

1992 brings a new beginning

1991 was a year marked by pain and joy. Joy that the Middle East war was over quickly and with far fewer American casualties than anyone dared hope for. Joy that the economy, although not robust, allowed most to find work and commerce. Pain based on fear that the glass was half empty when it was half full. Pain brought about by the reality that our every want and pleasure cannot be satisfied, and that instantaneous gratification was a thing of the past.

1992 is a new beginning. We believe the bottom has been seen economically and new growth will be slow but meaningful. A number of problems have been brought to the fore-

front that must be addressed. We have painfully learned that a high quality of education is not a product of the money spent on it. Much of the money we have invested in education has been wasted as we turned our schools of learning into social centers. The money we had to invest in the eighties is no longer there. Homeowners cannot afford the tax burden. State aid is no longer available. All educational establishments must return to the basics and costs slashed to the nation's average, which is less than half of what we are currently spending. School boards must be stopped from awarding salary increases that are double and triple those commanded in the outside world.

More police must be placed in the field and fewer police in non-police functions. The cost of law enforcement must be brought back to what the people can afford. A cleansing of the bureaucracy and administration must take place; a multi-tiered system of salaries and benefits implemented.

Like law enforcement and education, welfare, the other major tax absorber, must be reformed and New York brought into parity with the rest of the nation. New York cannot afford to continue to be the mecca for the indigent. Our desire to provide the best for everyone has made us non-competitive. Business and private sector wage-earners are abandoning New

York for more economical places to do business and to live. California, another truly liberal state, with an even more horrendous immigrant problem, spends about half of what we spend on welfare, yet serves twice as many people.

Taxes and the services they fund must be reduced in New York to the nation's average or this island and this state will continue to lose their productive people, leaving less to fund governments' insatiable appetites.

To accomplish these goals, New York must have leadership it can follow. Bad politics must be replaced with good government. Citizens of New York State should be granted an Initiative and Referendum procedure so that the people of the state may petition their government and, if their government fails to enact legislation, have the ability to place it on the ballot for direct action by the voters. I & R allows the citizens to enact laws the politicians do not have the courage to do themselves. Lord knows we have more than our fair share of politicians who lack backbone and courage.

1992 is a new beginning, how meaningful it will be, will be determined by the participation of the people who are affected. Our hope is that all will become more active in the government of their local schools, their towns and the county, as well as their state and the nation.

We pledge to do our part by bringing issues to the forefront and bringing both sides of the argument to your attention.

We wish you a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

And why not?

What wonderful people!

As the last packages carried by volunteer elves left for their destinations in the days before Christmas, the core members of "The Group" sighed in relief. Over 200 kids will not only have their faith restored in Santa Claus, but will be the beneficiaries of the true spirit of Christmas.

In most cases they will have socks and shoes, underwear, shirts, pants and sweaters, as well as warm coats, a few toys to lift the spirits and a certificate for food that will, at least for a few days, ensure there are no hunger pangs.

This year we established as our goal to do twice what we did last year, and we did it, by hook or by crook. A very special thanks to the tireless workers who had to catalogue the needs, shop for the merchandise, and box and wrap the numerous gifts. Deliveries were made right up through

Christmas Eve. Santa's helpers tried to arrive at the houses when the kids weren't home, so when the gifts were distributed they came from their parents and the children never need to know that it was outsiders who lent them a hand. What they never will know, either, is the incredible number of hours the volunteers put in. Some worked virtually every night, Saturdays and Sundays, from before Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve.

The magnitude of this would not have been made possible without the generosity of the contributors. This year, more people gave than ever before. The wonderful community of Suffolk residents sensed the need and gave generously. As The Group does not spend one cent on administrative costs and saves the money that would be required to acknowledge every contribution, please accept this message

in heartfelt appreciation for all of your contributions.

You can be assured that this year's families' needs were absolutely legitimate and, through the prudent shoppers taking advantage of sales and discounts, each dollar spent was multiplied two or threefold. The workers and the contributors came from all walks of life. The Group's effort is pure humanity, man helping man, because each of us knows that "there, but for the grace of God, go I."

It was The Group's pleasure to serve those who needed a hand. Hopefully, it will be the lift toward getting them back on their feet. The joy their children undoubtedly expressed on Christmas morning should be the source of strength and motivation for the parents to carry them through the hard times and to a brighter and happier future.

And why not?

It's time to give it up!

Members of the school board and administrators of the Shoreham-Wading River School District have spent years and thousands upon thousands of dollars in an effort to keep the Shoreham nuclear facility alive. Even at this point in time, with decommissioning soon to begin, the district's "keep Shoreham alive at any cost" philosophy has raised its ugly head again.

The district has launched a new challenge to the takeover of the plant and ultimate decommissioning by the Long Island Power Authority. Their motivation is self-serving, pure and simple. It has nothing to do with energy, or the area's need for electricity, as is now claimed; it has to do with bucks, windfall dollars the district has received in the past and wants to continue to receive in the future. District officials steadfastly refuse to accept the fact the plant is dead. They care little about the fact that every delay just adds to the final cost to the ratepayers.

It's time to give it up! LILCO's ra-

tepayers have already felt the impact of the Shoreham fiasco. Because of the utility's relentless efforts to put the plant on line, despite the lack of a safe evacuation plan and the escalating costs, LILCO's rates are now the highest in the nation. While LILCO made out like a bandit in the terms of the agreement concocted by Governor Mario Cuomo, getting back the bucks they paid for the construction of the plant and for profits as well, the ratepayers have taken it on the chin.

Cuomo's deal includes a "payment in lieu of taxes" phase-out of the tax yield Shoreham pumped into the Shoreham district. Ultimately Shoreham-Wading River is going to have to live without that windfall tax boom, and will have to end the spend, spend, spend habits they enjoyed while the taxes were supporting almost the entire amount of the district budget. The district will have to deal with the financial problems districts everywhere else face. And they'll have to do it without being subsidized by the ratepayers who have faced skyrocketing school taxes of their own.

Yet Shoreham-Wading River district officials continue to beat a dead horse, an action that only costs ratepayers millions of dollars more each and every month. If these officials are so insistent on keeping Shoreham alive because "we need the electricity," we suggest this alternative:

Gut the nuclear components from the plant. Retrofit the containment portion for use as an incinerator. Use garbage as an alternate form of fuel to heat the water to drive the turbines to produce the electricity that can be distributed through the transmission lines already in place.

There comes a time when reality must be faced. And a time when greed must be put aside for the benefit of all the people. Any further efforts to fight for Shoreham's use as a nuclear facility—which does little more than add an additional financial burden on the ratepayers for added interest costs—should stop immediately! If they persist, they should be disqualified from receiving any funds in lieu of taxes.

And why not?



TIME FLIES...

*And now our New Year's greetings are headed your way!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

See

Why you should fear an authority

We recently attended, with an open mind, the Eastern Long Island Businessmen's meeting, to explore the possibility of converting the Grumman air facility at Calverton into a commercial enterprise.

We are in full agreement with ELIB that the economy needs to be stimulated. Grumman is an airport of major proportions that should be utilized in some proper form. Aviation is big business and can give the economy a good boost.

As lifelong residents of Eastern Long Island, we also cherish the quality of life and our heritage. The proposal for creating a cargoport, or even a general aviation airport, does not overly frighten us. What does give us grave concern was the announcement made by the governor that a study would be conducted by a "Long Island Transportation Authority." This statement was made in a taped presentation, and was followed up in an article published by the Long Island Association in its publication entitled "Long Island." Both referred to the governor calling for the study to be done by the "Long Island Transportation Authority." This is frightening, because there is no Long Island Transportation Authority at this point.

An authority must be created by an act of the legislature. Authorities can be very dangerous in the hands of politicians. An authority has the power of eminent domain (condemnation) and supersedes the desires, the wishes and the will of the public. The authority is an entity unto itself, its members answerable to no one.

Under normal circumstances, the governor appoints the members of the authority for a fixed term of office. The members are not elected and, in many cases, do not represent the views of the people they will rule over. They are a form of government without representation.

Authorities are established by the government and usually at the demand of the financial community. The financial community wants authorities in place which can guarantee the repayment of all debts incurred by the authority. The authority raises its revenues to repay its loans by charging fees which it sets the rates on and can raise at will. An authority has the power to ignore, and even contradict, local zoning, planning and the voices of the elected officials.

What is most interesting is the fact that the Long Island Regional Planning Board has been empowered to

conduct a study of the cargoport proposal. It is estimated that study will take close to a year, if not more, to complete. And yet a spokesman from Governor Cuomo's office reported that legislation to create the authority will be filed in Albany early this year. Isn't this putting the cart before the horse? Why create an authority before the study is completed? Unless, of course, the authority is to be the weapon to override any local objections.

As we have stated before, the whole question of what to do with Calverton and how to utilize it to the communities' best advantage should be explored. An independent study should be conducted, not a study by an authority that, by the powers vested in it, can do as it damn well pleases.

The Shoreham fiasco came about because of dishonesty. Shoreham was brought to us by LILCO, a utility that has many of the same powers as an authority. We have all witnessed, and are paying dearly for, this debacle. The public was not asked its opinion. When opinions were given early on, they were ignored.

We believe the same dishonesty is being demonstrated once again. The

concept of an authority should have been brought out by the proponents rather than snuck through the back door. If Calverton is ever going to fly, it is going to have to be through the compromise and cooperation of all involved. The hysteria being raised by the opposition to any growth on Eastern Long Island is foolhardy. They've ignored the fact that the airport is there. It is a federal facility that the community has little say over. Accepting this as a given, they would do best to work within the structure as participants. The proponents, likewise, are off to a rocky start with the concept of an authority. For an authority does not have to listen to the opposition or even take into consideration the opposition's viewpoints. If productive use of the Calverton facility is going to be a reality, the starting point must be honesty and a willingness to listen to the other side.

Calverton is too big an asset to be disregarded. Our quality of life is too precious to be thrown aside needlessly. Let a study take place that takes into consideration all aspects. Do not make the study part of a master plan that has as its base a transportation authority, or the idea will go down in flames before the first page is written.

And why not?

Albany's costly welfare battle

The ad published here was originally run in The Reporter, a Delaware County weekly newspaper. It is symbolic of the battle going on in Albany.

Welfare and social service spending has outpaced all other spending in the State of New York during the last decade. The state has reached its limit in its ability to tax its citizens and businesses. It's time to cut.

Ralph Marino, who controls the New York State Senate, has been locked in battle with Democrat Mario Cuomo and the Democratic assembly leadership. Marino wants to streamline and cutback on welfare expenditures. The Democrats have resisted Marino's efforts and, instead, have insisted that the cutbacks, if they take place, come from local municipal state and school aid.

In last year's budget negotiations, Marino blinked and the Democrats won. They continued to increase spending on welfare, increased taxes and cut back on local aid to schools and towns. The state now faces an over-expenditure of over a billion dollars. The governor will only listen to additional cuts in school and town aid. Marino is insisting too much of the burden has been transferred to the local governments, which then must increase local real estate taxes to make up the difference. Now is the time for the welfare system to be tightened up and streamlined. Until this is done, he won't give in.

We believe that the approach Marino and the Senate Republicans are

taking is right. Under their proposal, children will not be affected. Payments to those covered for Aid to Dependent Children will remain intact. Able-bodied workers who currently are receiving checks will have two choices: get a job or get out of New York State. Why should one segment of our society be allowed to freeload while the other segment must work at least 40 hours, in many cases both husband and wife, and scrimp to make ends meet?

New York State spends more on welfare than any other state. We have an open door policy which allows anyone who emigrates here from another country or another state to immediately apply for and receive benefits. There are supposed to be requirements and tests, but because the system has become so overloaded, applicants are routinely passed through the process without checking or verification. Once in the system, little is done to encourage them to find gainful employment on the books. Many of the recipients, particularly those from foreign countries, once qualified for benefits, work off the books to supplement their welfare grants, and all without paying one cent in taxes.

The abuses are legendary, as are the examples of generation after generation of people within the same family remaining on the dole. Some of the recipients even have the audacity to say they work for welfare.

As our tax dollars become shorter and shorter, our priorities must be

SICK of working 40 hours or more each week just to feed your family?

Would you like to RELAX all day and still have all the benefits of a full time job?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, then you should consider moving to NEW YORK, "The Welfare State."

If you qualify (and only working people do not) you can receive the following:

FREE Housing
FREE Utilities
FREE Food

FREE Medical Insurance (with no limits or deductibles)

FREE Cash (for cigarettes, beer, drugs, etc.)

FREE Transportation
FREE Legal services

This program is not limited to 3 to 6 months like other states. In New York you can collect for life. Some of our families have received benefits 2 or 3 generations.

So if you would like to receive all this without working for a living just call the New York State Department of Social Services.

P.S. NEW YORK DOES NOT HAVE A RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT SO YOU CAN MOVE IN FROM ANOTHER STATE (OR COUNTRY) TODAY!
Paid Advertisement

brought back into focus. All of us with a social conscience want to extend a hand to help, but when the hand becomes a permanent extension and pulls us down, we must let go.

New York State must establish a legal residency requirement. Those who move here should receive no more in benefits during their first year here than they could in the state or the country they came from.

Any able-bodied person over 18 who is capable of working should be denied benefits. Welfare recipients should be expected to participate in the cost of health benefits, based not only upon their need, but their total income. The medical benefits they re-

ceive should not exceed the benefits offered by private plans. Welfare recipients should be deployed to perform the tasks they are capable of in community services.

The Republicans in the senate are arguing for fairness in New York State. We can't agree with them more. We can no longer afford to import users of the system while exporting producers in the system. Cuomo and the Democratic leadership must get this message.

It's up to you, the hard-working middle class, to let them know you are tired of being abused and you can't afford it and won't take it anymore.

And why not?

A plea for fairness and reform

Almost everyone agrees taxes are too high on Long Island. Good citizens, lifelong residents, are being forced to move. The cost of running the school system is too high. Almost every district is spending upwards of \$12,000 on each student. This is more than the cost of a college education for tuition alone.

The cost of education is a direct result of the number of students being educated in ratio to the number of people who are involved in the educational process, and what they are being paid. While school enrollment has decreased, the number of administrators has in-

creased substantially, as has the number of teachers and support personnel.

Not only have the numbers increased, but the salaries we pay them have as well. The average teacher today on Long Island makes over \$50,000 and receives nearly \$30,000 in additional benefits. Although town and county elected officials have heard the anguish of the taxpayers, school boards have not. In many instances, they have continued to settle contracts with 20 to 30 percent increases, triple and quadruple the increases being earned by the taxpayers.

The unions lay unrealistic demands down on the table, and all too often, without even a fight, school boards agree. In situations where the school boards say "no," they reach an impasse and the situation is turned over to PERB. The hearing officers come back with recommendations that almost always coincide with what the unions demand. They do not take into consideration the ability of the community to fund nor the realities of the economy.

This insanity must stop. At the rate we are going, by the year 2000 teachers

will be earning three to four times the average family income of the taxpaying public. The family's income is comprised of both bread winners working 40 hours a week, at least 50 weeks a year.

A recent state comptroller's office audit of the Longwood School District, where the typical teacher (bachelor's degree plus 30 credits) received a 31.5 percent salary increase in two years, from July 1, 1989 to July 1, 1991, and the tax rate went up 49.7 percent in those same two years. The audit report has this to say:

"The Board of Education of the Longwood School District, like other boards of education on Long Island, will be challenged to develop innovative service delivery and increased productivity in order to reduce the rate of expenditure. The alternative is a continuation of the trend of rapidly increasing real property taxes."

The answer may well lie in consolidation of local school districts, whereby the state or the county provides and pays for the basic core education, so that all students throughout the area receive an adequate education in the basics. Then, if the community decides, by vote, to add enhancements, fine. Those enhancements would be paid out of real estate taxes in that community.

Serious consideration should be given also to the establishment of a voucher system for education. This would encourage privatization of both secular and non-secular schools where competition would help control costs and increase the productivity of the students. Private schools today educate students at \$3,000 to \$6,000, half the cost of public education.

Reform can come from within or outside the system. The sooner the better. We can no longer afford to pour money into education unabated. We can no longer afford to accept mediocre results for the investment we are making. It's time for fairness.

And why not?

There is a better way!

The mounting costs of welfare are a major reason why budgets at the county and state levels are growing by leaps and bounds. Financial deficits at each level are putting municipalities, counties and states at the brink of bankruptcy. Suffolk County and New York State are prime examples.

A recent state court decision, which orders housing allowances for welfare recipients raised to \$800, will further complicate that problem. Whatever the merits of that decision, the problems of obtaining suitable housing for welfare recipients is not one that will be better served by pumping more money into the rent structure. It may well be resolved, however, by doing things a different way.

One of the major complaints often voiced about welfare housing is the outlandish rents being offered for substandard housing. A prime example of that was brought to our attention recently by members of a volunteer effort known as The Group, who delivered Christmas presents to families in need. In at least one instance, the recipient family was living in a one-room motel unit. This family, including small children, was cramped into this one room, with no kitchen facilities except, perhaps, a hot plate. While we do not know the specific rents being charged for these facilities, we have absolutely no doubt that it is substantial, far in excess of what should be paid for living conditions of that kind.

The same is true for those welfare recipients who are placed in emergency temporary housing facilities—in most instances, motel units—for which the county is charged exorbitant rental fees. An official from the Social Services department said strict measures are taken to control the number of individuals housed in one room, based on square footage. But if the owner violates that restriction without the department's knowledge, there is little they can do.

Who is being best served with such housing conditions? Certainly not the welfare recipient. Certainly not the taxpayers who wind up footing the bill. The owners of such facilities make out like bandits while the public and the recipients suffer.

There has to be a better way. And there is, but too many do-gooders and liberal activists stand in the way.

Several years ago, we proposed the use of state housing that was being

phased out of active use for the creation of a campus-like housing facility to accommodate welfare recipients. Not only to provide their immediate housing needs, but also to provide rehabilitative assistance designed to take hard core welfare recipients off the rolls. Include a nutritional center, medical clinic, occupational training, day care center, and suitable playground facilities for the children.

Offer such housing to those willing to make a commitment to work themselves back into the mainstream of a productive life. Utilize those at the campus for employment needs there, to fill jobs in the kitchen, the day care center, medical clinic, maintenance of facilities and grounds. Many of these positions could be part of the occupational training program. Residency at the facility should be limited to a specific time frame, time enough to put their lives back together.

There are state facilities where space is available for such a campus-like complex, and as the state phases out more operations, others will be available. Use of such facilities should be considered as a means of resolving the current welfare crisis.

In the past, the proposal drew, and we're sure will draw again, exclamations of horror. "You'll be ghetto-izing" the welfare recipient, was one such view. "You'll stigmatize them" was another. Hogwash! Ghettos are not created by common sense solutions, but by those who insist on the business-as-usual approach. Where are these same people when the recipients are dumped into one-room motel units, jammed together in conditions no one should be forced to endure? Don't food stamps stigmatize those forced to use them?

The current economic conditions have forced many people onto welfare rolls who would rather not be there. They are not those who remain on the rolls forever, virtually one generation after the other; or those who have learned to use the system to its fullest, producing children with abandon and receiving additional welfare funds as reward. For those forced into the welfare structure because of circumstances beyond their control, the system becomes a trap, with little chance of escape. There is no effort to help them overcome the obstacles thrust into their lives.

Another Group volunteer tells of a

father, mother and child forced onto the welfare rolls because the father lost his job. He has no car. He tries to find gainful employment, but must walk to each prospective employment opportunity, severely limiting those opportunities. He put pride aside for family need, but now can't afford a car because of the benefits he receives, and is trapped.

The welfare problem will not be solved by continuing to do things as we have in the past. We must eliminate abuse, put an end to exorbitant housing costs and substandard living conditions. We must establish meaningful work programs. We must make every effort to help people solve their employment problems, help them to become productive members of society. That must become a priority if we are to curb the mounting welfare problem.

In order to accomplish that, however, we must change attitudes. The attitudes of those who expect ongoing assistance rather than emergency help. And the attitudes of those who have for too long perpetuated their own views or empire with their business-as-usual approach.

And why not?

Self-service?

Elected officials are not the most popular people in the minds of the public, and often for good reason. The public has had good reason to wonder, from time to time, if the officials are more interested in serving the public or in self-service. A happening in Islip Town raises that question anew.

The town board has scheduled a public hearing on a Business Improvement District which will have a major impact on the downtown Bay Shore area. Despite a request by one official, Councilwoman Pam Greene, that the hearing be held during evening hours when business people would be more available, such will not be the case. The board has decided to hold the meeting during the day, as usual.

Is this serving the public? Or self-service? Store owners without the benefit of staff will be hard-pressed to close their stores to attend the meeting. Don't they count? Shouldn't they have an opportunity to provide input on a proposal that could affect their operations?

The same goes for residents who have to work during the day and seldom have an opportunity to participate in public hearings of importance. If, however, the town board scheduled such hearings during evening hours, in the area impacted by the proposals which are the subject of

the hearing, increased attendance might well result.

The Suffolk County Legislature could also be more responsive to serving the public. The legislature continues to schedule public hearings during regular meetings. When those hearings deal with a controversial subject, large crowds turn out. As a result, the legislature meetings drag out into the early hours of the morning, many people get fed up and leave, and the room is generally empty when the legislators get around to voting on agenda items. Why not a separate meeting for public hearings?

Officials are very quick to counter such proposals with the comment "We held night meetings years ago and nobody came." That could well be true. But with the escalating costs of government, the skyrocketing tax rates, and an increase in the number of people who are beginning to sound their concerns, this is a new era.

Good government serves the people first. It may not be convenient for the public officials to attend night meetings, but they asked for the job and they should do it. For the people, not their own convenience.

And why not?

Bare walls and halls of shame

Despite the crunch of the current economic times, the cutbacks in state aid revenues which have school districts laboring to cut staff and preserve programs while curbing spending, and escalating tax rates which have the public on the brink of bankruptcy, teachers in the Sachem School District have launched a job action in an effort to reinforce their demands for a salary increase.

Bulletin boards and hallways are devoid of displays, posters, or the usual presentation of the creations of children that are commonplace in school facilities. Apparently the effort of putting up such displays is being withheld by some teachers, not all, as a means of punishing the district officials who are not

bending over backwards to teachers' demands for their desired increase in salaries. The logic of punishing the children, and that's exactly what's happening, makes one wonder about the so-called dedication of those teachers participating in this job action. Dedication to what? the children? or their own selfish motives?

In our view, the bare walls in the Sachem schools stand as Halls of Shame! Shame on those who bring the children into their quest for personal gain. Shame on those who, according to some reports, have vandalized the cars of teachers not participating in this self-serving job action. There is no excuse for this—not the "frustration" that has been

voiced as the cause of the problem by a teachers' union official; not the pressure of striving to make ends meet, as some teachers claim.

Sachem teachers are not underpaid. In fact, 617 of the district's teachers are at the top of the salary scale. Teachers in the Sachem district earn from \$26,362 at Step 1 to \$63,137 at Step 19 for the 180 days they work, and they receive benefits—free hospitalization, dental, eyeglasses, and other financial rewards—that far surpass those enjoyed by the taxpayers they apparently care little about.

Negotiations started with the district proposing a salary freeze at the current level, while the teachers demanded 7.5

percent each year for three years, an increased salary step and other improvements. When negotiations stalled, an impasse was declared and a fact-finder was named to resolve the dispute. The fact-finder made the following recommendations: The parties should execute a two-year agreement. From July 1 to December 31 in each of those years, a general wage freeze should be applied. From January 1 to June 30 in each of those two years, a four percent general wage increase across the schedule should become effective. And, an additional salary step should be offered at the high end of the schedule. Meanwhile, normal increment step increases would go into effect on July 1 of each of the two years. These steps add approximately 1.5 percent to the salary.

The board has agreed to accept these recommendations. The teachers' union has not, and is insisting on more.

The plain, pure, simple fact of the matter is the taxpayers cannot afford increased taxes. The majority of the people in this district—and others throughout the county—do not earn anywhere near the salary the teachers do. And yet they are being asked, endlessly, to shell out more and more to pay for high salaries, and benefits that most can't afford for their own families.

This promises to be a long, trying year of contract negotiations in many school districts, as well as in county government. It is our hope that the employee representatives in these negotiations act in a more professional manner than have some of the teachers in Sachem. Teach the kids, don't use them for selfish motives! Do the job you are paid to do, or find another.

The people are hurting too much to put up with much more of this nonsense. In Sachem, residents who might otherwise have been supportive of the teachers have been turned off. Many are very, very angry, and with good reason. We've had long periods of officials at all levels caving in to pressure. The pressure now is going to come from the people. Enough is enough!

And why not?

Beaches and museums?

A consolidation of public and private groups and businesses into a "partnership" designed to ease the economic problems of the area met last week. If the initial reports of that gathering are accurate, we can offer little hope that the effort will reap much success.

Our pessimism is fueled by the fact the major discussion at that first gathering dealt with a proposed promotional campaign to focus on the positive aspects of the area, with stories and pictures of the beaches, museums, university campuses, the high tech companies and work force. The campaign would steer away from the negative factors which impact the area, the high energy rates, the soaring taxes, the lack of adequate public and rail transportation, and traffic-snarled roadways.

As a catalyst for the campaign, Long Island Lighting Company Chairman William Catacosinos announced LILCO would offer \$1 for every \$2 contributed to the \$2.5 million campaign by a private organization. He conceded later that the ratepayers

would foot some of the bill for some of this contribution.

According to Catacosinos, LILCO has been watching "with increasing despair" the economic decline in the area. He noted that many companies want to move out of New York City, declaring, according to reports, "but we don't want them to move to New Jersey or Connecticut or Virginia. We want them to come to Long Island."

One of the major factors of the economic crunch is the high cost of energy. What bottom-line oriented company is going to come to Long Island, where the cost of electricity is the highest in the nation? Long Island has lost more than 65,000 jobs since 1989 because of the high cost of doing business here. The companies that have left, and those still planning to move, certainly know about our beaches and museums. But they also know, all too well, about the energy costs, the taxes, the garbage disposal problems, the stifling laws that make this less than a welcome place in which to operate.

However, as long as the businesses

use their own dollars for their marketing campaign, it's their business. When LILCO expects ratepayers to foot some of the bill—how much is not certain—that's another matter. The rates are already too high. And ratepayers are already paying far too much for LILCO's advertising efforts to restore its tarnished image, an image which was destroyed by the callous attitude and wasteful spending that went into the Shoreham fiasco.

If LILCO stockholders want to use their own money, fine. Or, if Catacosinos, who recently received a pay increase which hikes his annual salary to almost \$500,000 per year, not counting "golden parachutes" and other perks, wants to use his own dollars, so be it. But not one penny of ratepayers' dollars should be earmarked for this questionable campaign. Ratepayers need relief. They are paying exorbitant energy costs not only for their homes, but also in higher taxes for all levels of government, schools, and prices caused by these high rates. Enough is enough!

And why not?

Point of view

Welfare system reforms are needed

By Assemblyman John L. Behan
Second Assembly District

State lawmakers were treated to another State of the State message from Governor Cuomo recently, except this year's speech was hardly a prize. The event did carry with it the customary pomp and circumstance, but the governor's speech lacked its usual rhetorical eloquence.

The governor spoke in a dozen different directions, took every opportunity to bait his adversaries with blatantly partisan comments, and contradicted himself more often than not.

One specific comment that stands out in my mind is when the governor purported that "We lead the nation in welfare reform." And I must say I agree with a college professor's reaction to the governor's comment: "If he believes that, he belongs in one of the institutions, if any are left open."

The governor's contention that this state has been any kind of leader in reforming welfare is not only blatantly untrue, but it highlights more than ever his inability to admit his faulty fiscal practices which have led us to financial disaster—number one being overspending on welfare and Medicaid costs.

This state has failed miserably at reforming our welfare system, which is overrun with fraud and mismanagement. We spend more on welfare and Medicaid expenditures than any other state in the nation, including those states, like California, that serve more recipients.

In 1983, when Cuomo took office, health and social services spending totaled \$9.8 billion. By 1991, spending reached \$19.8 billion, a 100 percent increase during a period of only 47 percent inflation. In fact, during the last two years alone, social service program spending has increased \$5.6 billion, representing 82 percent of all new spending.

The fact is the governor and other Democrats in this state have rejected attempts by Assembly and Senate Republicans to cut back on welfare, by calling it a move against the poor. What a ridiculous notion, since the truly needy would be better served with a streamlined and more efficient system.

And while welfare and Medicaid costs continue to reach new records and remain the major cause of "unanticipated expenditures," which the governor blames for the deficit, he continues to dismiss fraud as a major problem within the system.

Reports earlier this year of state and city Medicaid and welfare scams exposed nearly \$87 million in fraudulent claims and overpayments. I truly believe those findings are just the tip of the iceberg.

It is difficult to understand, then, that a man who boldly proclaims we lead the nation in welfare reform, was quoted just a week earlier as saying, "Of course fraud is a problem. Is it the major problem? No."

A reasonable and effective welfare reform plan remains one of the top priorities of the legislature and I continue to support measures that would require a small co-payment for certain recipients, a limit on benefits for able-bodied, single adults, and the reinstatement of a Welfare Inspector General to investigate and eliminate abuse of the system, among other things.

This state is certainly not a leader in welfare reform, but we could get on the right track if these initiatives were enacted, and if the governor would finally recognize what everyone else has known for some time—that wasteful welfare spending is bankrupting this state.

We have met the enemy

The comic character, Pogo, is famous for saying, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

The economy in the United States is strong, but not vibrant. Unemployment is up. There is tremendous discussion and debate over the quantity of products we are importing and the quality of American workmanship.

One of Japan's politicians proved that he has an American disease called "hoof and mouth" when he stated that American workers are lazy and don't want to compete. There probably has not been a bomb dropped with as much impact by the Japanese since Pearl Harbor.

The vast majority of American workers are productive. Most American businesses are competitive. Sure, we have our share of goof-offs, and there are American products that could be better.

America's problem is not wholly the quality of American goods. It is the cost of our goods in comparison to those that are imported. The buying decision is determined by you and I. When we stand in front of a rack of clothes and one jacket is \$99, another is \$299, they both look the same, feel the same, and apparently are made the same, we both know what we are going to do. We are going to buy the \$99 jacket regardless of whether it was made on Seventh Avenue in New York City, or Seventh Avenue in Taiwan.

When we go to an automobile dealer, it is even more confusing. Today, American-built cars are as good, if not better, than those built in Europe and Japan. The cars are a composite of parts that come from all over the world. The manufacturer may be in the United States or in a foreign country, but chances are it may be an American car that is manufactured overseas or a Japanese car that is manufactured right here in the United States. What makes it American? What makes it foreign?

Our economy today is a world economy. Markets are no longer domestic or foreign. Manufacturers and businesses have products assembled where they can be assembled most economically. They must, for we as consumers demand the

lowest prices. Although we are on an international economic standard as far as competition and price, the playing field is not level.

Wage scales are different in each country. Labor and environmental regulations are worlds apart. Many Asiatic, and particularly developing third world countries, pay no heed to the environment and operate without costly restrictions that have been imposed upon American industry.

Benefits and perks that can add upwards of 50 percent to the cost of labor are nonexistent in great segments of the international workforce. A few years back we read that the cost of benefits alone added \$6,000 to the cost of an American car. If this information was correct and foreign automobile makers did not suffer under the same liability, it is no wonder that their cars can be priced substantially more competitively than American cars.

All of us, quite righteously but selfishly, demand the best for ourselves without giving a thought to what the cost adds to the final product. When the United States was a contained market and all manufacturing or businesses within a given product line faced similar type costs, whether they were for material, labor or fringes, our end products were competitive. But when products are manufactured in foreign countries that are free of the costly restrictions and are assembled by labor that is not compensated by our standards, their products are going to be more competitive, and as long as we, as the ultimate consumer, choose to buy the better value, the market for American goods will dissipate.

We as consumers have the ultimate answer and that is to buy American products and shun foreign goods. Will we do it? I doubt it. We have already spoken with our pocketbooks. Given a choice of comparable products we will buy the most economical, regardless of where it is made.

To change this situation, American management must develop the ways and means to be able to build more economically, so that our products can be priced more competitively. In many in-

dustries, it will mean major retooling and automation. It may mean that we will have to cut back on some of the fringes workers have come to expect. Non-productive work rules will have to be eliminated. Overzealous regulations that are not cost justifiable, eliminated. New niches in the world economy, that we can do better and more economically, will have to be sought out. Artificial trade barriers and protectionism will not work in the nineties.

We are a world economy and we better become used to competing in it. It's time to trade in our "me-ism," what's in it for me, and start looking at the global aspects of our self-gratification. If we want to have jobs, the end product we produce must be competitive with those that are produced in En-

gland, Africa or Japan.

There are only two factors consumers are going to weigh in the end, whether they are American or foreign: quality and price. If America's management fails to understand this, and workers can't be convinced that the demands can't be weighed against the company down the street but against the country and its workforce overseas, our businesses will close and jobs will be lost.

We believe America's businesses and its workforce are up to the challenge. Once we all understand, and we are learning this lesson very well, that the need to compete is universal, we will.

And why not?

Part 2: Bare walls

We were wrong! In an editorial last week entitled "Bare walls and halls of shame," concerning Sachem School District teachers, we said the teachers receive free hospitalization, eyeglasses and dental benefits. This was in error. The district pays 92 percent of the costs of the medical and dental insurance plans. The teachers pay the remaining 8 percent, a district spokesperson reports. Eyeglass coverage is included in the dental program.

This was brought to our attention in a number of calls from angry teachers who felt our criticism about a job action--refusal by some Sachem teachers, not all, to participate in putting up bulletin board displays, which generally focus on the efforts of students--was not "helping negotiations." They complained their salaries are not as high as those in other districts. One said district taxpayers faced only a 4.5 percent tax increase, and if the increase had been 7 or 8 percent there would be enough money for increased teacher salaries.

But the words of one incensed individual deserve further comment. She has "dedicated 27 years of my life to teaching kids." After all that time, she

exclaimed, and all the education she had to secure, the reward she gets for all that dedication is \$50,000 a year. She did not mention benefits received. In Sachem, according to a factfinders report, the average teacher's salary is \$60,000, and benefits cost the taxpayers another \$13,000 per year. That, she declared, is not suitable compensation for her dedicated service.

Dedication? If we're going to talk about dedication, think of that word the next time you are snug and warm in your bed while a frigid winter wind howls outside, with snow falling. Suddenly, at 3 a.m., a fire alarm sounds. You snuggle deeper into your warm bed.

But somewhere in the community there are those who jump out of that warm bed, put on some clothes, dash out into the frigid night.

They rush to the firehouse, or to the ambulance headquarters. Someone is in need of help and they are responding. And they don't get \$50,000 a year. In fact, they don't get one penny. They are volunteers.

Now that's dedication!
And why not?

Tell the truth, governor!

Governor Mario Cuomo announced the 1992-1993 budget this past week. A headline read, "\$30 billion budget revealed." Whoa, wait a second! I recall last year's budget was over \$50 billion. How did Mario Cuomo suddenly lose \$20 billion? Turns out, Mario, by sleight of hand, had eliminated federal aid and some other sources of revenue to make it appear the state budget was less than it was.

There's a good reason why the Guv tried this smoke and mirrors scheme. His proposed budget for 1992-1993 is six percent higher than his 1991-1992 budget, and, in total, 14 percent higher than his 1990-1991 budget. The good governor of New York State is proposing to spend \$8 billion more than he spent three years ago.

We have all suffered under Cuomo's voodoo economics. We have heard him loudly cry out in anguish about layoffs, furloughs, cuts in programs, and particularly, cuts in state aid to local municipalities. During the last three years,

Cuomo has cut aid to Long Island school districts, our county and town governments by over half a billion dollars. In making these cuts, he created the illusion--and that is all it was, an illusion--that the state was cutting back on its spending. In reality, Cuomo has increased the state's spending by nearly 14 percent. This, of course, comes from increased taxes that make it that much harder for businesses to compete and for citizens to live in this state.

Not only have we had to pay the increases in state taxes through outright taxation and user fees, as well as new taxes on services that we were not taxed on before, but we have had to pay increases in real estate taxes to make up for the cuts our local governments suffered under Cuomo's uneven hand.

Cuomo has spent money recklessly on welfare and Medicaid. As we pointed out just a few, short weeks ago, you can walk into New York State without a penny in your pocket and immediately go on welfare. If you take advantage of

all the welfare programs available, it is calculated that you will have the equivalent of a \$25,000 income. Why bother to work in Cuomo's welfare state?

As more and more welfare recipients are moving into our communities, productive, taxpaying residents and businesses are fleeing. Businesses can't be competitive and workers do not have enough left over after their tax burden has been extracted to live comfortably.

As more producers leave and more consumers come in, the need for additional revenues increases on the state level. This, in turn, is a vicious circle which forces more producers to leave. This is pure voodoo economics, and it has bankrupted New York State. Look at it practically, what do you, a hard-working Suffolk County resident, have to show for the increased taxes you have paid over Cuomo's years in office that you did not have before?

During the last two years, the New York State Senate, led by Ralph Marino, has fought a long, hard battle to stop

Cuomo. Most people did not understand what was going on. The governor, on one hand, was painting a picture of slashes and cutbacks while, in reality, increasing spending. The Republicans, led by Marino, tried to get this message across to the public, but the liberal media kept crying about the amount of time it was taking to pass the budget.

During the last two years, Marino gave in, and in the end, allowed the governor to increase spending, increase taxes and cut back on local aid. This year, Marino and the Senate must not make the mistake they have made in the past. They should send Cuomo's budget back to the Hill with very explicit instructions to cut spending by at least 10 percent, which would only reduce the budget to the 1990-1991 level. Under no circumstances should the Senate, which represents the suburbs, allow any additional increase in spending.

It's time to declare war, or there won't be any taxpayers left to pay taxes.
And why not?