

## Duck Soup ... the Albany Version

By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Housing Chair

The question is...did the Albany (or was it Freedonia) crew really outdo the Marx Brothers??? Well we, here, think that maybe they're really in the running!

Where else would you see the winning battalion (while celebrating their victory, after years of looking like losers) hand over their newly found prime position to make real changes, to some wily traders in their group who, for a long time, have been posing as representatives of their community. This, of course, couldn't be further from the truth.

Their communities seem to be the furthest thing from their minds. I again use that term loosely. Because, as we are rapidly learning, the benefit to their personal lives and, more importantly, life styles, is really the motivating 'principal' ( I use that term loosely, as well) to much of what they do in Freedonia, ooops, I mean Albany.

Is this slapstick? Someone steps up and says, " You don't have a position for me? Well, make one up!" And

guess what — they invent a position whose duties are, certainly to me and probably lots of their constituents, a mystery.

What would Harpo say if confronted with this goofiness, we know he doesn't talk, but we think, even if he could, he would be rendered speechless at these shenanigans ... even for Freedonia. Oooops, again. Talk about horse trading!

So just when we thought we had a real chance to see some real changes that could give tenants a break to rent, not buy, and not have to go into bankruptcy as they try to live the 'American dream' and 'own' their home , even though that home really belongs to the banks and the "Las Vegas" gamblers (Wall Street traders) ... bam, these sterling characters in Freedonia, blow it up!

Now that we won the prize last year for the worst state government in the country, we may be seeing a scenario as big or bigger for next year!

We think Albany's goings on has outdone the Marx Brothers' *Duck*

## GENERAL MEETING

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17  
7:00PM**

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

## ON THE AGENDA:

**Senator Tom Duane**, who will be talking about his first year as Chair of the Senate Health Committee

*and*

**Assembly Member Richard Gottfried**, Chair of the NYS Assembly Committee on Health, will address the various health plans being developed for New Yorkers.

*Soup*, but who knows what next year will bring. Hold on to your ... hats? apartments? pocketbooks? Watch out, Laurel and Hardy! Quack! Quack!

*Keep fighting!*

## West Side Railyards Mega-Development Seeks City Approvals

By Andrew Berman, CRDC Member

The public hearing and approval process for Related Companies' enormous proposed development on the West Side Railyards, stretching from 30th to 33rd Street, 11th to 12th Avenues, will begin on September 9th at the NY City Planning Commission. This gargantuan project — far and away the largest in New York City in many decades — will require the approval of the City Planning Commission and the City Council.

Related proposes a sea of gigantic commercial and luxury residential developments at Times Square levels of density. What will surrounding neighborhoods like Chelsea and

Hell's Kitchen get in return? Enormous amounts of traffic and pollution, and a huge added strain on infrastructure like schools, sanitation, police and fire services, and hospitals.

There will also be NO permanently affordable housing on site, just a promise that the rental housing (an unclear percentage of the overall housing which will be built) will use 80/20 subsidies, so 20% will be affordable for 20 years (there will also be a small amount of off-site permanently affordable housing in Hell's Kitchen.)

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## West Side Railyards

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The plan is outrageous, and will have a huge impact on our neighborhoods in perpetuity, making them more crowded with more strained municipal services and a whole lot more luxury housing. While other cities and even other parts of our city have seen old railyards decked over and developed with low-rise and/or affordable housing, here we are told that nothing less than ultra-high-density, market rate housing and commercial development is possible. So while we defeated the West Side stadium previously planned for this site, we may get something just as bad if the Mayor and City Council give Related what they are asking for.

## Everything Was a Disaster

*Health care, affordable housing, the War in Iraq, and how gullible the American population had become ... Hillary voting for the war, people voting for Bush, and those damn articulated buses on 23rd Street that bend in the middle.*

*By Tim Gay, Former CRDC President, District Leader.*

I met Katharine Roberts in 1989 or 1990. It was at a meeting with other Community people at Moonstruck Restaurant. She was even a curmudgeon back then. And she kept close to the script.

But then it recently occurred to me: I never, ever disagreed with Katharine Roberts. She and I were almost always on the same wavelength, and when we weren't, it was because she had done her research and was a light-year or two ahead on where I stood on an issue.

For example, parity for mental health issues. At first her candor made me uncomfortable. Yes, many people have mental health care needs, but do we need to discuss it so openly?

Then, when I was diagnosed with depression -- after I quit smoking, I might add -- it became quite clear to me that Katharine was right: the squeaking wheel gets the oil. The more we talk about something, the more people know, and the more acceptable it becomes.

Silence was making treatable mental health conditions a taboo like tuberculosis and cancer were a century ago, and AIDS was 25 years ago.

A few of my memories of Katharine, with her gorgeous mop of gray curls and pastel-colored slacks and tops:

Sitting behind a card table: Asking, "have you signed a petition for...?" "Take a moment and fill out this post-card to..."

Turning on New York 1 or News 4 New York, and seeing Katharine testifying at City Hall, or standing with a sign protesting the war or the closing of a homeless shelter.

Some of us begin the morning deciding what necklace or tie to wear. I think Katharine began her morning choosing the appropriate political and social buttons.

The last time I saw Katharine was the day before she slipped into a coma.

It was a warm Friday in June, and she was traveling north on 9th Avenue with her shopping cart. For Katharine, she was actually in a pretty even mood, even though she told me she was being evicted!

We talked about the usual topics — her concern over where CRDC was heading, her cautious hope for universal health care with the Obama administration.

And then she told me that she was not well enough to travel to her sister's funeral six months earlier. I thought Katherine looked better than she had in years, and told her so. She was pleased.

As I walked away, I thought about her asking me years ago to be her health care proxy. I didn't realize I'd be getting a call in a couple of days.

She was in the hospital for a week as her brother, social workers, friends and I tried to sort through the health care proxy business. Katharine turned 83 the day before she died.

I'm so glad to have known Katharine, and I learned so much from her example. I think we all can say that.



*Katharine Roberts*

## Don't Vote for Bloomberg

By Judy Rrichheimer, CRDC 1st Vice President

Democratic Club Leader Exhorts Membership: “Do not vote the Republican line. Or the Independence Line.” A headline in *The Onion*? The stunning obviousness of this message might lead you to think so but despite the fact that many New Yorkers are beginning to see the light — of late the gap between Thompson and Bloomberg has tightened dramatically — Democrats who should know better are still clinging to their illusions about Michael Bloomberg.

Here's how their argument goes: “Bloomberg used to be a Democrat; he became a Republican only so he could run in this town. And throughout the two terms as mayor, his policies were just like ours.” Well, I admit in certain areas — public health, for example — Bloomberg could almost pass for a liberal, but overall he is not one of us, and it's time all Democrats told him so at the voting booth. Here are some of the many issues where Bloomberg unmistakably diverges from the progressive agenda:

**Support for the Republican National Party:** For a man who supposedly turned Republican merely as a convenience, throughout his time in office Michael Bloomberg has shown remarkable generosity to the party of Bush and Cheney. Even in 2008 — after famously turning officially independent — our mayor made a half-million dollar donation to the Senate Republican Campaign Committee. And that half-mil joined the several millions Bloomberg had already bestowed on our enemies from 2001 onwards.

**Gay Rights:** Any progressive who believes that Michael Bloomberg is a friend to the gay community and deeply supports gay marriage is either credulous or suffering from amnesia. In 2005 New York State Supreme Court Judge Doris Ling-Cohen ruled that under state constitutional language gay marriage is permissible in New York. Bloomberg appealed this decision, employing a neat bit of casuistry when he claimed that he was doing so in order to spare the feelings of gays who might marry only to have the ceremony voided by a higher court ruling. (Your money and mine went into that appeal. Gee, I don't recall any marriage-inclined gays acknowledging our kind consideration; how 'bout you?) And talking about tortured logic and gay rights, please recall a more recent example: middle-aged gay men targeted in sex shops and then falsely arrested for prostitution. Bloomberg joked that they should have felt flattered by having been mistaken for whores.

**The Indigent and the Homeless:** The federal stimulus plan allows for single able-bodied adults without dependents to remain eligible for food stamps until Sept. 30, 2010. Mayor Bloomberg feels that if we accept money for this extension our single able-bodied-adults-without-dependents population would suffer a breakdown in character, and so out of consideration for them, declined the offer. According to Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum's office, we are foregoing millions of dollars in federal subsidiaries. But on the other hand, perhaps the mayor is right: can we really put a price on character building? And in a similar vein, Bloomberg quietly launched a plan to charge the homeless to stay in shelters.

**Housing:** For rent controlled and stabilized tenants fortunate enough to still have an apartment, Michael Bloomberg is not a friend. His appointees to the Rent Guidelines Board consistently vote in favor of landlords. And as for Bloomberg's much self-vaunted initiative to build thousands of low income units, see a report by Comptroller William Thompson (our CRDC pick for mayor): Quoting from the *Daily News*, “The Bloomberg administration never checked to see if developers who got discounted city land in exchange for building affordable housing kept their end of the deal. The Cornerstone Program was supposed to transfer vacant city-owned land to private developers who promised to build 2,191 homes there, with 1,510 units designated for low-or middle-income New Yorkers. Yet the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has not followed up to see whether developers complied with those terms.”

**The Let-Them-Eat-Cake Approach to Life:** The mayor responded to complaints regarding the sharp rise in Time-Warner Cable rates, nearly unaffordable for average New Yorkers, by saying that we do not have to watch TV and we could read books instead. Now I would love it if people read more, and also if New Yorkers would walk on the right side of the street, and refrain from texting while they did so. And what's on your wish list, dear Club member, for ways in which to redesign the human race? The mayor proposed a plan for congestion pricing, whereby passenger cars would pay to enter certain zones in Manhattan. I liked the idea — in fact, I promoted it long before Bloomberg, *but only if* additional funds for public transportation were allocated. To this stipulation the mayor responded (I paraphrase), “What's a little extra crowding on the subway?”

When Michael Bloomberg put our money toward upending Judge Ling-Cohen's wise ruling he said he wanted “people ... (to) have a right once and for all to know where they stand.” Mr. Mayor, fellow members of CRDC ... my thoughts exactly!

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## Democratic Primary is Tuesday Sept 15

**Polls are Open 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM**

The Club will be open all day to answer the phones for people with questions. We will as usual open and close polling sites and have Campaign literature to distribute for our endorsed candidate. Please try to help that day as much as you can. Call Doris Corrigan 212-924-5433 to volunteer.

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