

But Can We Afford It?

Years ago, I was explaining rather enthusiastically a deal I was involved in. I offered all kinds of financial facts and figures to justify my involvement and when I had finished making my presentation, my four-year-old son, who happened to overhear the conversation, called me up short by asking, "But Dad, will you make any money?"

This somber question by a four-year-old should be asked of the Koppelman-Cromarty centralized court proposal. Cromarty and Koppelman, the politician and the planner, brought us the South West Sewer District. They used all kinds of facts and figures, some distortions, some outright lies such as the full page ads featuring toilets, asking whether "you will be drinking from here" next, to shove through this enormous pork barrel project which has been riddled with scandal and corruption, and has caused the property owners within the South West Sewer District to face bankrupting taxes.

Because of the huge cost over-runs, the waste, the corruption and the financial problems that surround the district, the full faith and credit of the entire County of Suffolk has tenuously been pledged in support of the bonds needed to build the project. Even today, this project still is not fully finished. The current County Executive has gambled his career on completing this financing by making the project into a specialized lease-back tax shelter, which needed the approval of the state comptroller, special legislation by the State and federal government, and is now awaiting I.R.S. approval. If this financing does not come through, up to one-third of Suffolk County's sales taxes may be needed to bail out the district.

The South West Sewer District originally was started in concept as a small, local-use public works project. By the time the planners and the politicians got through with it, the project stretched across four of the most populated towns in the county. After it was defeated at the polls, they retrenched and devised a "smaller" project that was estimated to run 250 million dollars but ultimately exceeded one billion dollars and may

still go substantially higher. This disgrace to all who were involved and a fraud on the people of Suffolk County just started in operation, and Koppelman the planner and Cromarty the politician have the gall to come back with another public works project on a scale as grandiose as the original.

What started out to be a limited, centralized court complex with a total price tag of under \$30 million now is projected, when financing is included, to be over \$300 million! And the plans haven't even been drawn.

The original controversy surrounding this project was the insistence by Cromarty and the Suffolk County Bar Association that tradition be disregarded and this complex be built in Hauppauge, just a few miles from the Nassau County boarder.

Riverhead is the County Seat, chosen as the County Seat because, geographically, it is mid-way between the East End of the Island and the Nassau-Suffolk border. County government should be convenient to all residents. No one should have to travel further than the farthest resident.

Riverhead already has the county structure. The County Clerk's office, which maintains the records, is there. The County Treasurer's office is in Riverhead. The County Court buildings are in Riverhead, as well as the official District Attorney's office and a relatively new criminal court building, as well as the old court facilities. Most important, the County Jail is in Riverhead which would place those being held for trial close to the facilities, saving the taxpayers a huge amount of money for the transporting of prisoners.

The Town of Riverhead doesn't like the jail in their backyard any more than any other community. They are willing to trade off this disadvantage for the advantage of having the courts and the support officers which provide jobs for not only Riverhead residents, but those within the commuting distances from Brookhaven and the other East End towns.

The legislature recently passed a law directing that if a court complex is to be built, it is to be built in the

Town of Riverhead. Koppelman, we understand, was furious, arguing long and hard with the County Executive to veto this resolution. Publically, Koppelman says that he is in favor only of a centralized court complex. He doesn't care if it is in the East or the West.

A meeting has been called by Koppelman and the Legislature to be held in his office on December 14. It is our understanding at this meeting Koppelman is going to propose the project be built in Riverhead, if the Town Board and the East End representatives will throw their full support to this project. In doing so, the East End leaders would have to accept the fact that Peconic County would never become a reality because the indebtedness that would be incurred by this project would be so overwhelming that the East End could never singularly afford to carry this indebtedness by itself.

We do not know how the East End leaders will react to the Koppelman proposal, but we ask that they and the rest of the Suffolk County Legislature consider this simple premise: Is it

needed? If it is needed, could we get away with a much simpler, economically smaller project? Most important, can the people of Suffolk County afford it?

We suggest that the County Legislature and the County Executive consider the fact that just last week, the money market turned Suffolk County down cold on their moral obligation bonds to bridge finance the South West Sewer District. Government and politics may well be a never, never land of make believe. Money markets are not! They face the cold reality of whether the borrowers are in over their heads. We suspect what the money markets are saying to Suffolk County is that we are.

We suggest that Cromarty the politician and Koppelman the planner, spend their time, energy and creativity figuring out how to best get Suffolk County out of the financial dilemma we are in because of their original creation, instead of planning for a new crisis in the future.

And why not?

Point of View

Is Your Life Worth Fighting For?

By LOU GRASSO

The Shoreham fiasco took another turn last week when the state's Disaster Preparedness Commission appeared ready to approve - stopped only by court order - an emergency evacuation plan the county - which developed the document - considered unrealistic. LILCO, concerned because the county was not moving ahead with an improved plan as fast as the utility wanted, submitted the county's rejected plan as their own.

LILCO officials argue they have a "legal right" to participate in emergency planning in the event of an accident at their nuclear plant. But, interestingly, it is the county that has the financial obligation to provide the manpower and logistics for an actual evacuation.

William Hennessey, chairman of the state's Disaster Preparedness Commission, has reportedly told County Executive Peter Cohalan he would cease consideration of the "LILCO plan" only if he were asked to do so by LILCO officials. Which led Cohalan to ask: "Who is running the commission, LILCO or the government?" When all the facts are known, the answer is painfully clear.

The man who had been dispatched by LILCO to argue their points before the Preparedness Commission at the cancelled meeting is Michael Patterson, a highly-placed LILCO public relations official. Before he took on that position he was a highly-placed, key aide to Governor Hugh Carey. Hennessey is also the head of the state's Department of Transportation. The three have a lot in common.

Why the rush to approve the LILCO plan just one week after the county has released its own, more detailed, evacuation plan? Well, Carey is on his way out. And so is Hennessey, who is slated to step down soon to become the chairman of the State Democratic Party. Rather than leave the doing to others, Carey and Hennessey - with Patterson's blessing, of course - are very apparently doing what they want to do while they still have the power to do it. No sense taking chances that someone else may not be so favorable to LILCO's point of view.

The devastating effects of a nuclear mishap would be non-partisan in nature. Radiation would kill Democrats, Republicans, and those from other political beliefs. This would not be a political issue, but one of human concern.

But it has become a political issue because of the way LILCO operates. A former Suffolk County Legislator joined the LILCO payroll when she was voted out of office. A key aide in former Presiding Officer William Richard's office also joined that payroll when Richard left that post to become deputy labor commissioner. And as has been already stated, Patterson joined the LILCO payroll when he left Carey's office.

Why would all of these people suddenly be recruited by LILCO if not for the political influence they may have, and the "insider's" knowledge of how the political game is played? LILCO is bound and determined to get the Shoreham nuclear plant on line, and they will use every tool at their disposal - inside political influence included - to get what they want.

It's interesting, then, that Hennessey is soon to head the state's Democratic Party organization. In that role he will represent Democrats throughout the state - and that includes Suffolk County which faces the phase in of a nuclear plant that has been the subject of much controversy, including an outside inspection of only one per cent of that plant's construction and safety-related equipment. And the firm that did that inspection was not, as the county has insisted, an outside independent firm, but, rather, one that was hired by LILCO. It is interesting to note that 19 problems, which will cost about \$1 million to correct, were found in that one per cent inspection. The question is: how many more lurk in the uninspected 99 per cent of the plant?

But, LILCO and its supporters will argue that plant has been subjected to inspection time and again by construction firm inspectors, LILCO inspectors, and inspectors from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Another inspection, now when the plant is almost done, would only be duplicating what has already been done.

ANOTHER VIEW

Let's explore that argument: The NRC recently took action against construction of a nuclear plant in Ohio by issuing an "order to show cause and order immediately suspending construction" of the William H. Zimmer Nuclear Power Station being constructed in Ohio. That plant is 98 per cent completed.

The NRC, in a report of that matter, notes: "In early 1981, the NRC conducted an

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General Information

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - We encourage our readers to express their views regardless of opinion through the Letters to the Editor Column. All letters must be signed with author's signature and address. We will withhold names on request and assign a nom de plume.

NEWS AND PHOTOGRAPHS Readers are welcome to submit ideas of interest and photographs for consideration of publication. All news and photographs become the property of Suffolk Life upon submittal and cannot be returned for any reason.

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Willmotts and Why-Nots

David J. Willmott, Editor

Merry Christmas

The Christmas trees are gaily decorated. The packages and gifts beneath them show thought and consideration, and the abundance of wealth here in America. Wherever you are, wherever you go, the knowledge that Christmas is near is in the air.

When all this tinsel and hype is removed, we should remember what we are celebrating. It's the commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of our Lord.

He was given to us by God to pave the way, for those who believe, into Heaven upon our demise. God gave us His Son in the simplest form, a common link to all mankind, birth by a woman.

This setting was free from the glitter and tinsel of that era, a barn in the back of an inn with only that which was natural as the surroundings. Jesus was given to us by God, who knew full well that His Son would be treated as a mortal and eventually cruelly killed by those He had come to save. His life, His presence, His meaning and His bearing can provide the answers and the direction for mankind to follow for ever more.

Without electronics, the media or computers, His Words were recorded, His actions and His deeds noted. The example He gave, the message He communicated has survived the illiteracy of early men as well as the technology of modern times.

His message was pure and simple, love, respect and honor each other. This Saturday, Christmas Day, may we all enjoy the peace and serenity He has provided for us. May we remember Him and celebrate His

birthday by doing, at least one act of charity and kindness to help our fellow man realize the true meaning of Christmas.

The staff here at Suffolk Life wish all our readers, our advertisers, and our associates, the joy of Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year.

And why not?



Merry Christmas!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

From the Entire Staff at Suffolk Life



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- MARIA PALAZZA
- PATRICIA BUTTI
- PETER PARPAN
- ROBERT CHARTUK



SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

So that our staff may enjoy an extended holiday, which they richly deserve, Suffolk Life will not be published on December 29. Our next issue will reach you in the mail on January 5. Suffolk Life extends to our large family of readers and advertisers a very happy and safe holiday season. We'll see you next year with a renewed dedication and many planned improvements to serve you better.