Heavenly Mandate?

Management has handed the BART Board a vaccine mandate to vote on. Maybe someone has been reading ancient Chinese history, a time when the Emperor would declare their harsh rules were “mandates from heaven.”

Medical studies show that these vaccines ARE effective. Out of the people who are vaccinated and get infected and sick, fewer get hospitalized or die than those who are not. And if they get infected with the virus, they carry a smaller viral load than people who aren’t. That means that they will be less likely to infect people they come into contact with.

But what is really going on here? Who can believe that BART is concerned about workers’ health and safety? When management finally admitted that we were in a growing pandemic, what was the response?

How long did it take them to respond with proper PPE, adequate cleaning tools and assuring that people who were working in closed spaces or wanting to eat in the break room had adequate ventilation? We’re still waiting!

When people wanted testing to be available on site, they said it was impossible. Their approach to contact tracing was half-assed at best. There has been no real attempt to educate people.

We can’t get divided into pro-vax and anti-vax groups. We all have to be responsible. Whether we are vaccinated or not we still have to look after the health and safety of us all. We can’t get drawn into the “masks off” wishful thinking. The six-foot rule gives some protection, but with a mask we have more and with the vaccine we all have the best protection available today.

But we don’t need a mandate from people who think they are living in the Emperor’s court.

Safety And Quality Are The Priority?

On the maintenance side of BART, as in the rest of the system, there is a real disconnect between what management says and what the reality is. We’re told that the priorities are:

#1: Safety
#2: Quality
#3: Compliance (with procedures and rules)
#4: Production/Service

But workers regularly find that safety is definitely NOT number one. Quality is not even a close second. Compliance is only when it benefits management. And pressures for production and service always win out in the day-to-day.

Paper vs. Reality

BART management has a problem connecting goals with reality. Attracting ridership is important and running 10-car consists all day sounds like a good idea. But there is a real problem of understaffing in almost all departments. And then there’s the problem of working railcars.

The retirement incentive, regular retirements, slowness in hiring, and difficulty of finding workers has helped create the staffing problem.

The Legacy fleet is aging and failing more often, and partly decommissioned. And the new cars, or “Fleet Of The Future” (FOTF), are still not as reliable as they need to be. Running 10-car consists all day might sound good but it will come back to haunt management.

The Next FOTF (Flop of the Future)?