

# Highest rates breed big profits

Us Long Island folks were the target of focus in a survey published recently in a Dallas, Texas newspaper. The survey dealt with the cost of electricity, and the fingers were pointed our way because we have the dubious distinction of having the highest electricity rates in the nation. Thanks to LILCO, and Governor Mario Cuomo.

We didn't need the Dallas survey to know our electricity rates are the highest. We get a reminder with every bill from our monopolistic utility. We also get a reminder in the loss of jobs because businesses are fleeing in frightening numbers to places where both taxes and electricity are cheaper. One of the key factors of the economic plight of Long Island is the cost of electricity. We pay those rates not only for our homes, but also in taxes to cover the energy needs of our governments,

schools, and in the prices we pay because of the higher cost of living here.

What the Dallas survey didn't show are the reasons for these high energy costs, which continue to escalate year after year because of a "sweetheart deal" negotiated by LILCO with Cuomo. A misguided, mismanaged, ill-conceived nuclear power plant, Shoreham, cost the ratepayers of Long Island billions of dollars over the years. Aided by cozy arrangements with the state's Public Service Commission (PSC) and the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), LILCO pursued a tunnel-vision course toward putting the plant on line.

Cuomo, to his credit, helped put an end to the Shoreham threat. But the price he paid in the deal he negotiated with LILCO is having a staggering impact on

ratepayers. Not only did LILCO get back all they spent in building Shoreham, but on top of Construction Work in Progress funds which had been granted by the PSC, the governor's deal gave them anticipated profits from the plant, and guaranteed rate increases over 10 years. In short, a bad situation has grown steadily worse.

LILCO benefited mightily from the governor's generosity. So much so, in fact, that the utility recently reported a whopping 23 percent increase in profits for the past quarter.

This increased percentage of profit has caused a new storm of protest. Bay Shore attorney and former District Court Judge Anne Mead, also a former chairwoman of the PSC, who now heads a citizens watchdog group, called the profits "unconscionable" and said she will ask the PSC to review the terms of the Shoreham settlement. And Richard Kessel, who heads the state's Consumer Protection Board, labeled them "excessive."

While we don't argue with those views, we have little hope the PSC will do anything. The PSC was part and parcel of the governor's LILCO deal, they had input into the financial giveaways it included.

And Kessel, who was put in his job by the governor, was the governor's "salesman" for the deal. He stumped the county extolling its virtues. He isn't likely to take a stand now against the deal, or the governor.

Kessel is also the chairman of the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), another gift the governor gave him. LIPA, more than anything else, was the weapon that helped kill Shoreham. The threat of a potential takeover of LILCO by LIPA was used to convince LILCO that a settlement was in their best interests. But Cuomo then shaped LIPA for his own use, gained the majority by loading it with his loyalists. A public election of LIPA board members has been stalled in the legislature, and politicians, along with some LILCO allies, have started calling for an abolition of the authority.

Shoreham is currently in the process of being decommissioned. A study is being made of the possibility of converting the facility from nuclear power to natural gas. The conversion would enable the use of turbine generating equipment already in place, as well as the transmission lines leading from the plant. But LILCO is not a fan of the conversion proposal. LILCO, in consort with the state's New York Power Authority (NYPA), is planning construction of a gas-fired plant at Holtsville.

This 150-megawatt facility will cost an estimated \$150 million. The cost of energy has been estimated at 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour.

The key word is estimate. One must remember it was LILCO's board and management that estimated the cost of Shoreham at \$250 million. The cost ended up, at last estimates, at about \$6.5 billion, approximately 25 times higher. LILCO earns a return on what it spends, not on frugal management.

Meanwhile, conversion plans for Shoreham recently released by three consortiums of private developers, have developed proposals that vary from the mid-\$200 million range to the upper-\$300 million range. The sizes of the proposed facilities range from 238 to 467 megawatts, and energy costs per kilowatt hour range from 4.5 to 5.62 cents.

Considering all of this leads to these questions: what data has been compiled to determine the need for the Holtsville facility? What comparatives have been made between Holtsville and the conversion of Shoreham? Which is in the financial best interest of the ratepayer? There must be answers to these questions before construction on Holtsville begins!

Interestingly, NYPA and two other firms submitted a bid for the Shoreham conversion project. They proposed a 401-megawatt facility at a capital cost of \$274 million. And yet, NYPA proposes to build the 150-megawatt plant for \$150 million. Their Shoreham proposal would yield more than twice the capacity at less than twice the cost. Wouldn't the ratepayers be better served by dumping Holtsville and going with Shoreham? Wouldn't the extra capacity help eliminate older and costlier oil-fired facilities, saving their higher maintenance costs?

We agree with Anne Mead. The Cuomo deal with LILCO that has produced growing profits out of the pockets of the ratepayers most certainly should be reviewed. And there must also be a serious evaluation of the current plans to rush ahead with a Holtsville plant while the answers are not yet all in on a Shoreham conversion.

We should not rush into another mistake as happened with Shoreham. It is imperative, given the bankrupting nature of current LILCO rates, that serious consideration be given to building the highest capacity plant at the lowest possible cost.

Whatever we do, we should be sure we are doing what's right for the ratepayers. They have suffered enough!

And why not?

## Above the law?

In East Hampton last week, two members of the East Hampton Town Board, various town and East Hampton Village officials, along with celebrity Billy Joel joined a group of East End haul seiners and deliberately broke the law. They were protesting the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC's) rules and regulations governing the taking of striped bass. They want the allocation for commercial fishermen to be larger, and the restrictions on size changed.

The DEC regulations were originally imposed because of alleged PCB's that had shown up in the striped bass stock that originates in the Hudson River. General Electric and other companies allegedly dumped toxins into the river. These heavy metals filtered downstream and imbedded themselves in the river bottom. The Hudson River is a nursery for striped bass.

The DEC promulgated these rules, also, to stop the over-harvesting of this species. Prior to these rules being imposed, bass of any size could be taken. Haul seining is a favorite method used by commercial fishermen. A net is strung out from the beach and surrounds the school of fish. Two trucks then pull the net into the beach. The fish suffocate as their gills become entangled in the net. This method of fishing is ancient, having been used for generations by the baymen.

Recreational fishermen, who fish not only for sport but increasingly for profit, have had a long-running battle with the true commercial fishermen as to whom the species belong to.

We never could understand the DEC's regulation based upon the PCB argument. Logically, small fish do not contain the accumulated amounts of PCB's that larger fish do. When the DEC first reopened the fishery, they allowed the recreational fishermen to take one fish over 26 inches. They now allow only one fish over 36 inches. If smaller fish contain less PCB's, why force the recreational fishermen to take the larger fish containing more PCB's?

The Chesapeake Bay area is another main nursery area for striped bass. In that area, you are forbidden to take the larger fish because their biologists believe these fish are capable of reproducing larger quantities of eggs and sperm, and therefore, are considered the breeding stock. That represents common sense to us.

Technical information aside, we find it reprehensible that East Hampton Town officials, Supervisor Tony Bullock and

Councilwoman Cathy Lester, who are pledged to uphold the constitution of the state of New York, would willfully violate these laws. They were ticketed for possession of undersized bass, after picking up fish taken in the nets. With their actions as an example, why should anyone obey any law they feel is unjust? If the East Hampton Town Board members feel they are above the law, why shouldn't the citizens? Aren't we a government of the people, by the people, and for the people? Are not the elected officials held to a higher degree of accountability because of the oath they take to uphold the constitution?

While East Hampton Village Administrator Larry Cantwell, Planning Board Chairwoman Pat Mansir, and town Natural Resources Director Larry Penny are not elected officials, and therefore not bound by an oath of office, they are nonetheless appointed officials and should obey the law, like it or not. How can they cite others for breaking a law if they pick and choose the laws they themselves will obey?

If Billy Joel wants to break the law for publicity purposes, that is between him and his conscience. The same cannot be said for the elected officials who joined him. Their cause may be right, their forum was wrong.

We believe the East Hampton officials owe all the citizens either a sincere apology for their lack of common sense, or their resignation for their arrogance in stomping on the constitution that allows them to serve.

And why not?

## Adding insult to injury

Those of us who own boats have had to pay a user fee for the last two years imposed by the United States Congress. To most of us, the term "user fee" means that services will be provided for the fees charged, although most times user fees are taxes in disguise.

Recently, we paid this year's user fee. On the back of the decal we had to place on the boat was the following legend: "The fee for which this document was provided was established under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. Persons paying this fee can expect no increase in the quantity, quality or variety of services the person

receives from the Coast Guard as a result of this payment." How do you like them apples?

Boaters were singled out for these so-called "user fees." The federal government then had the audacity to turn around and, in plain English, say you are being robbed.

These fees were put into effect last summer. Enforcement was started in September. The taxes were applied against all boats. The larger the boat, the higher the fee. Mariners screamed bloody murder. Congress recanted the law, but guess what? They are doing it in stages.

Small boats, basically outboards, won't have to pay the fee next year. Medium size boats, those up to 40 feet, will not have to pay the fee the year after. Owners of larger boats, over 41 feet, will continue to be raped until 1995. Why couldn't they have had the common sense and decency when they repealed the law to include all boats at the same time?

It's this kind of abuse by the Congress of the United States that has led most of us to believe that those sitting in Congress are first-class fools who deserve to be thrown out of office.

And why not?

# Let's look at BOCES

BOCES was formed nearly two decades ago. The concept appeared right then, but should be seriously questioned today.

BOCES is the acronym for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services. There are three districts in Suffolk County. BOCES is a state creation. Each school board is allowed to nominate a school board member to the BOCES board. The taxpayers and the residents have no direct say in either the representation or the opera-

tion of the board.

BOCES charges every school district an administrative fee to cover the overhead and the operating factors of the system. BOCES was originally sold to the public as a cost-effective way of providing vocational education for students who did not wish to pursue traditional high school and were not college-bound.

The argument in favor of BOCES was as follows: "Why should every district duplicate efforts when these

services could be centralized and offered by a single facility? By pooling the individual district's assets, better service could be provided at less cost." It also would provide special services that school boards might find to be cost-prohibitive in the psychological/handicapped areas.

BOCES charges the individual school districts tuition for vocational and other services, as well as the administrative overhead fees. Many school board officials have publicly

complained about the administrative charges imposed on the districts by BOCES. They have complained that the costs are not realistic, but there is not much they can do about it.

Just recently, County Comptroller Joseph Caputo generated a refund for Suffolk County of \$1.3 million from BOCES II. BOCES had overcharged the county for services, which was only picked up after an audit by the county.

Bill Ciraco, a former high school principal in Hampton Bays, has been a persistent critic of BOCES. For the past year, he has made several revelations that have brought into the public's eye apparent waste and possibly skullduggery. BOCES recently changed their procedures at meetings to stop critics such as Ciraco from speaking out or questioning where the people's tax money was going.

What is known is that the director of BOCES makes in excess of \$150,000 per year between his BOCES salary, which is a cost to school districts, and a salary he receives from the state in addition to the BOCES salary. It appears the superintendent virtually has unlimited perks, and has built high cost empires that probably are no longer needed.

Many school districts have indicated they would like to drop out of BOCES. They question the relative worth of the program. Some no longer use BOCES for either vocational or psychological services yet, they are being stuck with the administrative costs.

BOCES has become an arm of the State Education Department that is not necessarily needed or wanted and should not be financed by local school districts through local property taxes.

Our state legislators have, unfortunately, failed to address this problem. Since it is an election year, they should pledge to make it a priority item on their agenda next year. They should make it optional for school districts to belong to BOCES, rather than mandatory. Let the districts decide for themselves what they need and what is best for the students, rather than forcing them into another expensive mandate that may be wasteful and not needed.

And why not?

# What does a half-cent cost?

Most people do not pay attention to pennies. In fact, we do not even have a half-cent piece in our present currency. There is a move afoot to do away with pennies, rounding everything off to a nickel. So, what's the big deal about the county raising the sales tax by a half-cent?

In the context of a \$1.3 billion budget, on its own, it is incidental. But cumulatively, the half-cent increase will amount to \$50 million. Individually, it will mean that your buying power, that is the money left after taxes, contractual obligations and necessities such as food will be reduced by about \$100 annually. In the context of the average family's income being over \$40,000, what is \$100? The difference may mean keeping the thermostat at 69 degrees rather than 70 degrees during the winter. It might mean eliminating the birthday and Christmas gift to your spouse. It could mean that your three children visit the dentist only once a year rather than twice. It could mean giving up your semiannual night on the town. There is a whole host of other things that could and will be changed because you will be paying a half-cent more in sales taxes on top of the eight percent you are paying right now.

As taxes have risen in the past, we have all at least had the feeling that our individual pain was for the common good. Do you still have this feel-

ing? We don't. Not when you look around and see county cops are paid 40 percent more than their brethren on the state police force.

We don't feel very good about paying the cost of a college tuition for children in kindergarten knowing that the majority of them will not graduate with junior high school abilities to read or perform math. We feel worse about it knowing that we will be paying \$12,000 a year in tuition to educate our students when New Hampshire will spend only \$4,000, and their children will graduate doing better on the SAT's.

How can we feel good about it when we know that if the state would adopt a voucher system for financing education, private schools would expand and provide more children with quality educations at a third of the cost.

We don't feel very good about increasing taxes to pay for the high cost of removing garbage. This is due to state mandates and the garbage business being controlled by the mob. The cost of garbage disposal has risen to a point where this entity is rivaling the cost of police protection. Something stinks here.

We don't mind seeing our tax dollars being utilized to help others who are less fortunate, but we do resent paying the highest taxes in the nation to support a welfare system that per-

petuates laziness and living off the dole. Why should women be paid a bonus for having illegitimate children? Why should recipients be allowed to move into New York State and receive instant benefits? Why should they be granted benefits that are two and three times higher than those paid by the states they have emigrated from? We find it unfair and unjust that the medical benefits provided under welfare exceed those that we are able to buy for ourselves and our employees through the profits we earn and the hard work we perform.

Most of all, we resent the caliber of people we have put into office who know as well as we do what the problems are and what solutions are needed to bring about fairness. Yet, they have failed to demonstrate not only the political but the governmental courage to enact the correct solutions.

What's a half-cent? It's a lot of misery if not spent right. We have little hope that either our county or state officials will attempt to rectify the mistakes they have made in the past with this new-found wealth. In fact, we know as well as they do they will be back in a relatively short period of time with their hands out demanding more.

How much more can you afford to give?

And why not?

# Fill Mystical Mario's basket

The Mystical Governor Mario Cuomo will soon be pleading with you to refill his deficit financial basket. He will ask for your approval in November for a so-called Jobs Bond Act. He will create the illusion that your approval will provide thousands of new jobs, the economy will boil, the cup will runneth over and you will be rewarded tenfold for your prudence in authorizing Mystical Mario to borrow up to \$800 million in long-term bonds that will cost you and your children up to \$2 billion to pay back before they are retired.

Mystical Mario is the master of the shell game. If you live in the inner city, it's if you see it, you get it. If you

happen to live on Long Island, it's if you see it, you will never see it again. Mystical Mario has played this shell game time and time again on Long Island. Give me \$2 and I will give you back \$1, but you will feel good about it. We are exporting our money off Long Island and getting just a fraction back.

Take a look at the roadways upstate New York and compare them to Long Island. Traffic around upstate cities flows freely. Commuting is a dream. Here on Long Island, we have the longest parking lots in the world. Commuting is not only a nightmare but we pay additional taxes to support the inner city's mass transit services

which few of us ever use or benefit from.

Go into New York and you will see the inner city being rebuilt. Massive projects with massive infusions of state monies, all while Mystical Mario is threatening to close Long Island beaches because of a lack of money.

Don't kid yourself, Mystical Mario's Jobs Bond Act is the shell game of the century. By formula, Long Island is only guaranteed to get back 75 cents of every dollar we pay in. On top of this is the interest the bonds will cost, which will cut our real dollars by another 50 percent. Mystical Mario still has squirreled away \$300 million from the last job development bond issue.

Why is he rushing to borrow more and put us further into debt?

The bottom line is New York State has more debt than 47 other states. We should be reducing the debt, not adding to it.

We have the uncomfortable feeling the only jobs that will come out of this are "snow jobs," and we know snow melts away with time. What will be left after Mystical Mario performs his shell game is another disproportionate debt Long Islanders will be expected to pay off.

This November think about yourself. Vote "no" on the Jobs Bond Act. And why not?

# We complete a third of a century

With this edition, we mark the completion of our 33rd year of publishing Suffolk Life Newspapers. What was nothing more than a far-fetched dream in my wild imagination has grown into one of the country's largest weekly newspapers.

During my 33 years as the editor, I have published over 5,000 editorials. These editorials have been the voice of the average person, and have promoted your best interest. Your voice has never been compromised. At times, we have suffered financially because we took the people's side instead of the position favoring the establishment.

We report with pride that Suffolk Life won first place honors for an editorial this year in the Long Island Press Club's annual Media Awards Contest.

Our most notable success was our fight to protect the health and welfare of Suffolk County residents over the opening of the Shoreham nuclear power plant. We fought, and will continue to do so, for low-cost power for our readers, who face the highest elec-

tric costs in the nation. We did battle with Governor Mario Cuomo over his negotiated deal with LILCO which is making them rich, and the ratepayers poor.

We have been at the forefront of calling for fairness in the operation of our government. We have stood up and fought on behalf of the taxpayers against special interest groups, who benefit from an ever-increasing tax burden.

We have tried to bring common sense to the fore when reason has been lost through rhetoric.

We love Suffolk County, the land and its people. As a rare breed native, we have a special feeling for the land, the water and all that nature has provided for us. We have sensibly fought to protect both, keeping in mind man's legitimate needs for housing, employment and an ability to earn a living.

We have lost some battles to the extremists, such as Hampton Hills. The county could have acquired 1,200 of the 1,500 acres surrounding the country club for park and environ-

mental use. This would have come to the county free-of-charge in return for limited development of the parcel. Instead of compromising, the county bought the extremists' viewpoint, all or nothing. As a result, we ended up spending \$18 million to buy the property, which will cost \$90 million in lost tax revenues and interest before the bonds are retired. The seller ended up owning the golf course and, in effect, the county ended up paying \$18 million for 120 acres of scrub land. A compromise could have been reached where this land would have housed wealthy second homes requiring little in services, but providing a huge tax base without investing a dime. On the other hand, there have been numerous other projects which we have called to the public's attention, and have been able to stop, if they were not in the public's best interest, or promote, if they were.

Our news pages have kept Suffolk residents abreast of local, town and county news. Our news reporters have traditionally done an outstanding job of research and reporting as well as

writing. Over the years our young journalists have won numerous awards for their talented efforts. We have been the vehicle to bring you the births, the deaths and the other news notices that are of great importance to the community. All this has been accomplished without cost to you.

We have enjoyed doing our job and doing it well. The changes in the economy have put tremendous pressure on our revenue source, our advertisers. As this base has dwindled, we have been forced to cut back on our news staff and the space that we devote to publishing news about you and from you.

For a number of years, Suffolk Life was partially supported by voluntary subscriptions from our readers. At one point, more than half of our readership voluntarily paid for a subscription even though they would receive the paper free anyway. The revenues from these subscriptions allowed us to increase our news staff and improve our news product. We discontinued the practice of asking our readers to voluntarily support Suffolk Life through subscriptions when the economy was good, and advertising revenues flowed freely.

On our 33rd birthday, we find ourselves in a position of having to ask our readers to renew their support. We ask each family that receives Suffolk Life to voluntarily pay an annual subscription of \$10 per year. These funds will enable us to support the news side of the paper, to keep our editorial staff at a respectable level and our news hole strong enough to accommodate your many requests for coverage and the expression of your viewpoints.

You may ask yourself, why should you voluntarily pay for a subscription that you will receive free anyway? After 33 years of bringing you Suffolk Life, we believe we have proven our dedication to the people of Suffolk County. To keep our voice strong, free and independent, your investment in a voluntary subscription will tell us you want us to continue, you want to take part in keeping one newspaper on the side of the people rather than being part of the establishment that believes your pocketbook has no bottom and that you will take whatever those in power wish to throw at you.

It's been our pleasure to serve you for a third of a century. By the grace of God, we hope to be able to continue for the next third.

And why not?

## 'There's something wrong here . . .'

"It's upsetting...this is going on and on and on. This is not normal. There's something wrong here!"

Those words of concern were voiced recently by a West Islip resident who was describing a growing fear in her community because of a large number of breast cancer cases clustered in an area south of Montauk Highway. Lorraine Pace, who has also suffered with the same disease, has 20 friends who have breast cancer. She and a group of friends, some who have the disease and some who do not, have formed The West Islip Breast Cancer Coalition in an effort to determine why the breast cancer in her area is seemingly so high.

These friends, she notes, range in age and weight, some smoke while others don't. The only thing in common, as far as she can tell, is they all live in West Islip, south of Montauk Highway. So her group, with cooperation from Good Samaritan Hospital, Suffolk Life Newspapers and the county's Health Department, is conducting a Breast Cancer Survey for women residents of the West Islip community 25 years and older. A survey form was published as a public service on the front page of Suffolk Life's West Islip edition last week, with the responses returned to Good Samaritan Hospital. Then, with the help of the Health Department, those responses will be analyzed to determine if there are more than the 20 cases already known, how many more, and what common link may exist. Hopefully, the survey will result in information that will be helpful.

The response, thus far, has been, in the words of Lorraine Pace, "fantastic." More than 500 responses have been returned in just one week. And more are coming in daily. While it is still too early to know what this information will reveal, it is a start.

The West Islip area is not alone. Numerous studies have shown there are a large number of breast cancer cases here on Long Island. Because of that, Senator Al D'Amato recently announced the creation of a blue-ribbon panel of breast cancer experts to critically review available findings and community concerns. According to D'Amato, "The shocking statistics—950 women developing breast cancer in Nassau County each year, with Long Island breast cancer rates 13.5 percent higher than the state average and among the highest in the nation—demand that answers be found." D'Amato is absolutely correct. We are beyond the point of simply talking about the problem, we must find out the reason before we can bring about a solution.

D'Amato noted that environmental factors have been cited by many experts as the overriding reason that breast cancer rates are unusually high on Long Island compared to the rest of the nation. He pointed to recent Connecticut studies showing that women with breast cancer had pesticide exposure rates twice those of women without pesticide exposure. He noted, "I am concerned that earlier studies of pesticide exposure on Long Island were flawed."

He has called upon the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to review earlier studies, and perhaps use the Connecticut studies as a model for such a review.

D'Amato has also vowed to have the CDC scrutinize the information obtained in the West Islip Survey immediately upon learning of that effort, and the extent of that local problem, he called Lorraine Pace and offered help and encouragement. That kind of caring response must come also from all levels of government, from the federal down to the towns. Surveys of each community to determine where clusters may exist,

and the extent of the problem, will be a start in the right direction toward a possible solution. Compiling as much information as possible to provide the experts with statistical data that will aid them in their study of this problem must become a top priority.

If Long Island has the highest average number of cases in the state, as D'Amato reports, and is among the highest in the nation, it is time we stop talking and start doing. Suffolk Life pledges to assist in any way possible. We need to follow the example set by the West Islip Breast Cancer Coalition. We must combine our resources and work together. We need a coalition of public officials, health experts, and concerned residents here on Long Island to search for a solution to what is a serious problem right here on Long Island.

And why not?

**Enclosed is my voluntary subscription in support of Suffolk Life and the work it has performed on my behalf in the past.**

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# Water and politics don't mix

Jim Tripp's term as a member of the Board of Directors of the Suffolk County Water Authority is up for renewal. The Suffolk County Water Authority, a quasi-public authority, is one of the biggest businesses in Suffolk County. It has long been a patronage plum, with the directors appointed by the Suffolk County Legislature. They, in turn, select the chairman and the executive director.

The current chairman of the board is a professional, Michael LoGrande. The executive director is a political has-been, former Brookhaven Town Republican Leader Walter Hazlitt. Under LoGrande's leadership, the water authority is becoming professionalized. Long range goals and plans are being established. Personnel are being cut back in a move to stabilize water rates, or reduce them. Contracts are being investigated and abuses ferreted out.

One incident recently came to light, in which a political comrade of Hazlitt had rented space to the water

authority, but the space was never used. Suffolk County Water Authority ratepayers paid for it. As executive director, Hazlitt has used the water authority as a patronage mill. He increased the rank and file staff with political loyalists. He increased staff whether there was a need for it or not.

LoGrande, who has the backing of the majority of the current board, has put a stop to these abuses. He cut Hazlitt off at the pass. Hazlitt, smarting from having his reins pulled in, is attempting to change the complexion of the board. He wants Tripp out for his own political reasons.

The Suffolk County Legislature has two options: it can refuse to approve Tripp's renomination, thus doing Walter's bidding, and appoint another hack who will support Hazlitt; or it can appoint a replacement for Tripp who is not from the political world.

Tripp is an environmentalist first, foremost and always. He is employed by the Environmental Defense Fund.

He has five years' experience as a special prosecutor in the Eastern District Court. He is extremely knowledgeable about water, where it comes from and how to best environmentally utilize it. Possessing this knowledge, he is an important part of the water authority.

To his disadvantage, he is not a businessman by any sense of the word. He does not ask the hard questions or even weigh the economic interests against the environmental needs. Like many avid environmentalists, he has tunnel vision. In this respect, Tripp can be faulted for his lack of interest in the economic affairs of the authority. This allowed Hazlitt to make the authority his personal patronage mill before LoGrande became chairman.

The authority would still be doing business as usual if LoGrande were not chairman. Hazlitt wants to bring the authority back under his control. Tripp stands in the way, as he supports LoGrande.

The authority does need somebody from the environmental world,

particularly one who has expertise in water. Tripp wants to be renominated. The Suffolk County Legislature, which will make this appointment, should make every attempt to keep politics out of the authority. They can do this by reappointing Tripp. Failure to do this and placing in office another hack for Hazlitt to control is tantamount to giving away the public store.

Preserving our water has been the hue and cry, and the motivation for the costly purchase of land for water preservation, and the motivator for laws such as the landfill ban. The Suffolk County Water Authority for too long has been the dumping ground for political patronage. To have the county agency responsible for the precious water we have spent so much to preserve be nothing more than a political playground is criminal. Politics must be taken out of the picture, and professionalism put in!

The Suffolk County Legislature should act responsibly on this very important appointment. Or suffer the consequences.

And why not?

# Should the county buy Robins Island?

Robins Island should be put into perspective. Suffolk County has attempted to buy Robins Island for a number of years. The zeal to buy the island has been determined by who was promoting it at any given time.

If the county, by chance, was to acquire the island, the residents of Suffolk County would be investing somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 million to make this purchase a reality. This includes the purchase price, the interest and the loss of tax base. This estimate does not include the cost of maintaining the island, which would include seven-day, around-the-clock security protection that is presently maintained by the current owners to keep the island in its present state.

Let's say we do have the \$50 million-plus in excess tax funds to spend on the island, what do we get for our investment? An island that, by its very nature, is private. This is the lure that motivates people to own an island of their own. Does it make any sense for the public to own an island and keep it private? Why own it if you can't use it? If the public has invested its tax dollars in the island, should they not be able to use it as a beach and parkland? If the public is allowed to use the island, it loses its exclusivity and becomes just another real estate holding of the people of Suffolk County.

Are there any ecological values that set this piece of land apart from many of the others that people who do not have boats are able to reach? Contrary to the popular argument, the island is not pristine, it has a long history of being used for commercial, industrial and agricultural uses. Its original forests have been clear-cut,

parts of the island have regrown, parts have been planted with imported vegetation. The island is eroding, as it has since the ice age. The island does not contain any vast tracks of wetlands that would make it a critical part of the ecosystem.

The Nature Conservancy designated it as one of the last 10 great places left in America. But in reality, they ignored one of the really great islands just miles to the east, Gardiners Island, which is six times as large and does have forests, ponds, streams and wetlands that are in their original state. There is no comparison between the two islands. So much for the objectivity of the Nature Conservancy.

Extremists have conjured up the argument that the island is important to Long Island's watershed. There are no domes of fresh water under the island. Hydrologically, the island does not play an important part in the aquifer. The extremists ignore the fact that the greatest reservoir of fresh water Long Island has lies off the shores of Islip, running from the middle of the Great South Bay out into the ocean. According to studies done years ago, this concentration of fresh water could be pumped to the mainland and would meet our needs well into the 24th century.

Because Robins Island is an island and presently is not residentially or commercially overdeveloped, there is a rally cry by the environmental extremists who want to use the everyday common taxpayers meager resources to buy, collectively what they can't afford individually. A proposal has been advocated for limited development on the island. Up to 30 second-home estates would be clustered on a very small portion of the island. These

mini-estates would enlarge and contribute to the tax base while maintaining the vast majority of the island in its present form. The preserve part of the island could either be maintained by the residential owners, or deeded to the county for the public's use. Through compromise, both environmentalists and the taxpayers could benefit. If the island is to retain its charm, its mystery, it should remain basically undeveloped and in the hands of private owners. We have too many pressing problems here on Long Island to squander what little collective resources we have left.

If the environmentalists want their own private playground, let them buy it themselves. Let them launch a fund drive to raise the necessary money to

foot the purchase bill, and future maintenance costs. What limited county resources are available should be spent on legitimate land buys that truly serve the future of our water supply. That would serve the needs of all the people, not just those with special desires.

Robins Island has too limited a value to the people as a whole to warrant any further investment of our tax dollars. Common sense should provide the solution and it should be done now to stop the flow of our precious tax resources on prolonged litigation and legal fees. With the serious financial crisis facing this county, top priority should be given to the needs of people rather than the whims of special interest groups.

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