

## Another View Of Our Club

*By Steven Skyles-Mulligan, CRDC President*

Over the years I've thought a great deal about the purpose of a Democratic Club, particularly in an area that overwhelming votes our way. In the "old days," local Democratic organizations could help people to find housing, employment and other basic needs. Some clubs still do this, notably our neighbor, the McManus Midtown Democratic Club.

But CRDC has never been about those basic things. The people who founded the club wanted to encourage people to look beyond the essentials of daily life and envision a better world — and claim their own power to make it so.

When our club meetings are especially engaging — and they often are — we discuss what's happening in our neighborhood, in our city, state, nation and world. But we never rest there; at every meeting, when an important issue comes up, members want to know what they can do. At the same time, any elected official who happens to be present can expect to be asked some very tough questions.

Over the past few months, beginning late last year, CRDC has taken a position on more important issues than ever before — and we've let our elected officials know about it. These positions cover a broad ground: advocating a tax on sugared beverages; promoting withdrawal from Afghanistan; urging action on St. Vincent's; and requesting an Army Corps of Engineers study on a flood control solution which will surely be necessary within our lifetimes.

It may be, then, that our main purpose is to serve as a kind of debating society, where issues are discussed, positions taken and viewpoints promoted. We have the added privilege of being able to engage our local elected officials in that debate, which increases the likelihood that our voices will be heard — and acted upon.

From where I sit, there is just one problem: there are too few of us. We all know people who have opinions about various issues who might welcome a chance to share them. How we invite those people — our friends and neighbors — to engage in the discussion is a sticky problem. We didn't solve it during my previous tenure as president and my two successors were not able to solve it, either. I used to think it was a question of people not knowing and that, if we only got the word out more, others would join us.

Now I think that's not so much the issue, and that we need to invent new ways for people to engage. In other words, it may be time for us to reinvent ourselves. Sure, some of the structures and approaches that have worked well for 53 years still work, but others no longer have the same level of appeal.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be trying many new things — from the way our meetings are structured to how we communicate in the community. It's going to be exciting, and it's occasionally going to be exasperating. However, at the end of

## GENERAL MEETING

**Thursday, May 20, 2010  
7:00PM**

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

### ON THE AGENDA:

At our last two meetings, the Club endorsed for the following positions in the 75 A.D.:

**U.S. Congress, U.S. Senate, State Senate, Assembly, State Committee male and female, and Club member for our 12 Judicial Delegate positions.**

The final endorsement meeting is **Thursday, May 20th.**

All candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General will be invited.

There are vacancies for Civil Court Judge. It is unlikely the panels will have reported out before our meeting.

a year or two, we should have charted a new course that will enable CRDC to survive for another 50 years.

Please join us by sharing your ideas, attending an Executive Committee meeting (they're usually on the first Thursday of each month), or joining our Club's group on Facebook (just search for CRDC).

Let's try to have fun as we work to reinvigorate CRDC.

## Comment on Economics: Environment Requires Regulation

*By Maarten de Kadt, CRDC Club Member*

**B**usinesses use and abuse the environment without paying for it. This use is not included in their profit accounting, but businesses do profit from using the environment. Economists call this free ride an “externality” because this use is not included in market calculations; it is external to the market. Often when businesses use the environment they cause serious harm that the rest of us have to pay for, either in the environmental cleanup or in the costs (physical and monetary) to our health. There are five cases in point: nuclear energy from Indian Point; energy from coal; automobile emissions standards; natural gas obtained by hydrofracking; and off-shore oil production and exploration.

**Indian Point kills fish.** (As the nuclear power industry seems to do with impunity, lets put aside for the moment the huge external cost of what the storage of nuclear waste does to the human race over the long term.) Indian Point kills fish because the plant uses the water from the Hudson River for its cooling system. That use was put into question on April 2, 2010 when New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation ruled the plant’s use of Hudson River water violates the federal Clean Water Act. The plant was built close to the Hudson River in order to obtain readily available cooling water inexpensively. By sucking in the River’s water operators not only kill fish at the point where the plant takes in river water, but also by increasing the temperature of the Hudson River as warmer water is dumped back into the River. Inexpensively cooling this nuclear reactor increases the owner’s profit. The solution, not favored by the plant’s owner, the Entergy Corporation, is to close Indian Point. Indian Point provides 12.5% of New York City’s and Westchester’s electricity (Nuclear power provides 8.5% of the nation’s energy.) Indian Point’s energy could be replaced by an efficient gas power plant and by more efficient use of electricity by all its users.

**Coal mines kill workers.** The methane explosion that killed 29 people in the West Virginia, Upper Big Branch coal mine last April 5, 2010 need not have happened if its owner, the Massey Energy Company, had followed safety procedures instead of choosing to pay less expensive

finer received for safety violations. Coal provides 22.5% of the nation’s energy. Coal resources are vast but are dangerous to obtain. To obtain its energy, coal requires burning and the control of its emissions. At each stage, companies profit. Renewable energy sources provide only 7.3% of the nation’s energy. This is not increasing quickly enough.

**Automobiles move people ...** but they also cause global warming. Automobile companies have long resisted spending the money needed to reduce tailpipe emissions because, they believed, the additional expense would reduce their ability to take profits. On April 1, 2010 the Obama Administration mandated new increased fuel economy standards of 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016. Six years seems an awfully long time to achieve this long overdue target. Still missing in the mix is government expenditure on urgently needed and greatly improved public transportation.

**Hydrofracking poisons people.** Hydrofracking is a method of obtaining natural gas by injecting water, sand and chemicals thousands of feet under the ground to break up shale deposits thus releasing trapped natural gas. The case in immediate point is that part of the Marcellus shale deposit nearby New York City’s Catskill water supply. Natural gas is one of the cleanest of the fossil fuels providing 23.8% of the nation’s energy. Gaining profit by companies using the hydrofracking technique while at the same time poisoning the water supply (or the nearby environment) makes no sense whatsoever especially since actively developing alternative energy sources is available as an alternative.

**Oil exploration and production kills workers.** An explosion killed eleven Gulf of Mexico oil rig workers in an April 20, 2010 and left a large oil slick on nearby waters. Oil provides 37.1% of the nation’s energy. It is too profitable and the country is too dependent on it to cut back its production or search for more. Thus the President has opened new off-shore drilling areas. There is no talk of cutting back Gulf oil drilling. Oil consumption remains a major cause of climate change. Finding and producing it costs more than money — it costs lives.

The economics in each of these examples is simple. Greedy energy and transportation companies are focusing on potential profits through their free use of the environment, leaving the rest of us to pay for cleanup and the medical costs associated with the damage these

practices cause to our health. This is not a phenomena that free-market economics can solve. Rather, each of the cases described here cry out for strong government regulation and much more rapid development of renewable energy sources.

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## Letters To Mayor Bloomberg

*The following letters were sent to Mayor Bloomberg with the following cc's listed below:*

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### Climate Change Risks, #1 March 25, 2010

Dear Mayor Bloomberg,

New York City is clearly one of the most densely populated areas at risk of catastrophic flooding. This could occur because of global warming, or more likely, when a particularly strong storm blows in. Much of Chelsea is located in the 100 year flood plain and would be one of the neighborhoods hardest hit by a huge storm. You are no doubt aware of this, but it is not yet clear what you have been willing or able to do about it. The Chelsea Reform Democratic Club supports the action of our local Community Board 4 and other community groups ( see accompanying letter below) in calling on you to push the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do a feasibility study that details both our exposure and the possibility of instituting a sea-gate solution such as those installed in Venice, London, Rotterdam and other world cities. Based on the experience of other major cities around the world which took 20-30 years of discussion and planning before building barriers and gates, it is incumbent upon us to begin the process now.

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### Climate Change Risks, #2 March 25, 2010

Mayor Michael Bloomberg,

One of the greatest natural calamities that could wreak havoc in New York City would be flooding due to the surge from a "100 year storm". This storm could appear at any time- and even many times- within the next 100 years. New York City is particularly vulnerable to storm surges because of the New York Bight, which funnels water and increases the speed of a storm surge moving through the Verrazano Narrows. Storm surges have been known to be as high as 20 feet. As much of Manhattan

Community District 4 lies within the 100 Year Flood Plain, we request that the City petition Congress to appropriate necessary funds to enable the Army Corps of Engineers to begin studying the feasibility of installing sea gates and barriers for protection from the sea.

Indeed, Joshua Friedman of New York City's Office of Emergency Management offered sobering statistics about the region's vulnerability to coastal flooding. At a 2009 American Society of Civil Engineers conference, he told scientists, engineers, government officials and environmental advocates that a catastrophic storm surge will affect two million New Yorkers, 740,000 households, 272,000 buildings and 461 miles of roadways. Recognized experts have suggested that sea gates at the Narrows, the mile wide entry to New York Harbor, and lesser gates near Arthur Kill and where the East River meets Long Island Sound (Throgs Neck) would protect much of Manhattan. Gates could also help address issues related to sea level rise due to global warming: even without storm surges, sea level rise in 20-40 years will cause potential flooding at certain times of the year having nothing to do with storms.

Other cities have already built sea gates (Rotterdam and London) or are currently building them (Venice). In the case of London, the barrier's purpose is to prevent the city from being flooded by exceptionally high tides moving up from the sea, often exacerbated by a storm surge. It is deployed on average four times a year. In Rotterdam, the Maeslantkering is expected to be closed once every ten years to once every five years. The situation in New York City will depend on the expected frequency of storm surges.

Manhattan Community Board 4 urges you to reach out to our Federal representatives to request funding for a feasibility study to protect our city from potentially life threatening storm surges. The total cost of design and construction for gates at Verrazano Narrows, Arthur Kill and Throgs Neck is estimated at \$10 billion. There is no time to waste; whole communities may suffer irreparable damage if we don't act now.

Respectfully submitted,

FOR THE CHELSEA REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB  
Steven Skyles-Mulligan, CRDC President

*CC: Hon. Thomas Duane; Hon. Kristen Gilliband; Hon. Richard Gottfried; Hon. Liz Krueger; Hon. Carolyn Maloney; Hon. Jerrold Nadler; Hon. Christine C. Quinn; Hon. Charles Schumer; Hon. Scott Stringer*

PO Box 1120  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York City, NY 10113-1120

Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



### *Petitioning Begins June 8*

As usual we will be out petitioning for our endorsed candidates at all the right places, like 23rd St. and 8th Avenue, and in front of supermarkets, and of course where we live.

I am happy to say that this is an even-numbered year, 2010.

On even-numbered years, we do not have to petition by election district; as long as you stay in the 75 Assembly District (club has a map) you can get qualified signature in any election district.

So, as of June 8 we will be asking you to come out and meet your neighbors, and get them to support our efforts to qualify our endorsed candidates to get on the ballot in September.

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*Sent by CRDC on Climate Change Risks*

## Join CRDC Today!

Time to pay your 2010 dues to remain a member of CRDC, New York City's most progressive Democratic Club! Please fill out the coupon below and mail to our postal box, or you may renew by going to our website, [www.crdcnyc.org](http://www.crdcnyc.org).

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Send monthly newsletter by:  Email or  Postal delivery

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Make checks payable to CRDC and mail to:

PO Box 1120, Old Chelsea Station

New York City, NY 10113-1120

Questions? Call 212-924-5433, email us at [info@crdcnyc.org](mailto:info@crdcnyc.org), or visit our website at [www.crdcnyc.org](http://www.crdcnyc.org)