

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Please Renew Today

For thirty-seven years, I have written editorials covering almost every aspect of Suffolk County life. Often, I stick my neck out, taking up causes that are not yet popular but need to be addressed.

Over my life, I have had thousands of people who have thanked me for my efforts on their behalf. It is a pleasure to be of service to my fellow residents and to make a contribution in trying to make Suffolk County a better place for all of us to live.

Writing editorials is partly fun, but mostly a lot of hard work. Before a word is put down in print, research is done and much thought goes into those words.

If you have benefited from, have been stimulated by, or even perhaps angered by my words, I ask you to do a favor for me. On the front cover of today's paper is a subscription renewal form. Please fill it out and send it back.

When you send in the form, we request that you voluntarily pay for the paper. I am asking you to contribute \$15 for the year. If you cannot afford this or choose not to pay for your subscription, that's okay, but I still request that you send in the form anyway, indicating that you want the paper to come to your home.

It is very important for me to know that you support Suffolk Life. My entire staff does its darndest to bring you the best paper possible within our resources. The reporters cover the government, from school board to the county. The paper covers every aspect of your quality of life, the things that you and your organizations are

doing.

We are only limited by the amount of space that we have. Each paid subscription buys more paper so more news can be in the paper. In a sense, Suffolk Life is a partnership between our staff, our readers and our advertisers.

We are the communication vehicle of Suffolk County. Suffolk Life is found in every home. It is delivered by the U.S. Post Office for which we pay dearly. Our postal bill each year is over \$3 million. Your paid subscription helps offset some of this cost.

We understand there are a number of people who regularly read Suffolk Life but cannot afford to contribute the \$15. We do not want them to be without the paper. To ensure that you will continue to receive it, you only have to indicate on the form that you want the paper.

As an added bonus this year, all subscription renewals, paid or free, will be entered into four contests. During the first three weeks of January, we will award one lucky subscriber a weekend for two at the Roseland Ranch Resort. Accommodations, meals and all activities are included.

After all January renewals are in, we will hold a contest for which we will award \$1,997 in cash. To be eligible to win, you only have to clip the form on the front page and send it to Suffolk Life Subscription Contest, P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

Please send in your renewal form today. Thank you.

And why not?

Borrowing For Light Bulbs

During the past few years, a deeply disturbing practice has developed in the government. We call it borrowing for light bulbs.

School districts, through the state government, issue long-term bonds and then spend them on everyday operations. They finance light bulbs that will burn out within a year's time with bonds that run from five to thirty years.

This is a fiscally reckless maneuver. Elected officials will spend money on everyday expenses that are renewable by their nature and our children and their children go into debt to repay them. This practice must be stopped.

Legislation should be passed at the town, county and state levels limiting bonding to the expected term the goods or services will live. Any procurement that has a life span of under five years should be funded through the operating budget and today's taxes.

Bonds are not cheap. They require very expensive lawyer and investment counselor fees. They are generally paid directly out of the monies borrowed, thus reducing the purchasing power of the borrowed money. Like a mortgage, interest payments double after twenty years and triple on thirty-year indentures.

What we buy today with bonds will cost us two to three times that amount when financed over the life of those bonds.

Schools, most notably, put off general maintenance. The districts then go to the

taxpayers and say the roofs are leaking and need to be replaced. The argument is made that the roofs need to be replaced because they have suffered from benign neglect, but continual maintenance is often a fraction of the cost of replacement.

We recently learned that the Town of Riverhead bonded out the purchase of a tractor for thirty years. The tractor will probably be in the scrape heap by year fifteen, yet the children of Riverhead will be paying for that tractor for an additional fifteen years.

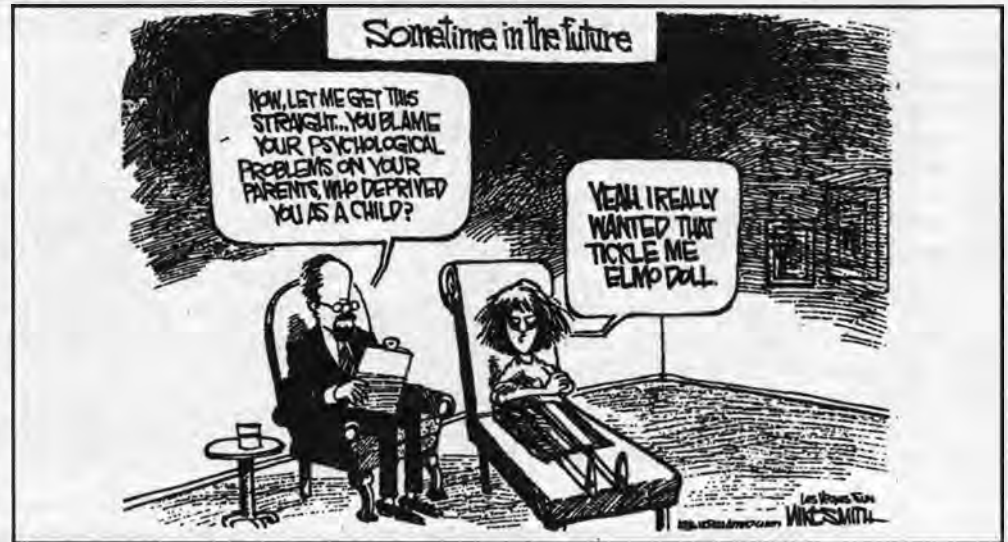
Computer systems are obsolete as they are being installed, yet some municipalities will bond out these purchases from fifteen to twenty years. The municipalities know full well that the software and even the hardware will be replaced within five years.

Most residents do not follow their government that carefully. They trust their elected officials to do what is right. Unfortunately, elected officials have a tendency to take the easy way out. They do what is expedient today and let someone else worry about dealing with the consequences tomorrow.

Just as we have placed caps on our budgets and taxes, we must examine how our municipalities are bonding and place caps on what can be bonded and for how long.

This should be a top priority for every government entity.

And why not?



Staff Legislative 'Must Do's'

Last fall, during our political interviews, our Long Island delegation of state representatives said that they had not addressed some Long Island issues in 1996 because they had not been asked to do so.

We hope those legislators will consider this as a formal request as they go back into session for 1997. In addition to this appeal by Suffolk Life, we would hope our county executive and the Suffolk County Legislature will formally write to Governor Pataki, Assembly Majority Leader Silver and Senate Majority Leader Bruno, requesting action:

Casino Gambling

The New York State Legislature will take up the issue of allowing localities to vote on the question of whether casino gambling should be allowed in their communities.

Last year, the legislature passed a similar bill, but restricted it to counties above New York City. New York City was not considered because its leaders asked to be excluded.

According to the state legislature, Long Island was excluded because no one asked to be included. Asking for voters to be given the choice is not tantamount to supporting casino gambling. This issue should be decided by the voters within each community.

If upstate residents are being given an opportunity to vote on this issue, so should downstate residents, particularly those of us on Long Island. It is a local initiative to be decided by local people. We are part of New York State and we should have no fewer liberties than our fellow upstate residents. It's up to the delegation to make sure we are given an opportunity to vote.

Funding the LIE

The Long Island Expressway is part of the interstate system. It is a New York State road. Albany and the state government have failed to either use state troopers to patrol this road or reimburse Suffolk County government, which is doing the job for the state.

The current cost to Suffolk County government to patrol the Long Island Expressway is \$7 million per year. Last year, the county legislature gave the state

an ultimatum to provide troopers on the LIE. Initially, the county legislature gave a date in July. It then backed off and gave a date in October. The county legislature flip-flopped again and rescinded the entire motion. You might wonder why.

The PBA is a strong, powerful, political force. The Suffolk County PBA considers the Long Island Expressway its turf. It had been suggested that if the troopers were brought onto the LIE, the county police could be transferred to the neighborhoods where they could address local crime. There wouldn't be any loss of jobs. There would not be any direct county tax savings either, but we would get twice the police protection. The PBA fought this tooth and nail.

Still, there appears to be a compromise.

The state provides police services on all major upstate highways. In many areas, troopers are the only police presence. Some small, local villages and towns don't even maintain their own police force.

It is impossible for the state to provide that service to Suffolk County, but here is the compromise: The state is reimbursing Westchester County for the county patrolling the state highways within their jurisdiction. The precedent is there.

State legislators indicated they had not been asked to put the money into the budget to fund this. They claimed that if they were asked by the county executive, they would include that money in this year's budget. We expect the county executive to make this request and we expect our state legislators not only to put the money into the budget, but to fight for it. This is a win-win situation for the people of Suffolk County.

Tenure Reform

The last item that almost all legislators agreed to is a serious look at tenure reform. To establish a method of accountability for superintendents, principals and teachers.

If not tenure reform, an expedient procedure for reviewing and removing teachers who are not meeting minimum standards. This will take cooperation from both sides of the aisle. We expect cooperation and action.

And why not?

WILLMOTT & WHY NOTS

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Show Some Fortitude

State, county and local officials, again, are focusing on only a small portion of the problem that overassessment has created. Any deal of any kind that involves LILCO should include either giving the entire \$1.1 billion won in recent certiorari cases back to the ratepayers where it belongs or simply eliminating it. Disposing of the company, either through complete or partial purchase or merger, will not address that issue.

In their blind effort to rid Long Island of its largest and most offensively mismanaged monopoly, our elected officials once again appear to be demonstrating a strange determination to be fair to LILCO's stockholders.

This determination has been twofaced at best. For almost two decades, our elected officials have consistently jumped up and down like jackrabbits during election campaigns demanding that LILCO be brought to task. Yet, once they are in office, these same representatives have allowed their bureaucratic staffers to bend over backwards to catch the scraps thrown from Catacosinos' corporate table as he manipulated state, county and local policies to benefit LILCO instead of the public.

It is with this same disdain that these elected officials now debate the court-ordered repayment of the \$1.1 billion. Brookhaven Town allowed the overassessment of Shoreham and county officials did nothing to dissuade them from that overassessment.

State and county officials have also become confused in the discussion of whether to completely or partially disenfranchise LILCO. And all of a sudden, a similar confusion rages after Brooklyn Union Gas (BUG) and LILCO jointly announced that BUG is willing to purchase LILCO for Catacosinos' price of \$24 a share—a price it would not pay at any time over the past 15 years while it has been attempting a LILCO buyout.

Now everyone appears to be focusing on whether such a buyout would benefit the stockholders of both utility companies. "It is a win-win situation," they say...

Quite frankly, the last thing public officials should be concerned with is the welfare of LILCO or its stockholders. More than a decade ago, the residents of this

county adamantly declared that they would not tolerate a nuclear plant in Shoreham or anywhere else in Suffolk. But LILCO, with assistance from the state and federal bureaucrats, insisted on investing the stockholders' money in a pipe dream. Despite any deal the previous governor gave to LILCO, the residents of Long Island (LILCO's ratepayers) should not be held accountable in any manner for the lack of foresight demonstrated by this electric utility's belligerence.

The primary goal of the current governor, state legislature, county executive, county legislature and elected officials in the 10 towns of Suffolk County should be to protect their constituents—the ratepayers who have been taken advantage of by mismanagement and arrogant leadership at LILCO and in government.

These elected officials must have the courage to stand up to Catacosinos and tell him "No more!" They must demonstrate the fortitude given them by the public's trust and demand that the state invoke its legal rights under Eminent Domain to condemn LILCO's distribution system for the good of Long Island's taxpayers.

If the state owns the distribution lines, the price of electricity on Long Island will be in state control. The public's control of the distribution lines would be further enhanced because LILCO would become just another electric supplier, which would promote strong competition by encouraging other suppliers into the area.

But regardless of the deal, any buyout or merger for LILCO should automatically include eliminating the \$1.1 billion overassessment claim and should involve returning that money directly to the ratepayers.

Such a deal should also include a much greater electric rate reduction than the 10% reduction proposed in the LIPA takeover of LILCO. Ratepayers on Long Island have been paying 17 cents per kilowatt hour while ratepayers in areas served by other electric utilities, such as Florida Power, have been paying less than 10 cents per kilowatt hour—that would be close to a 50% rate reduction. That is the only deal that state, LIPA and county officials should be willing to settle for.

And why not?

Viable Alternative

With college tuition and housing running the average student from \$10,000 to \$36,000, Suffolk County Community College offers the residents of Suffolk County a strong alternative to leaving the area in order to obtain a sound education.

In the past, community colleges, for a variety of reasons, have been considered an extension of high school. But today, at less than \$100 a credit, SCCC offers myriad courses on three separate campuses. Those courses range from business law to the humanities, computer technology, communications, fine arts, science and engineering, early childhood education, nursing, and criminal justice.

Reading through a recent survey offers proof that SCCC is an affordable academic leader, producing numerous Academic All-Americans, and boasts a staff of 450 full-time faculty with 1,000 adjunct professors.

SCCC can be the beginning point of an academic career or it can be used to round one off, to obtain additional knowledge after receiving a degree.

Your county taxes help underwrite the programs provided by SCCC, and it is good to see that money being spent to benefit our residents.

And why not?



You Did It

We would like to personally thank over 1,500 people who took part in The Group's effort for Christmas this year. Because of your generosity, your volunteerism, over 250 kids had Christmas. A Christmas that they did not expect or believe was possible.

As The Group does not spend any money on administrative costs, we do not send out an acknowledgement of contributions. This column is the only personal thanks you will receive. You can rest assured, however, that on Christmas morning, these children and their parents received joy beyond belief.

These children's lives had been turned topsy-turvy because of family tragedies. Their parents, under normal circumstances in years past, had been able to provide for them. But this year, they faced a glum Christmas.

Because of your generosity, they experienced their greatest Christmas ever. The best part of it was that it was all done anonymously and their parents could still hold their heads up with pride.

A million thanks to you for making Christmas 1996 the greatest ever for the kids we serve.

And why not?

Clinton is First

President Clinton has something no other president ever had and every president needed, the line item veto. Instead of having to accept a budget as a whole, the president will be able to take a pen to the budget and eliminate waste, fat and pork.

The line item veto, the result of Gingrich's Contract With America, will go a long way to cutting down on the size of the bureaucracy and the waste of your money. If the budget contains funding for studying the sex life of the tsetse fly or a federal museum for Hoboken, New Jersey, programs that clearly waste the taxpayers' money, the president can eliminate them.

In the past, budgets have been filled with pork that was the result of congressmen scratching each others' backs. "You vote for my project, I'll vote for yours." It does not make any difference how much of our taxpayers' money was being wasted.

We were disappointed to see that New York State Senator Daniel Moynihan has joined with five of his colleagues in a federal lawsuit to have this line item veto law thrown out on the grounds that it is unconstitutional.

Moynihan was quoted in the press as saying, "it will change my voting. There are things that members of congress very much want. To get them now, they deal with fellow legislators. In the future [because of the line item veto] they will have to negotiate with the president."

This is exactly why the line item veto was enacted.

Once a congressman had cut a deal, no matter how ridiculous it was, it was part of the budget and the president had to sign it into law or the whole budget went down.

We well remember President Reagan, on national television, showing the 20-inch-high budget filled with a lot of garbage, pleading for a line item veto.

It does not make any difference whether the president is Republican or Democrat, the buck stops with the president and the line item veto gives him the power to say no.

We hope and anticipate the federal court will throw out the congressional suit as frivolous.

And why not?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Death Has No Plea Bargain

To the editor:

My brother Gary's car broke down in the Riverside area of Flanders. He pulled into the driveway at 190 Old Quogue Road unaware of it being the address of a known crack cocaine dealer. He managed to make several calls to his family but they were unable to respond.

Gary went back to his car trying to find some resolution of his predicament. A young black man named John McGhee eyed his BMW parked in the driveway. McGhee, seeking revenge for the summertime assault on Shane Daniels at club Marakesh in West Hampton Beach, decided to make his own racial statement to the world. He went up to my brother, put a .357 magnum to his head and ended his life.

McGhee, the alleged assailant, will probably be able to plea bargain his case. My brother should have had the same consideration. He should have been able to plea bargain for his life.

Alan T. Youngman

Editor's note: McGhee is being held without bail on two counts of second-degree murder. He is scheduled to appear in court again on January 24.

Change the Batteries

Dear Editor:

Regarding the photographs on Page 13 of the Holbrook/Bohemia Suffolk Life (December 4). I always change the batteries in my smoke detectors when I change my clocks from standard to daylight savings in April and from daylight savings to standard time in October. "Change clocks?--change batteries!"

Michael McGrath
Las Vegas

Let's Do Something

Dear Mr. Willmott:

This is an open letter to the Suffolk County Legislature: I'm thoroughly disgusted with the members of our legislature who gave themselves a raise.

Those of us who are on small fixed incomes do not get raises. Most of us are middle income workers or retirees.

We can't afford these constant increases in our taxes. You are completely insensitive to those who elected you and we will remember come next election day.

Have you ever noticed the number of "for sale" signs around Riverhead? Mine is one of them. My taxes went up \$700 since last year. I can't afford to live here any longer.

Please, won't everyone of you who reads this letter write to Donald Blydenburg and complain? Or are you just going to sit and "take it" and do nothing?

Katherine Pugh
Riverhead

Now Isn't the Time

Dear Editor:

This is in response to the pay raises voted by the Brookhaven Town Board and the county proposals for pay raises. First, let me say that any one who takes on the job of elected official knows it has its drawbacks. When you run for office--be it town, county, or state--you work for the people. You must place your best interests behind you and place the people of your district first.

Now we are at a time when government is "downsizing" and people are getting laid off. No more is there the so-called "stable job." At this juncture, I would not recommend that any elected official be in support of a pay increase. Remember, at election time, you have to go to the voters and say "I downsized government by laying off so many people, but I also got my pay raise." That doesn't sit well with voters.

As to the issue of justifying the pay raise because my business is hurting by my attending this town or county meeting, there are many of us who attend many civic meetings--as well as town meetings and meetings at the county legislature--to get our issues heard, and at our own expense and time. People get involved to help improve, and bring change to, their communities and not to make money. When I attend a meeting and meet my neighbors, I learn more about my community. When a neighbor reaches out to me for any kind of assistance, I will try my best to help get the problem resolved. I do this without getting any money. I do this for the community. This should be the incentive for our elected officials. To serve the people, for the people, and by the people.

Michael Carl Tanner
Mastic Beach

Support Clean Water

Dear Mr. Willmott:

This is an open letter to Hazel O'Leary, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy.

Dear Secretary O'Leary:

The residents of Manorville have expressed their concerns about the threat posed to their water supply by the chemical discharge emanat-

WILLMOTT'S & WHY NOTS

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Governmental Short Circuit

There are a lot of reasons why AMP, Inc. (formerly Photo Circuits) of Aquebogue informed its 450 employees last week that it would be closing its doors. The predominant reasons given publicly are delivery problems, a weak market for electronic circuit boards, the high cost of LILCO services and Long Island's "expensive" work force.

Much of this is out of the control of the average worker at the Aquebogue plant, which was one of Riverhead Town's larger employers. But in some private conversations, we are told, if Riverhead officials had been paying attention, they could have done something to prevent the disastrous loss of so many jobs.

We are told that AMP managers petitioned the town to allow the company to revamp its delivery docks and other building changes to improve on-site conditions. These changes were to have made production more efficient and more cost-effective. Town officials were informed that the streamlining of these building improvements could prevent AMP's national corporate leaders from closing the West Lane facility.

But, instead of finding a quick or streamlined process for this application, town officials allowed the applicant to become bogged down in debate about minute color and design details with the Riverhead Planning Department and its

Architectural Review Board.

This is not the first time that Riverhead Town has disregarded the international, national, regional and local marketing competition that area businesses are confronted with. Something similar happened just before the Long Island-based Northville Industries was forced to sell its Northville fuel tank facility to Tosco of Connecticut.

It is not entirely the town board's fault that AMP or Northville closed down, but had local government been doing what it is supposed to do instead of finding ways to garner large cash reserves from high-priced developers or spending tons of money on a pipe dream to promote one area of town over another, this might not have happened.

Town officials (predominantly Republican) have consistently claimed to be interested in protecting the local mom and pop businesses, but they have done precious little except to throw bureaucratic hurdles in front of every step in the process.

Whose business will be next?

Perhaps the Riverhead Democrats have been right all along. Apparently, town government cannot be entrusted to a one-party system. Riverhead residents should seriously consider voting the Democratic line this November.

And why not?

ing underground from Brookhaven Laboratory. Recently, I was contacted by the Supervisor of the Town of Brookhaven and informed that the Department of Energy has decided at this time not to fund the additional water hook-ups requested by the town.

I am deeply distressed by the decision. The people of Manorville have the right to live free from the fear of drinking contaminated water and these hook-ups are necessary to provide them with access to the public water supply. I urge the Department of Energy to take the appropriate action and agree to provide water hook-ups for the approximately 150 additional homes in question.

The citizens of the Town of Brookhaven have always acted in good faith as it relates to the Lab. The decision by the Department of Energy last August to provide water hook-ups to 96

homes in the area of Weeks Avenue and South Street was the correct one. Now, I hope the department will take the proper action to ensure the safety of the people of Manorville.

Alfonse M. D'Amato
United States Senator

Tell it Like it Is

To the editor:

This is an open letter to Legislator Tom Finlay (R-Bayshore) regarding his appeal "Say No Way" (November 27).

This letter represents tens of thousands of taxpayers on fixed incomes who pay the salaries of elected officials. Some of us are retired with pensions based upon salaries in the seventies and eighties. What was fair and equitable then, is mere subsistent living now and threatens poverty levels in the future.

How could elected officials preaching "cuts," balancing the budget, and sacrifice on the part of their constituents exonerate themselves from correcting this burdensome deficit and, in fact, add to that burden by increasing their own pay?

Do our politicians lose sight of reality once elected? Do they represent only vested interests and themselves? Ideally, they represent us.

We are all in this together, so "bite the bullet" guys and forget the big bucks. Let's get things in control and then if there are any leftovers, decrease our taxes. That is what I would do for my constituents. Guess I would never make it as a politician.

No way are raises in order. Thank you, Legislator Finlay, for being a true representative of your people.

Linda Studer
Shelter Island

SUFFOLK LIFE

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and SUFFOLK COUNTY LIFE

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David J. Willmott, Editor and Publisher

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David J. Willmott, Jr General Manager
Joey Mac Lellan Managing Editor
Barbara Lampasona Data Processing Mgr.
Margaret Griffin Classified Manager
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Bad Politics, Bad Government

Tony Prudenti, former Suffolk County Republican chairman, and mentor for current Chairman John Powell, had a plaque behind his desk. The plaque read, "Good politics makes good government."

John Powell was a good student and learned many valuable lessons from Tony. Unfortunately, he did not keep Tony's constant reminder in front of him.

Last week, John Powell tried to orchestrate the elevation of his hand-picked candidate, Joseph Caracappa, to the position of presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature. This was bad politics.

Caracappa is from Brookhaven where Powell is also the Republican town chairman. That is the only reason why Powell could have been supporting him. Caracappa is young, a hip-shooter. He is not seasoned. He has only been an elected legislator for one year. He has neither the ability nor the respect needed for this job.

Powell, recklessly insisting upon his choice, got into a political fight with the Huntington Republicans. The fight led to a coalition between the Republican and Democratic legislators, which led to a standoff between the two camps.

Powell should back off, admit that he was wrong in pushing Caracappa. He should look to the other Republicans in the legislature. He should find the candidate with the best qualifications to serve all the people of Suffolk County and push for this candidate's elevation for the right reasons.

In our view, there are three good candidates who might be able to follow in Legislator Blydenburgh's footsteps:

Mike Caracciolo, from the First Legislative District, is experienced. He can be charming and he can be arrogant. He is

bright and seasoned. He is a maverick and might not be controllable, but he has shown an ability to work with allies and enemies.

Allen Binder from Huntington is also seasoned. He is sharp, a hard worker and ambitious. He ran once for congress and was defeated by Democrat Gary Ackerman, who is better known and the incumbent. Binder also lost a primary for congress to defeated congressional candidate Grant Lally, who outspent him substantially.

Binder has done an excellent job on the legislature's Social Services Committee which he heads. He does his homework and has earned the respect of his colleagues.

Unfortunately, neither Caracciolo nor Binder can muster sufficient support from their peers. At best, either candidate can probably only count on three Republican votes.

The third candidate is Angie Carpenter from Islip. Carpenter is an extremely hard worker. She has a vivacious personality. She is well liked by her constituents. She won her last race by almost 70%. Although Carpenter is tenacious and aggressive, she has won the respect of her Republican colleagues as well as the Democrats.

Powell would do well to support Carpenter. He could diffuse the argument that Brookhaven gets everything. Carpenter is known for being loyal and a woman of her word. These are attributes that Powell has long considered very important.

The legislature has until the end of today to select its leader. Both sides of the aisle would be best served by choosing Angie Carpenter.

And why not?

We Can End The Monopoly

LILCO is a monopoly and it is getting bigger. LILCO has announced that it intends to merge with Brooklyn Union Gas, doubling its size. This will make LILCO more powerful and put us, the customers, more at its mercy. Before this merger is allowed to go through, LIPA must act.

LIPA has the authority to take over LILCO or any part of it. LIPA must do the right thing: condemn the transmission and distribution facilities of LILCO's electrical system.

Once LIPA controls the transmission and distribution of electricity, it will have taken away LILCO's monopoly. Electrical prices will then become competitive. LILCO, the power producer, will be forced to compete with every other utility to sell electricity to Long Island customers.

LILCO's power, as well as outside power wheeled through the transmission and distribution facilities, controlled by LIPA, will be competitive. Prices will plummet. LIPA will be able to finance this condemnation through tax-free bonds that will be paid back from wheel-

ing fees paid by the electrical suppliers.

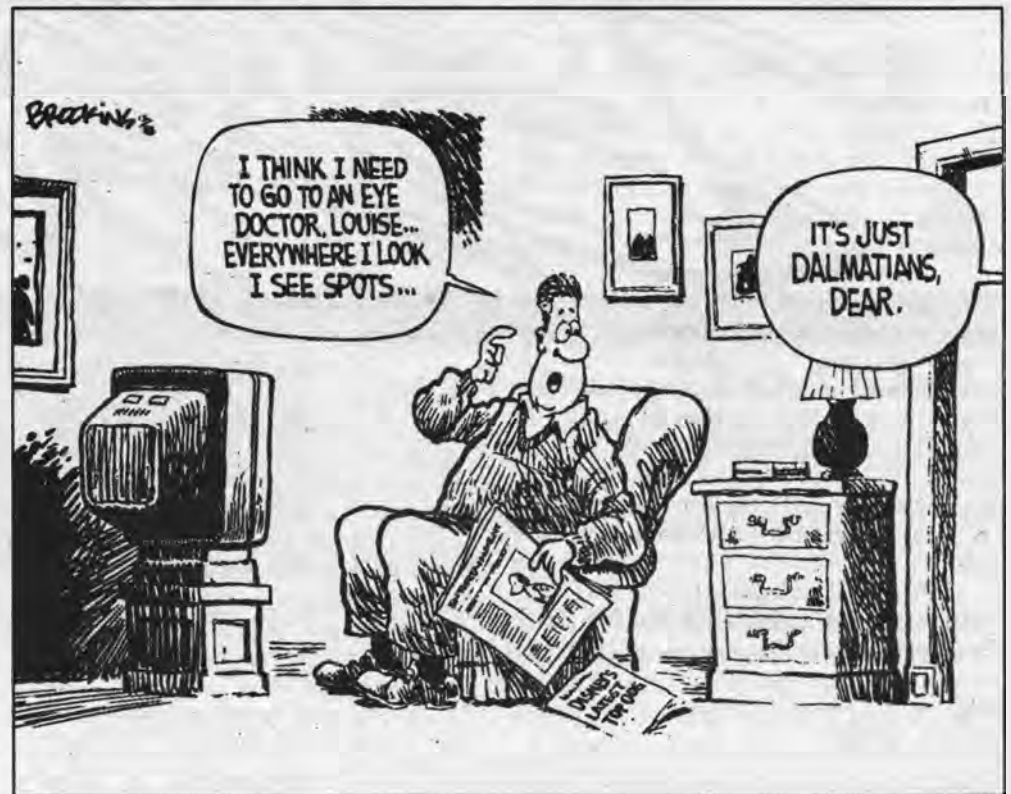
LILCO, as a corporation, will have the ability to continue to be a power producer and a marketer. It can structure its rates any way that it wants, building into them the cost of debt, Catacosinos' golden parachute and the doubling of his salary. But if LIPA owns the transmission and distribution system, the customers will not be forced to buy from LILCO or to pay for its waste.

We do not know why LIPA is waiting to act. We do not know why Pataki is being so tolerant. The answers to breaking LILCO's monopoly is there, it has been there and it must be acted upon.

LILCO will tell you that condemnation would take years. Yet, by its own testimony in other cases, LILCO has alleged that it would actually only take three months. Each month that goes by, Long Islanders pay 50% more for electricity than they would if we had competition.

Yo, George, what are you waiting for?

And why not?



What Is His Crime?

Newt Gingrich came blazing onto the American scene like a meteorite. He knew what he wanted to accomplish and spelled it out in the "Contract with America" and worked diligently to have this plan enacted. To do this, he had to upset the entrenched Democratic congressional machine. There seemed little hope that he could accomplish this goal, yet he did it. With a solid majority behind him, he entered 1994 full of hope and determination.

Gingrich was able to deliver the line item veto for this president and for all presidents to come. He led the charge on welfare reform, ending a 50-year cycle of dependency from cradle to grave. He passed a balanced budget amendment bill only to see it vetoed twice by the president.

Gingrich is brash, he can be arrogant, is super-intelligent and a personality in his own right. Unfortunately, he has a case of hoof and mouth disease and some of his statements have offended the public. He has relentlessly and persistently been attacked by the holdover Democrats and segments of the media.

They could not stand that he was changing America, bringing it back to what a majority of the voters wanted.

Gingrich was charged with ethical violations of house rules. No, not murder, not embezzling an S & L, not even taking advantage of insider information and making a killing in the stock market. We must confess, we really do not know what these charges are all about, nor do most other Americans.

Acting like the man he is, Gingrich got up and admitted to some technical violations that may have misled the ethics committee. Nothing astounding. Nothing that anyone should lose any

sleep over.

The furor that has surrounded Gingrich has weakened him, but, more importantly, it has weakened the cause. Americans wanted their government reformed. They wanted major changes. They were tired of congress as usual. This is what Gingrich's detractors cannot stand. It isn't Gingrich, it is what he has accomplished and his effectiveness.

Congressman Michael Forbes is a beneficiary of Gingrich's efforts and abilities. Gingrich personally became involved in Forbes' first campaign. He made appearances in Suffolk County on Forbes' behalf. Some of the funding for Forbes' campaign came through Gingrich and his contacts. Gingrich appointed Forbes to the Appropriations Committee, something that freshman congressmen rarely achieve.

We were dismayed that Forbes led the charge on the Republican side of the aisle against Gingrich. Loyalty is one of the most important attributes a team player must have. You don't shift with the wind. You don't take advantage of someone else's weakness to gain glorification for yourself.

Forbes did not reveal anything significantly wrong that Gingrich had done. He just played into the perception that had been created by the Democrats in congress and a segment of the media which is opposed to reform and change in America.

Forbes will probably pay dearly for this lack of courage. Hopefully, Gingrich will not be vindictive, particularly to the people of the First Congressional District.

We hope that the distractions facing Gingrich will not impede his effectiveness. America gave him a mission; let's hope he has the strength to carry it out.

And why not?

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Southampton Is Not For Sale

It was with a sense of satisfaction that we greeted the news that Southampton Town officials had turned over an alleged bribery attempt to federal officials.

Supervisor Vincent Cannuscio, Councilman Skip Heaney and Councilman Steve Halsey allegedly had been offered a bribe by an official of Vertical Broadcasting, Inc., to vote favorably on the company's application to build a communications tower in North Sea.

Instead of succumbing, the three board members acted as responsible citizens and elected officials should. They called in the feds and turned their evidence over to them. If the official from Vertical Broadcasting did actually attempt to bribe these officials, he should pay the consequences. This will be determined by a court of law.

As happy as we were with the honesty of these officials, we are just as unhappy with the governmental processes that cause legitimate applications to drag on for years without a resolution. This type of bureaucracy breeds corruption. The bit players who hold up applications needlessly because of departmental power trips bring weaker people to their knees who then resort to the time-honored response of bribery.

The day before the above information was released, we were discussing a simple application with a Riverhead businessman who wanted to change a door in a structure that he owned. He was not changing the size of the door, or the frame, just replacing the door and installing a push bar to accommodate the handicapped.

This application is three years old. The paperwork that had gone back and forth was truly amazing. In the bureaucrats' minds, the town has been justified in imposing all kinds of new regulations. These bureaucrats demanded a new site plan and forced the businessman to pay additional fees to enrich the bureaucracy. He had complied with most of their ridiculous requests. He had spent thousands of dollars on legal and professional fees and, to this date, he still does not have their approval. Would a lesser man have succumbed and paid a bribe? Is that what government is really looking for?

We have all heard stories about various inspectors having their hand out. It doesn't make any difference whether it is Huntington, Smithtown, Islip, Brookhaven or one of the East End towns. Tradespeople all have stories to tell.

An applicant should be able to reasonably comply with reasonable regulations and have their application expeditiously approved. When an application is made, it simultaneously should go to every agency involved. Each of those agencies should be held responsible for responding within a two-week period with a definitive finding. Any objections to the application should be spelled out in detail and the applicant given a specific period of time to comply. If they can and do comply, the applicant should be granted the appropriate permits without any further

delay.

It doesn't make any difference if it is a homeowner or a business application. Time is important to both.

How many homeowners have contemplated plans for home remodeling or expansion, got their finances together and expected to start work quickly but had to face a bureaucratic maze? Months, sometimes years, can go by before an answer can be secured. In the meantime, many will have given up and moved away. This is bad government.

Businesses must often move quickly as competition rapidly changes. Municipalities that treat these applicants with disdain and indifference signal to those businesses that this is not a good place to do business. It also sends a clear message that "It's okay for you to pay your taxes, but don't expect us to help you profit from your investment."

The recent loss of AMP, formerly Photocircuits of Aquebogue, is a case in point. A routine application for a loading dock was put through in August. The loading dock would have made their operations more efficient. The company that owned AMP is from out of state and it does not understand bureaucracy. It does, however, understand efficiency and if the Aquebogue facility could not be efficient, it would be closed. Four hundred and fifty jobs are now gone partially because bureaucrats could not make up their minds on the color they wanted the loading dock painted.

Shore Industries left East Hampton because of similar difficulties.

RaySon, Inc., of Shirley, owned land along West Main Street in Riverhead and spent three years fighting with the state Department of Environmental Conservation about building a plant in Riverhead, but town officials did nothing to help and the company picked up its operation and moved to North Carolina.

The developers of the Andersen farm along Route 58 in Riverhead are currently being held up because of bureaucratic stalling and the town is now facing yet another lawsuit.

We are in a changing world. No business is locked into doing business in a community. Regulations and red tape are often the straw that breaks the camel's back.

It's one thing to have to cope with high utility and labor costs. It is another to be expected to tolerate abuses from lower echelon bureaucrats and leadership at the top which is blind to what is going on.

Every elected official should do an audit and review of all their personnel procedures, rules and regulations. They should streamline those procedures and eliminate burdensome regulations. They should instill in every employee that they are there to serve and not be served. Unless we make these changes, we are going to see a continuation of companies moving off Long Island or resorting to bribery and corruption.

And why not?



Leadership By Default

We recently received a direct mail ad that had an illustration of people walking in a circle. The caption under the cartoon read, "I hope whoever is leading the line knows where they are going!" We chuckled, for this reminded us of the Suffolk County Legislature.

The Suffolk County Legislature, by default, has turned over the responsibility of selecting their leadership to Suffolk County Clerk Edward Romaine. The leadership of this body, for 1997, will be appointed by default. This is a sorry state of affairs.

The Republicans have a two-to-one majority, and yet they are in such disarray they cannot unify behind one of their own. Hopefully, by the time this editorial is published, Romaine will have made up his mind on who he will appoint and the legislature will have gotten down to business.

We fear, however, that 1997 will be another chapter of the "funny farm." The legislature has been dubbed the "funny farm" for good reason. It has often been without decisive leadership, and during those periods each legislator deems himself or herself a mini-county executive and chaos prevails. It is during these periods, when there is no sense of discipline, that county taxes are coincidentally raised. Every legislator becomes a wheeler and dealer with an attitude of 'you vote for my project and I will vote for yours...and the hell with the taxpayers who will be left holding the bag'.

Suffolk County government was a substantially better government when it was governed by a board of supervisors. Each supervisor was the chief executive of his or her town. They

brought the knowledge of their town to this county format and, working in cooperation with their fellow supervisors, sensibly addressed the county's needs and problems.

The supreme court stepped in and ruled that because of the difference in the size of the towns and the unequal representation of the smaller towns, the system had to be changed to representatives having equal population districts or the supervisors' votes had to represent the population of their towns. Suffolk County opted for the county legislature.

One of the main problems surrounding the legislature is that the definition of this body has never been carefully crafted in the charter.

The legislature rarely interacts with town officials. Our county representatives have lost the intimate, institutional knowledge of the communities. The legislature has become a highly political body where government is determined by vested interest and press releases.

One of the main problems surrounding the legislature is that the definition of this body has never been carefully crafted in the charter. The charter does a fairly good job of defining the county executive's prerogatives and responsibilities, but it leaves great voids as to the duties and responsibilities of the legislature. As a result, individual legislators, and often the legislature as a whole, try to preempt the county executive and take over his duties.

This year might be the ideal time to take a new look at how we govern ourselves. It might be the time to disband the Suffolk County Legislature and go back to a weighted board of supervisors.

And why not?

The Forgotten Man

There are 3,400 forgotten people in Suffolk County. Some are big, many are small. They are the unfortunate individuals who own land located in the pine barrens. Some own a couple of acres, some own much larger parcels, but they are all in the same predicament. They own land that is being taxed on its former best use value, but they no longer have access to those uses.

Some of this land was inherited from parents who had made long-term investments. Some of it was owned by investors who bought for the future. Some of it is owned by individuals who had hoped to build a house or two for themselves or their families.

When the land was declared to be inside the core preservation area of the pine barrens, the owners of this land were stripped of any utilization of this land. The value of it plummeted because no one is allowed to build on it. They were promised that the government would purchase the land or the development rights and they would be issued development transfer credits they could easily sell.

Outside of the government taking a few individual parcels, a vast majority of the owners have not been compensated. Yet, this past December, they received tax bills based upon the land being valued at fully developable formulas.

The landowners have two choices. They can refuse to pay their taxes, allowing the county to seize title to the land, thus stealing it from its rightful owners. Or they can file a class action lawsuit which many have joined

together to do. This type of suit takes years to adjudicate and costs hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Many of the smaller landowners do not have the funds to pay for these suits and it is doubtful that the compensation they will get out of the suit will be equal to the value of the land prior to the creation of the pine barrens. This is not fair or just.

The pine barrens has received some funding from the state and county governments, but no way near what is necessary for an equitable settlement. The funds they have received have been used to buy a few large parcels, the latest belonging to the Warners, who owned a duck farm on the banks of the Peconic in Calverton.

This taking of individuals' property without compensation is scandalous no matter what the justification. It is not what this country is all about.

The Pine Barrens Commission could make an immediate attempt to compensate those individuals holding ownership of small parcels. This might be just, but is it fair? There are owners of larger parcels who are barely hanging on by their fingernails. What about them?

What would be fair is for the Pine Barrens Commission to immediately compensate all owners. If the land is worth saving, it is worth paying for. If we don't have the money and can't afford it, we should not have created the pine barrens to buy it. This county and our state must have a conscience. We have an obligation to act fairly and honestly with our citizens.

And why not?

Lab Reactor Closed

The atomic reactor at the Brookhaven National Lab was shut down in December for routine maintenance. This was expected to take three weeks. During this time, the lab discovered that the wells surrounding the reactor had traces of radioactive waste, specifically, tritium.

Unfortunately, the lab did not make this knowledge public until the second week of January. The levels of tritium are twice the drinking water standard. The lab has installed several other wells in the area as a precaution to sample the waters.

Senator Alphonse D'Amato has called for a thorough investigation of the lab and is demanding that the reactor remain closed until the source of the leakage is determined.

The lab has been accused of polluting the groundwater with chemicals and radioactive material in the past. It has been placed on the Super Fund list and designated for federal clean-

up.

For years, BNL stonewalled inquiries into its operations, but has recently honed its public relations skills and appears to be trying to cooperate with the community.

High traces of chemicals have been found in homeowners' wells south of the lab property. The lab has maintained that this pollution came from other sources, but it has agreed to take part in the clean-up and the installation of public water to affected homes.

Spillage of radioactive material is serious. It can have long-term cumulative effects. We are disappointed that the lab waited over a month to make this knowledge public and we can only hope that they are doing whatever is possible to mitigate the effects of the leakage.

And why not?



School Tax Cut

Governor Pataki took the bull by the horns and addressed the escalation of school taxes in his budget address.

Pataki recognized that school taxes are one of the biggest problems residents from Niagara to Montauk have to cope with. He has offered a plan to reduce these taxes by up to 24%, with higher reductions for senior citizens.

In his proposed budget, he has offered to increase state aid and to put a cap of 4% or the rate of inflation (whichever is lower) on school budget increases. He proposed penalizing districts which spend more on administration and offered additional increases in state aid for those districts which cut administration.

The plan, if adopted, will be rolled in over a four-year period of time. This could save the average Long Island homeowner between \$500 and \$800 per year in school real estate taxes. Pataki's plan is welcome news. It is the first time any governor has addressed this killer issue head on.

The governor has said he recognizes the hardships that school taxes have caused residents. He has offered us his plan. Let's do something about it. It will now be up to the senate and assembly to come together on the details.

We encourage them to come up with a final plan that meets the intent of the Pataki proposal. All assembly persons and senators from Long Island are keenly aware of what their constituents told them last November when they ran for election: 'it is real estate taxes and utility rates, stupid. That's what matters to us, find relief.'

We are encouraged that Pataki's addressed this issue. We do think, however, that the real answer is for the state to fully fund the cost of basic schooling. It is a constitutional requirement of the state to provide an education for every student up to age 21. The Board of Regents has spelled out the requirements and the curriculum that must be given in every school that will allow a student to receive a Regents diploma. These are called mandates and they

encompass between 44% and 48% of the average Long Island school district's budget. The rest of the budget consists of electives imposed by the local school boards.

To accomplish these mandates, the state currently provides between 38% and 42% of the school district's budget through state aid. With the increases proposed by Pataki, the state's contribution will pretty much equal the mandates. Now would be the ideal time for the state to take over every school district in the state.

The state would provide and pay for the teachers, the buildings, the maintenance, and those supervisory personnel that are mandated by the state.

School boards would continue to be empowered to run their districts. They would select their instructors and administrators from a state teacher pool. This would be done on a one-year contractual basis. School districts would have the option of annually reviewing the teachers' performance and renewing their contracts if the teachers had performed satisfactorily. The same provisions would apply to administrators and support personnel.

School districts would be further empowered to offer courses and curriculum above the state's mandates. These offerings would have to meet voter approval. Districts that valued these enhancements and electives could enact them. Districts that were impoverished or had a constituency that could ill afford these niceties would have the opportunity to turn them down.

Regardless of what enhancements a district selected, every student in every district throughout the state would be given courses in the core curriculum that would guarantee that they had the ability to obtain a Regents diploma and go on to college.

If such a plan was adopted, New York would have better educated students and real estate taxes could be cut up to 60%.

And why not?