

'The economy, stupid'

Those three words, "The economy, stupid," helped propel President Bill Clinton into the Oval Office. They were the slogan of his campaign, an emphatic focus of attention on the key issue of the presidential campaign. Unfortunately, when they closed the campaign offices they apparently left the signs, as well as the focus, behind.

The economy virtually took a back seat during the first week of Clinton's presidency. Instead, Clinton put an elimination of the ban on gays in the military, a campaign promise that

won him support of the gay community during the campaign, at the top of his priority list. He put aside opposition, and the reported threat of resignation by top military officials, to push his "deep commitment" to the gay community. He seemed willing to sacrifice a honeymoon period with the Congress over the issue, with key congressional leaders vowing to pass legislation to reinstate the ban he threatened to abolish by presidential declaration.

"The economy, stupid" was the

theme song of his "deep commitment" to put the economy on the front burner as soon as he took office. If he was willing to go to war with Congress over anything, it should have been that issue which affects all of the people, not just a segment of society.

A major push to grant the President—this President or any other—the authority of line-item veto is an issue worthy of a battle with Congress. The line-item veto would give the President an opportunity to weed out the

billions of dollars of waste in political pork barrel projects which are used by members of Congress for political gain. Congress, which has fought against the proposal, will not willingly grant this authority. But needless projects whose only purpose is to enhance the political fortunes of those in Congress should be first on the list of "sacrifices" Clinton extolled in his inaugural address.

Despite his campaign rhetoric of relief for the middle class and "tax the rich," the first words out of the mouth of Clinton's new Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen were "energy tax." A broad-based tax that hits everyone, from rich to poor, across the boards. Why are we talking about a new tax when we have not focused on the wasteful spending so rampant in government? The deficit was created by spending more money than the government took in. Is the solution to take in more money, so more can be spent? Does the word sacrifice apply only to the taxpayers? Government is exempt? This is the change we were promised?

Clinton, admittedly, has an extremely hard job in front of him. He will make mistakes easy enough, errors of judgment and mistakes by acting in haste. Mistakes will also be caused by those who surround him. He will be criticized, fairly and sometimes unfairly, for political purposes. He must be smart enough to know what is within his realm to do and what is not. What is worth sacrifice, and what is not. What promises he must keep immediately, and those he must delay to engender a sense of compromise.

"The economy, stupid." Those words should be painted on the ceiling above his bed, and painted on the wall of the Oval Office. They are what brought him to the pinnacle of power, and could well be the words that spell doom to his future.

"The economy, stupid!"
And why not?

Trickle down taxation

Remember just a few short months ago Little Slick Willie in his quest for the presidency gathered great momentum by saying how he was going to "sock it to the rich?" How he was going to unmercifully tax those that were making \$200,000 or more? Remember how we warned that if Little Slick Willie taxed those that made over \$200,000 a year 100%, it would not fund 5% of his spending plans?

Remember when we said "trickle down economics" would be replaced by "trickle down taxation?"

Guess what folks! The first economic proposal in Little Slick Willie's program is to raise the tax on gasoline up to 50 cents a gallon from its current 14-cent level. Does that sound like a "sock it to the rich" program? Or is it trickle down taxation?

The majority of people that will be

hurt are those who use a car to get to work or to do business. Most of these are middle class people and small businesses.

The other program which you should watch very carefully is his plan to raid your net worth. Currently, federal estate taxes exempt the first \$600,000 that a person has accumulated over their lifetime. Little Slick Willie and his henchmen want to reduce this to \$200,000, and then tax you up to 50% on the balance.

Estate taxes are probably the least fair of all the taxes. Our estates, which most of the time is the value of our home and our savings, are the end result of our earnings and investments that we already have paid up to 50% in taxes on during our lifetime.

Now Little Slick Willie wants to tax you even in your grave. Many Long Islanders will accumulate an estate that is worth over \$200,000 upon their death. It will be the result of hard work, frugal living habits, and self denial, designed as a cushion against catastrophic illness. To allow Little Slick Willie and his henchmen to deprive your rightful heirs of your bequest is not only unfair, it is pure greed in its most ruthless form. This is real trickle down taxation.

And why not?

Pay raises killed

Hearing from the taxpayers, the residents of Suffolk County, the Suffolk County Legislature found the courage to rescind their automatic pay raises. We congratulate them on this newfound courage and good common sense.

There was no money in the budget to fund these raises. If left in place, the money would have had to be taken from other sources, programs important to the people, or taxes raised.

In the preliminary vote, Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburgh and Legislator Michael Caracciolo voted in favor of keeping the raises. In the final vote, Caracciolo, a retired cop with a lucrative pension, at the last minute changed his mind and left Blydenburgh the sole hold out for greed.

Now that the legislature has res-

cinded the raises for this year, they must pass a law permanently rescinding these automatic raises in the future. Next year, they will not be up for re-election.

Since the legislature will be in the process of looking at raises and the cost of government, it would be a good time for them to also look at the cost of their staffs. Many legislators are paying aides more than they are being paid themselves. Highly-paid executive salaries for aide positions do not make sense in this time of fiscal austerity. You can count on more on this later.

And why not?

Why duplicate programs?

State University College of Technology at Farmingdale is a state-run, two-year, technical school. It originally was established as primarily an agricultural institution where farmers would send their children to learn the latest methods for running an agricultural establishment. As Long Island changed, the school changed its curriculum to meet the technical needs of the area.

It was recently announced that the board of Farmingdale is considering entering the four-year school business. It still basically would be a hands-on, technical institution, but would be able to confer a four-year bachelor of science degree in aviation, in addition to the two-year associate's certificate. Farmingdale is a state institution that is supported primarily by the taxpayers of New York State.

Less than 15 miles away is Dowling College. They, too, have announced plans to expand. They are establishing a

multimillion-dollar aviation and transportation school at the Calabro Airport in Shirley. The first phase is scheduled to open in 1994 and be fully operational in 1996. The Dowling College aviation program has been in existence for the past 26 years. Dowling has traditionally taken those students from Farmingdale who had completed a two-year technical education in aviation, credited them with their two years of college and enrolled them in their four-year degree program.

Farmingdale, in announcing their four-year plans, intends to duplicate the Dowling program. Dowling officials, needless to say, are upset. They have committed millions of dollars to this venture and are questioning the wisdom of the state going into competition with them, and duplicating their efforts. Their concerns are warranted. Would we end up with two badly-gutted programs, with neither school having sufficient funds to operate?

Dowling students pay \$4,000 per semester in tuition. Of that, the average student, after grants and scholarships are accounted for, has an out-of-pocket expenditure of about \$2,000.

Farmingdale students pay approximately \$1,075 per semester. The balance of the cost of the program is made up by the taxpayers in the state of New York. Tuition in public colleges normally is one-third or less of the total cost.

If there ever was a time for reason and compromise, it is now. Before the state allows Farmingdale to duplicate the Dowling program, they should be questioning if this is the best investment of the taxpayers' money. Can an arrangement be worked out with Dowling to accept the state's students on a subsidized basis? Both schools should be talking rather than rattling each other's cages.

And why not?

Water tax

Governor Mario Cuomo wants the State Legislature to enact a tax on fresh, pure, drinking water. Are you going to put up with it?

Michael LoGrande, chairman of the Suffolk County Water Authority, has embarked upon a campaign to make residents aware of the governor's attempt to steal more of your money.

Can you do anything about it? Yes, you can. Take pen in hand, write to Cuomo, the nastier the letter the better.

Write to your state legislator, warn him not to support this rip-off. Do it today or the next time you turn on the tap, the state cash registers will ring again.

And why not?

An honest definition please!

Lee Koppelman's committee to study the feasibility of an airport at Calverton is now about nine months old. The primary agenda of the feasibility study is to determine whether a cargoport is a compatible use for Calverton and if it would be economically viable.

By now, this study group should have concluded that a cargoport as a stand-alone entity is not a viable option. Most cargo today is shipped in

the belly of general aviation flights. There is limited demand for cargo-only facilities. Economically, Calverton probably couldn't make it as a cargo-only facility.

In the grant application for funds to finance the feasibility study, the title of the study is "Calverton Airport." It is not limited to cargo only. After nine months of study, Koppelman and company should be able to tell the public in plain language, spe-

cifically what the other uses are that they are looking for at the airport. Will it be a general aviation port similar in character to LaGuardia or Kennedy? Or will it be a new buzz word airport, referred to in the grant application as "transfer airport," "Wayport" or "Remote Transfer Airport?"

What do these new buzz words mean? How do they differ from a general aviation airport? Is a transfer airport a hub airport where a major airline utilizes a facility to bring all

their planes into one central location, and transfer passengers from one airline to the next for the final leg to their final destination? If this is the case, are they exploring whether Calverton would be a national, international or multi-use airport?

With all the buzz words floating around, we believe it might be smart for Koppelman and the committee to issue a definition of what these words mean, defining the limits and the limitations.

As we stated at the beginning of the committee's study activities, we would not take a position, either pro or con, on the conversion of Calverton from a military mission to a peacetime mission until all the questions had been raised and answers had been found. Despite claims that Koppelman was biased on the issue, having already voiced support for use of Calverton as a general aviation airport in the past, we chose to give him the benefit of the doubt that he would come up with truthful answers and factual information, not rhetoric to prove a preconceived point of view.

We believe the public might find it interesting, considering the new vocabulary surrounding airports, to have a definition of the buzz words so we all can understand in plain English just what we are talking about.

And why not?

Why Suffolk County?

Sheriff Patrick Mahoney announced this past week that the state is mandating an increase in the number of guards at the Suffolk County Jail. This is a direct order from the state that will cost several million dollars in additional expenses to implement.

Currently, the ratio of guards to prisoners in Suffolk County is two prisoners for every guard. The ratio for the rest of the state is one guard for every three prisoners. In most states in the United States, the ratio is one guard to every four to six prisoners.

The prisoners held in the Suffolk County Jail are a mixed bag. The crimes of those being held for trial can range from automotive offenses to first degree murder. Those serving time are usually there for misdemeanors and for low-class felonies. The terms of imprisonment are generally one year and under. The majority of these prisoners are not considered maximum security candidates. Part of the jail system is the honor farm where prisoners are under minimum control. These prisoners are not considered to be high risk escapees, and are usually at the end of their sentences.

Is this order by the state just another case of dumping on Suffolk, those rich folks with money to burn and unlimited resources to pay taxes? It's this kind of "upstate thinking" that has led to the reduction in school and municipal aid from the state.

Suffolk County's government is on the brink of bankruptcy. Its productive citizens are being forced off the Island because of the oppressive taxes. We may look rich on paper but, in reality, most families are struggling from meal to meal and paycheck to paycheck. In our own homes, we have

denied ourselves luxuries and, in many cases, necessities. Why should Suffolk add 135 guards when we can't afford to stock food pantries and are cutting back on essential services?

Why should we be forced to have twice as many guards per prisoner than all the other jails in New York? Why shouldn't we be allowed to operate under the same standards as the rest of the state? Is this just another punishment by Governor Mario Cuomo for Suffolk County? How much more can we take? Isn't it time to end this abuse?

And why not?

The deadly sick pay policy

Most decent employers have some form of sick pay for their employees. Most recognize that people do get sick. They are dependent upon their paychecks. They have bills and obligations and when they become sick, through no fault of their own, wherever possible, their pay should be continued for a limited period of time.

Sick pay should not be confused with profit sharing, bonuses or additional vacation days. In the public sector, these benefits become blurred and abused, as we recently have seen in the case of former BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services)

Superintendent Dr. Edward Murphy. In Murphy's case, sick time was allowed to be accumulated, unlimited, and amounted to a gigantic ripoff of the system for close to a million dollars. Murphy is only symbolic, however, as the same thing is going on in almost every school district and municipal office throughout the state.

Sick pay is for being sick, it is not a bonus and the taxpayers should not be expected to have to fund it for any other purpose. An end to this abuse should be legislated. Public employees' sick pay benefits should match those of private corporations. This

should be the criteria that is used in the future for negotiations with the public employees' unions.

Possibly, a bank should be set up that would take care of the long-term illness, or those who suffer catastrophic medical disasters. In this way, both the normal, short-term needs and the catastrophic, long-term needs would be covered without the taxpayers being forced to pay out millions of dollars in overly-generous buyouts because of unrealistic benefits that were given over the lifetime of the employee.

And why not?

Becoming a floodgate

More trickle down taxation looms

President Bill Clinton's trickle down taxation is beginning to become a floodgate. On top of the proposal being floated for a 50-cents-a-gallon gasoline tax, home heating and electrical tax, his administration is now talking about cutting into Social Security.

Proposals have been made to raise the age limit for Social Security benefits from 65 to 67, then 69. Other proposals eliminate the indexing that keeps the value of Social Security dollars equal to inflation. Still others want to tax Social Security, particularly for those who have been frugal and smart enough to have established other sources of income in addition to Social Security.

Social Security was sold to the American public as an insurance policy, a government pension for you that could be bought and paid for during your working years. It was a split plan where the employers and employees contributed 50/50 to the program. It was meant to supplement people's savings and financial planning for their old age.

Most of us were led to believe that the funds we put into the Social Security Insurance Fund would be invested, interest would accrue and when we retired the sweat of our brow from our youth to our retirement would take care of some of our necessities in our older age.

In reality, the Social Security System has loaned these proceeds to the federal government. These monies have gone into the general fund and have been spent by Congress. The Social Security System is left with an IOU, and now the government is looking for ways to renege on these obligations by limiting benefits and taxing those they pay out.

With a Democrat in the White House, a Democratic Congress and a Democratic Senate, there isn't much loyal opposition left. It is up to us as individuals to get the ear of our congressmen, particularly our Democratic congressmen, George Hockbrueckner

and Gary Ackerman, who will go along with the President unless they know you are watching and will hold them personally responsible.

We suggest that you contact them early and let them know that Social Security is not an entitlement, but a program you have been paying into all your life. When you write to them, tell them you also want the "notch provision" eliminated and that those who have reached the age for Social Security should not be penalized for continuing to work and be forced into second class citizenship.

And why not?

What would you do with \$120 mill.?

Can your family use \$300 more per year? What do you think would happen to Long Island's economy if you and other consumers had \$120 million to spend in any way you saw fit?

One percent of the 8 1/2% Suffolk County sales taxes is due to sunset at the end of the year. This 1% represents about \$120 million in revenues which the county takes out of our spending power. It comes down to about \$300 WRA family.

At the time the county legislature,

in two separate actions, approved the sales tax increases they cried "poverty." The county faced a growing deficit, they claimed, and the increases were needed to offset that deficit. If the sales tax increase did not occur, they claimed, the county's credit rating would suffer and we would all have to pay more in interest for necessary county borrowing. And they vowed: "It's only temporary folks, just to get us out this crisis. They will end at the end of 1993." And the incumbent county executive, Robert Gaf-

ney, who was running for the seat at the time, demanded in strong language that state legislation authorizing the increases contain sunset limits, the time frame the increases must end.

Now, the county executive and some members of the county legislature want to continue taking the sales tax increases from you so they do not have to downsize Suffolk County government to live within your means to fund. For the sales tax to be continued, the county legislature will have to pass a law authorizing it. The New

York State Legislature will have to give its approval as well.

During the next two weeks you will find petitions in retail stores throughout Suffolk County. These petitions are being produced and distributed by Suffolk Life as a public service. We ask you to sign these petitions, demanding that the sales tax be rescinded as the politicians promised when they enacted it. If they see thousands of signatures on these petitions, they may develop the courage to do what they promised, which is to eliminate these temporary sales taxes and set about doing what they pledged to do, downsize Suffolk's government so they can live within your means.

The petitions will be available in the stores until March 5. They will then be collected and delivered to our county officials so that they may see, in written form, the will of the people.

About half the sales tax is being used to pay off tax anticipation bonds. These bonds were tied to the sales tax and will totally be eliminated by the end of the year. If the sales tax is continued, the legislature and the county executive will just use this money to increase the size of government and make things more comfortable for those who serve within.

The legislature has never been known to have courage, you have to force them to do it. Put your name on the petition and let the legislators know where you stand.

And why not?

It's a matter of trust!

Governor Mario Cuomo's proposal, unveiled in his State of the State message, to allow school districts to substitute an income tax as an alternative to the property tax gives cause to suspect the motivation behind his sudden support of a proposal that has been around for a long time. And if one looks carefully at the broken promises of the past, there is good reason to suspect a Trojan Horse.

Remember the rhetoric that was used to sell the New York State Lottery? It will raise millions of dollars for education, and will solve all our problems. It didn't. Sure, lottery dollars went toward education, but first millions were skimmed off the top for the bureaucratic patronage system that was developed. And the lottery dollars were not dedicated specifically for education. Instead they went into the general fund, and were doled out from there.

What this accomplished was the state used the lottery dollars as a substitute for the educational dollars which normally came from tax dollars. This simply made those tax dollars available for spending in other areas.

Are we heading down that path again? Will the dollars raised through an income tax provide the additional dollars that are needed to ease the cost of financing education on the taxpayers? Or will it simply make available more dollars that would have been earmarked for education from the general fund for our state officials to squander in other ways? Will they be dedicated solely for education? Will they qualify for deduction on state and federal taxes?

Can we trust our state officials? Consider this: In 1991, Cuomo and the legislators okayed a tax increase as a means of raising dedicated funds for transportation projects. There is, by some accounts, \$700 million in this dedicated fund, known as the "locked box." Cuomo is trying to get his hands on these funds to offset the state's deficit. In other words, he wants to use taxpayer dollars he vowed were for transportation projects only, and use them to ease the financial mess he has led this state into.

Cuomo wants to raid the surplus funds from the operation of the Long Island Rail Road to prevent fare increases in New York City because of the deficit operation of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, and has proposed using transportation funding for Long Island roadway projects for use

in upstate areas. The impact of his sweetheart deal with LILCO on closing the Shoreham nuclear power plant has driven our electric rates to the highest in the nation. And his arrangement with the New York Power Authority, also a part of the Shoreham deal, to build generating plants on Long Island is going to drive those rates even higher. NYPA's Holtsville plant, currently under construction, will, according to LILCO, cause an increase in LILCO rates.

For some reason, it seems, Cuomo has the idea that Long Island is filled with a lot of rich folks who can afford to pay more for schools, roads, and now, income taxes.

Cuomo also said he opposes "im-

posing any new unfounded state-mandated programs on local governments this year." Which causes us to wonder if he got a hearing aid for Christmas. An end to unfunded state mandates is, after all, hardly a new idea. That suggestion has been made by this newspaper for years. The only response that came from the state was more mandates.

If there is one thing we have learned from Mario Cuomo in recent years, it's look carefully at each proposal he makes, from every possible angle. The best way to deal with Cuomo's proposals is to apply the old adage: "Fool us once, shame on you, fool us twice, shame on us."

And why not?

All at the same time?

The exclusive front page story in last week's edition of Suffolk Life by Wayne Nester revealing a surge in reported leaks in LILCO's natural gas system gives us cause for concern. Apparently that concern is not shared by the state's Public Service Commission, which has done little, if anything, to determine why rubber gaskets are failing at such a high rate.

According to information provided by the PSC, more than 8,000 leaks were reported in the last three months of 1992 alone. LILCO engineers have concluded the leaks occur because of two factors: one, the couplings which contain the rubber gaskets are nearly 40 years old and nearing the end of their useful lives,

and secondly, the gas purchased from a Canadian gas consortium and transmitted through the Iroquois pipeline contains lower moisture levels. This causes the rubber gasket to fail because of shrinkage, they suggest.

While these conclusions may well be correct, we have a serious problem with accepting the thought that all of the 40-year-old gaskets would be failing at the same time. That happening is more indicative, as some have suggested, of increased pressure in the gas lines. That certainly sounds like a more plausible reason than the sudden cessation of "useful life" of so many couplings and gaskets.

Because of bitter cold weather and frozen ground, these leaks pose more of a problem in the winter than they do at other times of the year. Most leaks naturally vent up through the ground and dissipate into the atmosphere. With the ground frozen, this causes the gas to migrate along other avenues, underground utility lines are an example, where they could enter a home.

While both LILCO and the PSC report there is no cause for alarm, and we do not suggest there is, we do believe a thorough investigation should be launched to determine the cause so that a solution can be put in place. The sudden surge in the number of leaks should not be dismissed so lightly. The public deserves better.

And why not?

Opens door to AIDS

Under former President Bush, persons known to have AIDS were banned from entering the United States. President Clinton has ordered this ban discontinued.

The doors to the United States now will be opened to foreigners who have AIDS, people who would come both as visitors and applicants for citizenship.

We are not jumping up and down with joy about Clinton's latest pronouncement, and we doubt there are very many who are doing so. We have enough problems with our own home-grown AIDS epidemic. We don't need foreigners importing this disease into the country.

Not only is AIDS almost always fatal, but it is incredibly costly to treat. With the laws that our hospitals operate under, no person of any race, color, creed or nationality can be denied treatment in hospitals in the United States.

If someone cannot pay for the services needed, the taxpayers foot the bill. An influx of foreign AIDS sufferers into the U.S. is going to cost all of us a lot of money, and that will come from our taxes. Establishing a workable health care system to take care of our own is going to be a very costly matter, and we will be hard pressed to deal with that burden. Adding to it will doom, not assist, implementing such a program.

Is this a priority you want your taxes spent on? Is this the kind of change you wanted from President Clinton? You would do well to let President Clinton know what you think of the moves that he is making. He is a consummate politician who understands that angry voters are not friends. Let him know your thoughts.

And why not?

What happened to American dream?

As we listened to President Bill Clinton's speech last Wednesday night, it became clear that he defined rich as those with an income of over \$30,000. The middle class must then be somewhere between no income and \$29,999.

Just a few short months ago, Clinton had defined rich as those making \$200,000 a year. The middle class, by what we assumed his definition to be was between poverty and \$199,000, would, he promised, enjoy a reduction in taxes if he became President. Now that we know that those with a family income of over \$30,000 are, by Democratic standards, considered the rich, let's look at the rest of the speech.

Clinton claims he wants to raise taxes on all of us, the little rich and big rich, to cut the federal deficit. Yet, the plans he outlined indicate, even to an economic novice, that when he gets

finished we will owe even more money than we did in the past. The national debt will grow, not decrease. He plays clever games. Instead of coming out and saying he will increase taxes, he said we must sacrifice more. He has earned the nickname "Slick Willie" by flip-flopping, creating smoke and mirrors and not being a man of substance.

Under Reagan the phrase "trickle-down economics" was coined. As the rich had an opportunity to increase their wealth, their investments created jobs and opportunities for small businesses. This redistributed the wealth to those who put forth the effort to earn. The worker had overtime, increases in salary and the opportunity to change jobs. The small businesses willing to invest in equipment, product, service and marketing had an opportunity to make their business grow. Senior citizens who had been prudent, frugal and denied themselves the good

life while earning, could invest their small fortunes and receive reasonable interest on their investments.

Clinton's plan calls for sacrifice, we call it punishment. Every step of the way, those who produce, who work hard, who invest, will be required to give up more of their earnings to the government to have it squandered on programs that are ridiculous, and doled out to people who are not willing to invest their time and their energies in honest productivity.

The government has become, and will continue to become, more of an unequal partner. The government wants to share in the riches that come from honest, hard work and risky investment, but are they willing to share in the losses that can come from working in business or being in business?

Why are we as American citizens being asked to sacrifice or be punished? Are we in a war that requires

massive pooling of the citizens' efforts and earnings? Are the catastrophic needs of the masses, the average person, so overwhelming that we must strip the capital from the country to meet them? The answers are quite obviously, no. Clinton wants us to be punished solely for his own liberal political gain.

Our major problem is that we have an economy that is teetering. We are in a transition from war to peace. Whole industries are being transformed. Businesses are being forced to downsize and jobs are being lost. What is needed is an economic plan to reward ingenuity rather than penalize it. A plan that encourages risk of capital, of effort, in both time and energy. The Clinton plan is blindly deficient in this regard.

The Clinton plan sadly ignores the most basic principles of economics, to have a solid middle class you must have a class of both rich and poor. You cannot have a middle without both ends.

It's time for all of us, particularly the little rich, those with a family income of over \$30,000 and the very rich, those with incomes over \$200,000, to ask what can this country do for me? We have made our contribution, our sacrifices in the past. We have given our children as soldiers in the political wars. We have shared our earnings from the sweat of our brow when a legitimate need was there. We have risked our capital, we have built businesses, created employment. We have sacrificed the good life to educate our children and to aid our elderly. Now that we are facing tough economic times, where our businesses are having trouble profiting, overtime is evaporating, and wages are stagnated, what can our country do for us?

In place of the signs, "The economy, stupid!" that hung in Clinton's campaign headquarters, the Washington Republicans have produced a button with another message: "The spending, stupid!" In those words lie the answer. That's what our country, more specifically those in positions of responsibility and power, can do for us, they can cut the spending. They can eliminate those shameful pork barrel projects that serve no other purpose than political gain. They can eliminate the wasteful spending habits of those in government. The Pentagon, for example, squanders taxpayers' dollars by paying prices more than 10 and 20 times higher, and sometimes more, for even the smallest items. The legendary \$180 screwdrivers are but one example.

They can approve the line-item veto, which would give the President the power to weed out wasteful projects. And, they can approve a balanced budget amendment to force themselves to do what they have proven themselves incapable of doing in the past, spend no more than they take in from revenues.

We are willing to do our part, we have done it all along. What we need is a government that sacrifices as the people who pay for it have. But government must be willing to sacrifice first. Then and only then should the people be expected to bite the bullet and dig deeper.

We must restore the American dream or all will be lost. And why not?

Doom, gloom, golden lining

Ah! There is no joy in Gloomsville County. Not because the fiscal affairs are in dismal shape. Not because things are so bad that county officials are anxious to break their word that a sales tax increase would only be temporary. Not even because our energy rates are the highest in the country, our taxes are out of sight, and our future prospects dim. No. There is no joy because their dreams for a baseball stadium of their own, financed by the taxpayers who endure the already stated problems, have been shattered.

If these very same county officials could dry their tears, and look beyond their noses, they might find a golden lining around the dark cloud that has come into their lives. They might find that out of this rejection there is an opportunity for common sense.

Suffolk County officials, in seeking to build a minor league stadium to house a Double-A farm team, totally ignored another proposal that had been advanced. Suffolk County Pre-

siding Officer Donald Blydenburgh (R-Smithtown) had revealed that a consortium of developers were interested in building a domed stadium somewhere in the county, perhaps even at the Brentwood campus of the Suffolk Community College, with their own money. No taxpayer dollars!

The idea never took hold. Instead, Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney pushed for the minor league proposal. The reasons are clouded. Was it that the minor league plan would be more immediate, while the domed stadium proposal would take several more years? Was it a power play, my idea is better than your idea? Were the unions, who loudly supported the minor league stadium, more interested in immediate gain over long-term benefit?

Whatever, the failure of the minor league proposal opens the doors for a revisit of the domed stadium concept. A domed stadium would offer an expanded period for a variety of uses

and could be utilized to house an assortment of events, such as circus performances, concerts, horse shows, soccer contests, college basketball games, political conventions, the list goes on and on.

Is the proposal viable? We don't know. Will it be profitable? We have no idea. But considering the fact it would be a product of the private sector investing its own funds, it's their gamble, not ours. And, it could be a bigger boost to the economy, the tax base, and job opportunities than a minor league operation operating in fair, warm weather only.

If those who are shedding crocodile tears over the loss of the Albany-Colonie Yankees are really sincere in their belief that a stadium would be good for the county, they will explore the privately-funded domed stadium proposal very seriously and keep their hands out of the taxpayers' pockets to fund their own private little fantasies.

And why not?

The numbers don't add up

One of the major driving forces depressing Long Island's economy is the cost of our utilities, particularly, electricity. Officials from the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO), in sworn testimony, have claimed they can generate electricity for under six cents per kilowatt hour. Some of the older plants are generating electricity at two cents and under. The cost of electricity to consumers is 15 to 25 cents per kilowatt hour, more than 200% to 400% over the cost of generation.

These exorbitant rates have been set by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The PSC is charged with protecting the consumer from monopolies while, at the same time, ensuring the economic health of the utilities by establishing fair and equitable rates.

Florida Power and Light is one of the best managed and profitable utilities in the nation. The cost of electricity delivered to the consumer is less than eight cents a kilowatt, up to one-third the cost of LILCO power. We would think that the PSC would be asking why they are able to not only generate electricity, but deliver it, for one-third the cost that LILCO charges its customers, and still show a handsome profit. If Florida Power and Light can do it, why can't LILCO? Why does LILCO need 17 to 18 cents per kilowatt to wheel the electricity and operate the corporation, when Florida Power and Light can generate electricity, wheel it, operate the corporation and show a profit while charging the customers one-third of LILCO's cost?

We would think the Long Island del-

egation of assemblymen and senators whose constituents are being so badly abused would be demanding answers from the PSC. Somebody is making huge amounts of money off the backs of Long Islanders. They should be exposed.

The PSC should be revamped and stopped from allowing LILCO's highway robbery. The numbers just don't add up, but the customers are forced to keep paying.

We have long advocated that the PSC commissioners be elected rather than appointed. This might make the commissioners accountable to the ratepayers and the taxpayers. Long Island's economy cannot rebound, suffering from the burden of oppressive utility rates and property taxes. An answer must be found to both of these problems so Long Islanders can have hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

And why not?