothing to the economy. Government has the absolute obligation to use these taxes to pay for schools, hospitals, transportation, infrastructure, public health and all the necessary things that serve each and every one of us while putting money in the pockets of working people and growing our economy.

The real problem for investors is that in order to realize a profit, the goods and services they create must be then sold. The investing is easy compared to the selling. Government policy that puts money in the hands of consumers is the only policy that will lead to investment. And that is the program on which Democratic candidates should stand.

THREE PARKS HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 5th!

5-8pm

**American Youth Hostel
891 Amsterdam Avenue**

**Club Members and Friends please email
Lynn at lynnlthomas@juno.com or call
Lynn Thomas at 212-865-8042 to help or
contribute a dish.**

State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

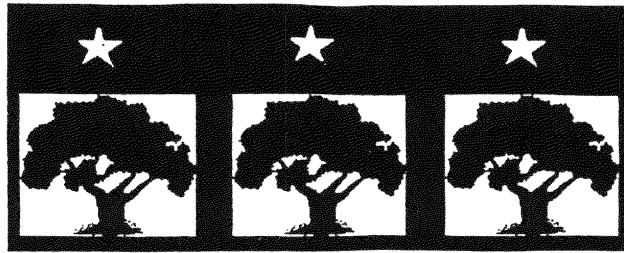
With the pressure of Election Day upon us the activities of the State Committee have taken a back seat to the more urgent matter of campaigning for regional and local candidates. Last weekend I went together with members of Three Parks and other West Siders to Westchester County to canvass for the re-election of John Hall to Congress. It is a tight race, but it felt like the momentum was moving in our direction; and except for the occasional door slam, most of the voters we met were grateful for our efforts and said they were leaning towards supporting Hall.

And this past weekend I traveled to New Jersey to join CFD member and former State Committeeman Larry Hirsch to canvass for Rush Holt on his bid to get re-elected this November. It started out as a beautiful day, and the polls show a slight lead for Holt, so hopefully by time you read this both Hall and Holt will have prevailed.

Also had a chance to check out Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell's campaign headquarters on Amsterdam – with no opponent on the ballot Danny has transformed his campaign office into a West Side campaign for all the Democratic candidates. Earlier last month Congressman Charlie Rangel, County Leader Keith Wright, and former Assemblyman Ed Sullivan joined members of all three clubs to kick off efforts for the entire New York Democratic slate.

Post election day State Committee work will begin in earnest – we will most likely have a new State Committee chairman, unless Cuomo accepts recently re-elected Jay Jacobs to remain to fill out his term. The Reform Caucus will be meeting again to elect leadership later this year, and I will be looking into the status of the Manhattan Caucus as well.

Thank you again for your support and encouragement in my campaign for State Committee, I look forward to seeing you at the November club meeting.



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Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316 • New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-6378

Please pay your 2010 dues by filling out the form below and bringing it to the next meeting
or by mailing it with your check to:

***Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025
Attn: Treasurer***

2011 MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member___

Renewal___

Membership Category -- Check One

Individual (\$25) ___

Family -- two adults in the same household (\$40) ___

Low Income (\$15)___

Sponsor (\$50)___ **Patron (\$100)** ___

Name_____ Date_____

Address_____ Apt. #_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (H)_____ (W)_____

Email_____

Check here if you prefer to receive the newsletter via email.

******Please pay your dues with a check or via PayPal--cash and money orders are far more difficult to process. Thanks in advance for your cooperation! Please make out all checks to "Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2011"******

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, November 10

RESCUING PUBLIC EDUCATION

ELECTION UPDATE

HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 5th!