

north shore news

LAUTENS: B-line to Armageddon if No prevails?

Trevor Lautens, contributing writer

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This
JUST IN
Trevor Lautens

The \$7.5-billion transit plebiscite coffin should have so many nails in it that it may require a second coffin.

There's a note of desperation in the Yessirs' plea-cum-threat to Metro Vancouverites to lend approval to the 10-year plan, funded by a half-percentage-point lift in the provincial sales tax. (Temporary? Permanent? Who knows?)

Vote Yes, or — Armageddon. Babies, moist at both ends, and their weeping mothers stranded in the rain, packed buses stonily sweeping past them.

Cynical manipulators with thick Langley accents evilly chuckling that they've foiled Vancouver Island pro-Yessir sages. UBC students going mad in bulging B-line buses, mobile Black Holes of Calcutta.

Vancouver Sun columnist Barbara Yaffe is, at this writing, the latest to spoil the well-heeled Yessirs' party. What, she asks, is the Yessirs' source of money?

Bafflegab reply: Metro mayors' council had agreed to spend up to \$6 million on "the education component to promote the benefits of mayors' plan for regional transportation." (Those ads plastered on bus sides, pro-Yes radio plugs and mass phone calls, are educational?) Translation:

Taxpayers ultimately are paying. Further questions "will be considered" — not necessarily answered, note — when "the campaign period is complete." Until then, peasants, just zip your lips and tug your forelocks.

As of a couple of weeks ago the Nossirs had raised a starveling \$30,000. Jordan Bateman calculates the Yessirs are outspending his ragged band 200-1, something like the Team Canada score against Volcanovia at the second-period intermission.

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Vancouver Sun columnist Malcolm Parry's nostalgia gland was squeezed by my recent utopian bus fantasies, especially the "club car" proposal.

Mac recalled travel with chums on the train from work in Birmingham to his Walsall home. Heady days. Possibly not clear-headed. A teetotal pal who worked at the Aston brewery would ascend, bearing two flagons of his daily free-beer allowance. This enlivened the group's card games.

"I often won enough in the games to buy 10 Senior Service cigarettes at journey's end," Mac recalled. "Given that, the free beer, and the low cost of a day-return railway ticket, I was, as the British say, 'quid's in.' "

Memories aside, Mac also sent a CNN story proving great minds think alike: In March San Francisco began a luxury bus service that has resemblances to my ideal bus.

Running between the wealthy Marina district and downtown, the buses have leather and reclaimed wood appointments; LED and Wi-Fi and mobile device outlets; an app offering pre-boarding orders for food and drink (sadly, non-alcoholic). An attendant serves drinks, adjusts the temperature, and chooses the music.

Normal bus fare is \$2.25. Headline: "Would you pay \$6 to commute in a bus that looks like a cafe crossed with a Virgin America plane?"

Certainly. See, grey-souled TransLink, my proposals aren't bizarre — they're sensible. Think!

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The North Shore Zone Festival of Plays is a happy, friendly week, requiring some stamina: An ice-breaker party Sunday, followed by six nights of plays. I made four, sending trusted agents to the other two. Beats the Stanley Cup playoffs without the Canucks.

The winner, off to its own playoffs in July in Kamloops: Rabbit Hole, with Peter Zednick picking up best director. Tightly written. Excellent cast. Gripping. Confession: I left at intermission. I didn't care to watch a couple's marriage unravelling, unable to handle the grief of their four-year-old son's death. Call me sissy. Call me jaded. I know enough about life's wounds.

Shallowly, you may say, I want entertainment, a few jolly laughs. And I anticipated the ending — a life-affirming birth of the spinny unmarried sister's child. Was I right?

Short notes: Sue Sparlin — who didn't begin acting until age 60 — would make a fine Madame Arcati if someone, please, would stage Noel Coward's Blythe Spirit. Nigel Vonas was a festival standout in an unpleasant play. And Kieyella Thornton-Trump, 10, won hearts in W.A. Troyer's Grandpa 'n' Me.

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Still more stage: Roger Nelson is as durable as the Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, which this area's oldest theatre company, North Shore Light Opera Society, has performed for 67 years. This year Nelson is staging H.M.S. Pinafore.

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West Vancouver is the Flip City of real estate, its prices maddest in the mad Vancouver area — which is yoked with London and Manhattan for the priciest property on the planet.

Last Saturday's Sun — anyone who doesn't read at least one Vancouver daily is badly under-informed — listed 23 West Van flipped property prices that would knock your proverbial socks off. Example: 910 Braeside St., sold April 7 for \$2,098,000, listed six days later for half a million higher.

The champ: A bare lot at 1424 Sandhurst Place, sold a year ago for \$3.7 million, listed last month for \$6.18 million. (In April a typical detached West Van home sold for \$2.23 million.)

I first reacted with shoulda/woulda/coulda: Why hadn't I got in on this feeding frenzy?

Confession: Because at heart I believe there's something indecent about treating a house — with its unrecorded history of families, of birth and growth and death, of talk and laughter, of murmured love and bitter quarrel, of secrets kept by its discreet walls — as just another commodity to be flipped up the financial food chain, like barrels of oil or railway stock.

That's the kind of chump I am.

Former Vancouver Sun columnist Trevor Lautens writes every second Friday on politics and life with a West Vancouver bias. He can be reached via email at rtlautens@gmail.com (<mailto:rtlautens@gmail.com>).

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