

## **The Real Michael Bloomberg by Dan Jacoby**

On the old game show, "To Tell The Truth", three people on a panel all claimed to be the same person, while four celebrity contestants tried to figure out who really was that person. At the end of the show, the emcee asked the "real" person to stand up.

Last spring, at the height of the state budget battle, Mayor Bloomberg threatened to pull his money away from Republican candidates, and even to bankroll Democrats to challenge key Republican state Senators, unless New York City got sufficient money to educate our children. In the end, he settled for a compromise under which we got some money to help build new schools, but no extra money for operations.

Now, as the election approaches, Michael Bloomberg is not only giving huge sums to Republican candidates, but also stumping for Republicans, gushing at a campaign stop in Westchester County that, "if you ever saw a group that's come through in ways no one has expected, I would argue it's the Republican Senate."

Will the real Michael Bloomberg please stand up?

The Michael Bloomberg who threatened Joe Bruno, the Republican Senate Majority Leader, with all sorts of dire consequences cannot possibly be the same Michael Bloomberg who campaigns enthusiastically for Republican Senator Nick Spano.

The Michael Bloomberg who, as Mayor of New York City, must continually battle upstate Republicans whose control of the state government is costing New York City \$10 billion per year, cannot possibly be the same Michael Bloomberg who fights so hard to make sure that upstate Republicans keep their jobs.

Or can he?

Walt Whitman once wrote, "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes." Certainly, people are capable of dramatic shifts in position in many areas. And just as certainly, as a Republican, Michael Bloomberg is expected to help fellow Republicans in a tough election season.

But Michael Bloomberg was supposed to be independent, so independent that he pushed very hard for non-partisan local elections. He was supposed to be so independent that nobody could buy his loyalty or his support. And yet, something has clearly bought Michael Bloomberg's support for upstate Republicans.

It isn't money. Bloomberg is richer than anyone who might want to buy him. So what could he want so much that he's willing to compromise his independence, to betray the city he supposedly leads, and to be so dramatically inconsistent?

Many people have said that Michael Bloomberg may run for President in two years. Is it possible that he is so desperate to get the Republican nomination that he would throw out everything he stands for?

Or is that depraved political hack the real Michael Bloomberg?