

MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol. 11, Issue 4
January 2006

FAX (212)864-8165

WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

Lobbying Effectively for Affordable Housing: MLRC's New Tenant Lobby Plan

The Mitchell-Lama Residents coalition is pleased to initiate: "Tenant Lobby Days in the Neighborhood". We are embarking on something new by focusing our attention on personal contact, reaching out in our neighborhoods to our State, City, and Federal legislative leaders, not just one annual trip to Albany.

We need tenant activists that participated in our past annual Tenant Lobby Day in Albany and additional Mitchell-Lama community members to join with us in visiting their representatives' neighborhood offices now and throughout the year. March 2006 is our designated month for lobbying.

We will have a few planning meetings for our LEGISLATIVE CAPTAINS: they will serve as the co-ordinators (formerly bus captains) of their local development/neighborhood Mitchell Lamas. **Sign up as a Legislative Captain or Participant beginning at our January 21, 2006 General Membership Meeting.**

MLRC will have a legislative agenda, paper work, and additional items available for this campaign.

Looking forward to your input and participation.

Let's keep affordable housing alive!

HAPPY
NEW YEAR!

Support
MLRC
Join
Today!

Use Coupon on Page 2

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SATURDAY, January 21, 2006

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Refreshments at 10:00 a.m.)

PLACE: Musicians Union Local 802
322 West 48th Street (near 8th Avenue) Ground Floor, "Club Room"

TRAINS: No. 2,3 trains to 50th St. and 7th Ave.; Q,W trains to 49th St. and Broadway; E train to 50th St. and 8th Ave.; D,F trains to 47th-50th St. and 6th Ave..

BUS: Crosstown M50: westbound 49th Street; Bus 7,10,11 to 48th St.

INVITED GUESTS:

City Council Member, Gail Brewer

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition
P.O. Box 20414
Park West Finance Station
New York, New York 10025

MLRC

“Tenant Lobby Days in the Neighborhoods” Beginning March 4th to 25th

Join Us Lobbying

Please call our voice mail to sign up
Legislative Captains will Contact you!

Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619

JOIN THE MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

INDIVIDUAL \$10.00 per year DEVELOPMENT 15 cents per apt.

(\$25 Minimum; \$100 Maximum)

2006

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Evening Phone _____ Day Phone _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

Development _____ Check: Renewal ___ New Member ___

Mail to: MLRC, P.O. Box 20414, Park West Finance Station, N.Y., N.Y. 10025

MLRC fights for you and your right to affordable housing!

UPCOMING EVENTS

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Saturday, January 21, 2006
10:00 a.m. - Noon
Musicians Union Local 802
322 West 48th Street
NYC

*EXECUTIVE BOARD Meetings (Saturdays)

February 4, 2006
10:00 a.m. - Noon

March 4, 2006
“kick off for Lobby Days”
10:00 a.m. - Noon

March 25, 2006
Special Event for Lobbyists
Time and Place
TBA

April 8, 2006
10:00a.m. - Noon
Tenant Lobby Days
Beginning March 4, 2006

*Executive Board Meetings are held at RNA House, 150-160 West 96th Street (between Columbus and Amsterdam).
All dates are subject to revision. Please call the voice mail to confirm (212) 465-2619.

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

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Jackie Peters

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Fax (212)864-8165
Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619

Joe Bruno, What Now?

By R. Woolis

Joe Bruno, the Republican Senate Majority Leader, has to be one unhappy fellow. The poor guy knows that New York is a blue state. There are more Democrats than Republicans in New York State. The only reason the Republicans still run the State Senate is that they get to draw the districts where only they can win. They tell their computers to draw the Senate districts, taking some Democrats and Republicans from one district and putting them in another, thereby maximizing their numbers.

It's the same old gerrymander game – Democrats in the Assembly and Republicans in the Senate. Talk about undemocratic undertakings and fixing elections! Time has run out. There, seemingly, are now not enough Republicans to move from district to district. It is only a matter of time. Sooner or later, the undertow will overcome the Republicans. Right now, any number of Republican Senators want to run for statewide office, thereby creating a situation where a Democrat will move into the vacant seats. Democrats should, given the proper promotion and starting now, be able to replace sitting Republicans. (Before the last election) Republicans suddenly started making noises like liberal Democrats. As a result, people's legislation was passed. There will/should be more of that now.

We appeal to Senators Paterson, Krueger and Schneiderman to assume harsh, militant and assertive postures; start campaigning immediately. Let the people's representatives take over in Albany.

Columbus House: Rent Roll Back

Editorial Note: The foregoing letter from HUD to RY Management, for the account of Columbus House, directs Management to roll back rents for \$265,000 to offset prior rent increases for major capital improvements. This adjustment is scheduled for January 1, 2006. The development is currently in a buyout mode, and the rent reduction should significantly reduce the rent roll for starting rents within the rent stabilization program – R. Woolis]

December 6, 2005

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 New York State Office
 Jacob K. Javits Federal Building
 26 Federal Plaza
 New York, NY 10278-0068

Robert Vaccarello
 RY Management Co., Inc.
 1619 Third Avenue
 New York, NY 10128

Dear Mr. Vaccarello:

SUBJECT: Project Name: Columbus House
 Project No.: 012-11059
 Rent Increase Roll back

This is in reference to the rent increase approved on January 1, 2003 at the above captioned project.

Subject to the conditions indicated below, we are prepared to roll back the rents to a gross potential annual rent of \$1,219,39.00 based upon 248 units available for rental, including commercial space (if any).

The increase that was effective January 1, 2003 included capital improvements in the amount of \$265,000 per year for a three-year period for elevator modernization at \$150,000, façade coating at \$55,000 and cabinet replacements at \$60,000.

You must submit within fifteen (15) days, one original and one copy of a properly executed form HUD-92458, (Rental Schedule and Information on Rental Project) enumerating the revised rentals, (Parts A-E; taxpayer's ID must be stated in Part G of the form).

This rent roll back will be effective on January 1, 2006; therefore you must submit the executed form HUD-92458 prior to the effective date.

If you have any questions, please call William Carrington of my staff at (212) 542-7884.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Printz
 Director, Project Management
 New York Multifamily Hub

Recent Developments Leaving Mitchell-Lama

As of August 2, 2005 according to the Daily News the following Mitchell-Lama's are pre-paying their mortgages (buyouts).

Bronx

University Riverview	Sedgwick Ave.	225 units
Janel Towers	Neil Ave.	229 units
Noble Mansion	Noble Ave.	236 units
Bruckner Tower	Underhill Ave.	208 units
Boulevard Towers	Bruckner Blvd.	329 units
Highbridge House	Ogden Ave.	399 units
Stevenson Towers	Bartholdi St.	121 units
Robert Fulton Terrace	E. 169 St.	320 units
Park Lane Apartments	Lafayette Ave.	325 units
Fordham Towers	E.188 th St.	168 units

Brooklyn

Prospect Towers	10 th St.	153 units
Tivoli Towers	Crown St.	302 units

Manhattan

East Midtown Plaza	E. 24 St.	746 units
Columbus House	95 W. 95 th St.	248 units
Town House West	W. 91 st St.	47 units
Westwood House	W. 93 rd St.	124 units
Columbus Manor	W. 93 rd St.	202 units
Lakeview Apartments	E. 107 th St.	446 units

Queens

Court Plaza	83 rd Ave.	248 units
Meadow Manor	113 th St.	132 units
Roy Reuther	Seagirt Ave.	917 units

BUILDING BRIEFS JANUARY 2006

The following DHCR developments face rent increase applications within the next six months:

CAMBRAY, Gouverneur	NORTHBAY ESTATES,
CATHEDRAL PKWY., New York	Brooklyn
COLLEGE HILL, Highland	PARKEDGE, Utica
ELI PARK 1, Binghamton	PINES, Perinton
ELI PARK 2, Binghamton	PARKSIDE APTS., Bronx
EMBURY APTS., Saratoga Springs	RIVERCROSS, Roosevelt Island
FAIRPORT APTS., Middletown	RIVERVIEW 1, Yonkers
KISSENA I, Queens	ROY REUTHER, Brooklyn
KISSENA II, Queens	STARETT CITY, Brooklyn
OAK TOWERS, Bronx	STUYPARK HOUSE, Brooklyn
MAYFLOWER TERRACE, Bronx	TOWPATH TOWERS, Fulton
	TRUMP VILLAGE III, Brooklyn
	TRUMP VILLAGE IV, Brooklyn

**NOW, LET US WELCOME THE NEW YEAR,
FULL OF THINGS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN.**

Social, Political, Cultural and Miscellaneous Notes:

- There is a rumor that the United States has misplaced 10 nuclear bombs
- There is a rumor that Halliburton has been contracted to build 14 military bases in Iraq.
- Farm-raised salmon are not pink, but gray – until they are fed a chemical pigment.
- As America thrashed about in a state of emergency, it needed solid reporting – and solid skepticism – more than ever. Instead large numbers of individuals were left believing that the September 11 hijackers were Iraqis, that Saddam Hussein was implicated in the terror attacks, and that the United States had actually found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The obsession of America's media was Monica Lewinsky. So much for our so-called liberal press.

COULD INDEPENDENCE PLAZA AND THE WEST VILLAGE HOUSES HAVE AVOIDED THE RECENT BUYOUTS????

It appears that these two developments might have been able to preclude buyouts for perhaps a ten-year period. The problem seems to have been the same in each case, namely internecine tenant warfare that prevented all the tenants from uniting and working with the best and most knowledgeable of their fellow tenants. It seems that the developments each had a J-51 tax offset program. Regulations require that J-51 recipients remain in the program for prescribed periods of time. This fact was unknown to the respective tenant associations, their attorneys, HPD and the owners.

This column is by Robert Woolis, who may be reached at 212-864-8165 (tel/fax) for info re rent increases, buyouts and other Mitchell-Lama housing matters .

Dues-Paid Developments

MLRC strength comes from you, the membership. Support the Coalition's educational, advocacy and outreach programs with your membership dollars.

**Individual Membership: \$10
Development - 15 cents per apt. (\$25 minimum;
\$100 maximum)**

Donations above the membership dues are welcome.

These developments are 2005 dues-paid members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

Bay Towers	Lincoln Amsterdam Houses
Bethune Towers	Michelangelo
Boulevard Towers	Masaryk Towers
Central Park Gardens	Meadow Manor
Clayton Apts	Noble Mansion
Coalition to Save Affordable Housing (Coop City)	RNA House, Inc.
Cooperators United of Co-op City	The Saratoga
Columbus House	Sea Park East-Concerned Tenants
Columbus Manor	Stryckers Bay
Concourse Village	Skyview Towers
Court Plaza	Tivoli Towers
Esplanade	Tower West
1199Housing Corp.	Town House West
Fordham Towers	Westview Apartments
Independence House	West Village Houses
Knickerbocker Plaza	Woodstock Terrace
Lakeview Apartments	

If your development has not received an invoice, please call the MLRC Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. Leave the name and address of the President of your Tenants Association, Board of Directors, or Treasurer and an invoice will be mailed.

Stringer's To-Do List: 99 Pages of Reform

The West Side Spirit, December 8, 2005

[Editorial Note: Scott Stringer, the Coalition congratulates you on your election to the Borough Presidency. We know you well, and you equally know us well. The Coalition has supported you for the past decade plus, and you have been a frequent guest at our meetings. Indeed you have even sat as a member of our Executive Board for some years. Now what is it that we expect? The Mitchell-Lama Task Force should be continued, *and its leader should continue to be Lee Chong*. We know of no one within your office who is better qualified. In any event, now that you have achieved “position”, we expect a lot from you and we will be keeping an eye on the Office of the Borough President; that is essentially you Scott Stringer. – R. Woolis]

“No one can tell me this job is limited,” Stringer said of the Manhattan borough presidency, a position some political pundits say is little more than a stepping stone to higher office. After all, he said, “people told me the Assembly was limited, yet we are leaving this office having had a tremendous success.”

Stringer carefully laid out his plans for the office he won last month in 99 pages of material posted during his campaign. Throughout, he explains how he will use the office to reform community boards, support public school families, promote responsible economic development, encourage environmentally responsible development and increase affordable housing in the borough. He even boiled down each of his five major objectives in a separate report on his transitional website, www.stringer2005.com. He plans to start with community boards, which he calls “the monthly town hall meeting.”

Like his reforms in Albany, which gave rank and file lawmakers a louder voice, Stringer intends to give more power to the twelve community boards that represent Manhattan residents on issues of community development and planning, land use, zoning, and service delivery. As borough president, he will have the power to appoint half the community board members and advise City Council members on the other half. This will put Stringer in a position to transform the community board system from the inside.

His first step toward empowering community boards will be to correct their internal problems by holding them to similar standards as other arms of the government. He will fill the boards to capacity and appoint entire boards at one time to avoid the possibility for members to be appointed in time for major decisions or board elections. Stringer plans to “professionalize” board members by training them in zoning laws and putting an urban planner on each board to design long-term plans for neighborhood development. He will also standardize board budgets so that they reflect the number of people served, crack down on conflicts of interest among board members and unreported lobbying of community

boards and require each board to have a website and submit publicly accessible annual reports.

Once all the community boards are uniformly highly-functioning, Stringer, who plans to attend community board meetings regularly, will throw his own weight behind their decisions and give them more influence over long-term planning, on the neighborhood level and borough-wide. “They are advisory, but they do have influence — more when the council member and the borough president agree to their decision,” he said.

The other area in which Stringer is likely to make the biggest impact is development, according to one of Stringer’s mentors, Rep. Jerrold Nadler. A former housing activist, Stringer is “sensitive to the need for ‘inclusionary’ zoning and tenants’ rights,” Nadler said. Nadler argued that the power to appoint community board members and a member of the City Planning Commission gives the borough president more sway over development than any other issue. One of Stringer’s first acts as borough president will be to appoint a deputy borough president for affordable housing to lead what Stringer calls his “strong and smart land use office.”

In addition to enacting the ambitious agenda items listed in Stringer’s housing report, such as dedicating 30 percent of new development to affordable housing units, the staff will continue Stringer’s tradition of writing investigative reports like “Total Collapse.” That 2002 exposé on the Buildings Department was published when he was in the Assembly. The land use office will draw talented urban planners from city universities through a fellowship program.

“The borough president can play a role in leveling the playing field, so that the people who created the city can stay there,” Stringer said. Young people flock to New York City to be artists, actors and teachers, he said, but “their dream will be deferred if the entrance price is a \$2 million condo.” The challenges ahead are daunting, but to Stringer they create an exciting chance for real action and change. “We’re going to do great things with this office,” he said.

RESISTANCE TO PRIVATIZATION AT CO-OP CITY

Proponents of privatization have launched a renewed attack on the common sense of Co-op City residents. While insisting that they are only exploring, they are trying to persuade the majority of cooperators who don’t want to move – and/or don’t have a comparably well designed, reasonably priced place in pleasant surroundings to move to – that it makes sense to risk losing Mitchell-Lama below market carrying charges (monthly rent) in order to enable a relatively small number of residents to sell privatized apartments.

Three years ago an expensive campaign also claiming to be merely “exploring” the privatization of Co-op City’s 15,500 apartments was initiated by the Board of Directors of the complex and its hired management agent, the Marion Scott Real Estate Management Company. A referendum to fund the campaign – held after the campaign and its funding were already well under way – was approved by a 55% to 45% vote.

In the currently revived campaign, the Board of Directors and the management company profess a neutral stance, however the organization promoting privatization was given hasty – and outside of the rules – recognition by the Board. The granting of similar recognition to the anti-privatization group was withheld for three years, a clue?

PITCHING TO GREED AND GET-RICH-QUICK ILLUSIONS

The pro-privatizers are pitching to greed and get-rich-quick illusions. At a Co-op City meeting they recently sponsored they presented a speaker from the privatized Seward Park Houses who described in a February 3, 2003 *New York Times* article how relatives of his, “bought a one bedroom apartment at Seward Park 11 years ago for \$7,500 and right before privatization swapped it for two other adjacent apartments for a total cost of \$15,000. He and his wife combined the two units, for which he said, “I was offered \$600,000 last summer.”

HOUSING OR SPECULATIVE COMMODITY

The privatization group strictly avoids any reference to the fact that Mitchell-Lama and Co-op City were not created as speculative commodities, but as antidotes to the lack of affordable and decent “market” housing. Mitchell-Lama is a ladder that middle income people can climb to scarce, affordable housing. Privatization will kick away that ladder. The pro-privatization message tries to turn attention away from the dangers of losing tax abatement, of losing SCRIE protection for seniors, of losing even the minimal DHCR safeguards from fraud and corruption. They steer clear of any consideration of the immorality of locking out future middle-income families so that a relatively small number of current move-outs can look for a windfall.-3-

Continued on page 6

NYCHA: Enhanced Section 8 Vouchers Different View on Downsizing

Editorial Note: Enhanced (sticky) vouchers) have been included as part of the buyout process for many developments now out of the Mitchell-Lama program. Up to the present time, HPD handled the voucher program. Now it is handled by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). In the past, the application of the voucher program by HPD included many draconian requirements, particularly as it related to occupancy. NYCHA liberalized these regulations and published the memorandum that follows. Unfortunately, this memorandum has not been properly circulated and is unknown to many in the Mitchell-Lama community. **BIG QUESTION:** How will this memo affect the developments serviced by HPD? – R. Woolis]

NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY
LEASED HOUSING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

LHD #05-22

FROM: Gregory A. Kern, Director
Leased Housing Department

DATE: June 30, 2005

SUBJECT: REVISION TO OCCUPANCY FOR ENHANCED
VOUCHER HOLDERS

In general, NYCHA's Section 8 Occupancy Policy provides that vouchers are assigned by bedroom size according to a standard of 2 household members per bedroom. The policy presently allows 3 exceptions: a) 2X households consisting of 1 adult and 1 child of opposite sex qualify for 2-bedroom apartments; b) 4X households consisting of 3 of one sex and 1 of the other, or 1 male and 1 female adults and 1 male and 1 female children, qualify for 3-bedroom apartments; c) disabled households, including some types of medical emergencies, can be approved for an extra bedroom as a reasonable accommodation when the space is needed for special medical equipment or other facilities increasing accessibility.

In recent weeks we have reviewed issues concerning enhanced voucher holders at project based and Mitchell Lama conversion sites who are overhoused, i.e. their actual apartment sizes are larger than their proper apartment sizes per our Occupancy Policy. Current policy requires such enhanced voucher holders to transfer to proper sized apartments, either on site or off site. Enhanced voucher holders can remain in oversized apartments after conversion, at corresponding voucher sizes and payment standards, only if no proper sized apartments are available on site at the time of conversion, and only for one year following conversion (see LHD #03-22 dated 4/18/03). Elderly and disabled enhanced voucher holders also can stay in oversized apartments on a year-to-year basis until a proper sized apartment becomes available on site (see LHD #04-27 dated 8/19/04). But when the initial one year expires and/or a proper sized apartment becomes available on site, overhoused enhanced voucher holders must transfer or staff shall downgrade their voucher sizes and payment standards to proper levels. Those not transferring would thereby have to pay higher tenant rent shares for the unauthorized space.

A significant number of enhanced voucher holders are overhoused at a time of conversion. They generally have occupied their oversized apartments for a lengthy period, notwithstanding HUD occupancy standards, through the acquiescence or inattention of site management. It is argued that NYCHA's current policy is not reasonable or equitable if such residents are forced to transfer. We have determined that this is a policy issue for which we have discretion, as opposed to a HUD regulatory or statu-

tory issue. We recognize that the factual situations for such residents vary widely case by case. We are also aware of the financial implications of such cases, given that any exceptions favoring overhousing add to NYCHA's subsidy expenditures.

After considering all these factors, I am announcing here that effective immediately, NYCHA's Occupancy Policy is being amended to allow a 4th exception regarding assignment of bedroom size, as follows: enhanced voucher holders who are overhoused by no more than 1 bedroom size at the time of conversion, and whose household size or composition does not change, are entitled to remain in their apartments, with voucher sizes and payment standards matching actual apartment sizes. Qualifying enhanced voucher holders do not have to transfer to a proper sized apartment within any time period. This exception applies only to that group of enhanced voucher holders. This exception does not apply to enhanced voucher holders who are overhoused by more than 1 bedroom size, or whose household size or composition changes after conversion, or who move from the conversion site to another location. As an example, a 3-person household entitled to a 2-bedroom apartment, who is occupying a 3-bedroom apartment at the time of conversion, can remain in that apartment with a 3-bedroom voucher at the 3-bedroom payment standard. But if the household size or composition changes, or if the household moves, then the household is only eligible for the appropriate payment standard at the same apartment or a new apartment. Or if the apartment has 4 bedrooms, then the current policy is followed.

Lastly, this new policy exception does not apply to regular voucher holders in our regular Section 8 program. Therefore regular voucher holders moving into a conversion site must meet current occupancy policy standards.

Continued from page 5: Coop City Privatization

OBSTACLES TO PRIVATIZATION OF CO-OP CITY

A recently concluded bank loan severed the Co-op City/HFA relationship. Language in the loan agreement bars privatization for five years, yet obligation to a private financial institution can become a step toward privatization. Possible impediments to privatization are contained in State Housing Law, which unless waived, require: 1- a referendum (once more) on funding the preparation of a preliminary plan explaining privatizing 2- extensive public meetings examining a privatization proposal, and 3- approval of privatization by two thirds of shareholders of record. Ten thousand two hundred and forty eight Co-op City families would have to say "Yes" to privatization.

There is a good chance that Co-op City will beat back the privateers, and remain a Mitchell-Lama beacon of multi-ethnic, moderate-income housing.

Mitch Berkowitz

Anatole France (1844-1924), renowned French author of **Le Lus Rouge**, written in 1894, shows France at his most prescient. In Chapter 7, he writes: "They [the poor] have to labour in the face of the majestic equality of the law, which forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under the bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." There is a moral in this excerpt for panjandrum Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Listening to Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Pataki sounding off during the recent TWU strike, one is reminded of the traditional union busting strike-breakers of the robber baron epoch in the United States.

DOES RENT STABILIZATION GUARANTEE AFFORDABLE RENTS?

By Robert Woolis, Co-Chair and founder, with Congressman Charles Rangel, of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

Landlords of Mitchell-Lama housing are buying out of the Mitchell-Lama program in bulk, with more to come. If a development was occupied prior to 1974, it will fall under the supervision of DHCR. Developments occupied after 1973 will simply revert to the vagaries of an open market that guarantees bad times for residents. Pre-1974 housing will have rents regulated by the percentage increases announced annually by the Rent Stabilization Commission. This article will detail the percentages since 1991, draw an average, and then project this average into the next fifteen years. Major capital increases will not be included, although we know that the effect on rents is substantial.

History of annual percentage increases: 1991/6.5; 1992/6.5; 1993/5.0; 1994/5.0; 1995/4.0; 1996/4.0; 1997/4.0; 1998/4.0; 1999/4.0; 2000/4.0; 2001/6.0; 2002/6.0; 2003/7.5; 2004/7.5; 2005/5.0 to a total of 79.5 and an average of 4.5. Reviewing the above, it would seem that using a going-forward percent of 4.5 errs in not taking into account the higher percentages of the last four years. However, the 4.5 percent will be used to project the effect on rents for the next fifteen years.

Year 1,	104.5
Year 2,	109.2
Year 3,	114.1
Year 4,	119.3
Year 5,	124.6
Year 6,	130.2
Year 7,	136.1
Year 8,	142.2
Year 9,	148.6
Year 10,	155.3
Year 11,	162.2
Year 12,	169.5
Year 13,	177.1
Year 14,	185.1
Year 15,	193.4

Accumulated rent increases after 5 years are 24.6%, after 10 years 55.3%, and after 15 years 93.4%. Keep in mind that the going-forward 4.5% was conservative and not included is the accumulated Major Capital improvement increase. This latter increase will staggeringly increase rents. The profits landlords accrue are far in excess of any profits to be made in the "market." So much for those who own for a living. It is now understandable why so few buyouts have been converted to coops or condos.

Note: The Rent Stabilization Commission issues annual rent increase percentage figures. To someone looking at any one year in isolation, the figures appear innocent. The cumulative effect of these figures, however, would substantially impact affordable housing in New York City. The Met Council on Housing deserves our gratitude and kudos for battling the annual rent increases applied to developments leaving the Mitchell-Lama program and to the other New York City housing programs supervised by the Rent Stabilization Commission.

How America Fell for the Snakes, and Why Fitzgerald Offers Us a Ray of Hope

By Malachy McCourt

'Twas said that St. Patrick banished all the snakes from Ireland, though some managed to wriggle back and get elected. Some came to America and became Irish conservatives and others changed completely and became conservative. Doesn't William Buckley resemble a king cobra and the Cheney Dick an elder sibling of a viper? Karl Rove appears to have breakfasted with his boa constrictor cousin on a particularly chunky schoolgirl.

George Wanker Bush has the mien of a rattlesnake who has just received a new set of rattles for Christmas. Tom DeLay would appear to be closely related to the python and Frist has all the benevolence of the mamba but none of its charm. Rumsfeld is a unique species and might be called a riddle snake.

This nest of reptiles moves to Washington en masse, poisoning the environment, eroding the Constitution of these United States and emulating the famous serpent in the Garden of Eden who supposedly tempted Madam Adam, a.k.a. Eve, to chomp on the golden delicious apple which God said was Forbidden Fruit promising protection against non-American snakes. (You see all these snakes are colored red, white and blue so you can distinguish them from others.)

And America fell for it, hoisting patriotic reptiles high on national shoulders, caressing them as they hissed and devoured the soldier children, Iraqi children, Sudanese children and New Orleans children, screaming to the country. We leave no child behind. We devour them all, even the dead ones. And no photographs, please, because any soldier blasted to bloody bits is not a nice sight when having the morning muffin and egg.

But for every snake in our beloved country, there is a mongoose, and the mongoose is the Valerie Plame CIA outing case, which bears the sobriquet of Patrick (Fitzgerald). The mistake the White House snakes made was in thinking Patrick was just like them, a brain-damaged, venomous Irish conservative. But he is a moral man, duty-bound like the mongoose and his namesake St. Patrick to destroy low-life.

According to the larger snakes, dropping the name of an intelligence officer was no big deal. After all, her husband, Joseph Wilson, almost single-handedly stopped an invasion of Iraq and deprived Halliburton and various companies of their rightful war profits. As well, we had to remove Saddam Hussein and all his fellow Iraqis from atop our oil under their land.

So what if a name is leaked to the press? After all, Valerie Plame was a small cog, and no doubt her foreign contacts were costing us money, and who can have respect for people who sell the U.S.A intelligence data, so no problem if they are killed. We can always buy a new set.

Watergate was a mere third-class burglary, and just because some people indulged in a little harmless perjury was no reason for the U.S.A. to get its national knickers in a knot – force a good, patriotic, Christian, anti-Semite like Richard Nixon to leave the White House, head for home and into the arms of Thelma. (No, her name was not Patricia, feminine of Patrick, for if it were she never would have cohabitated with a reptile.)

Back to the little technical perjury at hand, as Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison termed it. This little contretemps is about name-dropping, and oddly the guy who actually spoke the name in public seems to be getting off-scot-free whilst Judy Miller of the Times was threatened with contempt. Now Judy was a White House pet for so long she should have known you can't pet a cobra, not to mention taking them to bed, no matter how cuddly. Familiarity breeds contempt and snakebites.

Nobody is talking now about how the good old snake administration did in New Orleans. Brownie, you are doing a heck of a job (oops). Barbara Alligator Bush said those people were better off, but the downside was they might want to settle in Texas. Another bright spot is that we have 200,000 young soldiers bringing population control in Iraq, by killing those darned Iraqis who want them to leave, and when our boys and girls come home, they can do the same here. We only have about 16,000 badly wounded from that war, but at least most of them are too mutilated to be joining protest marches when the snakes cut veterans benefits.

All of the above keep the unemployment figures way down, and what greater calling than to give your life or at least your eyesight or your limbs for the economy of Halliburton and the \$200,000 they give to the Cheney Dick. But Patrick Fitzgerald presses on, and if there is any justice in this world, that nest of snakes will be without a pit to hiss in.

God help America.
