

Will court give LILCO \$500,000,000?

Fresh from victory after winning their certiorari suit against Suffolk County for \$78,000,000, LILCO is pursuing their second suit for almost \$500,000,000. The suits come out of the assessment on the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant.

LILCO claims that because the plant never went into commercial operation, they are entitled to the taxes paid on the plant. They claim that they were overassessed by the Town of Brookhaven.

If LILCO had been forced to shut down the plant and absorb their losses, they might have a leg to stand on. In the Cuomo-Catacosinos deal that shut down the plant, LILCO ended up not

only getting paid for the plant as an operating facility, but they got paid the equivalent interest they would have earned if the plant had been operating. More important, through rate adjustments, they have been paid the profits they might have made if the plant had been operating. This is all in addition to the rate increases that were granted to them by the Public Service Commission for Construction Work In Progress (CWIP) funds, progress payments that helped finance the work as it was being done. This was very unusual, as it violated the "used and useful" laws governing utilities.

Under these principles of law, utilities cannot charge the ratepayers for a

facility or a capital project until it is completed and operating. In effect, the ratepayers have paid for the plant twice, and now LILCO wants them to pay for it for the third time through their certiorari suit.

Supreme Court Justice Thomas Stark is handling this case. Stark should think long and hard about the reality of LILCO earning every dime it ever could have out of the plant if it had been in operation through increased rates. Part of these earnings would have gone to paying the taxes. Just because the plant is not operating, it does not mean that LILCO is not extracting from the ratepayers earnings that would have covered real estate

taxes. Logically, to us, it would seem that you can't have it both ways, but, this is what LILCO is asking Stark to okay.

Brookhaven Town politicians and County Executive Robert Gaffney are trembling in their boots about the ramifications if LILCO wins this suit. They should, because Suffolk taxpayers cannot afford another \$500,000,000 bond issue that will not even buy a loaf of bread for the citizens. These politicians are dancing around the recent proposal by the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to take over and dismantle the LILCO monopoly. They are trying to maneuver the takeover to make the certiorari suit go away. This is dangerous.

The current stance by these officials is similar to that taken when former Governor Cuomo came up with his sweetheart deal with LILCO to close Shoreham. Too many public officials and Shoreham opponents could see only one thing, that the deal would close Shoreham, and ignored the financial impact that could, and did, come back to haunt us and the LILCO rates. The "eliminate the tax certiorari" at any cost mentality could well lead these officials to ignore the value and benefits of the current LIPA plan, which would serve only to continue the monopolistic grip LILCO has held over this region, with no hope for a solution in the future.

We all have questions about the LIPA deal, but support, with whatever reservations they may have, should be given by our leaders if they are truly leaders. And if Stark gives LILCO any refund at all, which we do not believe is warranted, he should stipulate the money goes directly—not through LILCO—back to the ratepayers who paid the taxes and not the company or its stockholders.

And why not?

Disappointed in Pataki

Governor Mario Cuomo used to use some weasel-like techniques to avoid going to the voters for their approval to borrow. Unfortunately, Governor George Pataki is showing the same lack of public concern.

During his term of office, New York State became the most indebted state in the nation. In a Forbes poll, we ranked 48th out of the 50 states for indebtedness.

Governor Pataki, when running against Cuomo, condemned this backdoor borrowing and led the voters to believe that he would not allow his administration to do anything so unethical.

We are very disappointed in Pataki's announcement this past week that he is looking to do the same thing that he condemned Cuomo for. He wants the State Legislature to authorize him to use various authorities and agencies to float bonds without voter approval.

Cuomo was wrong, and Pataki is dead wrong.

The way this scheme works is the state sells one of its assets to an authority or an agency. The state gets up-front cash, which it uses for general purposes. The bonds issued to raise the cash are paid back over 20 or 30 years through rentals that are paid by the state. The taxpayers must pay for both principal and interest costs. It's a scam anyway you look at it, not good government and horrible politics.

During Cuomo's administration, the taxpayers (who did not have a say in the matter) sold Attica prison to the Urban Development Corporation. We will be paying rent for the next 30 years on something we owned. The same holds true for the New York State Thruway. This was sold to the Thruway Authority and now we are paying rent to the Authority for what we once owned.

The New York State Constitution says very clearly and plainly that if the state wants to bond, the project must first be approved by the legislature and then by the voters in a general election. This prevents the government from running up debts higher than the voters feel they can sustain.

The writers of the New York State Constitution were smart men. They knew you could not trust our government or its leaders. The residents must protect themselves from these politicians and that is the reason why they put limits on our borrowing and required voter approval to pierce these limits.

Pataki has made some great strides in government, but this blunder, if carried through, could tarnish his image tremendously. Governor Pataki must back off on backdoor borrowing.

And why not?

Dumping welfare on Riverhead

Riverhead is the county seat of Suffolk County. For generations, it was a grand old town. It is currently in the process of rebuilding itself, but the county seems to be determined to do everything it can to ruin it.

Persistently over the years, the county has dumped welfare recipients on the town. Greedy landlords have bought up low-income properties, converting them to Section 8 housing and unmanaged welfare slums.

Last year, at a Southampton Town social service committee meeting dealing with the problems of dumping in Hampton Bays, John Wingate, Suffolk County Social Service commissioner, released figures showing where the concentration of welfare families existed. Riverhead, with only 1.8% of the population of the county has 6.5% of its population on public assistance. This has put a huge drain on the schools, the police and the other public agencies. The average town has from 1% in Smithtown to Babylon with 3.4%. The average of the county is 2.8%. An additional 4.4% of Riverhead's population

is receiving other forms of welfare beyond public assistance. Riverhead has 50% more people on welfare than the rest of the county. This did not come about by chance. Suffolk County Social Services has directed and dumped welfare recipients in Riverhead for years.

Riverhead residents are on the low side of middle income. The town does not have a huge commercial base. In fact, almost one-third of the land in the town is tax exempt, leaving the hard-working residents to pick up the tab.

To his credit, recently-elected Supervisor James Stark has sued the county over the town's disproportionate share of welfare recipients. This move should have been taken 15 years ago.

The Riverhead School District has also launched a suit against the county and its Social Services Department, which states the lack of transportation between Mastic and the new Riverhead location of the center will lead to the relocation of many of the welfare recipients in order to have access to the Riverhead office. This, the suit alleges,

would cause extreme damage and hardship to the Riverhead school district. The impact would be felt in the lack of sufficient space to handle such an influx of residents and students, and because children who are victims of poverty are more likely to suffer from health, emotional and physical problems that impact on their educational needs and require additional, costly special education services. None of these costs, the suit notes, are being met by the state or county funding.

Recently, several major housing projects outside of the boundaries of Riverhead, but within the school districts, have gone Section 8. An owner of one of the condo complexes told me she paid almost \$125,000 for her unit just five years ago. Today, she can't get \$40,000 because of the new tenant mix.

The people of Riverhead have shouldered more than their share of the burden. They have been more than willing to stick out their hand to help those less fortunate but, even the charitable and willing have to say "no, no more" at some point in time.

There are some—Newsday, for example, in a recent editorial—who have criticized the town for attempting to stop the influx of added welfare cases, claiming the town's action is little more than NIMBYism (not in my backyard). Nonsense, that liberal view comes from those who are facing the financial impact of the problem. Riverhead has the highest percentage of its households and population on public assistance, according to September 1995 Social Services data. Why isn't this load being evenly shared by all ten towns throughout the county? Why should town and school officials sit back and say and do nothing while that percentage grows even more?

Even though the county is being sued, it is not too late for County Executive Robert Gaffney and Commissioner Wingate to create a citizens' advisory board for Riverhead. County officials should work with Riverhead Town the way they did in Bay Shore and with Hampton Bays. Redistribute the caseload so everyone is shouldering their fair share. Let's talk, gentlemen.

And why not?

No shift without mandate relief

In Governor Pataki's proposed budget it is suggested that 20% of the cost of the Pre-K handicap program be shifted from the state to the local school districts. Currently, the program is funded 59.5% by the state and 40.5% by the county. The state reimburses the county for its share of the program in the subsequent fiscal year.

The Pre-K handicap program is a statewide mandated program. It was originally designed to aid preschool children who had severe disabilities. The mission of the program was to bring as many of these children as possible up-to-speed before they entered school so they could be mainstreamed.

Like many bureaucratic programs, the mission was expanded as money was made available. The disabilities were ex-

tended to cover minor encumbrances and disorders such as speech impediments and minor orthopedic deficiencies.

During the late 80s, this program grew enormously, especially in Suffolk County. What had been a county contribution of under \$10,000,000 rapidly grew to well over \$100,000,000. The Pre-K handicap program far outstripped the county's ability to fund. This caught the attention of the elected officials back during the administration of former County Executive Patrick Halpin.

Suffolk, with only 7% of the state's population, was responsible for 25% of the entire state's expenditure for the program. Providers of special education remedial services were doing the evaluations of the children. These providers

ranged from BOCES to private agencies who made a profit on both the evaluation and providing the services. The more children they could qualify meant more children for the program. These evaluations were done with no outside system of checks or balances.

The administration of County Executive Robert Gaffney addressed this problem and insisted that, as part of the evaluation team, a member of county government be involved. This has reduced the number of children who are eligible, but Suffolk still leads the state.

One of the people who is close to the program once said that all that a child needs to qualify is "to speak Brooklynese." Once qualified, the child is transported from home to a learning center and the taxpayers face a bill of \$22,000 or more per year.

The rules governing the examination and the qualifying are set by the state. Overzealous examiners have driven Suffolk's cost right through the roof. It is projected that Suffolk's cost of their 20% share over the current figure is \$13,000,712. This would be an enormous burden on the school system. Before we shift any cost from the state to the local school districts, let us first take a look at the mandates and what they really say.

Most people would not deny truly handicapped children aid. Those with serious disabilities should be helped. If a child has a minor speech impediment, speaks with an accent, is slightly pigeon-toed or is slightly uncoordinated at three years of age, do they really need remedial attention? Can we afford it? Will it make a difference in their lives? Is it a priority?

Speaking as one who has been pigeon-toed all his life, I can honestly say that the only effect it has had on me is that it makes it impossible for me to snowplow and, therefore, I don't ski anymore. As a child, I would have been considered disabled under this program and, it is questionable whether remedial help would have changed my path in life.

Suffolk County currently is still responsible for almost 20% of the state's spending on this program. County officials claim that the mandates are the reason. We've shot back that if this is the case, why aren't the same mandates imposed on every other district in New York?

Do we have that many more disabled children proportionately than the rest of the state? Westchester, a comparable county to Suffolk, has less than one-third the number of participants than Suffolk. New York City, with 13 times the population of Suffolk and a huge population of immigrants and low income people, has just slightly over two times as many Pre-K handicapped as Suffolk.

We believe the problem is not totally a state-mandated problem, but overzealous testing and qualifying. This is the type of program that has been exploited and is eating up the taxpayers' ability to fund.

The state is right to bring the spotlight on this program. In Suffolk it has become one of the most costly social programs. It's time for local and state officials to review the total program and the process. Save the good and throw out the abuse.

And why not?

Pure, crude politics

Are Democrats imprudent?

Suffolk County Democratic legislators this past week announced that they were opposed to electric rates being set higher in Suffolk County than in Nassau, under the proposed Long Island Power Authority's (LIPA) Long Island Lighting Company takeover plan if Suffolk County is held liable for repaying LILCO for overtaxation.

There is a 50-50 chance that Suffolk County will be held liable and face a judgement running into millions of dollars, upto the \$500,000,000 claim made by LILCO. Obviously, the county and the Town of Brookhaven and the Shoreham-Wading River School District have spent this money and do not have the resources to pay it back.

Under normal circumstances, the

county might be faced with two options. Pay all the money back now and increase taxes dramatically to do so. Or: issue bonds to pay it back over a 20- to 30-year period, increasing taxes by 5% to 10% annually. However, with the LIPA takeover of LILCO proposal, LIPA is considering a plan by which LILCO rates would decrease to 11% in Suffolk County and 12% in Nassau. The 1% difference would be used to mitigate against the LILCO/Shoreham settlement. This would be the most painless way for the residents of Suffolk County to deal with this problem. It is far better than facing a high, one-time tax increase or a tax increase that will be with us for 20 to 30 years. Unfortunately, over the years, too many people have played politics at the citizens' expense in the LILCO/Shoreham issue.

Many people want to simply wish away the LILCO overassessment liability. But the matter is in the courts, and that is where the decision will ultimately come from. While we seriously question LILCO's legal position in this matter, the courts have already found for LILCO in a previous case. Appeals have not been successful. Like it or not, the judicial system is the way such issues are resolved. It is not prudent to simply wish away the issue of liability.

The Democrats' announcement is pure, crude politics that defies logic or common sense. There is a time for politics, but good government should be the top priority at all times. Stop playing politics over LIPA.

And why not?

Let's do it now!

The Otis Pike Preserve

Otis Pike is a Democrat. He served as congressman from the First Congressional District for nearly 20 years. He acted as a protector of Eastern Long Island and an emissary in Washington. Pike carried the banner for the little guy and didn't hesitate to take on the establishment or the entrenched.

Pike took on the President and just may have stopped this country from throwing out the Constitution and becoming a dictatorship. Pike grew up on Eastern Long Island. He was a woodsman, a bayman and a fisherman at heart.

Recently, Congressman Michael Forbes, a Republican, announced that he had introduced a bill into the House requesting that the lands outside of the Grumman fence become a people's preserve and never be developed. He has proposed this preserve be named the Otis G. Pike Preserve. We think this is a fitting tribute to a man who gave so much of himself for the people of this area.

We often disagreed with Pike politically. He was proud to be called a liberal, although at election time he preferred to be called a conservative. He was and is a fine gentleman who

has the ability to disagree without being disagreeable.

Ironically, Pike hunted and fished on this land in his youth and into adulthood. In fact, he got into a disagreement about this land with the federal government over shooting some ducks. Pike fought the allegations and won in a humorous but successful court battle.

Let this land be known as the Otis G. Pike Preserve. It is deserved and it is fitting. Let's do it now, while Pike is still alive and can enjoy this recognition.

And why not?

*Have You
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Your
Subscription?*

Awesome power of the lobbyists

Did you ever wonder how laws get passed that the public wants no part of?

Last week, the New York Senate and Assembly overwhelmingly overrode Governor Pataki's veto on requiring state Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) arbitration for the New York City Police disputes. This is only the third time in history that a Governor's veto has been overridden.

Every state legislator from Long Island vetoed for the override. Each legislator was keenly aware of the cost to the local municipalities brought about through PERB arbitration and police contract disputes. The arbitrators have had a history of only looking at the police demands and how they compare with the salary levels of surrounding communities. They do not take into consideration the tax load on

the municipalities, the economy or the ability of the taxpayers to fund the contract settlements.

In New York City, when contract disputes came to an impasse, they were settled by an independent panel that had been set up by the city. The panel had to take into consideration the city's ability to fund the contract settlement. New York City Police, under this system, did not make out as

well as their suburban counterparts. The unions demanded state arbitration.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani pointed out that the results of state arbitration can cost the city an additional \$200,000,000, which the city, faced with many budget problems, doesn't have.

The measure to change the system to state arbitration was passed by the Assembly and the Senate. Pataki vetoed it. The legislature overrode his veto. The legislators collapsed because of intense pressure from lobbyists and the unions that they represent. This whole scenario is indicative of the awesome power that the lobbyists and the unions are able to assert over the legislature. It is the same power that is asserted, daily, by teacher unions that have so heavily contributed to the cost of education on Long Island.

Until we have legislators with backbones and courage, the taxpayers don't stand a chance. In the case of New York City, the citizens don't either. To cope with the cost of this contract, Mayor Giuliani announced that he will order patrol cars to be manned by one police officer instead of two. This will cut down on law enforcement efforts on behalf of the citizens and put the police themselves in danger. Life is a trade-off, and the New York City Police have just traded their safety and the safety of the citizens for extra bucks.

The power and the influence of lobbyists must be brought under control. As funders of our government, we cannot afford out of control demands from those who fail to realize that there is an end to the money available from taxes.

Not one of our Long Island Legislators should be holding their heads very high. They let every citizen in the State of New York down and have opened the floodgates for the demands of all lobbyists. They should be ashamed.

And why not?

Over welfare cuts

Oh!, My bleeding heart

On Valentine's Day I received a message from a reader, Mike Ross, that tore open my bleeding heart.

Ross sent me a flyer that is being distributed by a lobbying group called Suffolk Welfare Warriors, complaining about Pataki's welfare reform proposals. Here are a few of the complaints that you may find it hard to agree with if you are a member of the society that goes to work every day to pay your bills.

Governor Pataki, and many of us, have the audacity to favor limiting general, temporary assistance to no more than two months in any 12-month period. This welfare assistance is for able-bodied people, capable of working. It also limits these people from going on the dole to a lifetime maximum of five periods. How cruel we are to expect people to work and not make a lifetime occupation out of temporarily living off the sweat and the efforts of real workers.

Under Pataki's proposal, special grants will be eliminated for furniture

to establish a home. Newlyweds who are starting their first home receive no such grants. Is it too much to expect that those who are living on welfare face the same problems as those who are struggling to earn a living?

There is a hue and cry because housekeeping and housekeeping services for welfare recipients will be eliminated. "Shouldn't the poor folks enjoy the same luxuries as the rich?" the welfare advocates cry. To which we reply: "Work hard and you shall receive. Work not and you don't."

The young couple working two jobs, saving their money to put their kids in camp during the summer when they are not home will hardly be upset to learn that the welfare recipients who are not working will not have special grants to pay for their kids' camp fees under Pataki's proposals.

And the list goes on.

The audacity of George Pataki, to require workfare recipients assigned to private sector locations to be employed in real jobs for real money and be re-

quired to perform work in a satisfactory manner! In the eyes of the welfare advocates, that's almost unconstitutional.

Speaking of the Constitution, the Welfare Warriors caution their charges that under Pataki's proposal, recipients can be forced to submit to drug testing. Failure to do so can result in denial of benefits. Somehow, the logic escapes us. Why should someone who is applying for taxpayer funds have a right to spend this money on drugs that are illegal in the first place?

Pataki wants a welfare inspector general to have added authority to conduct hearings, apply for search warrants and prosecute welfare fraud crimes. That sounds like a bunch of good sense to us. But apparently, the welfare advocates believe if you are on welfare, you are entitled to be placed above the laws that apply to those that are paying your way.

A couple of weeks ago, we said some bad things about Pataki. Maybe he is not such a bad guy after all.

And why not?

But economy still bad

Technically, we are at full employment

Believe it or not, Suffolk County is considered at full employment. Unemployment rates dropped to 4.4% in Suffolk County last month. Technically, 4.4% is considered full employment. The government has told us that those remaining in this percentage either do not want to work, or are over- or underqualified for the positions that are available.

If we have full employment, why is the economy so bad? We remember back to the mid-80s, the last time we were at full employment. The minimum wage was at \$4.25, but entry level jobs were beginning at \$5.50. Employees had the luxury of negotiat-

ing with strength with their employers. It seemed like we lived in a land of golden opportunities. Just open a business and customers flocked to you. Even the under-capitalized and the inexperienced were successful. What a difference 10 years makes.

Most of Long Island businesses are struggling just to keep their doors open. Employees know it is futile to ask for more money because their bosses are struggling to keep them employed. In 10 years, Long Island lost Grumman and all the peripheral companies that contributed to the defense industry.

Wall Street, where many Long Is-

landers worked, had wholesale cut-backs during the late '80's, positions they never refilled. Over 90,000 Long Island jobs left the area for less expensive places to do business.

The neverending increases in utility rates and real estate taxes has soaked up what was left of the discretionary income of Long Island survivors. Many of those laid off in the massive corporate downsizings have found employment, but not at the incomes they once enjoyed. Full employment is not Long Island's answer. Full employment at professional and manufacturing wages is.

Our economy must further diver-

sify and grow the businesses that can produce the wealth Long Island needs. To do so, our governments must cut back on the toll they expect to take from the homeowners. The cost of government and the services it provides must be returned to an affordable level, or the erosion will continue.

Commercial enterprises looking at Long Island as a place to locate look very seriously at the cost of employee survival. The wages that they pay are related to the wages needed by the workers to keep up with the Island's cost of living. Until Long Island becomes affordable to labor, it can never be affordable to business.

And why not?



Showdown on the L.I. Expressway

In an Omnibus Budget Bill passed by the Suffolk County Legislature, funding for continued patrolling on the Long Island Expressway (LIE) by the Suffolk County Police was eliminated, thus setting up a showdown on a much debated issue.

The LIE is a state road. Traditionally, state roads are patrolled by New York State Police. When the LIE was first created, officials in Suffolk and Nassau counties opted to have the highway patrolled by the county police officers. This was during the day and age of low taxes and easy money.

The county officials wanted the patronage. Yes, then, police often received

their appointments because they knew a politician or two. The police unions wanted it because it built their strength. The public didn't give a damn, they weren't aware of the ramifications and, as far as they were concerned, what difference did it make if their taxes were collected locally or on a statewide basis?

Today, with the high cost of county police, this issue is of major concern to both the county political leaders and the Suffolk County taxpayers. They want the state to assume their responsibility and the costs for patrolling state roads.

Why should we, as Long Island taxpayers, subsidize state police patrols all over the rest of the state, but be denied

this service and the tax savings that would result if Nassau and Suffolk taxpayers did not have to shoulder this responsibility? The savings realized could provide more of a police presence in our communities without an added burden on the taxpayer.

The legislature and the county executive were right to eliminate this expenditure out of the budget. This forces the responsibility back onto the state. The LIE is their road. Let them pick up the cost of ensuring its safety.

This is particularly critical in Suffolk, which just recently agreed to the creation of the Seventh Precinct in Shirley. The facilities are going to cost the

taxpayers \$20,000,000. This is only a drop in the bucket, for the precinct will have to be manned 24-hours a day, seven days a week, with a full staff of administrators, officers and support personnel. Where are the police going to come from? How can we afford it when the taxpayers are tapped out?

Logically, it makes sense to take the dollars we are spending on patrolling the LIE and transferring these funds into manning the Seventh Precinct. This is a win, win situation for Suffolk residents. We get better local patrols, which should reduce crime, and the state picks up their rightful cost.

The New York State Police currently patrol the Northern State Parkway, the Southern State Parkway, Meadowbrook and Wantagh parkways, the Ocean Parkway, and a portion of Sunrise Highway as well. They have barracks in Islip. The state police also supplement the town police on the East End through their command post in Hampton Bays.

State police are known to be tough, professional and yes, somewhat rigid. They probably will end up handing out more tickets on the LIE, which might help reduce the accident rate.

The Suffolk County Police can be re-deployed to local communities. The communities will have a better police presence and this will discourage crime and improve safety.

We hope the local legislators and county executive have the courage of their convictions. The Suffolk County Police unions are expected to oppose this measure. For once, they should be willing to compromise and look at the taxpayers' needs as well as their own. They won't be losing jobs, they just may not grow as fast as they would like.

This is a good opportunity for everyone, politicians and police, to show concern for the plight of the hard-pressed taxpayer and spread the financial burden onto the state level where it belongs.

And why not?

Should return to print

Forbes forgot his roots

Steve Forbes, the presidential aspirant, is the publisher and son of the founder of Forbes Magazine. The magazine gives the reader a tremendous amount of detail and viewpoints. Business leaders look to this publication for ideas and in-depth knowledge of companies and systems to help them formulate their ideas and strategies.

Forbes is reported to have a net worth of over \$400 million. Although brought up in wealth, Forbes was expected by his father to prove his mettle, to work harder and smarter than the next guy. Long before he worked in the executive offices, he worked the drudge jobs alongside the laborers and the crafts people.

Using his own money, Forbes propelled his name into the forefront of the New Hampshire primary race. From nowhere, he garnered a 14% showing in the polls and ended up with 12% of the final vote, a significant showing, but number four out of the candidates.

Forbes used television to sell his simple concept of a flat tax. But, people

were left to wonder about who Forbes was, where did he come from, and how he stood on other issues.

Forbes' meteoric rise was the result of blitzing the air waves with television commercials. He skillfully used TV to propel himself to the forefront. He stumbled badly in Iowa when he used this media to go negative. When he faltered after Iowa, we cannot help but think what would Forbes' fortunes have been if he had remembered from whence he came.

What would have happened to Forbes if he had used the print media to sell his substance to the prospective voters? In 30 second commercials, all you can hope for is name recognition and a fleeting glimpse of how a candidate stands on a single issue.

Television does not give you the opportunity of delving into the candidate's mind, how he or she reasons, what are the thought processes that he or she brings to the table? Candidates do not have the opportunity to present the issues or give the public the opportunity to

understand how they arrived at their beliefs.

What would have happened to Forbes if he had presented his viewpoints and logic, not only on the flat tax, but also on some of the key issues that voters make up their minds on? If Forbes had depended heavily on the printed word, would the vote have been different?

It's a long time between now and the summer. If Forbes returns to whence he came and uses the print medium to explain himself, the issues that he believes in and the reasons why, he can still be the Republican standard bearer. If he continues to almost solely rely on television, he will be a victim of 30 second sound bites and the electronic media that can counter every word he speaks.

In the world of politics, particularly national politics, you must build more than an image, you must build substance. You can only do this by giving the voters a true opportunity to get to know you through the print media.

And why not?

Unidentified wrongdoers

Garbage in and garbage out

When there is suspicion of official wrongdoing, the district attorney is charged with conducting an investigation to see if the charges warrant a grand jury investigation.

The grand jury, after hearing the witnesses, issues a report that can lead to an indictment leveling charges, or can exonerate those by refusing to indict.

The grand jury can also take a middle road and issue what is called a "C Report," which specifies the non-criminal actions of the individuals targeted by the investigations, but, by law, does not specifically identify those involved. The "C Report" is generally issued long after the fact, and while it often becomes common knowledge who the unnamed individuals are, they often are long gone from the scene.

In these reports, the grand jury may allude to unethical behavior or behavior that goes right up to the line of wrongdoing but stops an inch short.

We have read a number of these reports and have been left with the uneasy feeling that they are garbage. The allegations, because of the convening of a grand jury, seem to have a semblance of truth. The final reports leave those interested with the belief that something was done wrong but, because of a technicality or a loophole, an indictment was not issued.

In most cases, people who are called before a grand jury hire attorneys, which can cost them tens of thousands of dollars. Because they are called, they are put under a cloud of suspicion. Because no indictment is issued, but a report is, from the public's viewpoint, they are of-

ten presumed to be guilty until they prove themselves innocent. This system is wrong.

Before a district attorney's office convenes the grand jury, they must have their case down pat. They must have a degree of certainty that a crime has been committed, and the evidence that they have gathered warrants an indictment. They should not be fishing expeditions that waste the taxpayers' money, create huge legal bills and leave the victims with tarnished reputations.

In a recent grand jury report, it was alleged that former county officials used their power to favor specific individuals in the selection and awarding of health care services for county employees. While no criminal charges were reportedly involved, the actions alleged by the grand jury cost the taxpayers millions of

dollars in additional costs. This is wrong. County officials have a responsibility to spend the taxpayers' dollars as efficiently as possible, and not as a financial reward for favored friends or for favors rendered. Those who treat their public trust in this fashion deserve to be named and held up to public scorn.

While a C Report can, as District Attorney James Catterson states, lead to changes in the system to prevent similar improprieties from occurring again, it lets those who would abuse their responsibility to the taxpayers off the hook too easily. If more public officials had to face the public's scorn for needlessly wasting taxpayer dollars through actions of political favoritism, we just might have a lot less of such actions. Now, that would be a change worth having!

And why not?