

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Turning the Tables on LILCO

Governor Pataki is in a squeeze. With LILCO's victory in the certiorari suit, it appears that Catacocinos may now have the upper hand in the state's bid to takeover LILCO. This does not have to be the case.

Pataki can direct the Public Service Commission to order the proceeds from the certiorari suit to be disbursed to the ratepayers who paid the bill in the first place. The cost of taxes incurred by LILCO are a pass-through item to the ratepayers, the company's certiorari windfall should pass immediately back to them.

In reality, LILCO did not win the suit for itself, the company won it for the rate payers. The PSC must ensure that the ratepayers are refunded the taxes that they overpaid through LILCO rates. LILCO cannot be allowed to blend these refunds into the rate base, or as a profit.

The talks on a LILCO takeover have been slow and tedious. One of the stumbling blocks has been Catacocinos' demand that he be allowed to stay at the helm of LILCO or any new company.

Suffolk Life says, let's give him his wish. Let's not take over LILCO, let's let them live and die on the company's own strengths or weaknesses.

What the Governor and the Long Island Power Authority should be concentrating on is strictly taking over the transmission and distribution facilities of LILCO through eminent domain. The state should condemn this part of the company as it is an impediment to the public and, under LILCO's management, is causing irrevocable financial harm.

Once the state has acquired the transmission and distribution facilities, it should put out to bid and engage a

first-rate company to operate and rebuild its facilities. The company could offer to wheel electricity for rates established by the PSC. LILCO could transmit through these lines, so could every other electrical competitor in the nation.

Electrical power companies could be invited onto Long Island to provide electricity through competition. Each company would have equal access to the grid and could import electricity directly to the consumers on a contractual basis.

The wheeling fees would pay for the upkeep and the maintenance on the lines and the distribution system. All users of the system would pay a competitive rate for the use of the system. LILCO would be free to compete for the Long Island customers, but would be forced to be as competitive as the off-island suppliers.

The state would have to pay for this condemnation, but it would be a fraction of the cost of taking over the whole company. The cost of the bonds used to pay for the distribution system can be worked into the base wheeling rates. LILCO would be left with the company intact, minus the transportation and distribution systems. It would be up to LILCO to figure out how it could be competitive while servicing the debt load it incurred over the past.

The ratepayers had nothing to say about LILCO's ventures or the financing of them. Ratepayers are entitled to the lowest rates for electricity that can be secured through open competition. This should be the objective of the Pataki administration and the PSC.

It's time to turn the cards on LILCO.

And why not?

maximum penalties.

Quality of life crimes were once rare in Suffolk County. Those of us who are natives remember growing up not having to lock our doors or worry about the security in our neighborhoods. As times have changed and more criminals found that they could get away with crimes, crime increased. Many residents felt that they were prisoners within their own homes. The streets belonged to the criminal element.

The DA's imaginative program seems to be working. The law enforcement officials intend to move the task force from community to community. The perpetrators will not know when they are being targeted, and hopefully, when they realize that there is a good chance of being caught, will back off.

It's good to see the law enforcement agencies cooperating for the good of all Suffolk residents.

And why not?

## Suffolk's #1 Crybaby

Suffolk County Comptroller Joseph Caputo should be given the 1996 Suffolk Crybaby Award.

In a recent Suffolk Life news story, headline hunter Suffolk Legislator Steve Levy alleged that the county was being charged \$18.21 for a quart of oil and was paying the Suffolk County Department of Public Works a labor rate of \$124.02 an hour for services.

If this is true, it is outrageous. Our own county is ripping off our own county and the Suffolk taxpayers are paying for it.

Levy called upon the county comptroller's office to do an audit. Caputo responded with the claim that "his office is not in a position to move on this now, but maybe we can address it through our three-year plan for next year."

Besides, he continued, "If we do the audit, would the Legislature follow our recommendations, or do nothing, as is often the case?"

The purpose of the Comptroller's office is to verify spending by the county and the various agencies that do business with it. The department has about 131 employees--not quite a one-man show.

Every time there is an appearance

of fiscal wrongdoing and an audit is called for, Caputo whines about not having the staff and therefore cannot do the audit. This, too, is ridiculous and shows his disregard for the people of Suffolk County who elected him to this position. He should at least show some enthusiasm for the job he is being paid to do. A "yes" attitude would go a long way to giving Suffolk County residents a feeling that they have a watchdog. A lackadaisical or arrogant attitude of 'maybe we can get to it over the next three years,' sends the wrong message.

Obviously, the comptroller's office is not in a position to jump every time a politician looking for a headline calls out. But, at the same time, if you give the impression that you are too overworked and too overwhelmed to pay attention to business--the county's business--you are saying to those who do business with the county that there is no serious audit control.

If you are telling the taxpayers that perhaps your department may get to it sometime later, even after some possible wrongdoing has been revealed, we are going to end up with the kind of government that none of us wants.

And why not?

## Job Apprenticeships

As we ride through most of our local communities, we see brick buildings built during the Thirties for schools and municipalities. Brick buildings are not common on Long Island but were the result of desperate measures taken during the Great Depression to put people back to work.

People, who were unemployed and lacked skills, were engaged by the federal government to build these buildings. Many unskilled workers learned trades here that made them productive and provided lifetime employment opportunities.

In New York State, we are going from welfare to workfare. The question many have asked is where are the jobs going to come from? As the economy improves and New York State once again becomes a good place to do business, some of these jobs will come from the private sector. In the meantime, most municipalities have buildings owned by them or have desires for new buildings. Shouldn't our municipalities consider establishing apprenticeship programs for construction and reconstruction of these buildings?

Workfare recipients could be engaged in apprenticeship programs where they would learn valuable trades and be prepared to enter the work force with something to offer, talents that command good wages. During these apprenticeships, the entry level workers would be paid entry level wages. This would keep the cost of the projects down. As the

workers acquired the skills and the knowledge to become trades people, their wages would be accelerated and established by the open market. This would be a win, win situation.

Here is a perfect partnership opportunity for government, private enterprise and the unions. The need is there. The reason is there. The opportunities are abundant. Each town and county should identify projects that need to be accomplished and by bringing a coalition of providers together, develop projects and plans that will accomplish the needs of a community and the retraining of former welfare recipients. Many projects could be accomplished at a fraction of the cost, but this will take the cooperation of all.

And why not?

**Shouldn't our municipalities consider establishing apprenticeship programs for construction and reconstruction of these buildings?**

## Take Back Our Communities

District Attorney James Catterson and Police Commissioner Peter Cosgrove have come up with a plan to take back our communities from the criminal element.

In cooperation, they have established a specialized task force of Suffolk County Police officers who target communities and go after quality of life types of crimes. Those crimes range from graffiti to drug possession, burglary and criminal mischief. Under the program, police take on a high presence within the community.

During October and November, the Third Precinct was able to reduce crime by 25% in most categories. The perpetrators quickly realized that they were being targeted. The cops fully document each arrest, providing the ammunition that the DA needs for successful prosecution. They do not entertain plea bargains. The cases are solid and when presented, leave the judges little leeway other than to hand out



## The Blame Game

We were disappointed to see Newsday editorially playing the "blame game" for the continuation of the Shoreham fiasco and the judgment handed down by Judge Thomas Stark.

Shoreham was not a Republican thing, it was not a Democratic thing. It was a tragedy that should never have happened but that we allowed to happen.

In the early seventies, Irving Like, during the Lloyd Harbor hearings, pleaded with the hearing officers from the Atomic Energy Commission to look at Long Island and the question of evacuation. This was before one shovel of dirt had been dug. The Atomic Energy Commission hearing officers said, "We do not consider evacuation until the plant is built and is ready to operate." Of course, in hindsight, this position was ludicrous.

Long Island is just that, a long island. Shoreham is located about 75 miles from New York City and the bridges that allow for an exodus off Long Island on the East End of this long island.

Suffolk County, in anticipation of Shoreham opening, spent over \$1 million to develop an evacuation plan. It brought in experts from around the country. After months of intensive study, the experts concluded that Long Island could not be evacuated quickly or safely if there was a major accident at Shoreham.

The County Executive and the Legislature have a constitutional obligation to protect the safety of the residents. In good conscience, they turned down LILCO's demand for an evacuation plan because it was not a plan that could work.

When they turned down this plan, it signaled the end of Shoreham and it was then, back in 1985, that the Brookhaven Town assessor should have readjusted the assessment for Shoreham to reflect the diminished value of this property. Instead, Brookhaven increased assessments which led to the judgment that we now have to deal with.

LILCO, at the time of these hearings, had planned on Long Island becoming a nuclear island. They had on the drawing board a total of 11 nuclear power plants. LILCO officials claimed that energy generated from a nuclear power plant would be too cheap to meter. Friends of atomic energy proudly proclaimed that there had never been a nuclear accident and there never would be.

Politicians from Washington right down to local school boards saw the creation of nuclear power plants as a tax savior. Wall Street saw the bonding and funding of nuclear power plants as a never-ending source of fees and commissions. Investors saw them as gold clad securities that virtually guaranteed them a handsome return on investment. The public was too stupid to understand the known risk of nuclear energy and they left it up to the leaders to become involved in the creation of nuclear energy in the early seventies out of curiosity and

then as journalists when we sought answers to questions. LILCO officials stonewalled us and the more they refused to forthrightly answer our questions, the more suspicious we became.

During the late seventies and the eighties, we devoted 10% to 25% of our news hole to this one single issue. Editorially, we consistently spoke out about the folly and the ramifications this plant was going to have on the health and the economy of Long Island. For a long period of time, we felt we were whistling in the wind, then LILCO erected the evacuation alarm and people took notice. It was a different ball game when residents realized Shoreham was in their backyard.

In numerous editorials, we warned and condemned Brookhaven Town for increasing the assessments on this plant. We did not believe it was going to open and the town would face a liability for the taxes that had been assessed against it.

During the protracted talks between former Governor Cuomo and LILCO Chairman Catacosinos, we insisted that part of the deal be that LILCO would drop its certiorari lawsuit. The governor turned a deaf ear to us. It was suggested that politics was behind his ignoring this scenario. Cuomo was a Democrat. Long Island has traditionally been Republican. Eliminating the certiorari suit would give the Republicans a political edge. If the certiorari suit was allowed to continue and Cuomo could come in at the 11th hour and pull another trick out of the hat by making another deal with Catacosinos, he would be the savior of Long Island.

Cuomo lost his bid for reelection and Catacosinos continued to play hardball with Pataki. LILCO has won the certiorari suit. The ratepayers of LILCO, both in Nassau and Suffolk County, should be returned dollar for dollar everything LILCO won in court.

The Shoreham/Wading River School District, which even today is getting pilot payments in lieu of taxes, will be assessed over one-third of this judgment. Brookhaven town will pick up more than one-third as its share and the county will be liable for 20% to 30% for their participation.

Who is to blame? Every one of us. The politicians, and we believe particularly the media, that allowed the politicians to get away with this malfeasance. Instead of blaming others, Newsday should own up to its own misguided and blind support for the plant. Newsday was LILCO's biggest cheerleader and rarely ever spoke out on behalf of the residents or the ratepayers.

If Newsday, Long Island's daily newspaper, had been doing its job as a watchdog, it could have helped keep the elected officials' feet to the fire and aroused the public to protest the overassessments.

Newsday was too busy supporting LILCO's management to take up the cradle of the residents or the ratepayers. When the big guy in the sky judges our actions, Newsday will be forced to assume the responsibility for its negligence.

**Brookhaven town will pick up more than one-third as its share and the county will be liable for 20% to 30% for their participation.**

## One Last Gift

There are only 14 days left before Christmas. Two weeks from today, thousands of children will come tearing down the stairs to find that Santa visited their home.

This year, "The Group" has been overwhelmed with the requests for aid. Almost every application is tragic and cries out for help. We try to do as much as we can, taking our resources to the limit.

"The Group's" aim is to provide Christmas for the children of parents who are normally able to take care of their own. Families who have experienced accidents, tragedies, layoffs or economic reversals will have to tell their children Santa won't come this year. The children understand their financial difficulties, but they don't want to believe that Santa won't come. They hold on to the miracle of Christmas.

"The Group" anonymously identifies these families and their needs. Our volunteers shop for all of those needs. They make every dollar do the work of three. They have a very limited budget and generally the needs far surpass the amount of money that has been allocated.

Over the last 18 years, by some miraculously, we have been able to accomplish the impossible. Not only are the kids clothed from underwear to outerwear but they receive toys, games and other items of pleasure.

Every gift is personally wrapped and labeled with the child's first name. They are collected,

inventoried and bagged.

On Christmas Eve or a day or two before, a person unknown to the family arrives at their home. We try to make the delivery when the children are not at home. There is nothing that indicates that the gifts come from anybody but Mom and Dad or Santa.

As much as we believe in miracles, this program only works because of the generosity of our fellow Suffolk County residents. If you would like to join "The Group" we would deeply appreciate you donating what you can.

These next 14 days are going to be incredibly hectic. We have taken on commitments we do not have total funding for. We are counting on the last minute generosity of all of you to meet the needs of our fellow Suffolk residents.

We all know that "There, but for the grace of God, go I." At the flip of the card of life, our circumstances could be reversed, and it could be our children who are facing disappointment on Christmas morning.

All of the funds raised for "The Group" are used to buy gifts. Not one cent is spent on administrative costs, overhead or even wrapping paper and Christmas bows.

You may join "The Group" by sending a contribution to, "The Group," c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, PO Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

And why not?

## The Power To Appoint

Peter Cosgrove, the Police Commissioner of Suffolk County, announced his premature retirement this past week.

The Legislature and Cosgrove have been involved in an ongoing feud. The Legislature recently enacted a law forbidding any Suffolk County employee's salary from being higher than the County Executive's. Some said this was aimed at Cosgrove. Cosgrove's salary is set just below the County Executive's, but he receives additional compensation for teaching at Suffolk County Community College. Cosgrove gave this as one of the reasons for his premature resignation.

Many governmental insiders believe the reason he resigned on Wednesday was that the Legislature was expected to vote on a bill that would take away from the County Executive his prerogative to hire the Police Commissioner and give this power to the Legislature. Many feel this will politicize the police department. We share in these feelings.

The Police Commissioner currently serves at the pleasure of the County Executive. The County Executive is directly responsible for the safety, health and welfare of the county. As the Chief Executive, his powers supersede those of the Police Commissioner. He is the Police Commissioner's boss. It should be the sole responsibility of the County Executive to choose those commissioners who serve under him.

The Legislature should not be picking out the people who will serve directly under the County Executive. This is a breach of the checks and balances. We did not elect the County Legislature to be the County Executive, and we especially do not want them becoming 18 mini-County Executives.

The Legislature is there to advise and make laws, not to handle the everyday functions of the county. No commissioner or

boss can successfully operate a department if he or she has 18 teeny weeny bosses on top of them.

The Police Commissioner should get his marching orders, his commands, from the person the residents of Suffolk County have chosen as their leader. His term should end with the County Executive's. Every four years, he should be requested to submit his resignation, giving the County Executive the opportunity to reappoint him or select someone else whom the executive has confidence in and who he feels can do the job better.

It should be a function of the County Executive's department to have an ongoing nationwide search for replacing the Police Commissioner, in case the Commissioner desires to retire, is forced to retire, or the executive loses faith in him.

The Police Commissioner's position is too important, too sensitive to be left up to pure politics. The Commissioner must be dedicated and loyal to the County Executive while providing the strong leadership for the police.

The Suffolk County Police Department is a 2,800-man organization. It is in constant flux with officers retiring and new classes beginning. The police department is one of the biggest cost drains on government and there are numerous ways in which the costs can be contained if given direction by the County Executive. If the Police Commissioner has to put up with interference from 18 Legislators, each with his or her own agenda, the department would rapidly become filled with pork without anyone being held accountable or responsible.

The County Legislators should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and be appreciative of the role they have been assigned by their constituents.

And why not?

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SUFFOLK COUNTY  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Can't Something Be Done?

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter based upon an upsetting experience I had at the Smith Haven Mall on Wednesday, November 20th. I am hoping that the Management of the Smith Haven Mall will consider this a serious issue and attempt to rectify the problem.

While heading towards the "food court" I noticed a woman struggling to strap her toddler into a carriage and looking all around her calling a child's name. As I approached, her panic increased as she realized her other son was missing. The people around her immediately tried to help locate the boy, while I offered to stay with her toddler and my own two children. I was screaming for security, asking a proprietor to call them. He couldn't locate the phone number at his booth, ran to a nearby store and got the number. After dialing, he was informed by a recording that the number had been changed. All during this time the panic in this wing was horrific. The mother was begging for people to help her. I continued to scream for security while instructing people to check the exits. The cooperation and concern of strangers is what enabled us to find this child. He was down a long corridor leading to the bathrooms and an exit. When presented with her child, the mother threw herself on the floor and wept. Only then did security arrive.

I was extremely shaken by this incident as were many other people. We all know the possibility of losing a child to a sick deranged criminal exists. After ensuring this family was okay, my next concern was: why had this call for security taken so long? As each minute passed, I knew the little guy was getting further away. I was so afraid that someone would leave the mall with that child--making any effort at finding him next to impossible.

Angry, I went upstairs to make a formal complaint. After speaking to the head of security I was informed that I was not entitled to know how many guards were present in the mall that day. I pointed out that the proprietors did not have an accurate phone number to reach security quickly in an emergency. Why is it that there are fire alarm "pulls" for use in an emergency--and not a "red" phone with an immediate direct line to security? How much could it possibly cost this mall to install a red phone in each wing? There are so many situations that call for an immediate response: a heart attack, a person with a gun, a child snatching etc....

It worries me that such a large facility, with thousands of people passing through daily, is not

set up with a more efficient security system. I do not blame the security guard that responded so late: he didn't get the call until far too much time had passed. The security office on the second floor admitted to hearing our screams from below and radioed for help.

As a concerned parent and shopper, I urge the management of the Smith Haven Mall to look into this matter immediately. I also urge all parents to please insist your children hold onto you or the stroller, keeping them within eyesight at all times--especially during the crowded holiday season.

**A Concerned Mom**

## Don't Be Afraid

Dear Editor:

Are you unsure of exactly how religion fits into your life? Even though there's this tiny voice inside your heart that keeps saying that you "should" go to church, you should "practice religion." Is it fear of not "knowing what you should do" when you go to church or your lack of "knowledge" in things religious? I, too, felt that fear and I used to cover it up by saying "I don't need to go to church to pray, I can do my praying at home. God knows I'm talking to him. Who needs to go to church, they only want my money."

I finally uncovered my fear and swallowed it almost two years ago and took myself to a wonderful church right here in my own "backyard." When I first started to go to Grace Lutheran Church in Mastic Beach, I was scared. I didn't have knowledge of the bible: I was a child the last time I was in a church. With the help of the people of Grace--all of whom I've come to regard as a family--I'm learning. Never have I felt pressure to do or to learn. I never knew that my heart could actually sing with joy and peace and that I would feel comfortable going to church. It still amazes me.

I'm writing this letter because as I go through my daily life it amazes me how many people are just like I was: "afraid" of religion. If you could come and sit with us for an hour on some Sunday hopefully you, too, would feel the warmth and friendship the people at Grace have given to me and my family. The emotional and spiritual uplifting can do a body good.

I hope you catch the warmth.  
**Debby B.**

## No Place Like Home

Dear Editor:

In response to your editorial, "A Place for Everything," what I'm reading is that residents who live in Sayville group homes should be sep-

arated as castaways and discards and moved into an isolated area away from the general population.

These residents are people, human beings who have people and human rights (just as much as anyone else in society). In the eyes of God and the United States Constitution, all citizens have equal rights.

All of these residents living in group homes are in recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction--which is a treatable disease. They have admitted they have a problem and are willing and able to start on a new road of life.

While living in these houses, residents must attend AA meetings, attend drug and alcohol counseling and live within all rules, regulations and policies such as a night curfew, room and house cleanliness, attendance at in-house meetings and maintaining an attitude conducive to recovery.

All citizens are entitled to live wherever they wish, as long as they live within the boundaries of the law. To stereotype these men in recovery as second-class citizens is being discriminatory and unlawful, along with sending clear signals of bigotry and hypocrisy.

**Thomas Damiacki**

## Thanks for the Help

To The Editor:

The Mark C. Sinclair Foundation would like to thank everyone who helped make our first fundraiser a huge success.

Thanks go to Charlie and Jack Pensa and the Villa Paul Staff for providing the outstanding food and atmosphere that they are so well known for. Thanks also go to Kathleene Couch, Meghan and Lauren Sinclair, Val Scott, Priscilla Chumak and Cathy Walker for all their help. And to the members of Olde Town Lodge for their extremely generous donation.

Congratulations to Roy Pepperidge, Kathy Young and Jim Mulvey for winning the 50/50, and to Betty Fallot for winning the basket of cheer.

Mostly, thank you to everyone who supported us by attending the dinner, buying raffles or for their generous donations.

The playground is on its way.

**Liz Constantopoulos  
Laura DeVito  
Brenda Sinclair Herbst**

## Is This the Thanks We Get?

Dear Mr. Willmott:

President Kennedy once said, "Don't ask

what your country can do for you: Ask what you can do for your country."

Millions of us did. Those of us who were lucky to come out of it now have the right to ask our country, "What is our country going to do for us?" They are now trying to play games with our Social Security and our Medicare. Is that supposed to be our reward because we have lasted so long? These two gangs in Washington had better realize that we veteran seniors have families and friends and we do speak out.

I have six children and nine grandchildren, many fellow veteran friends and friends in this area where I grew up in and left to serve my country. I am angry and constantly speak of my anger and disgust with the ever increasing size of the government and the ever increasing taxes.

Now they want to play games with what we were and are entitled to. It appears to me that our so called representatives are more concerned with their prestige, power and their way of life than to be concerned about us.

What a nice way to say "Thanks" to those who served and all the seniors who paid their way through life.

**Roy Gurriell  
E. Northport**

## Keep it Down, Raise the Money

Dear Mr. Willmott:

With all of the uproar over the controversial proposal of Southampton Town bonding \$2.5 million dollars to build a competition-sized swimming pool and recreation center, there is another answer to this proposed method of finance. Why not the Property Transfer Tax to pay for this much needed and much sought after Health and Recreation facility? This method would erase the argument of a further property tax increase to pay off the bond and negate any further bonded indebtedness for our town. It would also do away with the argument as to having or not having a referendum regarding the pool as there would be no reason for it. Again the problem hasn't been the pool, the problem has been the further financial burden on our taxpayers to pay for it.

As I have stated before, the Property Transfer Tax has been used to great advantage in other areas to preserve open space and to provide recreational facilities such as this pool proposal (Nantucket is a prime example). The transfer tax is not regressive. There would be an exemption for the first \$75,000 dollars for the purchase of unimproved property and \$250,000 dollars for the purchase of improved property with the 2% tax to be paid on the excess over and above those basic figures. In using this method, our middle income land purchaser or home buyer would not be affected by this tax. The monies received from this tax could only be used for the purchase of open space, the purchase of development rights and the creation of parks and recreation facilities throughout all of our town. Had this property transfer tax been in effect in Southampton Town in 1995, the town would have received about \$6 million from this property tax transfer tax--and 1996 has been just as good a year real-estate-wise.

I believe this method of finance should be given firm consideration by our town board. It would turn our much needed pool and recreation facility from a divisive political battle into a "win, win, win" situation for all sides to come together and support this very worthwhile project.

**Edwin M. (Buzz) Schwenk  
Southampton**

## SUFFOLK LIFE NEWSPAPERS

and SUFFOLK COUNTY LIFE

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**SUBSCRIPTION RATE:** For Suffolk Life or Suffolk County Life is \$10.00/year within Suffolk County. \$17.00 per year outside Suffolk County. Newsstand single copy sales 25¢ per issue.

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