

BRONX BORO NEWS

EDITORIAL

Deal cable an arbitrator

FLAMBOYANT DALLAS COWBOYS owner Jerry Jones dropped by City Hall last week to support a City Council resolution that would call for mandatory arbitration to be included in local cable TV franchise agreements.

The idea, as outlined by Council Zoning and Franchises subcommittee chairman Tony Avella, is to prevent a replay, if that is the right word, of the Yankees blackout of 2002 and the Mets blackout of 2005, when squabbles between the cable carriers and the teams kept fans from seeing the games.

Avella (D-Bayside) wants such disagreements to be subject to mandatory arbitration, so that the city's cable subscribers aren't reduced to being pawns in a game for which they're footing the bill. In the event of an impasse between a content provider (the Yankees or Mets, say) and a cable company, an arbitrator would be appointed to impose a solution.

Jones, who is conducting a national campaign to get cable carriers to include the NFL Network in their basic service, has his own agenda in all this, and it has mostly to do with the NFL's (and Jerry Jones') bank balances.

Still, the franchise negotiations are the city's best window of opportunity to look out for the interests of local cable subscribers. Jerry Jones may not really be their best friend, but the city's negotiators certainly should be. Mandatory arbitration should be on the table during the franchise negotiations.

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BE OUR GUEST: JOHN MCDERMOTT, worker education specialist

Programs offer job training, but more should utilize them

In Brooklyn and throughout the city of New York, community-based education networks that provide free adult education, career counseling, job training and job placement opportunities are often underutilized.

These networks, publicly-funded and frequently allied with the labor movement, can be especially valuable to the unemployed, the underemployed and new Americans.

Individuals graduating from training provided by the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), for example, have dramatically increased their income, gained a promotion or started a new career. Finding these important programs is not difficult, yet many of the New Yorkers who need them have no idea they exist.

By most accounts, our city is flourishing. Real estate is booming, the Wall Street crowd is doing well and people flock to New York from all over the country and the world to find the American Dream.

However, for the working families laboring in perpetual entry-level, minimum-wage careers, this can be a tale of two cities. For those working for less than what the City Council has calculated as a living wage — about \$10.50 an hour with health benefits or \$11.50 without — living in the

world's capital can be a dangerous balancing act. One mishap, a lost job or a medical bill can easily wipe out a family's savings and put them on the street.

This can be especially true for new Americans, who may also suffer the additional difficulties of limited English, lack of exposure to workplace technologies or who cannot transfer academic or professional credentials earned overseas.

For working families, it can be a tale of 2 cities

Another group facing special challenges are so-called disconnected youth.

These young people, ages 18-24, are out of school and have only irregular employment or none at all. Some studies put their number as high as 200,000 (that's as if the entire city of Syracuse was out of work).

In an almost ironic twist, many employers and labor unions decry the lack of skilled applicants for in-demand occupations, and agree that even some basic training would improve an applicant's chances of getting the job they want.

To that end, the City Council has funded a growing list of partnerships with community organizations to expand the availability of workforce training and family strengthening programs such as GED

classes, English as a second language, job preparation, interview techniques and résumé writing, financial literacy and first-time home buyer courses.

Many community groups and unions provide free training for sectors with available jobs such as auto mechanics, health care workers, telecommunications and computer networking, food industry workers, commercial drivers and construction workers, among others.

We have seen first-hand the empowering, life-altering results for someone who is willing to put in the effort to learn a new skill set or a new language and embark on a new career.

You can identify programs in your area by contacting:

- **Consortium for Worker Education** at www.cwe.org/
- **Your New York Council member's** office at www.nycouncil.info
- **Your local Beacon Program school** at www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/services-afterschool-beacon.html
- **The NY Public Library** at www.nypl.org/classes/

John McDermott is assistant to Barry Feinstein, chairman of the Consortium for Worker Education, a private, nonprofit agency that provides a wide array of employment, training, and education services to 90,000 New York City workers annually.

VOICE of the PEOPLE

Not enough trains: That's D problem

When will the Transit Authority get the message and put more D trains in service? (Re: Last week's cover story, "Buses & trains are rail pain.")

People say the trains are too crowded and don't come often enough. That's not two problems, that's one problem: There aren't enough D trains, especially during rush hour.

Gay Morrone

Old ladies win race against pokey bus

Nobody asked me to vote for the worst bus service, but the Bx12 bus on Fordham Road can be pretty slow.

Some days the old ladies pushing their shopping carts from store to store make better time, even though they stop to window shop.

Eddie Villanueva

The numbers don't add up

Maybe the Transit Authority can tell me why it is that when you're waiting for the No. 4 train, you get at least two No. 5 trains, and when it's the No. 5 train you want, then two or three No. 4 trains come first. It never fails.

Cal Overton

Water scofflaw solution is all wet

The amnesty or Payment Incentive Program, under which more than 8,000 homeowners who owe the city a combined \$50 million in unpaid water bills are being offered a one-time amnesty if they pay up in 90 days, is an easier way to wash the faces of the incompetent people running the Department of Environmental Protection and the New York City Water Board.

It is also discriminatory because it's directed at single-family homeowners, instead of at anybody who uses water but doesn't pay the bill. (There are nearly 64,000 residential and commercial water-bill scofflaws who owe the city more than \$500 million.)

Water is a utility service that should be run like electricity, gas and phone — if you don't pay the bill, your service will be disconnected.

It's not fair that the honest people, paying their bills, should suffer increase after increase, just because the commissioner and director of the DEP and water board, are incapable of doing their jobs and duty.

Apply to those departments the same medicine President Reagan applied to the air traffic controllers on Aug. 5, 1981: He fired members of the striking controllers' union and replaced them.

Francisco J. Castillo

Forget congestion pricing; enforce the law

Congestion pricing is just another way for the government to pick the pockets of the middle class.

If the laws that exist now were enforced — don't block the box, no double parking — there would be a lot less congestion, but that would be too hard. Just declare a new tax and call it a victory.

Elie Kaufman



Now a mound, soon a ballfield

Breaking ground for a new West Bronx Recreational Ballfield at Jessup Ave. — which currently looks like a pitcher's mound for Paul Bunyan — are (l. to r.) **Fernando Williams, Wilhelm Rondo, Hector Aponte, Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Councilwoman Diane Foster, Maritza Groat, Sister Ellenrita Purcaro and Yvonne Przybyla.**

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