

QUOTATION

ON SUBWAY CONTINGENCIES AND GRAFFITI EXTINCTION

There were those, to be sure, who regarded subway graffiti as a form of folk art, and by 1984 it was so ubiquitous, sometimes covering entire trains, that even those who saw it as the beginning of the end of western civilization had come to regard it as an intractable problem.

Charged with getting rid of it, Mr. Goodlatte took it one car at a time. Starting with the No. 7 Flushing line, he stationed cleaning crews at each terminal and ordered them to remove graffiti from each car as it came in. If a job was too big to handle, the train was taken out of service and sent to the yard for a thorough cleaning.

The approach caused some delays and inconvenience, but Mr. Goodlatte's theory that graffiti artists who did not get to see their handiwork in motion would soon become discouraged proved correct.

After initial success on the Flushing line, the program was extended to other lines until 1989, when the Transit Authority ceremoniously took what it described as the last graffiti-covered train out of service for a final cleaning and declared the entire system graffiti free.

There have been some flareups since, and in 1991 Mr. Goodlatte had to reconvene a graffiti task force he had formed, but for the most part subway cars have remained remarkably clean.

From: Thomas, R. M., Jr. (1997, January 29). A. R. Goodlatte, 57, dies; Freed subways of graffiti. *The New York Times*, p. D22.

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