

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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

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Theresa Canter

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Bob Botfeld
Cynthia Doty

City Council

Phil Reed – 8th District
Gale Brewer – 6th District

Newsletter Production

Barbara Lee

State Committee

Lynn Thomas

DECEMBER 2004 MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, December 8, 2004

TIME: 8:00PM

PLACE: Hostelling International New York (HINY)
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

ROOM: Down Under Room

AGENDA

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

1. President's Report
2. Presentation on Social Security
3. District Leader Reports
4. Issues focus/Survey
5. West Side Stadium Resolution
6. New business
7. Adjournment

CALENDAR

THREE PARKS HOLIDAY PARTY

DATE: Sunday, December 5th

TIME: 5-8PM

PLACE: HINY

Please bring for the food pantry as well as the party

THREE PARKS BOARD MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, December 29

TIME: 8PM

PLACE: HINY

THREE PARKS CLUB MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, January 12, 2005

TIME: Hospitality 7:30PM

Meeting 8PM

PLACE: HINY

First meeting of the New Year

THREE PARKS BOARD MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, January 26, 2005

TIME: 8PM

PLACE: HINY

President's Column

Theresa Canter

December will be another exciting month at Three Parks! We have two events, the general meeting on the 8th, and our annual politically renowned Holiday Party. Of course, it will be hard to top last month's meeting! The club was honored and privileged to have both Congressmen Charlie Rangel and Jerry Nadler as our keynote speakers offering their analysis of the election and sharing their thoughts on the important issues we will be facing during the next four years. Many thanks to both for being so generous with their time and staying to take questions from the audience.

Where do we go from here? First, let's make sure we investigate all irregularities in the November 2nd election, and make sure that every vote is counted. For more information and how to help in these efforts, check out any of the following web sites:

www.msnbc.com (the Keith Olbermann blog),
www.therandirhodesshow.com, www.buzzflash.com,
www.helpamericarecount.org,
www.majorityreportradio.com, www.ohiodems.org,
www.dailykos.com. And especially the following 2 sites: www.commoncause.org, www.blackboxvoting.org.

Full participation is essential for a fair and just democracy, and we want to continue the fight to see that no one is disenfranchised.

Who will be our new leader? Will it be Howard Dean, as Chair of the DNC? Whomever, we need someone who can continue to mobilize us, build coalitions, keep us on message and put us back on the path to victory in the Congress and Senate. We need to be identifying and supporting our future leaders now...it is never too soon to be planting the seeds for victory in the next season.

We have a lot of important issues to address. Even if we had won the last election, the need to be vigilant would still exist...too much is at stake. Now, it is even more imperative to make our voice heard and to fight the Bush agenda. In our December meeting we will be highlighting one of the more pressing issues we will be mobilizing on — the privatization and funding of Social Security. We will also be discussing the West Side stadium issue, and determining what other topics the membership is most interested in and wants to actively work on.

I am looking forward as always to our annual Holiday Party! We will have a DJ so wear your dancing shoes and bring a dish to share with your fellow Dems. Non-perishable food items will also be collected for a local pantry. If possible, please let us know if you are coming and what you are bringing, so we can plan accordingly. Last year Dennis Kucinich surprised us with a visit, and two years ago, Howard Dean arrived with tons of maple syrup for the pantry! It is quite the event of the season!

Please take a look at our website...threeparksdems.org. It is still a work in progress, but we do have information on upcoming events and links to other websites of interest. Let us know if there is anything that you would like to see on the website. Email me with suggestions at ThreeParksDems@aol.com.

District Leader Report

Cynthia Doty

While rehashing this past election and trying to make sense of what went wrong and what went right, I keep asking myself "What does it mean *to me* to be a Democrat?" And then "Can those who voted Republican ever share that meaning, or should we only focus on converting non-voters and energizing non-participating Democrats?" These are questions hopefully we'll all find answers for over the next few meetings.

For me, being a Democrat means believing that the role of government is to protect the liberty, security, and quality of life for *all*, especially those less fortunate who are in need and are suffering. The Bush agenda threatens this very core belief. The Democratic Party must not compromise any of these principles as we rethink our strategy. We must not become more Republican in a false belief that that way we might win.

Instead we must learn better ways to express our platform, whether through better grass-roots community outreach, or clearer more persuasive candidates, or more powerful media campaigns. I still believe we can find ways to persuade swing voters and some Republicans to vote for increasing the minimum wage, better health care insurance, social security protections, affordable housing, fighting hunger and poverty, environmental protections, and international diplomacy rather than war.

The Republicans relied on the right-wing church network to mobilize their voters. Democrats used to have a huge union base to mobilize their voters. With the major changes in the work force and work place, unions have lost their numbers. However, the issues of workers such as wages, healthcare, safety, pensions, daycare, education, and environmental impacts still exist. But the old organizing mechanism that the unions provided is just weaker. So our challenge is to find a new organizing force to supplement the union efforts. The local Democratic Party structure could and should be that force.

We don't need to change the message, just the language of the sales pitch and, in some cases, the messengers.

District Leader Report

Bob Botfeld

In these few weeks since the election, there are few signs of hopeful or rational behavior coming from the Bush administration. But it is also possible that we could be witnessing the continuing rebirth of the Democratic Party.

It was reported by Ralph Andrew that Congressman Rangel was shaking his head in amazement at the turnout and interest of the Three Parks meeting on September 9 where there were over 250 in attendance.

On Friday, November 19, over 2000 activists attended a Mobilization 2004 service at Riverside Church. Reverend Forbes, Cornel West, Susan Heschel, and other religious leaders talked about the hijacking of faith by the right wing and how we should not have let that happen. Dr. Manning Marable of Columbia University spoke about the disenfranchisement of 1.4 million blacks voters - due to felony convictions. (This disenfranchisement may have significantly impacted the election. In the swing states of Florida, 31% of black men couldn't vote; Iowa and New Mexico, 25%; Minnesota and Wisconsin, 16%.)

The post-election activity is nationwide. On Sunday, November 21, tens of thousands attended more than nineteen hundred Move-On Election Follow Up parties.

At club member Arlene Geiger's apartment, along with sixty other Manhattanites, we discussed and prioritized the issues and strategies that Move-On should pursue over the next four years to counter the Bush agenda. At the Three Parks meeting on December 8th, we will have a chance to talk about our priorities.

WEST SIDE STADIUM

While we are organizing on the national issues, we can immediately have an impact on local ones. Attend the open city council hearing on the Hudson Yards stadium plan. It will be held at City Hall on December 13th at 9:30am.

Opponents to the West Side Stadium issue gained an ally when the leader of the City Council, Speaker Gifford Miller stated his opposition to the current plan. While he emphasized the dubious financing for the stadium, perhaps the Speaker was also influenced by club member David Weiman on Election Day. At 7:30am that day, Speaker Miller came to the Three Parks/Broadway storefront at 106th Street to greet and send off our Pennsylvania canvassers. David Weiman was the bus captain and as Miller was introduced, David alertly (it was 7:30 in the morning) took the opportunity to question Miller about his position on the West Side Stadium. Two weeks later, Miller announced his opposition to the plan.

At the club meeting on December 8th, there will be a vote on a resolution that expresses opposition to the stadium plan. A number of local officials have not yet taken a position on this issue. If you think this project is a boondoggle and wish to let these officials know your position, come to the meeting.

ELECTION RESULTS

Since we focused on out of district races – swing states and critical congressional races, I will report some results here.

Many of us canvassed in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Organized by the League of Conservation Voters, the door-to-door effort began in April and continued until Election Day. It was a very thorough campaign, which recruited hundreds of volunteer canvassers each weekend day and paid canvassers on weekdays. The effort apparently paid off. Kerry carried Montgomery County by 215,000 to 172,000, which was larger than Gore's margin over Bush in 2000, 177,000 to 145,000. This was significant because statewide in Pennsylvania, Kerry's margin of 130,000 votes was substantially less than Gore's 200,000 victory of Bush in 2000.

Locally, in the Staten Island/Brooklyn 13th Congressional District race between Frank Barbaro and Vito Fossella, Barbaro lost 59% to 41%. However, the increased Democratic effort, including a major assist from the Three Parks/Broadway storefront, reduced Fossella's margin from the 70/30 edge in 2002. This improvement was again contrary to the overall trend on Staten Island.

In 2004, Bush carried Staten Island by over 22,000 votes – there was no presidential effort; In 2002, Gore won Staten Island by 8000 votes. This suggests that the difference was that there was no visible presidential campaign on Staten Island this year; only a congressional campaign. At the Democratic executive meeting last week, I recommended that this and other nearby congressional districts be emphasized in the state party's overall campaign efforts as well as the more traditional assembly and state senate campaigns.

Proposed West Side Stadium Construction

In December and January there will be several hearing and potential votes in both the city council and possibly the state assembly on the development of the Hudson Yards plan including the construction of the west side stadium.

The proposed resolution would enable Three Parks to express their collective voice on this project. There will be a public hearing in City Hall on Monday, December 13th, 9:30 a.m.

This resolution will be discussed and presented for a vote at the Three Parks club meeting on December 8, 2004.

Resolution: Proposed West Side Stadium Construction

WHEREAS, a seldom used stadium would be a poor use of valuable public land and monies.

WHEREAS, the residents and neighbors of the proposed stadium site, the local Community Board 4 voted overwhelmingly to oppose the construction of the stadium in their neighborhood that would increase their congestion, traffic, and noise.

WHEREAS, public financing of sports stadiums have never proven to be financially viable.

WHEREAS, the city has not conducted an independent financial analysis of the plan.

WHEREAS, the city has not demonstrated that it has explored other development ideas for the potentially three billion dollars of public monies that will be committed to the overall plan.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT

1. The Three Parks Independent Democrats oppose the construction of the West Side Stadium as part of the current Hudson Yards plan.

2. The Three Parks Independent Democrats urge their elected officials including their city council members, state assemblymen, state senators, and borough president to express or continue to express their opposition to the construction of the West Side Stadium.

Campaign To Reform Albany

Wednesday, December 15th • 6:00pm

Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law
Tishman Auditorium, Vanderbilt Hall
40 Washington Square South

Free. To register, call the Women's City Club at 212 353-8070

Speakers: Jeremy Creelan, co-author of the Brennan Report
Scott Stringer, NYS Assemblymember, Manhattan
Barbara Bartoletti, Lobbyist, League of Women Voters

On July 21, 2004, the Brennan Center released The New York State Legislative Process: An Evaluation and Blueprint for Reform. The report concludes that New York's legislative bodies discourage rank-and-file lawmakers from participating fully in the legislative process and, in turn, deprive citizens of full representation in Albany.

Since the report's release, all of New York's major daily

newspapers, from upstate and downstate, have used their editorial pages to call the public's attention to the report's findings. A statewide campaign to reform the legislative process in Albany has begun. More than 30 organizations from across the political spectrum have endorsed their package of reforms, including the Women's City Club of New York.

Panel members will discuss the report's recommendations for state legislative reform.

Co-Sponsored by:

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University
School of Law

League of Women Voters

Women's City Club of New York

Hunger and Poverty are on the Rise!

By Cynthia Doty

Just after the election, the USDA released its statistics on hunger in America. During the Bush regime more than 3 million more families suffered from hunger. The number of Americans living below the poverty line rose by 4.3 million people. More and more of these people are working men and women, earning minimum wage. The cost of living, especially for housing and health care, is just too high to make ends meet. And our safety net programs keep getting cut. The "compassionate conservatives" are waging a war on poor people. And the armies of truly compassionate people who are staffing food pantries and soup kitchens are finding their resources and funding cut by the Bush administration. In New York, pantries have to either turn people away or actually close their doors because of funding cuts.

So in this holiday season please remember our neighbors in need. Give to local food pantries and various charities working to fight hunger and poverty. Bring canned goods to our Holiday Party. Donate to NY Cares coat drive. Help out at one of the local soup kitchens. But more importantly write a letter/email to all the elected officials urging them to increase the minimum wage and increase funding for poverty programs. The State Senate is voting on Dec 6th to override the Governor's veto on the minimum wage.

Write to Bruno and urge+ him to vote for the increase.

The government must take the lead in fighting for living wages and funding food programs.

In a society as affluent as ours, we should all be outraged that hunger is on the rise. No one should be turned away from a soup kitchen or food pantry. No one should have to go to bed hungry.

Random Thoughts on the 2004 Elections

By Steve Strauss

Well the way too long 2004 election cycle came to an end with very unsatisfactory results on the evening of November 2nd. Here are some of my thoughts. First however, Three Parks owes a huge thanks to Lynn and Steve Max, Bob Botfeld and Cynthia Doty who all spent hours staffing our campaign storefront. About 30 other people made very significant time contributions as well.

Three Parks really made a very big impression on the West Side and through out Manhattan by our efforts and we are poised to do big things in 2005 as a result.

I think the fundamental problem of the Presidential campaign was John Kerry's inability to connect with the average, Democratic-leaning voter. This disconnect proved fatal in states outside of the south where the so-called "values" issues did not play as heavily. While I think the Kerry folks ran a pretty good campaign, our candidate was unable to make enough middle-class voters comfortable with voting for him. Many people felt uncomfortable with George Bush's positions, but much more comfortable with him as a person and as the President. The Republicans also have this uncanny ability to convince people to vote against their economic self-interest by playing on their social issues fears and uncertainties.

Using Arkansas (where I spent a week as a volunteer during the 2002 cycle and 10 days in 2004) as a surrogate for the south as a whole I feel fairly confident in confirming that values issues and national security did swing many Democrats into the Bush column. With conservative Christian cable TV channels preaching very conservative positions on abortion, homosexuality, and family life 24 hours a day/seven days a week and many people hearing the same at church every Sunday and perhaps their kids learning it at private Christian-based academies every school day it's easy to see why this is happening. The worst thing is that there is no real opposition or alternative voice.

In this dismal aftermath it is worth pointing out a few bright spots. Democrats proved they can raise money, lots of money, from small donors. The next Congress will be more diverse--with more African-Americans, more Hispanics and more women. Democrats made some gains in State legislatures around the country. In Minnesota Democrats beat Republicans in 13 Republican House seats and in Michigan picked up 5 additional House seats. In North Carolina pro-choice majorities now control both houses of their legislature and in Washington State and Oregon pro-choice majorities were increased.

Here in New York State, Senators Schneiderman and

Paterson were extraordinarily successful in winning at least 3 additional State Senate seats with a 4th seat still undecided at press time. Democrats increased their Assembly majority by two seats and Assemblymember Brian Higgins won the open, formerly Republican U.S. House seat in the Buffalo area. The Fix Albany campaign defeated two incumbent members of the State Legislature (a Republican State Senator and a Democratic Assemblymember) to help accelerate the budding campaign to introduce democracy in the State Legislature.

Next month we should talk about the next Chair of the DNC and reforming our Presidential Primary process.

Take Action to Stop MTA Fare Proposal

By Eric Weltman

How's this for a deal? The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) wants to raise fares *and* cut service. The agency's board votes on the proposal on Thursday, December 16 – so there's still time to stop this reckless idea in its tracks. The governor appoints the largest share of the 17 board members, while the mayor appoints four; hence, advocates are urging people to call Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg.

The MTA plans to shut 164 station booths, reduce bus service during off-peak hours, and remove conductors from two subway lines. And in 2006, the MTA would slash evening and weekend subway service and eliminate 33 bus routes and overnight service on 95 bus routes.

The price for reduced service? A 30-day MetroCard could go from \$70 to \$84, while the 7-day card would increase by \$3. This on the heels of last year's fare hike, the largest in subway history.

The proposal has been criticized by Upper West Side elected officials, including Senator Eric Schneiderman, Assemblymembers Scott Stringer and Danny O'Donnell, and Councilmember Gale Brewer.

Public safety is a major concern because subway workers are the system's "eyes and ears." As Stringer testified, "The importance of tollbooth workers and train operators has increased ten-fold since September 11th and events like the blackout."

Closing booths would put an extra burden on those who might need assistance entering or exiting the subway – the elderly, the disabled, pregnant women, and travelers.

As the *Daily News* noted, "In some cases, riders...will be forced to cross major thoroughfares, such as Broadway or Brooklyn's 4th Avenue to get to a staffed entrance." For example, at the 110th station, on the 1 & 9 lines, the uptown booth is slated to close.

But even these harsh cuts won't resolve the MTA's budget woes: the agency is projecting growing deficits in 2006 and beyond.

There is strong consensus on the chief cause of the budget crisis: The state contributed no direct aid for the MTA's current capital plan. In fact, Pataki has failed to provide any new state aid to rebuild the transit system since 1995, according to the Straphangers Campaign.

Consequently, the MTA was forced to borrow and refinance \$22 billion in bonds to pay for repairs over the last five years. Annual interest on these bonds will double between 2003 and 2007, going from \$800 million to \$1.6 billion, when debt service will approach 20 percent of the MTA's budget.

The mayor also bears some responsibility. Bloomberg cut \$90 million in city aid from the MTA's current capital plan. And he wants the MTA to turn over valuable property on the West Side – which could be used to fund transit repairs – for a bargain price to build a stadium for the Jets.

Experts say that raising fares isn't the solution to budget problems. New York riders already pay a higher share of transit costs than riders on any other system in the country, according to the Straphangers Campaign. Raising fares could create a "death spiral" – discouraging ridership, creating the need for higher fares, and so on.

Clearly, the MTA has some fat it can trim. According to Comptroller Alan Hevesi, the agency has 698 staff in human resources, 443 in legal services, and 359 in budget/accounting.

But the real solution is more government aid. Several revenue-raising proposals have been put on the table: charging tolls on the bridges that span the East River – the Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg, and Queensboro Bridges; and reinstating the commuter tax, which could raise more than \$440 million a year, according to the Independent Budget Office.

Strong leadership from Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg is necessary to stop the MTA's proposal and institute real solutions to its budget problems. Please call them today.

Mayor Bloomberg: 311
Governor Pataki: 212-681-4580

For more information, or to get more involved, contact NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, www.Straphangers.org.

Eric Weltman is a writer and activist living on 102nd Street (www.EricWeltman.com).

SOCIAL SECURITY AT RISK

By Judy Wood

The Bush administration has been pushing this idea for quite a while now, and the New York Times of Sun. Nov. 28 shows us a more detailed plan than has been evident earlier.

The article points out that "privatizing" Social Security is going to be costly. The initial establishment of private investment accounts will divert money from current benefits to today's retirees. That's the first reason to say **no**. According to the Times article, borrowing, benefit reductions and tax increases may also be necessary to fund this appalling plan.

This plan relies on the stock market, which history has shown is not a safe, reliable way to insure the future income of retirees. The failure of private pension plans is something we keep reading about as well, which makes Social Security the pension of last resort for many. Since the most recent stock market crash, many have seen their private accounts dwindle or disappear and have had to return to work. In addition, the failure of companies, i.e. the airlines, means loss of pensions. And some businesses are declaring bankruptcy in order to avoid having to pay out the pensions to their retirees.

The presentation at the club meeting will be a much more comprehensive discussion of all of these issues so I urge you to attend and participate.

We need to make our voices heard in opposition to the dangerous plan.

2005 JUDICIAL VACANCIES

By Alan Flacks

Next year there are a number of Manhattan judicial vacancies in the Civil, Supreme, and Surrogate Courts. In the Civil Court, two incumbents, Ira Globerman, running County-wide, and Karen Smith, 5th Civil Court District, will seek re-election. [Three Parks is in the 5th District, so that we will make an endorsement there, too.] There is expected to be no opposition to their candidacies. The big contest will be for the County-wide seat vacated by Westsider Lou York when he won election to the State Supreme Court in this past November election. The general political judgment is that there are expected to be a large number of lawyers running for that vacant seat. The term is for ten years.

For the Supreme Court trial bench, while there are no

"open" seats, Karla Moskowitz and Lottie Wilkins are standing for re-election. They will seek re-designation at next year's judicial nominating convention for the 14-year term.

Probably the most exciting race will be for the New York County Surrogate, now held by Eve Preminger who must retire next year when she reaches the constitutional mandatory retirement age. Already, a number of people have declared their candidacy for this important 14-year post. [Manhattan has two surrogate judges (the other is Renee Roth) unlike the other boroughs, which have one.]

Early next year, the Party's county judiciary committee will set up a merit screening panel comprised of non-politically involved lawyers and lay people designated by the heads of various legal and community groups to interview the candidates for judgeships. [Most likely there will be only one panel for all the judicial offices.]

And as a practice has developed here in the 1st Judicial District of choosing candidates for Supreme Court predominately from among lower court judges who have come through the panel, we must pay more attention to the caliber of lawyers we put on the Civil Court bench.

THREE PARKS CLUB MEMBERS News and Announcements

CONDOLENCES

Condolences to Arthur Greig, an election lawyer and Park River Independent Democrats member, on the recent passing of his mother.

Kerry/Edwards Rally

at Straus Park
October 23rd 2004



Billionaires for Bush perform



Congressman Charles Rangel
and District Leader Bob Botfeld



Kids for Kerry

Photographs by Barbara Lee

Three Parks Independent Democrats HOLIDAY PARTY



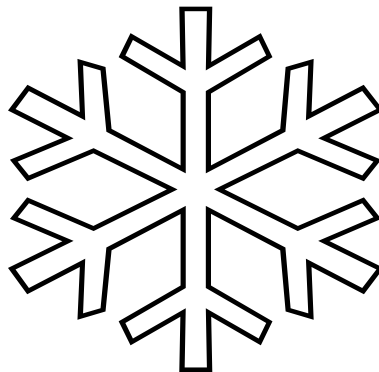
December 5, 5:00pm

Hostelling International New York
103rd Street & Amsterdam

Admission is Free. We just ask that you bring a Potluck Dish for all to enjoy and/or Non-perishable food items that will be donated to a local food pantry. For Potluck, let Ernestine know what you are bringing: Call 582-2008 or email: threeparksdems@aol.com

Announcing...

**The Three Parks
Independent Democrats
Annual Holiday Party – 2004**



**Sunday, December 5, 2004
5-8 p.m.
Hostelling International New York
891 Amsterdam Ave. @ 103rd Street
Chapel Room**

Come and enjoy the Fun, Festivities, and Food with other Club Members and their families.

Admission is FREE. We just ask that you bring a Potluck Dish for all to enjoy and/or Non-perishable food items that will be donated to a local food pantry.



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



Kerry/Edwards Rally at Straus Park October 23, 2004