

DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL

Trump the terrible

Cautious: This editorial contains two ideas. They might at first glance appear to be in tension. But both are, in fact, true. Both need saying.

The first idea is that House Democrats epically botched what should have been the simple task of disciplining freshman Rep. Ilhan Omar, who made anti-Semitic statements and should have been at the business end of a formal rebuke. Instead, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the House wound up passing a bucket of tripe that said all types of hate are bad.

The second idea is that President Trump, not content simply to assert this, took criticism of his political foes to disgusting and divisive and indefensible extremes by saying “the Democrats have become an anti-Israel party. They’ve become an anti-Jewish party.” Never put it past the President to turn what could be a legitimate point into an outrageous smear. Proud pro-Israel Jewish Democrats include New York’s own Chuck Schumer, Eliot Engel, Jerry Nadler, Nita Lowey, Mike Bloomberg, and millions of others across America.

And by Trump’s own logic — if a series of primal screams can be said to have logic —

the Republican Party has become a white supremacist party.

“I am just a big fan in what he stands for,” said Trump in 2014 about Rep. Steve King. King would go on to claim “our civilization” can’t be restored with “somebody else’s babies”; retweet messages from Nazi sympathizers; and lament that “white nationalist” has become a pejorative term. Trump would go on to be silent.

Meantime, Trump himself has retweeted an anti-Semitic image featuring Hillary Clinton; said to a group of Jews, “You want to control your politicians, that’s fine”; said a gang of neo-Nazi and KKK protesters included “some very fine people”; said a Mexican-American judge couldn’t be fair because of his background; denounced dark-skinned immigrants as coming from “shithole countries”; and as a candidate proposed banning the world’s billion-plus Muslims from so much as stepping foot in America.

Each time, Republican politicians furrowed a few brows and then went about their business.

If Democrats are an anti-Jewish party, what is the GOP?

News about newsstands

You pass them every day when you descend underground. Subway stations across the boroughs are home to 326 newsstands and other retail locations. If you’re reading this in print, maybe you even bought this newspaper at one.

But only 204 of these spots are open. The other 122 are dark. That means less money for the Transit Authority, fewer places for passengers to buy drinks and snacks and Lotto tickets and even the occasional New York Post, fewer eyes and ears on the platforms and mezzanines, and fewer opportunities for newsstands operators and the people they hire, both often immigrants.

The problem? Transitcrats have been terrible at renting out the spots.

The TA bureaucracy gives leaseholders

the runaround, making them wait for months or years to get the keys after agreeing to a deal. The trio of new Second Ave. stations didn’t get their newsstands opened until 18 months after the stations’ ribbon-cutting.

And when subway service is altered for construction and a substantial number of customers disappear — it happens a lot — the TA refuses to offer a break on rent during the repair period. That’s what happened when the No. 1 station at 168th St. closed for elevator upgrades. Unable to meet the rent, the newsstand closed.

There’s hope that it’s getting better. The system’s bigwigs are now committed to quickly and fairly renting out every last location. Thirty are already underway. The remaining 92 will soon follow.

Fill them all.

The truth about jobs

After many months of robust growth — credit to President Trump on those, as we’ve gladly given in this column — the job market screeched to a halt in February, adding just 20,000 payroll positions. The good news is wages are still on the rise.

We do not offer this as evidence that the economy is suddenly sputtering. Averages mean much more. Single months could well turn out to be hiccups.

It is, however, worth note that Trump’s first 25 full months, including his massive

tax cut, much-ballyhooed “regulatory relief,” trade wars, attack on the Affordable Care Act and all, have yielded 4.9 million new jobs.

The last 25 full months of the man Trump and Republicans portray as a job killer, President Obama, yielded 5.3 million new jobs. This number is larger than the other.

Meantime, the deficit is spiking.

Try as he might, promise though he did, MAGA man hasn’t catapulted the nation into a glorious new world.

Tax developers, not vehicles

BE OUR GUEST

BY ERIC UHLFELDER

Imagine you live in a small town and local officials encouraged some of the country’s biggest companies to move in, which subsequently caused terrible traffic. In not having accounted for such impact, town leaders then decided to tax local residents every time they use their cars.

In a nutshell, this is exactly what New York’s local and state leaders are proposing.

Our city and transit planners ushered in three seismic failures congestion pricing purports to solve: massive redevelopment of Manhattan over the past decade (160 million square feet, according to Dodge Data and Analytics), which did not come with sufficient infrastructure expansion or taxes on development to help pay for such improvements; an unregulated influx of for-hire vehicles, whose numbers now exceed 100,000, seven times more than yellow taxis; and a mismanaged subway system, which has failed to benefit from rising fares as workers and residents now opt for more reliable transport.

Congestion pricing has already brought surcharges to taxis, a beleaguered industry reeling in reaction to the unregulated explosion of app-hail vehicles, which also pay the same tax. Officials now seek to levy a similar tax on all drivers because the lobbies that represent them are weak if non-existent. This scheme is regressive in that it hits middle- and working-class drivers much harder than wealthy drivers while creating a cash cow that doesn’t ensure efficient use of proceeds to improve transit.

The governor and mayor would have you believe that, if drivers want to avoid the large fees, they can either choose to enter Manhattan below 60th St. during off-hours or opt for public transit.

But taxi drivers don’t have that choice. Neither do residents who need their cars for jobs and family. Service vehicles and truckers delivering goods don’t have that choice if clients aren’t open at night. And this tax will be passed on to consumers.

While sounding counterintuitive, it is illogical to link congestion and subway improvements. The respective causes

and fixes to these problems are very different.

What makes more sense is to tax new development in congestion zones to help fund necessary transit improvements that these new buildings directly require. Make this tax progressive, with larger buildings paying higher rates.

Then, issue bonds against this new revenue stream to start essential capital improvements. And explore innovative ways to levy congestion taxes on all large buildings in these areas that have contributed to the problem and that profit from subway access.

These new taxes will redirect development to parts of the city that can better handle it. The city should also limit app-hail cars in Manhattan and force them to pay a taxi medallion-

like fee to be in the clogged borough.

Expedite the mayor’s development plans for ferry services along the East River and all of the Hudson River to relieve subway congestion. This new system would take a fraction of the time and money to build compared to traditional transit systems. (Ferries are also a more rational alternative to the mayor’s light rail plan for Queens and Brooklyn, which is adjacent to the East River.)

If a congestion tax is voted on, officials should explore an incremental approach that’s more rational and equitable than the present severe plan, which would drain \$1 billion per year out of the economy. One option: setting up alternating access days to Manhattan based on the “odd and even” license plate number system. Drivers who opt to travel on their off day would pay a steep tax. This would be more fair than the proposed tax while immediately reducing congestion.

But developers — who profit hugely from their location in the city and access to subways — are the ultimate cause of congestion. Taxing them would more accurately recognize the true cost of development.

Uhlfelder has authored books on planning and finance.

Congestion pricing is the wrong way to generate revenue for the subways