



Don't Drop Your Guard When it Comes to Trolley Cars!

The *Sunday News* article "City trolley put on slow track fails to get federal funding; not all on board with present plan" is hardly reason to celebrate. How often did we hear that the Convention Center / Hotel Project was dead just to have it be re-born at still greater tax payer expense?

The private Lancaster Street Car Co., consisting of persons self-selected rather than elected or appointed through a public process, is determined to obtain funding from some government source, likely the state.

Tim Peters, Chairman of the Street Car Company, says "It doesn't get 'greener' than streetcars." Apparently Peters doesn't understand that electricity is largely generated by burning carbon fuels!

Trolley cars were a mode of transportation that came and went at the beginning of the 20th Century. The best thing Peters and his cohorts can do with the antique cars they purchased is to donate them to the Railroad Museum in Strasburg. Now that would be a laudable service to the community!

Monday Morning Rush Hour Back-Up on Walnut Street

NewsLanc inquired of City Policy why, once a week, Walnut Street just west of Queen Street is obstructed by a tractor trailer parked two thirds across the road, thus creating an obstruction for rush hour traffic. Below is an explanation from Sgt. Gary Metzger of the Lancaster City Police:

"I think I'm correct in saying that the tractor and trailer is in the 1st block of W. Walnut St. every Wednesday morning. They are making a delivery to the State Store which is located in the 200 block of N. Queen St.

"The loading dock for the State Store is located in the 1st block of W. Walnut St. For at least 10 years they have been delivering on Wednesday morning.

"When they started doing what they are currently doing, I contacted the Liquor Control Board and the

trucking company. I wasn't successful with them. I was basically told that the truck makes deliveries to several stores. It just happens that Lancaster is the first delivery in the morning.

"I asked if they could use a small truck. I was told that when they bid on the contract, they bid on being able to use 48 ft. trailers.

"I then contacted a State Senator about the issue. I think he tried to address it, but was unsuccessful.

"Former Mayor Smithgall tried to address it, but was unsuccessful.

"We were successful in getting them to only take up one travel lane. In the past the truck took up a parking lane and two travel lanes. The right parking lane was used as a travel lane."

LETTER: F&M Bars Reporter from McCain Event

"Ron Harper [news editor of the Lancaster Post] was told to 'leave F&M property'" by the Lancaster Police with F&M security standing by. This is simply

unbelievable and unconstitutional. I honestly can not believe this." Editor: We do! John Fry is the one that F&M should throw out!

LETTER: Why Did Alliance Distort Reasonable Proposals?

“Regarding the NewsLanc article about the Lancaster Alliance: ‘The streets of hell are paved with good intentions’

“There is no question that the Lancaster Alliance has performed community services worthy of a legitimate 501(c)3 organization. Yet whether the Lancaster Alliance is actually a legitimate non-profit can be called into question, based on their past and present actions.

“For example, the hotel and convention center currently under construction - originally proposed by the Lancaster Alliance - clearly violates the findings of the 1998 LDR International report, which was commissioned by the Lancaster Alliance and is still displayed on their web site. How and why did the Lancaster Alliance take perfectly reasonable proposals and distort them into a project where private companies making a minimal

investment stand to make a considerable profit, while taxpayers are stuck with nearly all of the exorbitant costs and practically all of the risk?

“Also deserving of scrutiny is the streetcar proposal, which seems to be a done deal even though not one single vote has ever been taken by any governmental body which would be required for the streetcars to operate in the public rights of way.

“These and other projects by the Lancaster Alliance must call into question whether its actions which truly benefit the community constitute its true purpose for existence, or if the Lancaster Alliance’s philanthropic work is nothing more than a cover for an agenda which exists primarily to profit its most powerful members.”

Reflections on the Press and Democracy From Afar

5000 miles away in Budapest, the concerns are the same as in Lancaster (and elsewhere), as accomplished individuals in their early 40s bemoan the failure of the print media to perform its traditional “Fourth Estate” duties as a watchdog of the government, church and business establishments.

The head of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union points out the failure of Hungarian and other Eastern European newspapers and magazines to conduct serious investigatory reporting. He explains that reporters have to produce articles each week and are not allowed the two or three weeks required to research and investigate an important issue. Therefore, they are not sufficiently informed to ask perceptive questions. As a result, the print media uncritically report what they are told.

Further, their editors fear offending their advertisers. Unlike a century ago when profits depended upon “newsboys” competing with sensations on street corners, circulation today is based on home delivery and advertising is the key variable for profitability. Sound familiar?

With few exceptions, newspapers and magazines have investors who seek the best possible rate of return on their investments. Capitalism is not built on idealism!

The civil liberties leader favors a web site that commissions journalists to conduct in depth studies of important topics and then publish them.

A McCaskey / Columbia University graduate who has resided in Hungary for fifteen years suggests a web site to monitor and critique published articles.

Both ideas are deemed worthy. So the matter becomes: From where will the money come to cover even the relatively modest costs of Internet publication? To combine both approaches into a single web site would require a budget of a \$100,000 a year. (It would cost at least half again as much here in Lancaster.)

The discussion spotlights two of the most critical challenges to the furtherance and preservation of democracy and a constructive society: Will enlightened philanthropy support competition for self serving government and business interests and use the economical Internet to reach and inform the public?

And will the public, who tend individually to focus on its personal concerns, be willing to take the time to visit alternate sources of news and information?

NewsLanc.com DOESN'T JUST REPORT. IT INVESTIGATES!