

Is It Your Turn?

You have worked hard all your life. You're married and your kids are between babies and teenagers. It's been a struggle, but you have met the bills and have enough left over to provide a little taste of the good life for your children. Although modest, there have been a few toys and games and special wearing apparel from Santa in the past.

Tragedy struck this year and all of your hard work and plans have had to be put aside. Your children will have to be told Santa won't come this year. This happens too often.

A gathering of us called "The Group" tries each year to make sure that Santa comes to families like this who, through no fault of their own, will not be visited by Santa this year. We pool our resources and through the generous contributions of others, we make sure the little ones are remembered on Christmas day. Sometimes our emphasis is on needed clothing to ward off the cold. Sometimes its for food, but always we manage to include some special gifts from Santa Claus.

We are just into the season and already our funds are tapped out. For whatever reason, contributions have not been forthcoming this year. We have numerous families we have heard about that need help. An unexpected operation and, because there was no insurance, one family's funds have been wiped out. There is nothing left for Christmas. Another family faced broken water pipes because the oil ran out. Their finances have been depleted. In another instance, the engine in the working parents only car blew up and had to be replaced in order for the breadwinner to continue working. There are a number of situations which could well have happened to any of us, each destroying the hope of

a happy holiday.

The older members of the family can understand these tough times, can tighten their belts and struggle through. But the little ones don't understand and that's where The Group tries to help out.

If you can afford it, we desperately need your contributions. Large or small, every cent will be used to provide for the little ones. If you or your family, a group of co-workers or an organization would like to provide Christmas for a whole family, we can provide you with the first name of the kids, their needs, and their wants. You can do as we do, shop for them. It is quite an experience. It is a personal experience.

There is no temporal reward, not even a tax deduction. Although you will not know the name of the recipients and they will never know yours, on Christmas morning you will know the true meaning of the day for you will have reached out and helped someone in their hour of need, anonymously and without recognition. You will have that special feeling as your imagination will portray the little ones coming down the stairs, fearful that Santa has not come but hopeful that he did. And there, under the tree is the sight of a Christmas they will never forget and, hopefully, gifts that will uplift their spirits and carry them through the dark winter months to come. Remember, "there but for the grace of God go I."

If you can help, please do. Write today to "The Group"
c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers
P.O. Box 167
Riverhead, New York, 11901
Time is running out. Please help us help those who need a helping hand. And why not?

Shoreham Travesty

On the eve of December 1st, Governor Cuomo called this editor and said, "It will be Black Friday, the legislature has decided to open Shoreham." It may be Black Friday, but Shoreham does not necessarily have to open because the legislature refused to cave in and go along with the governor's badly negotiated deal, a settlement that rewards the incompetent LILCO management at the risk of the ratepayers financial stability.

Shoreham is as much, if not more, of a safety hazard today as it ever has been. It was poorly designed and ill-conceived. It should never have been built on an island that is impossible to evacuate. It wasn't the welfare or the needs of Long Island that created this project. It was the greed of Wall Street and the investors in this country.

The governor's negotiators did a horrible job of representing the ratepayers of Long Island in the negotiations. They gave away not only the store, but the financial future of the region. The governor handled the negotiations as a proprietary matter. He did not seek out the wisdom or the counsel of the legislature, the senate or the leaders of the community. When he announced some of the terms of the deal he did so arrogantly saying, "Take it or leave it. There will be no changes, there is nothing to negotiate." He left no windows of opportunity for improvement or representation by Long Island's elected officials.

Pleas were made to him all along for clarification on specific points of the agreement, but the governor arrogantly responded: "Everything is

strength of the deal that even Wall Street said was a "sweetheart deal for LILCO." Both the governor and the management of LILCO gambled that the public opposition would collapse and the legislature would follow.

Serious discussions with the legislature and senate did not take place until the last week of November. No one blinked and midnight, December 1, came and went. The LILCO board met on December 2. They agreed to pursue vigorously the licensing of Shoreham, and said they would consider further discussions on a settlement.

there to be understood." The governor scheduled television appearances to explain the deal to the public, and made statements that were simply not true, raising doubts that the governor, himself, understood the full details of the deal his negotiator, Vincent Tese, had made. Efforts to obtain answers about questionable portions of the deal-- an example, Will the N.R.C. go along with the deal?-- were unsuccessful. The answers never came.

LILCO Chairman Bill Catacosinos went down as dangerous a path as the governor. He watched the stock of the company go from \$8 to \$15 on the

The legislature will be back in session on December 12. All sides should use this window of opportunity to hammer out a deal that closes the plant and economically can be absorbed by the region. Failure to do

so will lead to many years of uncertainty, hostility, anger and resentment. The governor should get off his kick of "I've done all I can do, now it's up to you" and meet with the legislators, learn their concerns, and work cooperatively to develop an agreeable compromise.

The company most assuredly will face bankruptcy with or without a license. They are on tenuous ground now and without the deal we would not be surprised to see the stock fall not only back to the market value of \$8 dollars, but even lower. The rates projected under the deal cannot be absorbed by the region without causing LILCO to fall into an even more precarious financial situation because of the reduction in sales:

LILCO cannot depend upon the Public Service Commission to forever be its savior. The pressure from the public will mount and the PSC will have to be more responsive in the future than they have been in the past. The new Senate Majority Leader, Ralph Marino, unlike his predecessor Warren Anderson, is not opposed to an elected P.S.C., and there is going to be a hue and cry for many changes in the way this supposedly regulatory body operates.

The next seven days are critical and every moment should be used to hammer out a deal that is good and fair for all concerned. It is time to put aside egos and guilt trips and work for the benefit of the people.

And why not?

A chauffeur driven limo for Campo?

Leon Campo is a very busy man. Every moment counts. Campo is a business administrator for a large Nassau County school district. He is chairman of the Suffolk County Water Authority. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Long Island Lighting Company. He simultaneously feeds at three public or quasi-public troughs. Every moment counts. In addition, Campo heads up several citizens groups, some of which are not very large. In fact, the membership has often been suspected as being limited to the name that Campo gave it.

Being chief spokesman, public relations agent, treasurer, fund-raiser and organizer for these organizations is very time consuming. Every moment counts.

Campo recently, at the Suffolk County Water Authority ratepayer's expense, had a phone installed in his car at a cost of close to \$2,000 as well as an answering service for his home and his office in Nassau County. These services cost the ratepayers

over \$400 per month on top of the estimated \$500 in phone calls Campo makes each month.

Campo defends this long-winded, expensive communication practice as a time saver, claiming it saves him three hours a day. Every moment counts. Campo obviously is one of the longest-winded politicians in Suffolk County. No one has dared to challenge his ability to stretch a single one sentence thought into an epistle as long as John's or Luke's.

Since Campo's time is so valuable, shouldn't the Suffolk County Water Authority ratepayers provide him with a chauffeur-driven limo? Every moment counts. Just think of all the wonderful things Campo could do for Suffolk County residents if he didn't have traffic congestion or anything else to worry about other than his incessant chatter and eating at the trough? After all, every moment counts and the public doesn't seem to mind.

And why not?

Goodbye Good Friend

You have read many times about "The Group," a gathering of people who try to make Christmas brighter for those in need, operating anonymously without fanfare or desire for benefit or publicity except when necessary to help raise funds to support the effort. The only person whose name has ever been publicly connected with "The Group" was that of the late Jess Marchese, because he was one of the original founders of the concept, in fact, the source of the initial proposal.

"The Group" is especially saddened, because this year, just before Christmas, we have lost another of our major members. Ken Rood, co-owner of Ben Franklin's in Oakdale, died in his sleep recently.

Ken Rood and Al Schips, who run this family variety store, have constantly made their store available to "The Group" shoppers. They not only generously offered very substantial discounts, but personally have taken part in helping to fill needs of the little ones on the Christmas lists.

We well remember one of our early shopping trips when Ken and Al walked through the aisles of merchandise with us and would say, "Here, take this, his feet must be warm, he must have socks. I'll bet he doesn't have a flannel shirt or a sweatshirt." These were gifts that the men gave time and time again, on top of very liberal discounts which allowed us to double our buying power. Both men mentioned many times that they remembered their own humble beginnings, the difficulties they had in their lives and the obstacles they had to overcome. They felt it was a privilege to be able to help others in their hour of need.

"The Group" will go about its business this year, but with a saddened heart. We offer our prayers for Ken, our love and deep respect for Marilyn, his wife, and his children. We are sure the good Lord, in making his final judgement, will remember Ken's generosity and his concern for those less fortunate.

And why not?

LILCO The Racketeer

Suffolk County sued the Long Island Lighting Company, under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO statute), for racketeering, contending that the management of LILCO had lied to the Public Service Commission in presenting false information that caused the Public Service Commission (PSC) to grant illegal rate increases. A federal jury agreed with the county's contentions and found LILCO guilty of fraud, awarding a judgment to Suffolk County for \$22 million.

As the average homeowner has also been defrauded by LILCO's actions, it is expected a class action suit will follow, and LILCO could be liable for several billion dollars to recover funds illegally taken from the residents of Long Island. It is estimated that the average homeowner who has paid LILCO bills could recoup up to \$4,000 as a result. These liabilities would cause LILCO to go bankrupt.

After the New York State Legislature had refused to accept the governor's badly negotiated deal, it seemed almost certain the Shoreham nuclear power plant would be opened by the federal government. Now, with this judgment, the likelihood of this happening is not as certain. For a company to be given a license to operate a nuclear power plant, the utility must prove its financial stability. Obviously, LILCO will not be able to do this under the weight of this judgment.

This is the window of opportunity that has been needed all along for a

negotiated settlement to bring about the permanent closing of the Shoreham nuclear power plant. New York State governmental officials have the cards in their hands to work out an arrangement for the dismantling of the plant, and future rates that can be absorbed by the economy. It also presents an opportunity for the revitalization of the Long Island Power Authority and the public takeover of this troubled utility.

When one looks at the history of their illegal rate increases and the part that the Public Service Commission played in them, one sees an all too cozy relationship between the staff of the PSC and the utilities. Where was the PSC in demanding believable documentation? Did the PSC know that they were being lied to, but in their quest to accommodate the utility, go along with it? Where was the responsibility of the appointed members of the Public Service Commission? Did any of the members of the PSC directly or indirectly, at the time or after, receive benefit? Did any of the commissioners go on to work as consultants either directly or indirectly for the Long Island Lighting Company or any of the other utilities?

The PSC has long been the target of strong criticism because of repeated decisions that favored the utilities, without regard to the impact on the public. In fact, one PSC administrative judge, Frank Robinson, told a Suffolk Life reporter at a Patchogue hearing that the major consideration given in rate increase request cases is to the financial con-

sideration of the utility. Despite the fact it had been created as a regulatory agency to protect the ratepayers from exorbitant rate increases by the utilities, the PSC became little more than a rubber stamp flow-through conduit for rate increase requests.

This was especially true under utility-oriented PSC chairmen, most recently during the reign of Paul Gioia who was a particular friend of LILCO during its Shoreham construction efforts. Despite demands from public officials that Gioia be replaced, and pleas from the public that rates had to be controlled, Gioia helped LILCO survive with construction work in progress (CWIP) funds, a "financial stability adjustment" and other financial gifts to keep LILCO solvent at the expense of the ratepayers.

Governor Mario Cuomo, who could have replaced Gioia as chairman, thereby cutting his power and ability to keep bailing LILCO out of one financial dilemma after another, took no action and LILCO continued to feed off the ratepayers' suffering. Many experts disputed LILCO's claims of financial need, energy requirements, and start up dates for Shoreham. But the Public Service Commission took LILCO at its word, swallowing every claim hook, line and sinker. At the public's expense.

There is no excuse for the PSC to have accepted false information time after time. The PSC had sufficient staff and resources to weed out fact from fiction. Certainly there is no excuse for the PSC to have accepted lie after lie, time after time,

when it was clear that early LILCO start up claims proved erroneous.

There have been repeated demands that the PSC be revamped, that the commissioners be elected rather than be the product of the political appointment system, that the agency be forced to live up to its initial reasons for being, a regulatory body to protect the public from greedy utilities. If the public is to be truly protected, the cozy relationship between the PSC and utilities must be ended, information upon which rate increases are based should be carefully studied and proven as truth.

It's time for government to look at itself. It's time to revamp the Public Service Commission, to make it a protector of the ratepayers and make it live up to its responsibility as a regulator of utilities. A license to operate a utility should not be a license to lie, steal and cheat from the public, which is what the Long Island Lighting Company, with the approval of the Public Service Commission, has made it.

There's an old adage that says "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." Shame on the Public Service Commission. Either they have been fooled repeatedly, or they have ignored the reality of truth in a deliberate effort to enhance the financial health of the utility. Either way, action is needed to transform the PSC into a regulatory agency with integrity and a desire to protect the public. The lunacy of the PSC's past actions must end.

And why not?

Star or team player?

Governor Mario Cuomo was quoted last week as complaining that county officials had not been involved in helping to settle the stalemate that has developed over his controversial Shoreham agreement with LILCO. That complaint is mystifying because Cuomo has steadfastly refused to open the door for others to be involved in the negotiation process.

Commenting on remarks made by County Executive Patrick Halpin that the county would be willing to discuss with the company a settlement of the recent RICO judgment granted to the county, Cuomo is quoted as retorting: "My point is that it's good that they're in now, but they're very late. We called them to help a week ago, where were they? Two weeks ago, where were they? Now the plant is very close to being opened, and I don't hear anybody who killed this agreement suggesting how to stop LILCO from opening the plant."

Governor, you weren't listening. You didn't want to hear anything from anyone unless it was total agreement for the giveaway terms concocted by your chief negotiator, Vincent Tese. You have been spout-

ing a "take it or leave it" message since the terms of your settlement were first announced. Your chief settlement salesman, Richard Kessel, was asked weeks ago to arrange a meeting between you and the members of Suffolk's delegation to the state legislature, but nothing happened. We know the request was made, governor, because we made it. Where were you, governor, one week ago, two weeks ago, two months ago? You had it in your power to sit down with those opposed to your deal and work toward a compromise that would have spared the ratepayers from financial disaster. But you didn't listen.

You still have that power, governor. And if you really wanted to settle the issue, you would stop the rhetoric, and the complaints, and end the finger pointing and call a meeting. You could put your ego aside and listen to what the others have to say.

The ball's in your court, governor. Are you willing to pass it off in a display of team spirit, or are you going to keep shooting for the basket yourself, striving to be the star? We think you're bigger than that, governor. Aren't you?

And why not?

The Year of the Taxer

The Chinese celebrate the coming of the New Year by dedicating it to an animal that has sociological implications. Suffolk County politicians are welcoming in 1989 with the creation of their special breed of symbol, the "Taxer."

The "Taxer" is an ugly animal; there is nothing beautiful or redeeming about it. It feeds on greed and waste. It has a ferocious appetite. The more it gets the more it wants. It's not very smart, like its creators. It is self destructive, another trait they are known of harboring.

The Taxer arrived soon after the first of December this year. It snuck into every household hidden in a dull but telltale envelope bearing the address of the local receiver of taxes. "Taxer" is a single sheet of paper filled with gobbledygook and numbers. There is only one line that counts, the bottom one. This is what the borrowers of land and occupants of buildings must pay their creators in order to stay in tenancy.

The "Taxer" had a ferocious appetite in 1988. The county portion of this dastardly beast grew twice as big under its wasteful master, Patrick Halpin, and the 18 clowns who feed at the trough.

Does anyone know why the county portion doubled in size? Didn't Halpin and the clowns know that times were tough? That they can't keep currying favor with special interests groups by adding more of a burden on the shoulders of the taxpayers?

The left side of the "Taxer," the town side, had almost as ferocious an appetite. It grew from 15 to 25 percent, depending upon where you lay your head, with the exception of East Hampton where the figures went down a wee bit. One must wonder how East Hampton, run by freshman Supervisor Tony Bullock could produce a tax decrease, when all others were increased. Was it mirrors or was it good, tight fiscal management with an increased tax base because of the construction of second homes? From reports we hear, it was a combination of good management and an increased tax base.

The biggest bloat of the "Taxer," the cost of supporting education, grew everywhere, even though a number of districts had declining enrollment which should have reduced the tax bite.

As we enter 1989, the "Taxer's" reign will be but for a year if the citizenry, the tenants of the land, show their anger. If they will join hands and, using the voting booth as their weapon, will kill off the "Taxer's" greatest allies, the incumbent politicians who have wrought such devastating hardship upon the taxpayers through ever-increasing taxes. This they must do to stop the Taxer from growing larger, increasing in appetite until it swallows us all in one gigantic bite. The Taxer must go!

And why not?

words LILCO wants the ratepayers to foot the bill to challenge the verdict that benefits the ratepayers. More arrogance.

Everything will work out fine in '89 if the PSC, once and for all, stops feeding LILCO's insatiable appetite for ratepayer dollars. If Mario Cuomo, who has bragged about the great changes he has made in the PSC, makes it known to the people he has appointed to this regulatory body that it's time the ratepayers get a break. That LILCO will have to feed its own arrogant and wasteful spending habits. That the "construction work in progress"... "financial stability adjustments"... and all the other utility welfare programs of the past are dead.

Our fervent wish for this new year is that the Shoreham fiasco comes to an end in 1989. Enough time and money have been wasted on this horrible mistake. It's time to tackle the rest of our problems.

Included in that list are the escalating tax rates that will kill the economy of our county unless they are brought under control. Our governmental and school officials had better realize that the end to wanton spending practices is at hand. They had better start spending taxpayers' dollars more efficiently, or get out of the business of government.

We are now one year away from the end of garbage disposal as we now know it, with landfills destined to close in 1990. Some towns are moving in the direction of recycling, others are still stalling. The state is

still ordering, but doing nothing to help solve the problem. That attitude must change if the problem is to be resolved.

Will it be business as usual during 1989? or will, miracle of miracles, our county legislators start putting problems first and politics last? The answer to that will come early in the new year when the legislators attempt to elect a new presiding officer. Remember the fiasco of 1988, when county business came to an abrupt end while legislators fought their way into a stalemate until the very final moment when the decision was to be out of their hands? At the moment all signs point to the same silly game, the same senseless battling, the same political nonsense. Should that occur again, we predict a major effort to eliminate the legislature, with a very good chance of success.

The advent of a new year gives rise to hopes of better days ahead. We sincerely hope such is the case in the personal lives of all our readers. We have some serious doubts, however, that this will be the case in the business of government. Whatever resolutions we may make for the new year, the one we should resolve, and keep, is that we will keep a sharp eye on the actions of our officials, speak out when they are doing well, and let them know when they're not. Good government starts with an alert constituency. Let's do our part to make sure they do theirs.

And why not?

Better days ahead?

In a few short days we will be embarking down the path of a new year, with a heavy burden of unfinished business to complete. The one major ongoing problem which continues to dominate attention--the future of the Shoreham nuclear power plant--appears headed for an ultimate conclusion.

At various times in 1988, Shoreham appeared to be headed for a license in one moment and toward the scrap heap in the next. The Reagan administration and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission continued their push to license the plant, but a negotiated settlement between Governor Mario Cuomo and LILCO officials proclaimed the death of the plant. That deal ran into trouble, however, with opponents determine to reduce the financial impact on the ratepayers, and the governor declaring nothing else could be done.

The most startling news of 1988 came with the verdict by a federal jury which ruled LILCO and a former utility president were guilty of lying and racketeering in providing the state Public Service Commission with false information concerning Shoreham in rate increase appli-

cation. The jury awarded Suffolk \$22.9 million, an amount that includes punitive penalties permitted in Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) actions. Those damages could be increased to over \$4 billion if Federal Court Judge Jack Weinstein certifies ratepayers as a class entitled to damages in the RICO suit. That would bring LILCO to its knees financially, and almost certain bankruptcy.

With that cloud hanging over its head, one would think LILCO would be anxious to fully cooperate in negotiation talks, as has been urged by Weinstein. Informed sources, however, indicate such is not the case. While talking "cooperation" in public, the scene behind the closed doors of the negotiation sessions is reportedly sharply different. Little has changed in attitude in the LILCO management ranks. The arrogance remains.

Meanwhile, LILCO is also seeking a rate increase before the state Public Service Commission, citing financial problems. A top LILCO official was recently quoted as saying some of the money would be used to appeal the RICO verdict. In other

'The Group' offers thanks

The leaders of "The Group" have asked us to express their deep appreciation to the hundreds of people who have responded to our call for help.

This Christmas morning, close to 100 wee ones will find Santa Claus came to their homes. Depending upon the needs, there will be socks and underwear, shirts and pants, varied outerwear, heavy jackets. Although there will be only a smattering of the toys television has made popular, there will be a host of other toys and games that should help these little ones have one of their nicest Christmas holidays ever.

"The Group's" effort is all done anonymously. Every penny is spent on gifts and food. It was decided in the beginning that we would not waste our precious dollars in sending acknowledgements to those who contributed. The leaders have asked to use this medium to say thanks from The Group and from the kids.

We hope that each of you who responded to help these youngsters will envision on Christmas morning the smiles, the delight and the excitement, remembering, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Merry Christmas to one and all. And why not?

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