



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 6, 2014

Is Bill de Blasio Trading Horses for Money?

They used to hang horse thieves — now they elect them mayor. As many know, New York City’s new commandant, Bill de Blasio, has sworn that one of his first acts upon taking office will be to ban Central Park’s iconic horse-drawn carriages. He claims that forcing horses to work in Manhattan is inhumane, but is he really just kowtowing to a big real-estate developer who heavily supported his campaign?



Interestingly, there was a time when de Blasio was more blasé about these animal-rights concerns. In fact, when he had the chance as a City Council member to [support legislation](#) banishing NYC’s hansom cabs in 2007, he balked. Now, though, he leaves no doubt as to his position. As NBC New York [wrote](#):

“We are going to get rid of the horse carriages. Period,” de Blasio said at a press conference....

“We are going to quickly and aggressively move to make horse carriages no longer a part of the landscape in New York City,” de Blasio said. “They are not humane. They are not appropriate to the year 2014. It’s over.”

Yet de Blasio doesn’t intend to leave the carriage drivers high and dry — he [plans to replace](#) the hansom cabs with “electric, vintage-replica tourist-friendly vehicles that provide jobs for current drivers.” And, of course, green concerns can change any leftist’s heart. What kind of green changed de Blasio’s heart, however, is the question. As the New York Post [reported](#) this past September in a piece entitled “De Blasio’s switch on Central Park carriage horses brings activists’ dough”:

Records show that Steve Nislick, who co-founded the animal-rights group NYCLASS, has ponied up the maximum \$4,950 for de Blasio’s campaign. Two other NYCLASS pals, Wendy and John Neu, have chipped in \$9,900.

More importantly, the organization has spent \$774,000 in ads against a key de Blasio Democratic rival, Christine Quinn.

But this is where it really gets interesting. Because it turns out that this Steve Nislick isn’t just another Greenpeace retread.

At issue here is an entity named Edison Properties, which is, real-estate writer Michael Gross [reported](#) in 2009, “a real estate development and management company” that just happens to have two businesses, “Manhattan Mini-Storage and Edison ParkFast — with multiple locations in the same Far West Midtown neighborhood as the stables where the Central Park horses are housed.”

Now, can you guess who is both the CEO of Edison and the man who conjured up the idea of replacing NYC’s horse-drawn carriages with electric cars?

That’s right, Steve Nislick.

Gross elaborates:

His connections to local politics are deep, and his company ... employs legions of lobbyists to



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influence city decisions on real estate and zoning in its favor.

... Nislick shows his hand [in a brochure on the electric-car scheme] when he discusses those five stables where the horses are housed, all sitting ... [in] the same neighborhood where Edison operates many of its parking lots and storage warehouses. In a curious twist for a parking lot mogul, Nislick paints his proposal as “a green transportation alternative.”

Gross then tells us that when Nislick finally gets to his real point, he writes, “Currently, the stables consist of 64,000 square feet of valuable real estate on lots that could accommodate up to 150,000 square feet of development. These lots could be sold for new development.”

And the horses could be sold to a glue factory, too. Of course, de Blasio has promised to “‘provide a humane retirement of all New York City carriage horses,’ thus loading even more pension and health-care liabilities on his preferred beasts of burden, the city’s taxpayers,” [writes](#) Nick Gillespie at the Daily Beast. Radio giant Rush Limbaugh had his fun as well, [saying](#) on his show last Thursday:

Why do you think the new mayor of New York is going to get rid of the horse-drawn carriage?... Keep in mind, these people think that automobiles and fossil-fueled vehicles are destroying the climate and would love to take us back to the horse and buggy days, except the new mayor of New York thinks it is cruel and inhumane for horses to pull carriages with people in them.

Unfortunately, though, de Blasio’s scheme — and more significantly, what it tells us about de Blasio himself — are no laughing matter. While he has pledged to fight “income inequality,” one of his first acts upon taking office is to eliminate some of NYC’s most lucrative blue-collar jobs. And replacing the horses with electric-cars is unlikely to work. Horse-drawn carriages have been plying Central Park’s roads since the park opened in 1857, and, as Spokane, Wash., tourist Kathy Walker [attests](#), some NYC visitors will even schedule their hansom cab rides prior to arrival. It’s hard to imagine that a departure from tradition, such as electric cars, could ever have the same cachet.

And while not many people work in the NYC hansom cab business, it’s likely that de Blasio’s economic recklessness will only continue. Bear in mind that this is a man who honeymooned in Cuba in violation of the U.S. travel ban to that nation; supported the communist Sandinistas, which included raising funds for the group, traveling to Nicaragua, and subscribing to the party newspaper, *Barricadda*; and whose choice for a college trip was a visit to the Soviet Union. This was the same year Ronald Reagan called that nation “the Evil Empire.”

But de Blasio has perhaps accomplished one thing many thought impossible: making Little Big Gulp look good. As some may know, that’s the moniker I quite unaffectionately attached to ex-mayor Michael Bloomberg, the Menshevik who sought to ban large sodas and prohibited the donation of food to homeless shelters because the city couldn’t be sure of its salt and fat content. And now we have not “[Mr. Ed](#)” but “Mr. Red,” the savior of equines who can’t speak for themselves.

Well, at least de Blasio never said on the campaign trail, “If you like your horse, you can keep your horse.”



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