

Mine for 1989

In discussing this week's editorials, Lou Grasso, Suffolk Life managing editor, suggested I do an editorial based upon having a magic wand and being able to accomplish my fondest wishes, even the impossible, to make Suffolk County a better place to live.

With my magic wand, I would first settle the Shoreham controversy. The nuclear reactor would be dismantled and removed from the property, thus eliminating a real threat to Long Island residents from a possible accident spewing radiation and death. The cost would be borne by the speculators who gambled on profits they thought they could gain, manipulating the elected officials, the regulatory agencies and the public.

The operation of the Long Island Lighting Company would be taken over by the Long Island Power Authority. Freed of the wasteful Shoreham plant, LIPA would produce electricity and sell it to the consumers at 40 percent less than profit-making utilities do throughout the nation. This is an historical fact of publicly-owned utilities. With the Shoreham problem out of the way, and with economical energy rates for the future, Long Islanders could get on with solving the many other problems that face us.

Wand aims at officials

My magic wand would turn to elected officials. When I was growing up, being an elected official meant you gave back to your community what you had received, by donating time to public service, serving as an elected representative of the people. Compensation in those days was more in the form of reimbursement for expenses incurred than the feeding at the trough which salaries of elected officials have become.

On the town level, a business manager, a top business executive, would be appointed to run the town like a business. He or she would manage all the day-to-day affairs, maximizing personnel and equipment. He would prepare budgets and make sure every tax dollar was used prudently. Department heads would answer directly to him, as would their employees to them.

The town board would be made up of civic-minded individuals who would make laws and set policy. They would select the business manager and then keep their hands off the operation of the town. Theirs would be the sounding board for the public, bringing to the council the comments and wishes of the citizens. Councilmen would only receive compensation as a reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. The council would meet only monthly or quarterly.

The Supervisor's post would become ceremonial where he or she still could kiss babies and cut ribbons. His compensation, likewise, would be a mere pittance.

Public salary changes

Public employees who work for the town governments would be paid salaries equal to those offered in the private sector. Below management level, they would be paid by the hour. From their hourly compensation, they could buy the group benefits they need and desire, eliminating all those costly hidden benefits that can add 60 percent to their earnings, benefits that must be funded by taxpayers who do not enjoy the same benefits themselves.

Non-essential services on the town level would be placed on a pay-as-you-go basis. The cost of obtaining a permit, whether it be building or recreational, would be borne by the applicant. Sufficient personnel would be hired by the community to process the permits in an expeditious manner. Where a permit could be issued immediately, it would be. Where a permit required work, the process would be completed in no more than a week. This is the way business would handle the services of government.

Cutting out waste

My magic wand would then turn to duplication of services. Give the power and responsibility to the state that is the state's, to the county what is the county's and to the towns that which is rightfully theirs. It's a stupid waste of taxpayers' money to have these three branches of government performing the same functions. There would be a storm of protest raised over the elimination of the duplication. The cry would be, "My job is being done away with." But in this day and age of ultra-low unemployment, help wanted signs proliferate in the region and no one has to fear unemployment if he or she is willing to work.

Abolish legislature

Turning toward the county, my first act would be to abolish the Suffolk County Legislature and replace it with a weighted Board of Supervisors. The supervisors know what is going on in their towns, they know what the people want. Why should we have a county legislature made up of incompetent middlemen who rarely ask the supervisors of the towns what is going on, their opinions on measures they enact on the county level that affect the towns?

If my wand was powerful enough, it would totally eliminate the county government. Our sister state, Connecticut, gets along without counties very nicely, thank you. They save billions of dollars by eliminating this duplicate layer of government.

The state government has its own host of problems for us to center around, especially the governor's appointed Public Service Commission. The P.S.C. has a dual role, the commissioners are there to regulate rates and ensure services for the consumers, but, on the other hand, they are there to ensure the continued financial health of the utilities so that they have the capabilities of meeting the needs and the demands for increased services. The P.S.C., since the early 50's, forgot the first part of their responsibility in their quest to do the bidding of the utilities. As a result, rates have skyrocketed for electricity, phones and water. Utilities have not only been allowed, but encouraged, to waste money on boondoggles such as Shoreham. The Public Service Commission is badly in need of a complete restructuring, particularly the staff that seems to be in the pocket of the utility.

Prod the governor

If we could use our magic wand, we would prod Governor Mario Cuomo to accept his responsibility as governor, to work with Ralph Marino, the new senate majority leader, to achieve a P.S.C. and a staff that is as consumer-oriented as they are to the lobbyists and the utilities.

While revamping the P.S.C., Governor Cuomo should also look at his D.E.C. First, order them to act as courteous, helpful members of his family. Second, revamp the D.E.C. and fund it so that it has enough people in the right spots to do the job of protecting the environment. Three, remove the petty bureaucrats who take glee in saying "no" and stopping or holding up projects under the guise of minute technicalities. Eliminate from these bureaucrats the power to be policeman, prosecutor, judge, jury and enforcer. Streamline the appeals process so the public has an even break. Set up a system whereby the people who have been improperly charged can quickly appeal the decision and, if found right, would receive triple compensation for the costs incurred in proving themselves innocent in instances where they have been found improperly guilty.

A better education

Parents of school-age children would be given a voucher that they could apply toward the tuition for educating their children. Competition in schools would

result in much lower educational costs while improving the quality of the education students receive. Teachers' salaries would be increased substantially if they could be compensated for working a normal work week and work year. Does it make any sense to encourage and educate teachers, and then only allow them to work 800 hours a year at what they have been trained for, when most workers put in 2,000 hours?

Housing for needy

For the unfortunate needy, my magic wand would develop a complete social service complex. Housing would be provided for the homeless as well as for families in need. Within the complex there would be communal feeding facilities for those who need such help. Families could prepare their own meals. Health and hospital services would be steps away. Counseling and guidance would be on-site. Standard education and special education, geared to the needs of the residents, would be available for all who sought it. Rehabilitation and vocational training would be premier projects. All needs of those in need would be provided in one centralized location. Service personnel would be used to the maximum as transportation all over the county would be eliminated. Slums and deficient housing would be eliminated in every town. People no longer would be sleeping ten to a room in dilapidated motels and apartments. And we would truly be helping people to restore their lives.

New drug laws

My magic wand would develop a set of laws for drugs that would be patterned after and be as effective as those that pertain to D.W.I. The goal would be to make the possession of drugs as unappealing as being caught driving while under the influence. For a young people under 18 years of age, the privilege of driving would be put off until they are 25. Those over 18, if convicted for a first offense, would only be allowed to drive to and from work. All, whether they be 14 or 40, would have to attend drug rehabilitation classes. The fines would be substantial, but manageable. There would be no plea bargaining, simple possession would mandate full compliance with the penalty. Second offenders would be treated more harshly, with all state licenses either being revoked or restricted, including licenses to do business, practice medicine or law. People would soon realize that the simple possession of drugs carried a socially unacceptable price.

Love and trust

My magic wand, pointed at families, would create an atmosphere of trust, love, mutual respect and communication. Parents would look at their children and teach them that they are someone of value. Children would look at their parents with respect. Husbands and wives will talk, communicating their true feelings and emotions. They would spend time working in unison, playing together and praying as one.

In a final gesture, my wand would be pointed at the economy, making it robust and healthy, filled with new ideas and opportunities. Jobs would be plentiful for all who wanted them. Profits would be abundant for those who earned them. Quality would be back into business in a climate where everyone strives for perfection and settling for second best would be a disgrace.

Common courtesy would become a standard and a smile, a thank you, and pleasantries an everyday occurrence.

Unfortunately, I don't have a magic wand, just a fertile imagination, yet, there is not a project, not an idea in this editorial that cannot become a reality if we the people want it to be.

We know who the enemy is, it's us. But we can change things, if we try.

And why not?

Enough Is Enough

After receiving our annual real estate tax bills, there can't be a resident in Suffolk County who isn't ready to say "enough is enough!"

Although County Executive Patrick Halpin promised that the county portion of taxes would be raised by only 16 percent, which is 12 percent above inflation, when the tax bills were sent out, residents found themselves facing increases from 50 to 200 percent.

It's easy to get mad at Halpin, for after all he is the county executive. He was the one who promised a smaller double digit increase when, in reality, he probably knew full well it would be triple digit. But in the final analysis, the culprit is not Halpin, the culprit is the Suffolk County Legislature, a legislative body made up of 18 autonomous, elected officials.

Every two weeks, these people meet to spend your money. They not only spend more than is budgeted, they don't care. They have persistently developed spending plans that exceed spending caps and limitations we, as Suffolk County residents, have placed on them. The legislators, unlike supervisors, oper-

ate away from town hall. They are not seen or perceived as part of the community and rarely act as representatives of the community or the voters.

This past year, the legislators tried to pass laws which would allow them to develop and revamp the county executive's budget to meet their spending wishes four times a year. The county executive is chosen by the people as the chief budget officer of the county. It is up to the county executive and his staff to plan out spending so that it stays within the taxpayers' ability to finance.

The legislature approves the budget as a whole, and then votes on specific projects within the budget as they come up for implementation. They not only approve these projects, but a whole host of other projects, additions to the budget which add tremendously to the tax increases. Each legislator, responding to special interest groups and political motivation, proposes a host of favorite programs. To gain passage for these programs, they trade off their votes with other legislators. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours; let the taxpayers find

a way of paying for it," is the logic behind their actions.

Spending is about the only thing these people can agree upon. Last year, it took a full month for them to decide upon a leader. This year promises to be no better. During the first session of the legislature each year, a presiding officer is to be elected. This year, each Republican nominated the Republican seated next to him. Each received nine votes, as did Democrat Sondra Bachety, last year's eleven month leader.

The cost of running the legislature is a sickening waste of millions of dollars. Not only are we paying our part-time legislators full-time salaries, which were just increased to \$40,000 per year, (while they were socking taxpayers with whopping tax increases, they voted all county elected officials a 3.5 percent salary increase) but we supply these legislators with offices and staffs. The presiding officer has had as many as 30 people on staff in the past.

The county legislature is a wasteful duplication of effort. To be fair, it has had some good moments, and has accomplished some good. But the good is far outweighed by the bad.

Some say that a legislative form of government is more representative, as each representative serves a district of somewhat equal population. Those representatives, though, get lost in the shuffle and rarely know the feelings, the frustrations and the true desires of the constituents. They are keenly attuned to the requests and the demands of small but powerful pressure groups that demand theirs, now.

Nassau County governs itself, as

Suffolk once did, through a board of supervisors. Each supervisor's vote carries the weight of the population of the town. This is a perfectly sane and acceptable method of representation, according to the Supreme Court. Although the system may not be perfect, particularly in a county so heavily one-sided politically, it is expedient, sane and far more economical.

On a number of occasions, citizens who have had enough have attempted to bring, through Initiative and Referendum, the question to the voters on what form of government they want to be represented by. The legislature, fearing the outcome, has done everything in its power, including the manipulation of time, to thwart these efforts. They have had the initiative petitions thrown out on technicalities, and have used delaying tactics to cut into the time allowed for the public gathering of signatures.

To us, the issue is very simple. Do the citizens of Suffolk County have the right to choose the form of government they want to be represented by? Are the legislators upholding the constitution they are sworn to defend by denying the citizens the right to choose? Once the question is on the ballot, then debate can take place on the merits of our legislature versus a weighted board of supervisors. It will be a hotly contested election where all the pros and cons can be brought out.

Let's make 1989 the year that the voters sing out loud and clear, enough is enough. Give us our freedom to choose.

And why not?

Quick divorce vs. violence

No one supports or approves of violence. Headlines have blared out over this holiday season of murders and beatings in domestic situations. Could the long drawn out, emotionally devastating and financially crippling divorce procedure be a contributing cause?

We have long advocated that divorces should be as easy and sensible to achieve as a marriage license is to obtain.

We are pro-family and totally support the family concept, but we are realistic enough to know that in some marriages, in fact, almost half of them, there comes a point where the participants realize that they have made a mistake. They cannot continue living together in harmony. Often this decision is made after months and even years of thorough thought by both parties. In normal circumstances, the parties discuss the reasons and the ramifications. They go over the finances, their responsibilities, and have a basic agreement in mind, with a few fine points to agree upon. Then they go to an attorney and the first thing that is recommended is that they both have separate counsel.

Attorneys, instead of being counselors, take the position of opponents. Minor points are magnified, emotions are inflamed and what could be a quick, easy separation becomes a combative and emotional, destabilizing experience.

We have had many discussions with divorced parties of both sexes. They have all been pretty much

unanimous in their feelings that when the settlement was finally sealed, it was not much different from what they had originally agreed upon or thought it would be.

When the agony is first over, there is hatred and huge legal bills for both counselors must be paid, which deplete the couple's resources. We have watched a number of people come out of marriages totally bitter after the hassle of legal experience.

We have often wondered if some of the domestic violence between estranged husbands and wives could not be avoided if the two parties were allowed to separate without this legal agony. Doesn't it make sense to establish a legal marital arbitration system whereby couples who are in basic compliance about the provisions of a divorce could go and present their case without the need for, or the cost of, legal representation? The arbitrator, having final authority as a judge, would weigh the reasons for the divorce, the fairness of the disposition of the couple's holdings, and the agreed responsibilities of both parties and issue an immediate declaration dissolving the marriage. Both parties would walk away hurt by the break up of the institution, but at least their emotional state would not be disturbed by months and years of protracted, emotionally devastating and expensive litigation which, we fear, may well contribute to domestic violence. It's time to give this matter serious consideration.

And why not?

Rebirth of LIPA?

After being shoved in the shadows for eight months, while Governor Mario Cuomo and his men tried to sell a deal which financially enriched LILCO at the expense of the ratepayers, there is an effort underway to try to breathe new life into the Long Island Power Authority. A meeting of the LIPA board has been called for January 27.

Unless there are some drastic changes in store for LIPA, efforts to restore it to health are a dismal waste of time. LIPA has become a plaything for Governor Mario Cuomo, to do with what he sees fit when he sees fit. With a couple of exceptions, he stacked the board with his cronies. He pulled the strings and they danced to his tune. He used it as a weapon to try to force LILCO into negotiations. And then when Vincent Tese, a member of Cuomo's administration who also sits on the LIPA board, negotiated the controversial deal which would have enriched LILCO, Cuomo's men on the LIPA board blindly approved the settlement.

LIPA was formed to protect the ratepayers from the arrogant attitude of LILCO. It was created as a

tool to take over the utility, through friendly means or a stock buyout, and ensure the death of Shoreham. LIPA could well be a very important part of Long Island's energy future, but not if it continues as Cuomo's toy. It needs new people and new direction. It needs to represent the ratepayers, not the politicians.

We and others have repeatedly called for immediate elections so that the people, not the politicians, can name who will sit on the LIPA board. But Cuomo won't hear of it. He refuses. He wants to keep it as his own plaything, to use as he wishes.

The agenda for the January 27 meeting, according to LIPA board member Richard Kessel, state consumer chief appointed by Cuomo and a key Cuomo henchman, is "mostly housekeeping matters." That would be a waste of time. If Kessel and the other Cuomo men truly want to do something worthwhile, they would pass a resolution calling for immediate elections. Let the people have the right to name those who will be involved in making the important decisions about the future.

And why not?

Is your congressman worth 50% more?

Congressmen, senators, the president, vice-president and most highly paid federal officials, including judges, will receive a 50 percent pay raise on January 30 unless congress votes otherwise.

Congressional salaries will go from \$87,000 to \$135,000 as a result of recommendations by a special commission created by President Ronald Reagan. Since the president has endorsed these recommendations, congress will not even have to vote the raises into effect, they will take place automatically unless congress itself objects.

We don't know how you feel about it, but we feel this is the scam of the year. Why weren't we, as voters, told about these pending congressional increases prior to election? Why didn't our congressmen speak out then, and why don't they speak out now? With all of the concern about

the national deficit, how can we talk about padding the pockets of those who are responsible for the wasteful spending that has contributed so much to this problem?

We have yet to read what the impact of these wages will be, but it is plain to see that if the bosses receive a 50 percent pay increase, they will have little defense against the demands of the millions of federal workers who will surely want to share in the higher salary mentality.

We have printed coupons for you to send to your congressman and federal senator. Demand that a vote be taken in congress on this proposal. Let each one of them vote "yes" or "no" on their pay raise. Let's hear how they rationalize this added spending at a time when this nation must bring its spending under control.

And why not?

Dear Senator Moynihan:

Stand up like a man, and demand that congress vote on the pending pay raises. Unless you can figure out how I can increase my income by 50 percent, I demand that you not increase your salary.

Signature:.....

Address:.....

Dear Congressman Hochbrueckner:

Stand up like a man, and demand that congress vote on the pending pay raises. Unless you can figure out how I can increase my income by 50 percent, I demand that you not increase your salary.

Signature:.....

Address:.....

Dear Congressman Downey:

Stand up like a man, and demand that congress vote on the pending pay raises. Unless you can figure out how I can increase my income by 50 percent, I demand that you not increase your salary.

Signature:.....

Address:.....

Dear Congressman Mrazek:

Stand up like a man, and demand that congress vote on the pending pay raises. Unless you can figure out how I can increase my income by 50 percent, I demand that you not increase your salary.

Signature:.....

Address:.....

Dear Senator D'Amato:

Stand up like a man, and demand that congress vote on the pending pay raises. Unless you can figure out how I can increase my income by 50 percent, I demand that you not increase your salary.

Signature:.....

Address:.....

Driving people away

Former Patchogue Village Mayor Norman Lechtrecker has been the subject of scrutiny by Newsday in recent days because property in the vicinity of land which is the subject of a village rehabilitation project with the use of HUD funding. An illusion has been created that is designed to give the impression that Lechtrecker has, therefore, done something wrong. The only wrong in this whole thing is that which has been done to a man who has the reputation--well-deserved--for being a dedicated, honest public official.

Lechtrecker's ownership of the property in question could rank as one of the worst kept secrets in the whole world. That ownership was, in fact, the target of criticism, political attack and public exposure during an election campaign. It was well aired, certainly no secret holding. Lechtrecker has been involved as one of 14 owners of this land for the past 25 years. It's not something that was gobbled up to take advantage of the village's rehabilitation project, which is designed to improve a once deteriorated section of the village.

There are no HUD funds involved in the one acre site owned by Island Industrial Park. The "problem," at least in Newsday's mind, apparently, is that this land is located in the vicinity of the village project site. Although it was offered for sale at the appraised value, it is not a part of that project. Although Newsday has raised the specter of a "conflict," there are no facts that support that premise.

Although the impact of this smearing of a man's reputation by innuendo

do would seem limited to this one man, such is not the case. "One of the stupidist things I ever did," said Lechtrecker recently, "was to get involved in public office. When they can take something that is clear and pure, and make it something dirty. . .," he said, his voice trailing off in emotion. And anyone who knows Norman Lechtrecker, how he was coaxed to run for mayor because of his commitment to the village where he was born and grew up, would surely feel the same if approached to seek public office. This attack by innuendo is driving good people away from public office, and everyone suffers as a result.

Lechtrecker's eight year administration as mayor of Patchogue Village was launched not because he had any desire to become involved in politics. But a group of people involved in the Patchogue area prevailed upon him, after a search for a new leader to help solve some of the village's problems, to take the mayor's job. He did, and during his administration much was accomplished. But no matter how much good was done, a daily newspaper's efforts to create the specter of a conflict has tarnished a record of dedication and accomplishment.

Surely those who would use their political positions for personal gain should be called to task for such actions. But facts, not innuendo, should be the basis of that scrutiny.

Those who serve for public good rather than personal gain deserve applause and appreciation, rather than unfair treatment.

And why not?

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Taxpayers must organize

The only thing elected officials understand is pressure. They receive pressure both from small groups with vested interest and large groups out to enrich themselves at the taxpayers' expense. Unfortunately, the taxpayers who pay the bills are fragmented and do not have a single, unified organization to inform them or to speak on their behalf.

For years, Long Island has been known as one of the highest taxed regions in the nation. Although this was true, we also enjoyed one of the highest levels of per capita income which continued to rise rapidly. This all came to a screeching halt in 1988. Our economy slowed down, large increases in wages were a thing of the past. But our politicians did not react, in fact, they continued on their wanton spending spree. School taxes in most districts shot up from 10 to 20 percent. Town taxes rose on an average over 10 percent, only East Hampton and Islip held the line. County taxes went off the wall.

Patrick Halpin, in 1987, ran on a platform that said that Michael LoGrande had not done enough to cut taxes. That he, Halpin, could do better. He promised no new tax increases. He knew what the budget was when he made this promise. He had but barely landed in office and he started to bemoan the fact that he saw financial crisis ahead. This did not stop him, however, from initiating new programs, hiring new personnel and spending money like a drunken sailor.

When he presented his budget he went public, claiming that taxes in Suffolk County would be raised 16 percent. This was as much of a lie as his promise not to raise taxes. When the tax bills went out, property owners who receive their tax bills direct found increases from 100 percent to almost 300 hundred percent in the county portion of their taxes. Those who do not receive their tax bill direct, whose bill goes to a bank or a mortgage company, will find themselves with a huge bill to make up for the tax shortage in their escrow account. These new mortgage payments, we fear, will be beyond the ability of many to carry.

On the state level we had a windfall in the billions just two years ago. This surplus has vanished and Governor Cuomo has proposed a whole host of new taxes and increases in the old taxes. He proposes cuts in revenue sharing with counties and towns, simply transferring the tax burden back on the local taxpayer. Nowhere in his message are there indications of his desire to substantially cut back the ever-growing state government.

Congress has not even settled in and there is serious talk about deficits and raising taxes on everything

from corporate to social security. The people we elect are unable to say "no." They give in to every harebrained demand, spending your money to keep their voters happy, hoping you never connect the two.

There isn't much we can directly do about the federal and the state budgets, as we are only a small part of New York and the United States. But we can surely affect the crazed spending in our school districts, our towns and the county.

We must develop a highly organized taxpayers' organization in the county with an umbrella group in each town and school district. These

organizations must be highly developed and well funded. The sole purpose of their existence will be to cut out the waste, the duplication and the limited programs that too few are enjoying at the expense of many.

The organizations must monitor their governmental agencies on an on-going basis, have representatives at all public meetings and have speakers available who cannot only speak as individuals, but with the clout of the organization. When politicians refuse to act responsibly, they should feel the organized lobbying might of the organization both during their tenure and on Election

Day. The need for an organization of taxpayers is paramount, it can't be put off.

Suffolk Life will gladly champion this organization's causes and is willing to help in its development. We are looking for sound, respected community leaders to join with us. If you feel as we do, that you have been taken advantage of once too often, if you have had enough, write The Taxpayer, c/o of Suffolk Life Newspapers, 1461 Old Country Road, Riverhead, New York 11901, and we will attempt to help organize all those interested in becoming active in the formation of this organization.

And why not?

Is Cuomo in Yo Yo Land?

During our years of battle over the Shoreham nuclear power plant, we had grown fond of Governor Mario Cuomo. He had earned our respect because of his fierce determination to protect the safety of the people of Long Island. But in recent times, we have found some of his actions to be beyond common sense and cannot fathom his reasoning.

Last spring, it appeared that the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) was about to make an offer to take over LILCO, and was on the verge of victory. Cuomo then announced that Vincent Tese had negotiated a settlement on Shoreham. The settlement was an unwieldy, unbelievably expensive, economically crippling proposition that Long Island could not swallow. In making this announcement, Cuomo categorized LIPA and their offer as a joke. From the jaws of victory he snatched defeat.

For the next six months, Long Island was paralyzed because of the controversy that surrounded this ill-conceived, overly-generous offer by the governor to the management of LILCO. Deadlines came, deadlines went. Finally, the last deadline came and the Long Island Albany delegation of the state legislature refused to accept the economic harm that the Cuomo deal would have done

to the area. It appeared that the licensing of Shoreham was imminent and nothing but a miracle would stop it.

Suffolk County had filed a federal racketeering action against LILCO. This RICO civil suit was characterized by Cuomo as unimportant. In fact, he tried time and again to get the county to drop that suit. But the federal jury found that LILCO was, indeed, guilty of racketeering and awarded the county a \$22 million judgement. As the county had been injured, so had all other ratepayers. As a class action with its triple damages, LILCO faces a judgement that may go over \$4 to \$8 billion. A judgement that size would place the company in bankruptcy.

Federal Judge Jack Weinstein offered all parties an opportunity to negotiate a settlement. The possibilities for a settlement are unlimited. They could range from a complete takeover of the company by the Long Island Power Authority in satisfaction of the judgement, bankruptcy of the company by the certification of all ratepayers as a class in the action, to a settlement that might allow the company to remain whole with new management, Shoreham closed, and rates capped at an affordable figure over an unlimited number of years.

Negotiations were being held between the litigants when up pops Cuomo like a yo yo and he states publicly that he feels a \$200 million settlement is the answer. Cuomo is not part of these negotiations, but he is the Governor of the State of New York.

While they are talking about a potential \$4 billion judgement against LILCO, we fail to see where Cuomo's suggestion of a \$200 million settlement has any relevance. It is destructive to the negotiations from the standpoint of the people.

It may very well be a figure that LILCO could live with, particularly if they got the rest of the Cuomo deal. But from the peoples' viewpoint it was a dastardly thing for Cuomo to do. Cuomo has prided himself on being an honest governor, but one has to wonder why he made such a ludicrous statement, one that can only hurt the peoples' side of the negotiations.

From informed sources we hear that the Public Service Commission, which in recent times has been marching to the beat of Cuomo's drum, has been involved in the negotiation process, and has been devising figures that would allow LILCO to survive without pain, pay dividends and escape the impact of a financial stress brought upon themselves by themselves.

We would think that the governor's pride and honor would demand much more of this corporation, one that has been convicted of lying to the state and as a result, cheating the Long Island ratepayers. If Cuomo is not going to be on the side of the people, we believe it would be wise for him to keep his apparent desire to save LILCO to himself, and allow the negotiators to hammer out a settlement that is fair to all, most especially the ratepayers.

And why not?

Congressional offices

Senators

Alfonse M. D'Amato (R)
One Penn Plaza—Suite 1635
New York, N.Y. 10001
212-947-7393

Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D)
733 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017
212-661-5150

464 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-4451

SUFFOLK CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

George Hochbrueckner (D)
3771 Nesconset Highway
Centereach, NY 11720
516-689-6767

1008 Longworth House
Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Thomas J. Downey (D)
4 Udall Road
West Islip, NY 11795
516-661-8777

Room 2232 Rayburn House
Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-3335

Robert J. Mrazek (D)
143 Main Street
Huntington, NY 11743
516-673-6500

Room 306 Cannon House
Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-5956