

NEW YORK POST

We ain't buying Cuomo's 'cure'

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If chicken soup can cure Albany's epidemic of corruption, New Yorkers will be feeling better soon, thanks to the nostrums Gov. Cuomo dished out yesterday.

In a dreary event that smacked of a placeholder for real action, Cuomo summoned a handful of district attorneys to tout changes aimed at making it easier to use state laws to prosecute political corruption.

Some penalties would be increased and standards lowered for conviction, moves Cuomo claimed would give prosecutors "the tools they need."

Maybe, but it's not legal hurdles that keep DAs from doing corruption cases. They themselves are part of the political system, backed by the party bosses and running with some of the people they should be prosecuting. That's the main reason corruption cases usually fall to federal prosecutors, and the new laws wouldn't change that.

Cuomo flicked at that fact in an answer to a reporter's question, just as he flicked at a question about term limits. Neither subject elicited much enthusiasm.

Then again, neither did talk of corruption itself light the governor's fire. If he's lost his famous temper over the explosion of scandals, he's doing a good job of hiding it.

Too good for my taste.

Where's the passion? Where's the righteous anger at those who have betrayed the public trust?

It was missing in action, as it has been for the last week. Again, the governor lapsed into a philosophical dead end about "human nature" and "human behavior" behind the scandals.

He said corruption is “nothing new,” and cautioned against thinking legislation will solve the problem, while allowing that government mixes a “bad combination of chemicals — power, money, arrogance and greed.”

All true — and beside the point. His job is not to explain it — it's to fix it. Anything else sounds like an excuse.

The problem, I fear, is that Cuomo was not prepared for this turn of events and hasn't come to grips with his responsibility. He traded his deep distrust of Albany's transactional culture for legislative support of his agenda.

His mistake was making it all personal. They voted with him, and that was enough. He stopped looking underneath the rug.

Even now, when he should recognize that he's been snookered, he looks more dazed than determined. It's a sign of his predicament that Assembly Speaker Shelly Silver called him a “partner” and said Cuomo promised not to oust him.

Not so long ago, Cuomo had a different standard. He didn't believe that crime was the only problem.

He came into office knowing that virtually everything in Albany was part of a quid pro quo. The profusion of single-house bills reflects how lawmakers use legislation, even dead-on-arrival legislation, to curry favor with special-interest groups and contributors.

In that context, it is a big deal that Bronx Assemblyman Eric Stevenson was caught on tape telling the businessmen allegedly bribing him that they could dictate a bill giving them a monopoly in adult day-care centers. Stevenson introduced the bill — an action that is part of the federal charges against him.

“How many other pending bills were born of bribery? How many passed bills were born of bribery? How about items in the budget?”

It would be heartening if Cuomo asked those questions. But they came from Preet Bharara, the crusading US attorney who is doing his best to bring public integrity to Albany.

He could use some help.

Law 101 for Quinn

Quick, somebody teach Christine Quinn the First Amendment. The council speaker

seems to think that free speech applies only to those who agree with her.

For the third time, Quinn is using her office to try to silence criticism and dissent. The pattern is troubling for someone in her current position, and doubly so because she is the leading candidate for mayor.

Her latest demand for conformity or silence came after an independent group, NYC is Not for Sale 2013, ran a TV ad attacking her. It denounces Quinn as a phony "progressive" who is "always on the wrong side" of liberal issues, ranging from paid sick leave for workers to animal rights.

Quinn's reaction was to have a lawyer fire off a letter to Time Warner Cable, demanding that it stop running the ad because, the lawyer says, it is inaccurate.

That's mighty rich for a politician. And also dangerous, because Time Warner is dependent on Quinn's approval for local business.

Indeed, Quinn earlier threatened Cablevision when it suspended 23 workers. She appeared at a union rally to say, "We are going to find ways to hold them accountable using every level of government we can."

Before that, she went after Chick-fil-A when its owner dared to oppose gay marriage. She urged NYU to evict a store on its campus, accused the owner of "intolerance and homophobia," and said she didn't want Chick-fil-A "in my city."

Her city?

Not yet.

Gee wiz, all kids aren't gifted!

Parts of Manhattan are getting like Lake Wobegon, where all the children are above average. The Post reports that 47 percent of kids taking the test for "gifted and talented" kindergarten spots qualified in parts of TriBeCa and the Upper East and Upper West sides.

But if everybody is gifted, aren't they also average?

Praise out of left field

Look up — it's a bird, it's a plane. Actually, no, it's pigs flying. Lots of them, each one representing praise for Margaret Thatcher from liberals.

Sometimes it takes a death to appreciate a life, and so it is with those on the left when it comes to the Iron Lady. Heart be still, even The New York Times joined the chorus of praise.

Of course, Thatcher's passing provoked an outpouring of affection from those who long appreciated her staunch defense of free markets and free people. The trouble in picking her finest hour is that there were so many of them.

Standing up to rapacious trade unions, privatizing nationalized industries and cutting back on government spending reflected her determination to stop Great Britain's slide into socialism.

She was equally firm in ending appeasement of the Soviet Union. With President Reagan and Pope John Paul II, she helped win the Cold War and defeat communism.

The results were so positive and lasting that the editorial page of The Times had to concede them. The paper took a break from its usual shrill denunciation of conservatives to call Thatcher a "pathbreaker" who "transformed Britain."

Its caveats were many — she was "divisive" and "bullying." But The Times concluded that "the passage of time has drained much of the old anger and left behind her record of accomplishments."

If that was an apology, consider it accepted.

Bam cut\$ & runs

Good to see President Obama has his priorities straight. He flew to California on Air Force One for fund-raisers, and last night held a party celebrating Memphis music.

Yet, because of sequester cuts, the White House remains closed to public tours and the trial of Osama bin Laden's son-in-law might be delayed because public defenders are forced to take furloughs.

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