

## As I see it...

# Tax revolt of 1989

### If You Are Big Enough, You Don't Have To Worry:

I was brought up to believe that the laws of the United States pertained equally to everyone, whether they be rich or poor, an individual or a corporation. Something is wrong with this picture.

The Long Island Lighting Company was found to have violated the RICO statute. The president and the corporation were found to have lied and cheated. The penalty for this fraud could be as high as \$8 billion.

The judge has not decided exactly what the penalty will be. Instead, the attorneys for LILCO and the Public Service Commission have been meeting behind closed doors to negotiate the penalty and work out a compromise that allows LILCO to avoid bankruptcy. Compromising on breaking the law?????

If you didn't pay your federal income tax, deliberately lied and cheated on it, would you be able to negotiate the verdict? Enjoy the country club!!!

### If You Are Small Enough:

On the flip side of the coin, this past week I met with a group of Shinnecock area fishermen. Frustrations ran rampant at this meeting. Another of their men had died the day before. He died trying to navigate the badly-shoaled Shinnecock Inlet. These men, who must brave the tides and the elements and pick their way through ever changing shoals, had been promised by the federal government that this passageway to the sea was to be dredged and stabilized by the Army Corps of Engineers.

"Don't worry guys, it's in the federal budget. The funds have been earmarked. The job will start in 1990. Just hang in there. Go out to fish when you can, risk your life and your investment when the seas are rough. The funding is in the bag. The project will start in 1990."

December 18, 1988, the corps said, sorry folks, you are not economically important and your lives have no value. Therefore, there are no funds included for Shinnecock in the 1990 budget.

The total funding had been budgeted at \$8 million. \$8 million out of a trillion dollar budget. Hardly pennies in the scheme of things. Pennies to the Washington politicians, but economic and physical survival to a bunch of hard working decent men who probably would be better off going on welfare. So much for equal justice and representation.

And why not?

There should be little doubt in any taxpayer's mind that we've been had. Taxes today could not even be imagined just 20 years ago when we purchased our homes. Many of us have seen our tax bills go from an average of \$500 per year, to \$4,000 and \$5,000. And 20 years ago, we did not pay a sales tax.

We let this condition happen, in fact we contributed to it. Now we are in revolt. We are rebelling. It will take more than rhetoric. It will take hard-core organization and unity. In many ways we are the enemy. We accepted the political rhetoric that we were demanding new services and expansion of government. In a sense this is true, for within all of us there is greed. Whether a young parent with children in school, a senior citizen or a business person, we all want the best for ourselves as long as someone else is paying for it.

Parents with children are too ready to agree to increases in programs, reduction in class sizes, new and bigger buildings. Many parents not only subscribe to these theories, but buy the school administration's arguments when they should be questioning why their school budgets are going up when enrollments are decreasing annually.

A councilman from Smithtown recently pointed out that over the last decade, enrollment in Smithtown schools dropped by over 50 percent. The district closed six schools, but the budget still went up by something like 200 percent. This is not prudent nor responsible government.

On the town level, things are just as bad. With the increase in crime, homeowners have expressed their fears. The politicians' answer has been to add additional police officers. In the past decade the Town of Riverhead has seen its police force expand by 50 percent. The cost of a police department has always been the biggest portion of the town budget, and it keeps going higher.

While the police force was expanding at this alarming rate, populations were only increasing by less than one percent per year. Homeowners never demanded that the politicians require more work, more productivity out of the force. During this time, the P.B.A. unions which were organized demanded huge increases in pay, increased benefits and cutbacks in the number of hours that the officers worked. The politicians gave in to the most vocal pressure groups.

Towns to the west of Riverhead are no better. Homeowners also complain about crime, and demanded more visibility from the county force. The towns, unable to get it, instituted their own police forces. To get around the technicalities in the law, they called these people code enforcement. They equipped them with look alike police

cars, and uniformed the people right down to sidearms. More often than not, appointments are made based on politics and patronage rather than need or ability. And now western towns are, in effect, paying for two police forces.

County government has run rampant. In 1983, former County Executive Peter Cohalan gave away the store to the civil service union. Pay raises were granted to 10,000 county employees that averaged 78 percent. We said at that time that this fiasco of financial imprudence was going to come back to bite us where it hurts the most. We predicted then that massive layoffs would be a necessity by 1987 when the last round of these giveaways took effect. We were not wrong. The impact on county taxes was masked by two flukes. The economy boomed from 1983 to 1987. The unanticipated windfall from super sales tax revenues made up the gap. LILCO, which had withheld one hundred million dollars in real estate taxes, anted up and got the politicians through 1987. When the tax bills of 1988 went out, the chickens came home to roost. We are now paying for the sins of the past.

There is not a county legislator, Republican or Democrat, who was not fully aware of the impending crisis. They chose to ignore it. They chose to spend, spend, spend. A whole host of new programs was introduced, programs not asked for by the majority, not needed by most taxpayers. Every program had its constituency. Although small in numbers, they add up on Election Day. The legislature, which has never been known for guts, took the easy way out. This day has come to an end.

County government must be cut back. Duplication of services must be eliminated. Marginal programs must be eliminated. Unneeded employees, sadly, must be laid off. There is no alternative. The economy is not going to boil during the next few years as it once did. It's going to hold its own and it is going to grow at a much more restrained pace.

The environmentalists, in their quest to keep Long Island as it was 50 years ago, have successfully stymied growth and development, particularly, in the commercial sector. The anti-business and commercial mentality of the county legislature has successfully made Suffolk County a bad place to come to do business. Growth in this sector will be very limited in the future. We will be fortunate if we are able to attract enough new business to make up for those that are moving out of the area for more friendly climates, areas that have lower taxes and lower utility costs.

Taxpayers in Suffolk County must organize on a county level, on a town level, on the school district level. We must have a common goal of passing a law similar to Proposition 13 in California, or Two and One-Half in Massachusetts. This measure would not only cap all real estate, county, town, school and special district taxes at a percentage that we could afford to absorb, but, also, would establish our assessments at the current level and prevent the towns from raising the assessments except when the properties are sold.

We can settle for nothing less. It's going to take a lot of grueling organization and hard work. By joining hands we can gain control over our gutless government. We are the people, we are the taxpayers. This is our government, not theirs.

Organization is going to require the skills of the professionals, the managers, the accountants, the lawyers and the bankers. It will require the services of the citizens to monitor all public meetings, to carry petitions, and to gather signatures. In plain English, it is going to require volunteers. Volunteerism is noble and a worthy public service objective, one that we all should be involved in.

In a tax revolt we will not only volunteer to help our neighbors and our community, we are doing it to help ourselves. We are ready to join the fight, to put the full resources of Suffolk Life to work for you. Suffolk Life reaches every family in Suffolk County. This is your personal opportunity to join with your neighbors and friends to fight back.

We have been flooded with responses to our editorial last week calling for a taxpayers' organization to fight back. Residents of Suffolk County are fighting mad, and are raring to go. One letter symbolizes this fighting spirit: "I am a retired widow who has lived in her home for 20 years, paid taxes, voted in the assorted elections, but the time has come to stand up and be counted. I expect to reside in this house for the remainder of my days. No governing body will force me out because of taxes. I'm ready to do battle!"

How about you? Are you ready to join this crusade to survive? If so, drop us a note, containing your name, address, phone number, and tell us how you would like to help in our fight. If you have special expertise, legal, accounting, financial, indicate that fact. We're enlisting an army to help fight this war against taxes. Will you join us?

Mail your reply to: The Taxpayer, c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, 1461 Old Country Road, Riverhead, NY 11901.

And why not?



## End the secret deals

Closed door talks between the court-appointed mediator, lawyers for LILCO and the ratepayers who were included in the RICO suit brought by Suffolk County failed to produce an agreement last week. Had those talks produced a settlement recommended by mediator Kenneth Feinberg, ratepayers would have been clobbered again, just as they were when Governor Mario Cuomo's negotiator Vincent Tese met with LILCO officials while sipping expensive wine in the secrecy of a luxurious New York City apartment.

In a replay of the Tese scenario, the talks were ultra secret, at one time covered by a court order which forbade consultants from divulging any information to those not part of the secret talks. For the most part, Suffolk County officials, who were victorious in their RICO action against the Long Island Lighting Company, were left cooling their heels outside the negotiating sessions. Although invited to attend a marathon session on Sunday designed to produce an agreement, county officials sat excluded from the discussions for more than six hours, not present to hear what was being discussed, or able to participate in the negotiations.

The reason for the secrecy becomes painfully clear when the terms of the mediator's proposed settlement terms--labeled Confidential--are explored. A copy of the confidential information, obtained by Suffolk Life, reveals the following:

LILCO would pay \$400 million to settle the matter, with none of that amount paid during 1989, and the rest spread over ten years.

LILCO would pay preferred dividends immediately, with the payment on common stock dividends delayed for one year.

Here's a killer: "Suffolk agrees that, 'neither Mr. Uhl nor LILCO attempted to mislead, or did deliberately mislead, the Public Service Commission'--but Suffolk brought the suit in 'good faith.' "

The payment of fees for lawyers and consultants would come from a \$10 million ratepayer fund.

Are you sick yet? Hang on, there's more: "Suffolk signs State-LILCO settlement agreement. Shoreham closed per former deal terms (sale to LIPA.)"

Get a grip on yourself, here's another dilly: "Ratepayers lose \$700 million Shoreham prudence claim."

Miraculously, LILCO was asked to give something: "LILCO drops tax certiorari and related suits."

But!: "LILCO and Uhl keep insurance proceeds."

Thankfully, the mediator's recommendations did not fly, and the RICO case went to the courtroom of Federal Judge Jack Weinstein last Thursday. He heard arguments from LILCO that the verdict should be set aside; and requests from a host of others asking to be included as ratepayers in the case. Judge Weinstein reserved his decisions, which are expected in the near future.

Obviously, those who closed the doors for secret talks, just as Feinberg and Tese have done, are afraid to talk in the open, or have representatives of the people on hand to hear the wheeling and dealing that goes on. It is no secret that Governor Cuomo was very intimately involved in the RICO negotiations in the same manner he was masterminding the Tese giveaway. Considering the fact Cuomo repeatedly tried to get Suffolk to give up the RICO suit, his involvement and Suffolk's exclusion smacks of arrogance and questionable tactics. One thing has become painfully certain. Whenever the doors to these secret gatherings open, LILCO walks out with broad smiles. And no wonder, the giveaways become more and more unbelievable.

There may be more efforts to come up with a settlement before Judge Weinstein renders his decision, since the judge is known for a keen desire to settle such issues through negotiations. But the judge is also known as a man with great integrity, which seems to be lacking in the proposals that come out of closed door discussions. Hopefully Judge Weinstein will order those doors opened for any future talks that may be held, with Suffolk officials and the state assemblymen who fought so hard for the people, involved. We have learned from past experience that "done deals" produced behind closed doors include terms that enrich LILCO at the ratepayers' expense. It's time to end the secret dealings to protect LILCO.

And why not?

## The right choice

Board of Elections-Commissioner Bill Canary, who played a major role in the Bush campaign, has been offered a post with the new-administration. With this announcement, a stampede of political

opportunists has developed for the elections board post. With the mood of tax revolt in the air and people fed up with politicians using taxpayers' dollars to reward political favorites, the Republican leadership will be

under close scrutiny as they fill this post.

None of the contenders, with the exception of Deputy Commissioner Jerry Berger, has any experience with the Board of Elections. Berger has been deputy commissioner for over a decade. He is known as one of the hardest working people at the board. He is the one person that everyone goes to when they need knowledge about election law and procedure. Anyone who knows anything about the operation of the board of elections knows full well that Berger has been the stabilizing force there and responsible for improvements made in recent years.

Berger should be the logical choice for the job not only because of his experience, but also for the fact that he has been exceptionally fair to all, is honest and has been a loyal Republican. Berger has been passed over on different occasions because of political deals. This was not right then, and is not right now.

We are in the middle of a tax revolution. The leadership of the Republican party has an excellent opportunity here to do what is right for the right reasons and show the public that even in making political appointments they are going to make sure the public gets its money's worth.

Berger has the experience, he has the knowledge. He has proven his management capabilities and does not need any on-the-job training, which is costly and counter-productive. The two other leading contenders for this position, Edward Ecker from East Hampton and Harry Whithers from Babylon, have bounced around from one patronage post to the next. Neither man, credential wise, can hang his hat on the same rack as Berger. The Republican commissioner of the board of elections may have been strictly a patronage post in the past, but the day and age has dawned when even positions that are designated political should go to the most highly qualified candidate, one who can give the taxpayers the maximum return on their investment.

For John Cochrane, Suffolk County Republican chairman, and for the town Republican chairmen who make up his committee to select anyone else but Berger would not only be foolish and a slap in the taxpayers' face, it would be a display of political arrogance and a waste of taxpayers' hard earned dollars. This is the time to make the right choice, not the political reward.

And why not?

## The true Downey

Tom Downey, when he campaigns, runs from the fact that he is a liberal. Through smoke and mirrors he creates an illusion that he is a fiscal conservative and has the public's best interests at heart. Tom Downey's true colors came out of the closet this past week when he not only announced that he favored the great congressional robbery, but did not use the powers of his incumbency or his position on the House Ways and Means Committee to call for a vote on the measure that would give him and his cohorts a fifty percent pay hike.

Because we sent Downey back to office over the years, he is today one of the most powerful men in congress and in the Democratic party. If Tom Downey told Majority Leader Jim Wright that he wanted a vote in the

house of representatives on this issue, we believe there would have been a vote.

Downey did not have the guts to bring this issue to a vote. Instead, he will allow the pay hike to go into effect by doing nothing. There should be no doubt in the voters' minds just who Tom Downey is looking out for in Washington. He has become so used to feeding at the trough and so secure in his incumbency that he believes the voters will take anything, and when election time comes two years from now you will have forgotten how he ripped you off. The public should remember Tom Downey, the Jesse James of the 80's, the next time his name appears on the ballot.

And why not?

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## A plan for battle

Congratulations! You did it! You made your views known, you flooded your congressional offices with the coupons that appeared in Suffolk Life, and your demand for a vote on the infamous 50 percent pay raises was heard. As you undoubtedly know, the vote was held and the raises were defeated.

In early January, Suffolk Life published an editorial informing close to 500,000 families in Suffolk County that the congressmen and many highly paid federal officials were about to get the 50 percent pay raise without even having to vote on it. We included coupons demanding the senators and congressmen stand up and vote on the issue rather than let it slip through the back door.

The day before the vote, we received a call from a Newsday reporter in Washington who questioned us about the coupons. "They are all over the place down here," she said. "They have made quite an impact." As Lou Grasso, Suffolk Life managing editor told that reporter, "It proves that you can fight city hall, and even congress."

We won that battle, but now we must turn to another. We cannot rest on our laurels, we must begin anew to voice our anger, to let our public officials know that we are not going to be participants, not merely the source of bucks for their wanton spending.

The reckless spending continues here in Suffolk despite the mood of anger that the soaring tax rates is generating. In Babylon, the son of the town's highway superintendent is appointed to a \$47,000 a year job in the Farmingdale water district, going door to door to ask people to use less water. The job was not advertised, it was simply handed out like a gift. The new presiding officer of the county legislator, Gregory Blass, gave his aide a \$16,000 a year raise, from \$33,000 to \$49,000. These exorbitant salaries for such positions are an indication of the mentality that has caused taxes to soar.

The flood of mail that we have received at Suffolk Life in response to our editorials about the tax revolt of 1989 has been staggering. The names of those who have offered to volunteer in the effort to fight the wasteful spending are being put into a computer for

organizational and possible mailing purposes, broken down by towns. What we envision is an organization of ten town chapters, making it easier for folks to participate within their own local areas, with the leaders of the town groups participating in a county group to unify the voice of the taxpayers' organization.

We propose the creation of standing committees to monitor county government, the Suffolk County Water Authority, Suffolk Community College, the Suffolk O.T.B., town government, school districts, and special districts which rely on taxpayer funding.

The purpose of the Taxpayers Organization is to put a stop to the runaway taxes within Suffolk County through organization, education, investigation and the mobilization of manpower as a show of strength. To be successful, the organization must have active members in each town and school district. The overall organization must have sufficient numbers to outweigh any other lobbying or pressure group, individually or collectively.

That, in a nutshell, is the proposal for an organization to fight the wanton spending practices of politicians. Suffolk Life has offered to provide the leadership to give birth to the group, which should be a people's group, run by and for the people.

When do we start? The overwhelming response from the public indicates there are few places that could hold such a massive turnout for a single meeting. Thus we propose ten meetings, in each of Suffolk's ten towns. To start this off, however, we need leaders. We need people from each town to volunteer to act as leaders to get the town groups underway. To start the ball rolling.

We would like to schedule a meeting of the leader volunteers here at Suffolk Life at 7:30 p.m., March 1. From that gathering should come the scheduling of meetings within each town, and the formation of committees within those town groups.

The Tax Revolt of 1989 is underway. You have shown that you do make a difference, with your victory in Washington. Now let's turn our attention to Suffolk County and end the waste of our tax dollars here.

And why not?

a Proposition 13 to cap governmental spending. Some Democrats followed, declaring their cap proposal was far better than that offered by their political foes. County Executive Patrick Halpin joined the game by declaring the need for a "Taxpayers Bill of Rights." And politicians in Brookhaven joined the frenzy with a scheme of their own, this one the creation of a "Suffolk Committee to Repeal the Tax." Brookhaven Supervisor Henrietta Acampora, whose sig-

nature appears on a letter sent to over 100,000 Republican, Conservative and Independent voters, conceded she had absolutely no idea how she was going to go about repealing the tax, declaring the committee would, if nothing else, keep the need for tax relief in the public's eye. Does she really think the public needs to be reminded about the great tax ripoff of 1989?

The Brookhaven scheme added a new twist, an appeal for contributions. "Right now, the Democrats have hundreds of thousands of dollars that they can funnel into Brookhaven to try to defeat me," her letter declares. ". . . But with your generous support, I know we can win the battle against the tax and spend Democrats."

This attempt to raise political funds is, some political insiders say, the product of high priced political consultants. They don't care how they get the bucks, they don't care if what they say is the truth. But for Acampora to ask for funds for a tax repeal, and then say she doesn't know if repeal is possible, is seeking funds under false pretenses. Put another way, it's fraud, pure and simple. What's worse, she's asking for money from the very same people who are being killed by taxes. Acampora, and anyone else involved, should be ashamed of being part of this scam.

All these politicians are the very same people who have been on a spending binge. The legislators are the very same people who have voted to pierce a four percent cap already in place, and have added millions of dollars to the county budget in the process. And headlines about overtime payments and patronage positions in Brookhaven hardly give assurance that sound, efficient management is in place in that town. On the contrary, it smacks of spending arrogance and abuse of taxpayer dollars. Where has Brookhaven cut its budget? How many patronage positions have been eliminated? The answers are painfully clear. Outside of rhetoric and scams, nothing has been done.

Three weeks ago, at a meeting of the

ten town supervisors hosted by Suffolk Life, we discussed the forthcoming tax revolution. Supervisor after supervisor pointed their finger at the county when it was all too apparent that the towns were just as much to blame. I personally charged the supervisors with leading the way by going back to their town boards, calling together their department heads, telling of the revolution taking place and demanding a 30 percent cutback in the cost of operating the town. So far all we have heard is rhetoric.

Enough already! All of these political games are proof positive that the politicians think the taxpayers are a bunch of gullible idiots. That they can escape responsibility for the wasteful spending that has resulted in soaring tax rates simply by throwing political rhetoric at the flames. They're wrong. Very wrong.

The anger out there in the public sector is like nothing we have seen in the past. This is no temporary brush fire. This is a roaring blaze that won't be put out with rhetoric. It's going to take meaningful action in weeding waste from budgets, the elimination of political payoffs through patronage with high paying positions that are not needed. It's going to take the political guts to say "no" to the pressure groups who want to pad their own nests, at the expense of the taxpayers. It's going to take an honest accounting for each dollar spent. Each budget dollar must be justified before it is spent. Padded staffs must be trimmed, more accountability from governmental workers must be demanded.

Indeed, it may well take putting new people in responsible positions. If the best our current officials can offer is more of the same political rhetoric of the past, and worse, use of a serious tax problem as a means of raising political contributions, it's time to change the cast of characters. Business as usual is a thing of the past. This is the era of the taxpayers who are demanding change, and will take whatever steps are necessary to bring it about.

And why not?

## Save Shinnecock

While we should be opposed to wasteful spending, we should also fight to ensure that federal dollars are spent in needed ways. One such way is the stabilization of the Shinnecock Inlet, a dangerous passageway which has already cost the loss of human life.

Funds earmarked for the correction of this problem, pledged since 1960 for the dredging and rebuilding of the inlet, were deleted from the 1990 budget recently. Over one million dollars in federal funds has already been spent in planning and engineering of this vital project, and over \$800 thousand was recently spent by Suffolk County for emergency dredging to try and punch a hole in the sand bars so that the com-

mmercial fishing boats could get out to sea.

Several boats, both commercial and private, have been badly damaged, resulting in millions of dollars in losses over the past year.

Eight million dollars out of a trillion dollar budget may be pennies to our federal representatives, but it is the difference between life and death to people who work 16 hours a day to eke out an existence.

Why not send a telegram to President George Bush, The White House, Washington, D.C., encouraging him to include Shinnecock Inlet. A flood of messages might just do the trick. Let all of us reach out and help our fishermen in their hour of need.

And why not?

## Conning the people

The current mood of anger in the public sector over escalating tax rates has not been lost on the politicians. More and more are jumping on the bandwagon, anxious to seize the opportunity of the moment. If the subject matter wasn't so serious, these political actions would be humorous. As it is, they're little more than self-serving.

Republican members of the Suffolk County Legislature jumped on the bandwagon first, declaring a need for



# LILCO's lesson

The final chapter in the long, controversial saga of Shoreham is replete with the same jurisdictional arrogance and people be damned happenings that have been commonplace throughout the entire history of this plant.

From the very beginning, when LILCO and the Atomic Energy Commission, the forerunner to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, dismissed any consideration of the possibility of evacuation until after the plant was built, Shoreham has been a prime example of how money talks. The nuclear industry and the utilities, who invaded that area with grandiose schemes of power, have had the upper hand. Regulatory bodies, from the AEC to the NRC, have put aside the best interests of the public for financial considerations. A president made a promise he had no intention of keeping. Put another way, he lied.

If a licensing panel from the NRC came out with a decision the top officials didn't like, they simply changed the people on the panel. The new handpicked panel then changed the decisions to the way the top people wanted. If the regulations became a stumbling block to getting Shoreham on line, no problem, change the regulation. The money people have control of Washington, the people don't count.

Legislative action in Albany created the Long Island Power Authority which was designed to provide an alternative to the arrogance of LILCO. Governor Mario Cuomo jumped into the picture, stacked the LIPA deck with his own people, used LIPA as a big stick over LILCO's head, and in the end, undercut its value for his own political schemes.

But the courts would be another matter. Surely we can find justice there, right? Wrong. Suffolk County initiated an action under the RICO statute, charging LILCO had lied in presenting to the Public Service Commission information upon which rates were based. LILCO tried to have the case dismissed, but the judge refused. But LILCO continued to have friends in high places. Public Service commissioners testified during that trial that they would have given LILCO the same rate increases even if they knew LILCO was lying. So much for protecting the public.

Although few people gave the RICO case much chance at succeeding, lo and behold, the 12-member federal jury found that LILCO had, indeed, lied. Suffolk was awarded some \$22 million, and ratepayers had the potential of a future award of over \$4 billion. The specter of an award of that magnitude gave LILCO reason to shudder, and forced it back to negotiations. These nego-

tiations were held behind closed doors, mostly between LILCO and a court appointed mediator and, of course, Governor Cuomo was deeply involved even though he had attempted, repeatedly, to get Suffolk to drop the suit.

The sweetheart deals behind closed doors, with terms that made LILCO officials emerge with broad smiles, caused Suffolk officials to oppose settlement offers. The judge solved that little problem easily. He dismissed the case. He claimed it belonged before the PSC, despite the testimony from PSC officials they would have granted rate increases even knowing LILCO was lying. The judge had another solution. He certified ratepayers who had initially been a part of the Suffolk suit, and named a Manhattan attorney to represent those ratepayers. Despite the fact seven of the eight ratepayers objected to the terms of an offered settlement, which gave ratepayers a drop in the bucket, the attorney settled. Since the judge, who favored the settlement, is the one who decides the attorney's financial reward, there is some question as to who did what and why.

The one thing that is painfully clear is that LILCO is ecstatic that

the suit was settled for as little as it was. That settlement removes the possibility of an appeal reversing the judge's dismissal. It removes from the negotiation process the big stick that was hovering over LILCO's head, a weapon that could force them into more consideration for the public. With the settlement, the banks began offering extensions of credit, and LILCO can now thumb its nose at the public and its demands for equitable energy rates.

With LILCO's continued successes with friends in high place, the public is powerless to act. Or is it? In the end, the final act may be played out by a determined public, one angry enough to fight for its future.

How? Well, what did LILCO do when it decided to fight the opposition by Suffolk County and New York State? They didn't pay their taxes, right? That one action caused tremors in governmental circles. It caused then County Executive Peter F. Cohalan, a onetime fierce anti-Shoreham, anti-LILCO foe, into submission. Cohalan flip-flopped on the issue and became a sudden supporter of LILCO and the nuclear plant.

Where does LILCO's money come from? It comes from you, the ratepayers. What would happen if you started turning off the switches more and more, began using less and less electricity? LILCO would get

less and less money. Sure, you say, then they would go before the PSC and ask for higher rates, as they did when the people did, indeed, conserve more, and the PSC would, as they have so often in the past, grant the request.

If that were to happen, ratepayers could tear a page out of LILCO's book. They could withhold the payments, just as tenants do when landlords don't provide needed repairs or heat, showing a total indifference to the tenants. Sure, LILCO could turn off the power. But they would be embarking on a course of financial suicide, and emergency actions could be taken by government to ensure the health and welfare of the people.

We're not advocating here an immediate payment strike. We are making the point that the people are not totally without power, and do not have to be held as sacrificial lambs by arrogant utilities. That the public still has a big stick that can be wielded to protect its future.

And LILCO had better begin to realize that the public is in an angry mood, over taxes and over energy rates, and is prepared to act. Our message to LILCO is, negotiate in good faith, work out terms that the public can live with, close Shoreham, or face the consequences.

And why not?

## The games continue

"The people of Suffolk County deserve leadership, not pandering. The people of Suffolk County deserve candor, not posturing, and the public deserves substantive action, not gimmicks."

Those words were used by Suffolk County Legislator Wayne Prospect who, with Gregory Blass, presiding officer of the legislature, last week announced "...one of the most ambitious budget reduction initiatives in the history of local government." Upon careful examination, their budget reduction plan violates everything Prospect said the public doesn't need, pandering, posturing and gimmicks.

The Blass, Prospect duo called for a two-year wage freeze for all county employees, including elected officials. While a wage freeze may well be an important ingredient of any effort to bring county taxes down to a sane level, we do not believe many legislators have the backbone to stick to that proposal. We remember too well the actions of the legislators who buckled under the intense pressure brought to bear by members of the county's CSEA union when the CSEA was given a sweetheart contract by then County Executive Peter F. Cohalan. The financial ramifications of that contract are

one of the reasons for the current tax crisis in Suffolk County.

Despite the call for a public freeze on the salaries of public officials, there was no mention of a rollback of the increase the legislators voted for themselves and other public officials not too many weeks ago.

The Blass-Prospect proposal calls for taking the revenue sharing portion of the county's drinking water protection program away from the towns and "returned to the people to reduce property taxes." The people approved the designation of these funds in a referendum last year when they approved the extension of the one-quarter percent sales tax. This proposal would also have to go on the ballot. The Blass-Prospect proposal accomplishes only one thing. It will cause an increase in town taxes, thereby accomplishing no tax relief for the public. It's a scam, a gimmick.

The only proposal in the Blass-Prospect plan that makes any sense is the termination of the proposed western court complex. Their proposal comes some \$6 million dollars late, however, the amount already spent on this grandiose scheme which should not have been approved to begin with. Suffolk Life warned when this proposal was ap-

proved that it would become another Southwest Sewer District boondoggle. That cost overruns would cause the burden on the taxpayers to soar. And that is exactly what happened. Early in the administration of County Executive Patrick Halpin, when costs were escalating wildly, Halpin lopped off four floors from the overall plan in order to curb spending. That was a good start, but if a floor was cut off every time the costs went up, the court complex would be a hole in the ground by the time it is finished.

The court complex was born out of a hue and cry from attorneys and judges about the need for additional court space, and about the rundown conditions of present courtrooms. It went from need to fiasco, however, with a design competition and plans for maximum security courtrooms and a campus setting, and squabbles about the size of judges' chambers. No consideration was ever given to a less ostentatious plan, or the refurbishing of existing facilities. Grandiose, not functional, was the name of the game, as if quality justice required a fancy courtroom. Quality was targeted on the facility, not on the judges. And that is a crying shame.

Blass and Prospect want to use the

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