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The Politics Are Wrong

by Abe Mittleman

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Generally speaking, in a just society those who do wrong aren't rewarded for doing so. However, the bill recently passed by the state legislature okaying the City of New York to issue permits allowing livery taxis the right to do street hails in upper Manhattan and the outer four boroughs does just that.

The livery industry has a very long history of flouting the rules. The industry as we know it today was mostly born from cars that were violating the rules going back decades. When medallion taxis were the only taxis licensed to do business in the City of New York, these rogue taxis were operating in complete defiance of the law.

The only license they had was a fraud obtained from the state by registering themselves as New York State taxis and obtaining livery plates. Without a license to operate in the City of New York, they did so anyway. The only exceptions were those who were legally registered as car services, but even those vehicles would often illegally steal street hails.

Then in the 1980's, when it became apparent that the need for taxi service was growing, the drivers of these cars were allowed to operate as pre-arranged service for-hire vehicles. They agreed to not do street hail pickups, while medallion taxis were given the exclusive rights for these street hail pickups as such law was enacted. Radio rights were removed for medallion taxis as part of this law.

We gave these livery cabs a foot in the door for free. We surmised, as it turned out to be correct, that they had no intention of keeping their end of the bargain. Over the next 25 years, they would grow their numbers and steal street hails until only the written law had any semblance of what was right.

One by one, they took what was not theirs until they claimed they owned it. With no enforcement of the law they had it. Now all they had to do was convince the right politicians to make their illegal ways legal, and so far, they have.

If this bill is allowed to become law, there is no doubt that these livery cabs will not stop where they are limited. There is no doubt that they will find ways to circumvent their limitations as they have done in the past.

If the politicians think that G.P.S. tracking and taxi meters will keep them honest, then they better think twice. Even in the areas where they are permitted, there is no way they will be able to

police them into using this equipment. When they are in forbidden territory as allowed to be when transporting passengers into these areas, they for sure will take fares and not be detected by making cash deals as they have so many times in the past. This will keep them off the radar.

The bill passed the Assembly and State Senate, but it has yet to be signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Hopefully, our governor will recognize this injustice and send those responsible back to the drawing board to do it right. All the people in the City of New York deserve legitimate taxi service, but not what's now being offered.

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