

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Don't Forget Long Island

The State Legislature rejected a bid to allow casino gambling in particular areas of the state this past week. It appeared that upstate residents were going to get the opportunity to establish casino gambling, until the recent vote.

Going into January, it looked like a sure bet that a statewide referendum would be held on this issue. If the voters of the state approved the measure, upstate municipalities then would have had the option of approving or rejecting legalized gambling in the counties and communities.

New York City officials had conveyed to the governor and the legislature that they did not want the city included. They were left out of the bill which was passed last year, but over the past couple of months, Mayor Giuliani was pushing to have the city included in the legislation.

County officials on Long Island did not convey to the state legislature whether they wanted to have an option to vote, so Long Island was excluded from the legislation.

Most state legislature candidates from Long Island said during the recent campaign

that they would make sure we would be given an option to vote on this measure. They said they only needed to be asked by the county executives or the county legislatures.

It appeared that the bill was on a fast track, but our Long Island delegation of state representatives disregarded their constituents because local officials from Long Island had not contacted them.

Although the chances seem slim that the bill will come up for another vote this session, if it does, Long Island should be included. The only way to ensure this is for the county executives to officially go on record as wanting the people to have a choice.

Wanting the opportunity to vote and supporting casino gambling are two different questions. It is up to the politicians to make sure that our rights are upheld and we are afforded the option of voting. If they oppose casino gambling, they should then campaign to have it defeated, but the final decision should be up to the people.

And why not?

## Paying for Sins Past

If LILCO reneges on its PILOT payments to the Shoreham-Wading River School that is due this spring, the district may be facing bankruptcy. The payment is part of a government contract that amounts to over \$9 million.

It would be tragic, almost devastating, to have a school district go bankrupt, not for the taxpayers, but for the children who would be affected.

The taxpayers were eligible to elect the school board. They chose to either stay away from the polls or elect candidates who believed it was their God-given right to spend every nickel that the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant's taxes were capable of producing.

I personally pleaded with the superintendent in this district to use some common sense and discretion. Shoreham-Wading River was spending four times the amount on their students than the surrounding districts of Riverhead and Rocky Point were spending.

The superintendent said to me, "We are going to spend every last dime as fast as we can. We know this is not a common sense produced one of the most elaborate school districts this country has ever seen. They have pools and green houses, observatories and boats. The school has all the luxuries the residents cannot afford but did not have the will to say no to."

The Shoreham-Wading River School District is still spending, although it has cut back. Real estate taxes are rising in the district. If LILCO pulls another one of its fast ones, the district can collapse financially with every bit of the shock reverberating throughout the community.

The last answer that will be palatable to all the taxpayers who did not benefit from the LILCO legacy is that they be asked to pick up the tab for the Shoreham-Wading River School District's sins of the past.

And why not?

## Kill Sales Tax Now!

The government recently conducted an experiment; it eliminated sales tax on clothing over a one-week period. The politicians did not have a clue about the outcome. Had they taken Marketing 101, they could have predicted the results.

Stores were filled with shoppers. Some merchants reported seeing crowds they had not seen in years; their sales last week surpassed sales during the Christmas season. But the experiment was costly for state and local governments--tax losses are expected to amount to \$25 million.

New Jersey was the biggest loser, as New York shoppers stayed away from its year-round tax-free shopping havens. We are sure that many of the catalog retailers, whose lure is tax-free shopping, felt the impact as well.

Sales that would have gone out of state stayed in the state and helped enrich the economy, creating ample employment opportunities. It will be interesting to see what effect this tax-free period will have on clothing sales

in the forthcoming weeks.

Did shoppers stock up on basics such as underwear and shoes? The new lines of spring and summer clothing are just beginning to arrive. Will consumers have enough income left over to maintain the purchases of these new lines, or will the sale of these items suffer? Will consumers wait for another tax-free period to go on their next buying binge?

The politicians have a dilemma. They now know that people will be motivated to buy if the items are tax-free. What do you do to make up for the loss of this tax revenue? Are there areas of government that we can cut back to make up for these losses, or will we have to add to other taxes to make up for this shortfall?

One thing is for sure, the cat's out of the bag. Consumers are wildly enthusiastic about tax-free shopping and the government is going to have to learn how to cope with this predicament.

And why not?



## The Best Choice

Out of the chaos surrounding the election of the Suffolk County Legislature's Presiding officer, sanity has emerged.

Eighteen-year veteran Joseph Rizzo of the legislature failed to choose its own leader.

Rizzo was the natural choice as he has the institutional knowledge and the experience, having been the deputy for a number of years. Rizzo was content to be deputy and he let it be known early on that he did not aspire to become presiding officer unless he had the full support of the Republican legislative bloc.

When Rizzo initially took himself out of contention, it allowed the gulf to widen between the Huntington Republicans, who supported Steve Hackeling, and the Brookhaven Republicans, who, at the

steps for AME workers that guarantee they will receive raises after the contract has expired and while they are negotiating for a new contract.

The contract on spending and taxes. The financial impact of the proposed AME contract could require the piercing of that cap. Will Rizzo hold to his Conservative beliefs or will he cave in and allow taxes to be increased on the residents?

The county will face other shortfalls brought about because of binding arbitration in police negotiations. Under binding arbitration, the county must accept the arbitrator's decision. Unfortunately, the county did not present a strong case to the arbitrator this year.

Foolishly, the county did not demand the right to place a representative on the arbitration

**Rizzo has a solid working relationship with his colleagues**

urging of Suffolk County Republican Chairman John Powell, supported Joseph Caracappa. The other contenders, Michael Caracciolo, Allan Binder and Angie Carpenter, could not muster enough support even when they combined their Republican strengths with a Democratic presence.

Rizzo has a solid working relationship with his colleagues from both sides of the aisle. Both Rizzo and Maxine Postal said that they can fight like mad for their particular viewpoint during a legislative session, but walk out of the legislative room and converse as friends.

Being presiding officer is not going to be an easy job. The Association of Municipal Employees' proposed contract, negotiated by the County Executive, is a financial time bomb. It calls for raises of 15% to 35% over the contract period. It reinstates

board. Instead, they accepted a one-man arbitration panel which, in the past, has been a disaster. The law allows the panel to be comprised of either one or three people. The county has the right to appoint one representative, the union has the same right. The third person must be agreed upon by the two parties involved.

Rizzo's challenge is going to be how to curtail spending and to reduce spending to meet the financial requirements of Suffolk that are beyond the county's control. This is going to take imagination, innovation and a willingness to at least explore new territory that has been previously thought untouchable.

Rizzo has surrounded himself with good people and that may be the saving grace. Time will tell.

And why not?



## Fifty To Die For

A woman's breasts are not only an important part of her physical anatomy. Emotionally, they are a very important part of her psyche. To a male, they are a part of a woman's sexuality. Unfortunately, breasts are alarmingly susceptible to cancer.

Women and men are instructed to regularly do a self-examination of their breasts, checking for lumps or any abnormalities, both interior and exterior.

Over the past 15 to 20 years, smart men over forty have had a routine mammogram done during their annual health examinations. This modern bit of technology has been able to pick up small tumors and other abnormalities that may be precancerous. Mammograms have been credited with saving the lives of thousands of women. If breast tumors are discovered by mammography, the procedures used for remediation range from simple lumpectomy to a radical mastectomy, where the entire interior of the breast is removed along with the surrounding lymph nodes and some portions of the muscle. Some of these procedures were unnecessary. The result of these often unnecessary procedures is that women are in a panic and doctors have begun practicing defensive medicine in an attempt to avoid a malpractice suit at all cost.

Some of these medical abuses have led to the National Institute of Health deciding not to recommend that women in their forties should have regular mammograms. This is in contrast to the recommendations made by the American Cancer Society, the American College of Radiology, the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

There are three different types of breast cancer, one is slow-growing and the chances of survival are good. Another form is very aggressive and early detection has little impact on survival. The third

type is between the two and mammograms definitely aid in their detection.

If a woman has the second type of rapid growth cancer, mammograms are of little help, but with the other two types they are definitely a winner.

The government is concerned about the rapid increase in the cost of medical care. We wonder if the decision not to recommend mammograms for women in their forties isn't based on the cost to the government and the insurance industry. If this is the case, they are being penny wise and pound foolish. Prevention, early detection and immediate remediation is a lot cheaper than long-term care.

We have known several young women who have died from breast cancer. In all but one case, they had not had a mammogram. They either did not feel they needed it or they did not want to chance finding out that they had become a victim. Their deaths were tragic. Most left behind a husband and children who had to suffer the traumatic effects of losing someone dear to them, a wife and a mother.

Mammograms are inconvenient, they can be uncomfortable and they are expensive, about \$150 through a private physician. Clinics will perform this procedure for substantially less. In the context of cancer run amuck and the remediation necessary, this cost is pocket change. It can also ease the emotional stress involved and possibly prevent death.

It should be a woman's right to decide for herself whether she wants or needs this procedure. Women should unite, with their husbands at their side, to protest this decision by the National Institute of Health. You can bet that the insurance companies will use this recommendation to deny women insurance coverage for this procedure. They will claim that NIH said it was not necessary. You must wait until you are 50 years old or die from this decision.

And why not?

## Repeal Wick's Folly

Southold Town has taken the initiative to push the New York State Association of Towns to begin a campaign for the reformation of "Wick's Law." Other municipalities should consider doing the same.

Wick's Law was initially adopted in 1953. It requires municipalities and school districts to split construction contracts over \$50,000 into three categories—plumbing and gas; steam heating, hot water and ventilation apparatus; and electric wiring and lighting.

There is no question that the intent of this legislation "...to assure the prudent and economical use of public moneys..." is clearly a noble endeavor on the part of our state legislators, but it has not worked the way it was supposed to.

Despite the fact that almost every branch of government has complained about this legislation over the past 20 years, this law continues to cost the state's counties, towns, villages and school districts a 20% to 40% increase in building construction.

The unions that benefit from the law have opposed any reform or repeal tooth and nail. In the past, the state legislature has always caved in. In the meantime, needed repairs and new projects have been postponed because of the cost and the waste that this law brings about.

Now is the time for our legislators to start representing their constituents instead of adhering to the whims of the unions. Each of our state leaders has to muster up the courage to stand up and say "No!" to these powerful unions and their cohorts.

Wick's Law will be the subject of debate during next week's Association of Towns conference in Manhattan and this opportunity should be taken by each of Suffolk's 10 towns to begin an organized campaign to repeal, or at least modify, this law. If New York State's towns, counties, cities and school districts stand together on this issue, the state legislators and the governor will have to listen.

And why not?



## Learn From Our History

President Clinton gave his State of the Union address and outlined his direction for the next four years. He zeroed in on education. His solution was the same as all big government proponents have been in the past, throw money at the problem and it will solve itself.

We know from our 60-year experience with welfare that money is not the answer.

On Long Island, we are keenly aware that throwing money at education is not the answer. During the seventies, we were in an affluent environment on the island. We wanted our children to have better things and better tools than we had. If they became better educated, they could achieve even more than we did.

Long Island increased spending on education far out of proportion to our spending on any other segment of governmental service. This was Long Island's great experiment with gambling on the future.

Today, Long Island spends more than twice the nation's average on education. Yet, the results from this investment have been dismal. The average young person graduating from high school has a seventh grade ability in math and an eighth grade ability in reading. That is deplorable.

Sure, we have Westinghouse scholars and God bless them, but the average child is ill-equipped to go to work or to college.

A recent report indicated that 67% of high school graduates going to any college required remedial help in the basics during their first year of college.

The President has proposed that the federal government substantially increase its contribution to the states. We are painfully aware that when the federal government sends funding back to the states, it sends that money with strings attached, rules, regulations and mandates.

The cost of complying to get the money is often counterproductive and most of the money is wasted on the

bureaucracy of complying with the grants.

Clinton spoke of the federal government providing \$7 billion for the construction and remodeling of schools. This is but a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed.

Palm Beach County in Florida estimates that to build and remodel its schools, about \$5 billion is needed. When you look at the other 49 states and multiple counties, you have an idea how inadequate this money is and how little it is going to do.

As part of his Crime Bill in his first term, President Clinton allocated monies to engage 100,000 new police officers nationwide. As of the writing of this editorial, only 20,000 police have been hired, even though almost two years have gone by.

The money only covered the salaries of the officers for the first few years. The balance of their employment had to be picked up by local taxpayers. Most communities recognized this trap and their inability to afford this expenditure. They wisely turned down this "free" money.

The Clinton administration has been strongly supported by the National Educational Association, the umbrella organization of the state, county and local teachers' unions. They have their own agenda for controlling our children. It has little to do with practical education and a lot to do with turning our children into members of a state controlled from cradle to grave.

The first aim of the unions is to bloat the bureaucracy, and outside of being game pawns, our children being put last. The unions are the problem with education in America today. Does the President have the will or the guts to take them on, to harness them and place the kids' needs first?

If the federal government has the money, is in a generous mood and wants to give block grants to the states without rules and regulations, great, but don't give us a Trojan Horse. We can't afford it.

And why not?



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## You Are On Notice

Governor Pataki, the New York State Senate and the New York State Assembly have been put on notice that Suffolk County is officially requesting that the state live up to its obligation to either patrol the New York State roads, Long Island Expressway and Sunrise Highway, or include the funding in the state budget to reimburse Suffolk County for doing the job.

Last year, state senators and assembly members said they had never been formally asked to provide the funding or the manpower to accomplish this need.

One of the first acts of the Suffolk County Legislature under Joseph Rizzo, the new presiding officer, was to pass a resolution requesting the state's intervention. This was done in conjunction with a bill submitted in the senate by Senator Owen Johnson (R-Babylon) and in the assembly by Assemblyman Paul Harenberg (D-Sayville). Both of these state officials had promised *Suffolk Life* they would introduce such legislation during their reelection interviews last fall.

Now that the county has made an official request and that request has been introduced as proposed assembly and senate laws, the legislature has been put on notice, and its excuse should be put to rest.

If the state comes up with the money instead of the manpower, the county can

either reduce its expenditures or use the money to beef up the neighborhood patrols. This is a win-win situation that deserves everyone's support.

The Suffolk County Police Benevolent Association opposed the move in the past because it feared that New York State Police would be brought in to patrol the LIE. The county PBA considers this its turf and does not want any interlopers interfering with its sphere of influence and was afraid the officers patrolling the LIE would lose their jobs. But this is not what would have happened. The police assigned to the highways would have been redeployed in the neighborhoods where residents want the police presence.

We hope that the PBA will rethink its opposition and do what is best for the people. It is a win-win situation even for them.

This is a perfect issue for the Long Island State Delegation to show cooperation and solidarity on. The proposed measure has a Republican sponsor in the Republican-controlled senate and a Democratic sponsor in the Democratically-controlled assembly. Politics should not be an excuse. Even Governor Pataki owes his existence to Long Island, so he should not be a stumbling block. Maybe Long Island has a chance to win in Albany this year.

And why not?

## Let The Private Sector Do It

In both his state of the union and his budget address, Governor Pataki rightfully proposed the creation of charter schools in New York State. Charter schools are private schools created by parents or organizations to meet specifically defined needs of students.

The students are not getting quality education or services from the monopolistic public school system.

Like many private schools, charter schools are partially funded through state taxes. Part of the funding comes from tuition and other private support.

Consequently, there has been an outcry from the educational establishment which claims the public school system cannot afford to lose its educational monies.

Likewise, there has been a show of support from parents with children who would benefit from these charter schools. These parents believe that the public schools have shortchanged their children.

Pataki's action clearly dictates that this state will no longer tolerate the status quo in education. We will explore innovative new programs that can better enable our chil-

dren to meet their potential.

By this proposal, Pataki is signaling to the educational establishment that he is willing to stand up to it. The establishment can either fight him or learn to work with him.

Early indications are that the teachers' union will fight tooth and nail to handcuff and handicap charter schools by insisting that the teachers and administrators be covered by the same terms and conditions of union contracts that cover public schools. They want the same salary scales, work rules and tenure clauses.

If the unions win this fight, and charter schools are handicapped as public schools are, education will come full circle without accomplishing anything. This is going to be the biggest hurdle Pataki will have to overcome.

Pataki will need the support of the leadership in both the assembly and the senate. If kids count, leadership will give their support. If union contributions, lobbying and pressure are more important, we will be back to ground zero, and not only will the taxpayers lose, but so will the kids.

And why not?

## Work Together

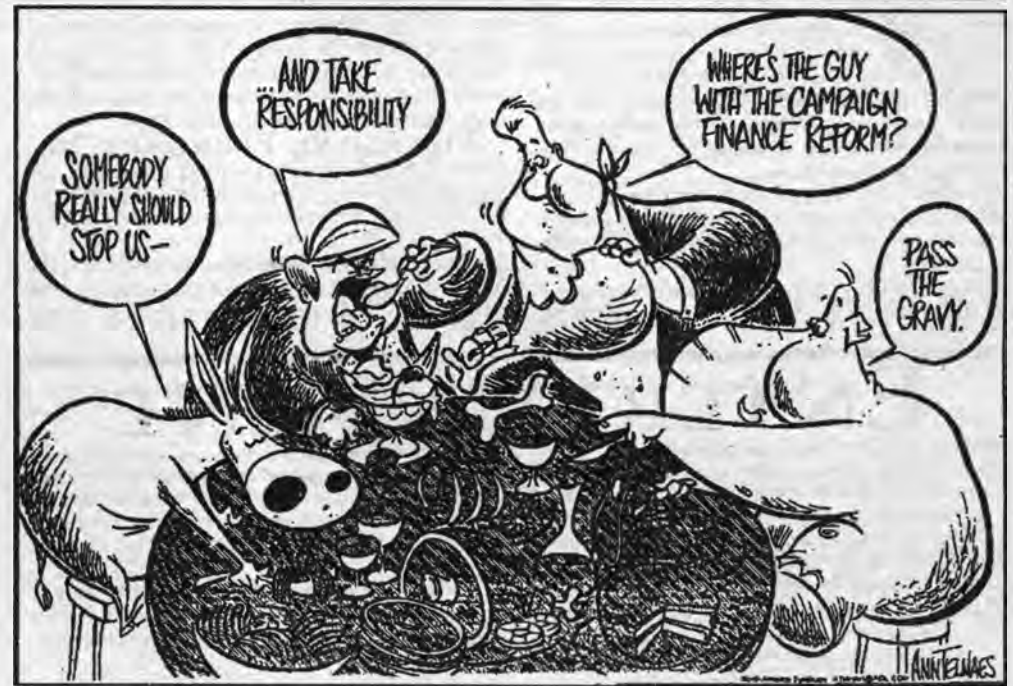
Calling for the indefinite closing of the reactor at Brookhaven National Laboratory by Suffolk Legislator Michael Caracciolo appears to be nothing more than headline grabbing in an already confusing and difficult situation.

Yes, BNL discovered tritium contamination in its sample water wells in the southern part of its 5,265-acre site between the Middle Country Road. Tri-

tium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen with a half-life of 12 years.

Yes, it should have responded faster to notify the media and community about that contamination, and yes, a complete clean-up of all the tritium is expected.

BNL is a privately operated facility funded by the federal Department of Energy. It has also been listed as a Super Fund site for almost 10 years, during which the feder-



al government has done little to eradicate the problem. In the past, the federal Department of Energy has disregarded the public's safety with Shoreham and other issues. The clean-up of the tritium must be monitored by an outside ecology firm.

BNL ecologists and physicists have noted that the tritium plume is about 80 feet wide and about 400 feet long. This plume has not crossed over BNL's property boundary, but has been hard to monitor because it is so narrow.

These specialists claim that the amount of tritium found in BNL's on-site test wells is 32 times the state's allowable drinking water standard. They have noted that this level of tritium, although higher than the standard, is still not enough to cause any damage because the radiation molecules are water soluble.

Because BNL's past relationship with

the community has been poor, at best, people are skeptical and so are we.

However, the facility has recently stepped up its community relations activity and opened its doors to the residents and media. Calling for the indefinite closing of a significant part of BNL, which employs 3,200 area residents, is inappropriate.

Caracciolo claims his proposed legislation is intended to "ensure public safety...and get to the bottom line."

If that is so, he and the rest of the county legislature should actively join with Congressman Forbes and Senator D'Amato, who have called for the thorough investigation and mitigation of the situation. If complete mitigation is not possible, the legislature can then demand that the reactor be closed.

And why not?

## Election Year Common Sense

The dark clouds of the coming November election have been spotted by the Suffolk County Legislature, giving newly-appointed Presiding Officer Joseph Rizzo the ability to convince the legislature to correct two injustices it had previously imposed on the people.

Utter anger toward the legislature has prevailed since it imposed an additional \$100 penalty on delinquent real estate taxpayers, and began requiring the towns to pay a portion of the county's dredging expenses.

The courts ruled that the county had imposed this \$100 penalty illegally, but limited the refund of this illegal overcharge to those people who had been smart enough to have written "paid under protest" on their checks. The county then announced that it would abide by the court ruling and only give refunds to those people who had protested.

This illegal fee had been imposed on top of fees and interest already imposed by law. More than 75% of the delinquent taxpayers had not registered the protest complaint on their checks.

The county claimed that it could not afford to give back the money that it had illegally taken. Can you imagine what

would happen to John Q. Public if we took something illegally, were caught, and then refused to return it?

The new legislature, facing reelection, decided to stop stonewalling and has approved refunding these illegal fines. About 6,000 county taxpayers can expect a refund shortly. Hurrah! one for the people and common decency.

Continuing in its benevolent mood, the legislature voted to rescind a law mandating that towns pay for 10% of dredging projects conducted by the county within the town's boundaries.

This was an unfunded mandate that threatened to break the bank in several towns. The county had not consulted with the towns to find out if they could afford it. It was just a sleight-of-hand maneuver to transfer county responsibility onto the backs of the towns. In plain English, it was bad government.

The legislature should be praised for correcting its misdeeds. It may be the new leadership or the reality that November comes closer every day. But the 1997 county legislature is at least giving the appearance of thinking about people first. What a relief.

And why not?



## The Nightmare At Brookhaven

As usual, those involved in the nuclear industry downplayed the potential for danger at Brookhaven National Laboratory when it became public that a leak had occurred and Tritium had polluted the groundwater.

The proponents of the lab tried to equate the potential for human harm to the dosage that one receives from an X-ray. This is a time-worn stance that the industry has taken whenever the dangers of radiation are discussed. It's the same thing as an educator pointing to the number of Westinghouse scholars we have on Long Island when most children are graduating with only an eighth grade ability to read.

The lab originally claimed that its spill was minute.

The contamination was only twice New York State's drinking water standard. We now know that the spill has been going on for over three years. The spill has resulted in more than 30 times the allowable standards for drinking water.

The spill has moved southward almost a quarter-mile from the suspected source. It is moving at one foot per day.

The lab is right smack in the middle of the pine barrens. The alleged purpose of the pine barrens was to protect our drinking water. The aquifer lies directly under the lab.

To the south of the lab are over 10,000 homes. Most of these homes are built on small plots of land and occupied by people of limited resources who can't afford to abandon their homes, pack up and leave.

Suffolk Life led the fight to stop the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant. We did so out of a decision to err on the side of safety rather than on the side of economics. Because those in the industry chose to stonewall rather than be honest with the public, our curiosity and fear began to

peak.

There are about 3500 jobs involved at Brookhaven. We are concerned about those employees, not only for their economic well-being, but for their health.

We are not only concerned about the residents directly downstream from the plume, but all the residents in the surrounding areas that breathe the air and draw water from the aquifer.

Last year, the lab wanted to dump millions of gallons of water into the Peconic River and the Peconic Bay. We were suspicious of this move, even though state health officials had signed off on it. With our suspicious minds, we can't help but wonder if the removal of this water was not part of the lab's solution to the problem. The investigators should check into this and not just accept the lab's explanation.

We wonder if they were "not aware" of problems on the lab property and simply using this water removal process as a way to handle that problem. Because so few people know about nuclear energy, they do not have a healthy respect for it. You can't smell it, you can't taste it, you can't see it, and most times you are not knocked down by it. Most exposure to radiation is slow, it's insidious, cumulative, and destroys from within, causing myriad abnormalities, including cancer.

We are glad that the county held the hearing last Thursday, which drew the attention of Congressman Michael Forbes and Senator Alfonse D'Amato. In this latest nuclear crisis in Suffolk, we at least have our local and federal governmental officials working together to find the cause, the extent and the remedy that will be necessary to protect our lives. This was not the case with Shoreham.

And why not?

## Flush That Idea

County Executive Robert Gaffney is considering the establishment of a sewer authority. He should flush that idea.

An authority is an onus form of government that has powers of eminent domain and is removed from the checks and balances of electorate control. An authority should only be formed as a last resort.

The reason Gaffney is considering a sewer authority is that individual sewer districts are running out of stabilization funds that were the result of a one-shot sales tax extension. This sales tax extension had been approved as a means to soften the impact brought about by the cost overruns of the South West Sewer District. It was supposed to allow the districts to phase in rates so that residents within the districts would not be hit with a huge increase in their sewer taxes all at once.

The sales tax was collected county-wide. People who were not connected to any sewer district paid the taxes even though there was no direct benefit. This was a political way out of a horrendous sit-

uation that has been brought about by bad, corrupted government.

Several years ago, the sewer tax sunset and in place of it, voters approved using the same quarter-cent sales tax for water preservation and environmental acquisitions of open space. This tax is to sunset at the end of the nineties.

With the sewer stabilization funds running out, some homeowners face increases in sewer district taxes of over \$1,000 in their particular districts. These are districts that have traditionally charged unrealistically low sewer fees. They have applied the stabilization funds to operating costs and now that the funds are running out, they will have to charge the users the full cost.

There are several questions that reasonable people should explore on this issue. Is it ethically right to impose a county-wide tax that only benefits a limited number of homeowners? Why should one neighbor subsidize the other when they have to bear the full cost of handling their own problems?

Is this financial crisis a political crisis in



disguise? Don't the politicians realize that there is a coincidence that the sewer stabilization fund is running out of money about the same time that the quarter-cent environmental fund will sunset? Was this part of the grand design and grand plan to keep us stabilizing sewers for evermore?

Why weren't sewer rates raised gradually to meet the costs, so there would not be a huge immediate impact and increase in taxes? Why should we consider establishing a sewer authority with powers of

eminent domain, removed from popular vote and public approval?

Is this situation a crisis of such magnitude as to require a Draconian measure?

There is more to sewers and taxes under the lid of this cesspool. The whole situation stinks. We hope that stench is strong enough to catch the attention of the taxpayers, who we expect are being prepared for another political bailout.

And why not?

## A United Suffolk?

If you apply a doctrine of fairness, the argument for a united Suffolk County vs. the secession of the East End as Peconic County falls decidedly to the commitment of the movement.

The people of the East End overwhelmingly supported (by 70%) a separate Peconic County. Why keep residents part of a whole if they want to be separate? Is this fair?

The difference between life on the East End and western Suffolk County is like night and day. The things, the values and the concepts that East Enders hold near and dear are alien to those on the West End.

East Enders want small government. They don't need, require or desire many of the services that government considers important. They are more independent, prefer to look after themselves rather than to have their neighbors look after them. Most enjoy small things. Things like air around them; and they dislike homes being built on top of other homes.

They have proven time and time again that they are willing to dig into their own pockets to preserve open space and slow down development. They have been willing to take property off the tax rolls, pick up their share of these taxes by willingly going into debt with bonds to pay for land that was acquired.

When it comes down to taxes and finances, they bitterly resent paying for a disproportionate share of county expenses. East End residents are not part of the Suffolk County Police district because they prefer their own town and village police. Yet, they are charged 25% of the administration costs incurred by the Suffolk County Police.

True, they receive some benefits from the police labs and the specialists, but they have an alternative to these services through the State Police.

County Executive Gaffney made an impassioned plea, devoting almost one-third of his State of the County address, opposing the creation of Peconic County. This was unusual because he sacrificed time that should have been devoted to some of the major problems facing his administration.

In the past, Gaffney has philosophically indicated that he was not opposed to the creation of Peconic County, he felt people should be allowed to make up their own minds. Why the change? It has nothing to do with fairness; it's taxes and pure political power.

If Peconic is successful in seceding from Suffolk, the county loses a cash cow that it takes more from than it gives. The growth of Suffolk County will come on the East End. This means jobs, government and patronage. County leaders do not want to see this plum slip through their fingers.

These are all the wrong reasons and we hope that Gaffney has the common sense to rethink his position rather than doing the bidding of the powers that be.

The concept of Peconic County has been alive and well for more than 30 years. It originally was a concept promoted by East End leaders who had little power and a small following. Today, the little guy has been joined by the big guys, the big money that is on the East End and those that have a lot to say in government and finances.

Chances have never been better for a secession movement for the right reasons. And why not?