

Time for conductor Kalikow to jump off runaway MTA

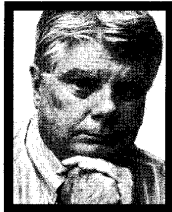
ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME for Peter Kalikow do the right thing and submit a resignation of honor, on a matter of principle?

You know, the way French generals do when they lose a battle. Or when British cabinet ministers are embroiled in scandal. Or when bishops are caught in the choir loft with an attractive member of the congregation. In Japan they have a more drastic method, but I am hardly calling for that. Just for

a decent and honorable resignation.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, of which Mr. Kalikow was named chairman three years ago, is a disaster, wallowing in debt. Ten years ago the MTA owed just over \$7 billion; today it owes twice that. Fares are about to go up again, service is about to be cut, workers will be sacked. The city over the years had ponied up less and less. So, too, the state.

Yet the MTA rushes blindly ahead with appealing but fanciful schemes: LIRR links to Grand Central, the legendary Second Avenue subway, a direct link from JFK to Wall Street, and so on. In fairness to



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the man, Peter Kalikow has warned that some or all of these projects may have to be scrapped.

Yet he gives no thought to other, sensible economies. The other evening Channel 2 News ran a feature on all (more than 100) of those shiny black cars MTA execs drive about town rather than sully their images by riding the ugh! subways and buses like the rest of us.

This at a time when our commuter rail lines to the north and east, Hudson, Harlem and New Haven, will be cutting schedules and raising prices, our buses will be fewer and farther apart (with winter looming), subway booths are closed and subway cleaning and

maintenance trimmed.

Kalikow is a real estate mogul and a political appointee of the governor. The nearest he ever came to working in the transportation industry was a few years back, when he and the village fathers of Montauk feuded over whether Peter should be allowed to build a pier to moor his yacht.

Tom Hanks, on *The Polar Express*, has a more impressive transit résumé.

Elsewhere in the clips, we learn that Peter was (for about 15 minutes) publisher of the *New York Post*. Was that before or after Abe Hirschfeld mangled the same job? Who can keep these things straight? The eyes glaze over.

Yet Pataki named a man totally without qualifications to head up a complex agency that was already troubled and running short.

When I recently encountered, coming out of church, a pal who follows state and local government more closely and intelligently than I do, I asked, was there a single reason Peter Kalikow should be running the MTA? My source could think of one: "He doesn't steal."

And among Pataki appointees, that's something.

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