

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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NOVEMBER 9th, 2011

FEATURED TOPIC & SPEAKERS: CONGRESS MEMBER CHARLES B. RANGEL will discuss Occupy Wall Street, jobs and the Dream Act, the Republican presidential candidates, congressional redistricting—and more!

DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9th

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. Congress Member Charles B. Rangel
4. New Business
5. Adjournment

CALENDAR

Wednesday, November 16, 2011
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

SUNDAY, December 4, 2011
Three Parks Holiday Party, 5:30 to 8:30 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, December 14, 2011
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, January 11, 2012
Three Parks Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

Many thanks to last month's speakers: Andrew S. Dolkart, Director, Columbia University Historic Preservation Program, Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director, Historic Districts Council, and many others from the West End Preservation Society and Landmark West. They do an amazing job working to preserve our neighborhoods.

This month's meeting will feature our Congress Member Charles B. Rangel, who will discuss Occupy Wall Street, jobs and the Dream Act, the Republican presidential candidates, congressional redistricting, and more.

A detailed and well-documented study was released on October 17 by a Cambridge based research group, Synapse Energy Economics. Prepared for Riverkeeper and the Natural Resources Defense Council, the report gathers in one place myriad materials relied on by Three Parks and other groups clearly confirming that closing Indian Point will not cause economic problems or electricity shortages in New York State.

For example, the report shows that Indian Point (1) now makes up only 12 percent of Con Ed's contracted capacity, down from 26 percent in recent years and (2) provides only 3 percent of New York City's total energy requirements—and just 16 percent of the total amount of electricity the city can receive from outside the five boroughs. Closing Indian Point will cost the typical consumer \$1-5 per month, and less if we make good use of energy efficiency options. The report also refutes positions taken by the Charles River study commissioned by Mayor Bloomberg's administration. You can find the entire report at <http://www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/news/stop-polluters/power-plant-cases/wedon%E2%80%99t-need-indian-point/>

The timing has never been better for closing Indian Point. Thanks to all of you for enabling Three Parks to continue to press our elected officials on this vital issue.

Finally, please mark your calendars now for the Three Parks Holiday Party on SUNDAY, December 4 from 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the Youth Hostel. As always, we look forward to celebrating the season with our members and friends, and to tasting the delicious treats you bring to this potluck extravaganza.

The 2012 FOOD and FARM BILL:

Why New York City Cares

By Cynthia Doty, District Leader

The Food and Farm Bill is the single greatest influence on what we eat. It determines how billions are spent shaping our food system, from producer to consumer. We, in NYC, have an enormous stake in the Food and Farm Bill. Eight million of us spend \$30 billion annually on food.

Yet, hunger persists. 1.84 million NYC residents rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Stamps, and 1.4 million rely on emergency food. One in six, including more than 400,000 children, live in households facing food insecurity. Many find unhealthy food far more accessible than healthy food. The nutrition safety net does not meet the needs of our hungry neighbors.

The 2012 Food and Farm Bill does not really promote healthy food choices, like fruits and vegetables. America needs 13 million more acres in fruit and vegetable production for each of us to meet USDA healthful dietary guidelines. Yet, the Food and Farm Bill provides incentives for the production of processed foods high in sugars (from federally subsidized corn) and added fats (from federally subsidized soy). The least healthful calories in the store are the cheapest, partly because of federal financing. Past bills perpetuate chronic hunger and widespread obesity. In NY State, \$6.1 billion is spent annually fighting diet-related diseases.

Food is also connected to a healthy environment and economy. Our current food system accounts for 20 percent of our national energy consumption and relies heavily on inputs including chemicals, fossil fuels, and a huge amount of water which if unchecked will degrade our natural resources, erode our soil, and pollute our air and water.

NYS is home to more than 36,000 farms – most are small, family farms ranging from one to 99 acres – generating \$5 billion per year. This resource is threatened as we lose farmland to development. A small number of corporations increasingly control food production, availability, and cost. Bad policies have resulted in corporate consolidation of the food chain, making it difficult for small and mid-sized farms to continue.

Because of federal policies, we are losing farmland and our farmers are fewer and older; our system of production

and distribution is unsustainable; our fruits and vegetables are grown on land in danger of development; and we import almost as many agricultural products as we export, all this while our population is growing. Around the world family farmers and local food self-sufficiency are disappearing, in part, because of their inability to compete with our subsidized commodity crops.

A majority of Americans believe we must provide an equitable food safety net, yet our food safety net is unraveling. With the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate our farm and food policies. The New York City Food and Farm Bill Working Group has developed five Principles that must be in the 2012 Food and Farm Bill: A Health-Focused Food System; An End

to Hunger and Access to Healthy Food; A Level "Plowing" Field; Good Environmental Stewardship; and Vibrant Regional Farm and Food Economies.

The 2012 Food and farm Bill is part of the negotiations underway by the Congressional Supercommittee dealing with the deficit reduction. Major cuts to the food safety net are expected. The deadline is set for November 23.

Please tell Congress: Do not cut SNAP, support small farms, reduce subsidies to big corporate farms, and vote for the *Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act* sponsored by Representative Pingree and Senator Sherrod Brown.

Proposed Resolution on Supporting Activities of Occupy Wall Street

From time to time, Three Parks introduces resolutions to enable the club to work formally on various issues, for example, health care/single payer, Social Security, fracking, and Indian Point. Below for consideration by the membership is a proposed resolution supporting activities of Occupy Wall Street. It will be read, discussed, and voted on at the November 9 club meeting.

WHEREAS Three Parks Independent Democrats shares the Occupy Wall Street Movement's grievances regarding income disparity, economic inequality, and the disproportionate influence of money on the democratic process in the United States,

WHEREAS the Club supports Occupy Wall Street's nonviolent activities in furtherance of First Amendment rights, and

WHEREAS the Club supports Occupy Wall Street's nonviolent activities focusing national attention on issues vital to the future health of our neighborhood, city, state and country.

THEREFORE, be it resolved, that Three Parks Independent Democrats will join in the relevant activities of Occupy Wall Street and allied groups and will continue to work, as it has for the past 36 years, with other like-minded organizations to further progressive causes and maintain and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood, city, state and country.

Three Parks Endorsement Vote for Democratic Candidate for U.S. President By Cynthia Doty

At our January 11, 2012 Club meeting we will hold a discussion on the Presidential candidates followed by an endorsement vote for the Democratic Presidential candidates. At present there is only one candidate running on the Democratic line: President Barack Obama. Petitioning for President and candidate delegates begins on January 3, 2012. The NY Presidential Primary will be April 24, 2012.

Congratulations

Congratulations to County Committee member Noah Lichtman and his wife Sara on the birth of their baby daughter Esther.

Condolences

Condolences to Three Parks Board member Mary Ann Marks on the recent passing of her sister and nephew.

Sharing Thoughts on Indian Point By Wendy Dannett

I want to share some thoughts on the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant after attending a meeting with a Fukushima Japanese Delegation on September 23 and a rally along the Hudson River on October 9. People who have researched Indian Point's problems know how dangerous the plant is, due to the possibility of flooding, destruction from an earthquake (the plant lies on a fault line and evacuation plans are inadequate), and the continual leakage of fuel. Add to these the fact that the plant is very old and parts are wearing out. Indian Point and the plants in Fukushima have the same design – all were made by General Electric and are the same vintage.

The Japanese delegation discussed specific problems that included the Japanese government not evacuating children from areas known to be contaminated with radiation, not regularly checking radiation levels of food and the soil, and continuing to approve use of nuclear energy. It was exciting to hear that Japanese women activists succeeded in stopping 30 reactors from opening (though about 25 got approved).

It was distressing to hear that one Fukushima plant's reactor licenses were renewed a week before the Japanese earthquake. It has been shown that the criteria in the U.S. for renewing licenses of nuclear plants have eased so that older plants can be approved. Indian Point is currently up for relicensing,

Riverkeeper and others have reported that very little of the energy produced at Indian Point is used in New York. And there are many renewable sources which could replace the use of nuclear energy (see the Riverkeeper report dated October 17, 2011).

With all the reasons for discontinuing the use of Indian Point and other nuclear power plants, it is still hard to fight the nuclear industry. President Obama is supportive of nuclear power, and the nuclear industry gets government subsidies. But this is an issue we must not give up on. While the Hudson River Rally on October 9 was small, people there were very dedicated to ending nuclear power in this country.

State Committee Report By Daniel Marks Cohen

A State Committee meeting has been called for mid-November in Albany. Two resolutions have been submitted for consideration: a resolution on tax policy and another try at getting a strong position against gas fracking. Both proposed resolutions follow.

Resolution on Taxation Policy

WHEREAS, the United States and the State of New York are struggling with serious fiscal problems which have arisen from the economic recession and will do so for the foreseeable future, and

WHEREAS, it is impossible to bring the long term national and state budgets into balance by budget cuts alone without seriously damaging vital programs including education, environmental protection, health care and infrastructure maintenance, and

WHEREAS, public employee layoffs and furloughs, reduction of public employee wages, increased public

employee contributions to health and retirement programs, increased tuition at public universities and increased transit fares and tolls amount to a tax on middle class and poor working people, and

WHEREAS, during the Bush and Pataki administrations significant tax reductions were given to upper income groups which have significantly reduced the ability to support vital government services, and

WHEREAS, we need to restore balance to the taxation system by increasing tax rates on taxpayers in the upper income brackets to a more equitable level as they were in previous Democratic administrations in the nation and the state, and

WHEREAS, President Obama has made the need to increase federal tax rates on taxpayers in the upper income brackets to a more equitable level a cornerstone of his economic recovery strategy, and

WHEREAS, the need to raise taxes on taxpayers in the upper income brackets has been recognized by such significant investors as Warren Buffett, and

THEREFORE be it resolved that the New York State Democratic Committee calls upon the New York legislature and the U.S. Congress to increase the rates of taxation on those in the upper income levels, and

FURTHERMORE the Secretary of the New York State Democratic Committee is instructed to transmit a copy of this resolution to all of the members of the New York State Assembly, the New York State Senate, the Governor of the State of New York, Senators Gillibrand and Schumer and the New York State Congressional Representatives.

Resolution in Support of Banning Hydraulic Fracturing Gas Extraction in New York State

WHEREAS, Hydrofracturing is a method of drilling for natural gas that requires literally millions of gallons of fresh water that become polluted and highly toxic in the process; and

WHEREAS, Hydrofracturing, also known as hydrofracking, would pollute our state's waters by requiring between 3 to 8 million gallons of water and 80 to 300 tons of chemicals, depending on well size and depth, to be pumped into each of those gas wells; and

WHEREAS, this water would come from our streams and rivers or be pumped from underground, and would then resurface from the wells as highly toxic waters; and

WHEREAS, there is no way to prevent these highly toxic waters from eventually polluting more water; and

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has stated that “gas drilling poses unacceptable risks to the unfiltered drinking water supply for nine million New Yorkers;” and

WHEREAS, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has formally notified state officials that it has major concerns about how the proposed drilling would affect public health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, while New York State environmental officials have recently announced that they would impose stricter regulations on hydrofracturing; and

WHEREAS, these regulations will apply to the Catskills watershed, which supplies the New York, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties’ water supply, and will also apply to the smaller Skaneateles Lake watershed, which supplies drinking water to Syracuse and some other communities; and

WHEREAS, in other areas of New York State, gas companies would face a far less cumbersome permit process that would rely on the state’s own environmental assessment of where drilling can be allowed; and

WHEREAS, New York State environmental officials have not imposed an outright ban on hydrofracturing; and

WHEREAS, well-respected environmental advocates such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) have stated that nothing short of an outright ban on hydrofracturing would ensure that gas companies do not exploit the watersheds in the future;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New York State Democratic Party calls upon Governor Cuomo and the NYS Assembly and Senate to ban hydrofracturing in New York state; and

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the New York State Democratic Party calls upon our Congressional delegation and our two Democratic United States Senators to pass legislation banning hydrofracturing throughout the U.S. and immediately bring this process under the jurisdiction of all applicable federal laws; and

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the NYS Democratic Party urges further research in and economic support, including but not limited to support such as tax credits, for non-polluting alternative energy sources such as wind, solar and hydropower.

West End Avenue Historic District Update By Cynthia Doty

Thanks to all who attended the Landmarks Preservation

Commission hearing about the creation of the West End Avenue Historic District and to all who sent letters or signed petitions. The testimony was overwhelmingly in support, with only two or three speaking against it. The Commissioners seemed very favorably impressed. The vote is expected soon and then it will go to City Council for the final votes. Stay tuned! We will keep you posted on next steps.

Obama’s Social Security Tax Cut By Steve Max

Democrats should take warning from Mitt Romney’s October 12 statement that he will not support Obama’s proposed Social Security payroll tax cut. Romney is now positioning Republicans to pose as defenders of Social Security and will be able to accuse the Democrats of undermining it unless enough Congressional Republicans join with the President to pass the bill. In July, 63 progressive House Members, including Nadler and Maloney from Manhattan, but not Rangel or Velazquez, asked the President let his payroll tax cut lapse.

Last December, with bipartisan support, the employee payroll tax was lowered from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent for one year. This equals about \$110 billion to be repaid to Social Security from general tax revenue. Obama’s failed jobs bill would have lowered the tax to 3.1 percent for both employees and employers. The outlook now is that the tax cut will soon be reintroduced as a stand-alone one shot stimulus bill that can gain Republican support.

We now find the Obama Administration venturing into what is for Democrats very strange territory. Senior Obama strategist David Axelrod, who has left the White House to work on the campaign, immediately issued an attack on Romney. According to ABC News, Axelrod cited a recent statement by economist Mark Zandi that failure to extend the Social Security payroll tax cut could trigger another recession in 2012. So, here we have a major Obama spokesperson saying that the operation of Social Security causes recessions, and by extension, that Social Security is unsustainable in difficult economic times because it requires too high a tax. According to this logic, what then is the future of Social Security?

Charles Blahous, one the six Obama appointed trustees in charge of the Social Security system, has issued a strong warning against cutting the payroll tax. He said, “The payroll tax is Social Security’s lifeblood. If it continues to be significantly cut, then only one of two things can happen: Social Security’s insolvency is accelerated, or Social Security must be financed by general (read: income tax) revenues.

Either choice undercuts Social Security's future ability to operate as it has in the past. So far, the Administration has quietly made choice #2: to convert Social Security into a general revenue-financed program. ... Essentially, the proposal would require that income taxes (rather than payroll taxes) must be raised in the future to redeem Social Security Trust Fund debt and to pay benefits. This would convert Social Security into a program that requires higher income taxes to fund. It also would convert Social Security into something more like welfare, for which the funding is provided—not by contributions from all covered workers—but preferentially from those subject to the income tax.”

We should not think that defeating the payroll tax cut ends the possibility for a stimulus measure before the 2012 election. Instead of cutting the Social Security payroll tax, cut the income tax instead. Economist Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research says, “If we want to give a tax cut to workers equal to 3.1 percent of wages, as President Obama has proposed, along with a similar cut to some employers, we can just write that into the law without any reference to Social Security. In other words, the tax cut would take the form of a tax credit that is paid out to workers and firms in exactly the amounts that President Obama proposed. However this credit would have no connection whatsoever to the Social Security tax, which continues to get collected at its normal rate.”

We should insist that our Representatives hold out for this approach.

Keystone Pipeline as An Issue for Concern By Merle McEldowney

Stopping the proposed Key Stone XL Pipeline is seen by some as critical in the fight against climate change. Like Hydraulic Fracturing and Indian Point, the pipeline is another example of industry promoting dangerous and polluting ways to get energy. All three have the possibility of devastating environmental accidents, are supported by industries able to influence government (based on their ability to lobby and make political contributions), and represent huge investments of capital (that could develop alternative energies that would provide safe clean energy, promote jobs, and save the climate).

The pipeline to be built by Trans Canada would carry oil extracted from the Tar Sands in Alberta Canada to Texas refineries to prepare it for export. The pipeline is to go through America's heartland – putting at risk important agricultural areas and water used in irrigation. The Tar Sands is stated to have 2 trillion gallons of oil; however, the oil is mixed with sand, clay and bitumen. Getting at this oil involves burning natural gas to get the oil out of the sand. Extraction of the oil produces three times the

green house gasses of conventional extraction (visit <<http://ran.org/what-are-tar-sands>>). This project, like hydraulic fracturing, would deplete fossil fuels and use dangerous methods. Another pipeline (Keystone I) built by Trans Canada was predicted to have one spill in seven years; however, there were 12 spills in the first year. See <<http://www.tarsandsaction.org/spread-the-word/key-facts-keystone-xl/>>

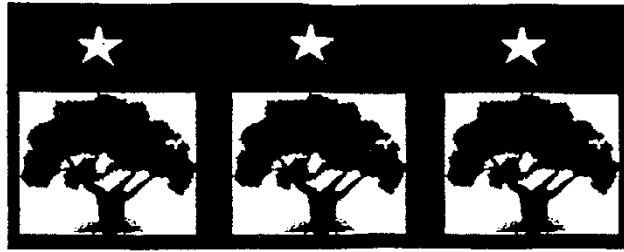
By standing up to the oil and gas industry, President Obama could stop the pipeline without going to Congress. The industry, as usual, has been praising this project for the jobs it will create and U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Contact the President and our members of Congress and tell them to stop the pipeline.

Poverty and Hunger Statistics Worsen as Food Pantries Struggle to Meet Demand By Ken Tulloch

According to the 2010 census, one third of New York City children are living in poverty. Since 2010 the situation has gotten worse. New York City food pantries statistics show a 40 percent increase in clientele since 2008, and their number of clients is increasing. This indicates that more and more of our neighbors are going to bed hungry. In the meantime, Congress, Albany, and the city are cutting their budgets for hunger-related programs. If there is no turn-around in governmental priorities, we will see a dramatic rise in hunger both here and in the rest of the country.

We need to give a hand up to those who through no fault of their own find themselves in food lines today. With the economy in the doldrums and few people with any political clout advocating for the poor and marginalized, the hunger problem is not going to get better soon. Those who care should push their electeds for funding increases for hunger alleviation in federal, state, and local budgets.

For the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) on the corner of 86th Street and West End Avenue at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, the situation has become more difficult. In the last three years, it has had a whopping 53 percent increase in clientele while government funding has declined. Some of the increase is a result of other pantries closing. WSCAH faces a budget deficit of close to \$100,000.00 for fiscal 1011 (ends June 2012) if it does not get additional funds from government, foundations, churches, and private donors to make up the difference. To learn more or to donate visit <www.WSCAH.org>



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

Please pay your 2011 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) _____

Low Income Family (\$20) _____

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, OCTOBER 12

SAVING THE HISTORIC UPPER WEST SIDE

