

EDITORIAL

Nothing to celebrate

The Amazon debacle is a worrisome sign of a new direction in Democratic politics

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

This one's a heart-breaker. Amazon's Valentine's Day breakup with New York is devastating to the state, to New York City and to Long Island. The repercussions are enormous — and will likely reverberate for generations. Months after New York wooed and won Amazon, the company walked out on its suitor on Thursday. With it went the dream of more than \$27 billion in tax revenue and at least 25,000 jobs over the next 15 years, plus the promise of thousands of unionized construction and service jobs and the boon to supporting industries. With it, too, went the possibility of new infrastructure, workforce training, and the larger notion that this is a dynamic state that can reinvent itself for the 21st century economy by attracting new companies and building new industries.

Why would any other company want to come here after watching the Amazon debacle? The desolate Hunters Point site that would have been Amazon's second home has offered many of the same economic incentives for three decades. Nobody came. No one else knocked on the door.

And for Long Island, a region that for decades has talked about technology and life sciences as the future, but never has been able to get there, this is a sickening blow.

While Amazon's decision to pull out of New York and turn its focus to Northern Virginia and Nashville certainly marks a big defeat for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, neither man is responsible for this mess, although we would like to have seen stronger action from the mayor.

Instead, this loss belongs squarely on the shoulders of

State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and her deputy, State Sen. Michael Gianaris, both of whom flunked this defining test.

For Gianaris and Stewart-Cousins, the Amazon deal's collapse represents a failure to lead, to imagine, to think big. In an effort to win political points with the left, Stewart-Cousins and Gianaris, both Democrats, tried to play a game with Amazon, only to watch the corporate giant take its ball of jobs, revenue and economic promise and leave. That's not something to be proud of or to applaud.

The silence of the Long Island delegation was deafening, too. There was no clamor to get Amazon to stay, no big news conference or public statement, no effort to call out Stewart-Cousins and Gianaris for selling out New York.

Yet as news of the deal's collapse broke Thursday, boisterous celebrations began.

Newly elected Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, State Sen. Jessica Ramos, City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer, and several candidates for New York City's public advocate, including Nomiki Konst, were among those cheering.

"Na na na na . . . na na na na . . . Hey hey hey . . . GOOD-BYE," tweeted Konst.

Let's be quite clear. This is NOT a victory for anyone in New York. Yes, the region won't be welcoming a company that has many nonunion positions, but we won't be getting the unionized construction and service jobs, either.

And without new sources of revenue, and a company with reason to want to improve nearby neighborhoods, the city will not see the big upgrades so many area residents and elected officials — including those who were so vehemently anti-Amazon — want so badly.

What about hopes for a new subway station, better signaling, or more elevators?

Nope.

What about a Long Island Rail Road station in Sunnyside, or renovations to the two in Long Island City, or better rail service overall?

Can't do it.

What about new schools, computer science programs, and a place where small businesses could flourish?

Sorry.

The tax incentives that were decried here won't be reincarnated as cheap housing or increased school funding. This won't be a case of \$3 billion suddenly appearing; it'll be a case of \$27 billion disappearing. Remember, too, that other cities offered the same or more in incentives for Amazon. If we can't compete, companies will just go somewhere that can.

Reflexive, anti-corporate, anti-business rhetoric, which denies the realities of economics to indulge in histrionics, has real ramifications. The Democratic Party and its leaders in New York and nationally are going to have to address that issue before they tip so far to the left that our economy topples over. Income

inequality must be addressed, but rejecting capitalism is not the answer.

The opportunities lost from Amazon's exit can't be quantified, and likely won't be fully understood for years to come. But we'll see it every time a Long Island senior citizen's home isn't bought by a young Amazon worker, or when office space stays vacant because it's not filled by a new synergistic tech business, or when school district enrollment continues to dwindle, rather than be bolstered by new Long Island families.

New York always has been the nation's economic center, in part because in its history it has welcomed companies that are key to the country at any given moment, from Grumman to Kodak, from IBM to PepsiCo, from JPMorgan Chase to Pfizer. Today, at least, we're not that state.

On Valentine's Day 2019, New York's dreams of a better future were punctured. There is nothing to celebrate.

