

Suffolk Life Newspapers has been targeted by the Suffolk County Community College Faculty Association, which has initiated a boycott threat against Suffolk Life advertisers with the warning that they will cease to patronize any advertiser that advertises in this publication. The Faculty Association's action followed publication of an editorial which urged Suffolk County legislators to reject

a proposed contract settlement because of our concerns that this agreement would set a precedent for settlements with eight other bargaining units involved in negotiations with the county, and the ultimate impact on the taxpayers. We offered the Faculty Association an opportunity to present their side of the issue. Their response, with Suffolk Life's position, follows:

## SCC Faculty Association position:

Yes, Mr. Willmott, we do have a difference of opinion. Would that the world were as black and white as the picture present or that issues presented at a bargaining table were as easy to resolve as your editorials suggest.

The contract negotiated by the Faculty Association of Suffolk Community College is unique on many levels. It is not totally funded by the County. In fact, it will be paid for primarily through state aid and student tuition which comprise 72% of the College's operating budget. The County's share has been only 28% for the past several years. Put another way, 4.7% of Suffolk County property taxes goes to support Suffolk Community College. On a typical \$3,500 property tax bill (of which only 15%, or \$525 is county taxes), \$25 per year (or \$.50/week) goes to support the entire operation—staff, buildings, equipment, books, etc.—of Suffolk Community College.

This contract is not, nor was it intended to serve as, a benchmark for any other union; it was crafted specifically to meet the varying needs of the faculty, the College and the County. It will be paid out of a budget separate and distinct from the County's operating budget.

**PAST SETTLEMENTS:** To set the record straight on past bargaining, members of the FA have never received salary settlements under any County administration that averaged over 40% or provided increases anywhere near 70%. FA settlements, even during what you've called the "good times of the '80's," hovered around the cost of living, often below the increases reported in both the public and private sectors. We have also never reached a settlement based upon the settlements of the other County bargaining units. Rather our bargaining posture and the final settlements have been based on conditions specific to the community college: conditions affecting a faculty who genuinely care about the students they teach and the learning atmosphere of the College. Our faculty are required to have at least a master's degree in

their discipline to teach and must earn the equivalent of a second master's degree before they can be promoted to the rank of full professor or reach the top of the salary schedule. These same faculty must also work, on average, 22 years before reaching the top of the salary schedule.

**LAG PAY:** When we sat down to negotiate over 24 months ago, we were (and continue to be) well aware of the economic condition of the County. In fact, immediately prior to the expiration of our last contract, the FA was one of the first County unions to agree to loan the County 10 days pay from each of our member's salaries. The FA membership's agreement was not predicated on the participation of other County unions. In addition, the membership agreed to this loan knowing this concession to the tough economic times we are all facing would not be coupled with a successor agreement that could buffer the financial strains they too were experiencing. Such behavior is hardly the attitude of a group concerned with "what's in it for me and the hell with everyone else."

**SALARIES:** The context of the recent FA agreement seems to have been overlooked in your editorials. This contract does not establish SCC's faculty salaries as the "trendsetter" for the other unions in any bargaining arena. It is not an agreement that allows SCC faculty salaries to catch up to the faculty/teacher salaries at Nassau CC, FIT, Westchester CC, C. W. Post or most NJ community colleges (those work forces with whom we do compare professionally.) In fact, this contract doesn't keep us even or begin to close the gap with the salary schedules of other local educational institutions.

**QUALITY ISSUES:** Another aspect of our bargaining which we did have to factor into the negotiations was the effect of faculty retirements on the quality and the number of courses the College offers to students. Within the next two years, 123 members of our full-time faculty (31%) will be eligible to retire, 65 members will be over 60 and 24 will be 65

or older by the year 1995. Because of anticipated retirements and increasing student enrollment, the college is now faced with the prospect of recruiting and hiring new faculty who will take our institution into the 21st century. SCC's accreditation standards require geographic as well as ethnic and gender diversity in its faculty. Thus SCC is faced with competing nationally against many other educational institutions which are also in recruiting modes. While a starting salary of \$25,000 may be attractive to a graduate student from the Midwest, when he/she factors in Long Island's cost of living, \$25,000 is not a competitive rate.

The contract the FA negotiated with the County Executive, ratified by the membership, approved by the College Board of Trustees and presented to the Suffolk County Legislature was negotiated in good faith. It is the result of many months of compromise and consideration, not only for the faculty but also for the College and the County, including its citizens.

Finally, let me make a comment about Suffolk Life's offer to allow the FA to present its case regarding its negotiated contract to the residents of the County. We have taken you up on your offer and we too hope that, as you've stated, "the air can be cleared once and for all" on this issue. Granted we do not have control over future editorial commentary nor the decisions that allow some letters to the editor to be printed without editorial comment. Most of what has transpired over the last several months may have been avoided had someone at Suffolk Life made an attempt to hear both sides of the story before rushing to a judgment based on pieces of misinformation. The issue is not, and never has been, freedom of the press. Rather it is a matter of balanced reporting and even-handed journalism. That truly would be in the best interests of the residents of Suffolk County.

Ellen Schuler Mauk, President  
Faculty Association of Suffolk Community College

## Suffolk Life's position:

We thank Ellen Schuler Mauk, president of the Suffolk Community College Faculty Association (SCCFA) for presenting her viewpoint regarding the negotiations between that bargaining unit and the County of Suffolk.

It is the responsibility of a newspaper to present both sides of an issue. We accept this responsibility and have traditionally attempted in our news coverage to give the pertinent facts and viewpoints of the individuals involved with government. The credo for our news staff is it must be balanced, accurate and fair and honest.

Our editorial column is our opinion. It is in this space that a position can be elaborated upon and warnings can be issued about the ramifications to the taxpayers about pending governmental actions.

In the latter part of January, County Executive Robert Gaffney, in a meeting held at our office, outlined his recently-negotiated contract agreement with the Suffolk Community College Faculty Association. He indicated he was excited about this contract as it would set the precedent for negotiations with the other eight unions the county must deal with. He emphasized that the contract covered a five-year period. In the first year, there would be no increase. For the second year, a flat \$1,250 bonus would be paid, which would not be built into the wage base. In the third, fourth and fifth year, increases would range from 4% to 4.5% to 5%, with a cumulative total of less than 14%.

We congratulated Gaffney for his efforts, noting if other wage increases were similar, they would be within the range of inflation and Suffolk County might have an opportunity to get out of the financial dilemma it was in, and stabilize the morale of its work force.

The proposed contract was then submitted to the Suffolk County Legislature for review and vote. In mid-March, the Suffolk County Budget Review Office (BRO), the Suffolk County Legislature's financial analysis office, released a report that was startlingly different from the county executive's perspective.

The report stated that the cumulative total of the raises was not in the range of 13% to 14%, but ranged from 24.2% to 42.4%. The cost of this contract, the BRO cautioned, could pierce the caps placed by the legislature on the county

executive and itself for spending and taxation.

In fact, while the county executive initially voiced support for the contract, the words of caution about the cumulative impact caused him to review the matter. On Friday he conceded, "the combination of the 4.4% in step increases and the added 4% does not look like something that is economically doable or acceptable with the county legislature." Gaffney said the county is continuing negotiations with the Faculty Association in hopes of reaching a settlement more economically in keeping with the county's current fiscal condition.

As to your comments on the impact to county taxpayers. First, state funds, which come from the same county taxpayers, are questionable. The state's fiscal crisis has caused a reduction in school aid, including SCC which has lost, according to BRO, 7.4% in state dollars in the last two years. Secondly, we're concerned about the use of excess tuition funds to help pay for this contract. It is our understanding these funds were designed to protect against future increases in the tuition, which has increased by 34% over the last two years. How much more can this tuition go up without impacting on the ability of our youth to afford a college education?

If this contract was to be the trendsetter, as the county executive indicated to us, then the total cost of raises for all county employees would be between \$150 million and \$180 million. Couple this with recent reports that the county faces an \$18 million deficit in this year's budget—other sources within the county speculate the deficit is closer to \$40 million—and the result is financial disaster.

The county has been, and continues to be, in a precarious financial condition. The economy within the county is stagnated. Over 80,000 jobs have been lost in the last 24 months. Real estate values have dropped by about 30%. Sales taxes have been increased one cent, and the county maintains that unless this temporary tax increase is continued, it will not have the funds to pay the current bills. There are virtually no options left to prudently operate the county in a fiscally responsible manner.

Our initial editorial on the SCCFA contract, which has now become the centerpiece for a boycott of Suffolk Life's

advertisers, warned the legislature of the ramifications of enacting this contract. We did not question the need or the quality of education provided by Suffolk Community College, nor have we done so in the past. We directed our comments strictly to the cost of the contract and the ramifications we believe it would have on all other labor negotiations. We believe this to be a reasonable position and the responsibility of any newspaper published in this county.

It should be noted that AME (Association of Municipal Employees), the largest of the county unions, who represent the non-professional staff, is also without a contract. They, like the Faculty Association staff, have accepted a lag payroll. And many agreed to furlough time as well. They have suffered equally. Do you really expect their leadership to accept any less than you have negotiated for your members?

The Suffolk Community College Faculty Association members below the top step in the salary schedule, although without a contract, have continued to receive step increases which have automatically given those employees salary increases of 2.2% to 4.4%. The AME employees have not enjoyed this benefit. The county executive and the legislature would be hard put to deny these employees increases that were not comparable to those won by the Suffolk Community College Faculty Association.

We respect your opinion that the Suffolk Community College Faculty Association contract would not set a precedent for the other unions, but we do not agree. In reading PERB (Public Employment Relations Board) and binding arbitration reports covering other municipal unions, we find that the basis for the awards favorable to the unions are comparable to other unions within the municipality, or on parity with like unions in other parts of the region.

We agree that the starting figure of \$25,000 for new college faculty does not enhance recruitment efforts. We have frequently editorialized that percentage increases benefit those making higher salaries the most. We have often stated that those in the lower ranks should receive a higher percentage, or the increases should be given in a flat sum so that all employees benefit equally. That, in our view, is fair. As a union official, you have the ability to seek that fairness.

SEE Page 6

# Reform fails again...

**from page 2**  
charge, adding that he accepts these contributions but that they do not reflect any "interest peddling" when it comes to his votes on matters affecting these contributors. "If that were the case, I would not have voted to terminate some positions in the past or voted for the lag payroll last year that affected these workers," Davis said.

Levy stated that he does

not accept contributions from PACs or collective bargaining units. "I am not saying that anyone who has accepted a contribution from these groups in the past has done anything illegal; at present it is perfectly legal to take contributions from these sources. What this legislation will do, however, is change things for the future and minimize the influence this type of money has on elected officials. But many officials

are loathe to change a system that will impact their political careers," Levy added.

The move to get the defeated bills back on the floor failed by a 7-11 vote. Levy said he will not give up trying to get support for the two reform bills, which may include taking the fight to the residents of Suffolk to get a public referendum on the ballot in 1994 through initiative and referendum procedures.

# Radio debate ends...

**from page 2**  
added.

But, for those who opposed the bill, including Legislator Steve Levy (D-Sayville), the cost to the county under the new system is steep.

"I don't have to be convinced that this is the best of the best on the market today, but I have serious questions about the cost of this new system. When you're near fiscal bankruptcy, as we are

in the county, do we need to be spending \$14 million on a capital bonding project? I have yet to see any evidence that the present system created a public safety hazard," Levy said. He added that he would have preferred to repair the present system, which was estimated to cost \$7 million, rather than spend twice that for phase one of this project.

"That's the scary thing here; this \$14 million will cover only the first phase of

the project. What's out there in the future when phase two is implemented and what will that cost taxpayers?" Levy asked.

He points to the problem-plagued Criminal Justice Information System that the SCPD purchased several years ago at a cost of \$18 million. That system has reportedly not worked as it was purported to when the company selling the system made its presentation to the county.

# Rabies bill passes...

**from page 1**  
He claimed the bill was dangerous because it lends a false sense of security that rabies will be eradicated if mandatory vaccinations are required. "The real enemy is the wild animal, not the house pet. It is obvious that this legislature doesn't want to deal with the real problem.

This bill will do nothing to reduce rabies in the wild," Corrigan said. As an alternative, he called upon legislators to embark on a program similar to one in Europe where bait piles laced with the vaccine were placed in the woods for animals to feed upon, ingesting the anti-rabies vaccine.

"Rabies has all but been eliminated in Europe as a result of this program, and that's what this legislature should be implementing if they want to stop rabies at the source," Corrigan added.

Binder explained that the cost to implement such a plan is beyond the resources of the county, claiming his bill will adequately address the problem in the county. "Rabies is coming and it is coming quickly. My bill addresses that urgency now. I would like to see the state pass similar legislation," he added.

One of the more controversial aspects of the bill will allow the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to pick up stray cats, neuter and inoculate them, and return them to the spot where they were found. This could mean that pet owners who allow their cats to roam off their property run the risk of having them taken in by the SPCA. Binder stated that the agency will perform these services at no cost to the county, and will handle up to 20 cats per week.

# Our position...

**from page 5**  
Our Letters to the Editor column often contains letters from readers who disagree with the position we have taken. Most of these letters do not have editor's notes. If a writer makes a personal attack or, in some cases, is not accurate in the presentation, we will defend against the personal attack or correct the misinformation.

A boycott of a newspaper's advertisers most definitely does have to do with freedom of the press. These union activities could have a chilling effect not only on Suffolk Life, but on any other publication or organization that would speak out on behalf of the taxpayers. If it becomes acceptable to interfere with a publication's freedom of speech, what other liberty would you be willing to give up next?

The purpose of a good newspaper is to educate its readers and, present all sides. We strive to do that, and your words on this page are proof of that effort. Our readers now have both sides of the issue. They now have the opportunity to formulate their own opinion, which is how it should be. And why not?

# Dems seek an end to tax hike

Suffolk County Legislator Steve Levy (D-Sayville), along with other county and local Democrats, are calling upon the state legislature to defeat the proposed extension of Suffolk's sales tax.

executive and the Republican-Conservative majority in the county legislature that the public wants the sales tax extended as an alternative to an increase in property taxes.

Democrats contended the public wants neither tax, but instead wants the executive and the legislature to scale back excess in county government.

Said Levy, "The approval of the sales tax extension would simply allow officials to take the easy way out and continue business as usual."

In the event the state legislature refuses to block the extension, Democrats maintain this tax should be subject to a vote by the people via referendum in November.



Name:.....  
Address:.....  
Town:.....  
Phone Number:..... Age:.....  
Performance location you wish to attend:.....

## Color Elmo

# Be a circus clown!

It's that time again! Time for youngsters from six to 12 years of age to dust off their artistic talents and take a shot at being named a winner of an opportunity of a lifetime: to become a circus clown for an opening performance of the Clyde-Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

Here's how you can achieve this dream opportunity: color the drawing above. Be as imaginative as you can, as neat as possible. Elmo himself will visit Suffolk Life to judge the entries and pick the winners. Elmo is a funny guy, not only at the circus, but everywhere he goes. He bops people on the head with a big rubber hammer, and tries to give them haircuts with big wooden scissors. You can do the

same thing when you walk out into the arena under the tent at one of the six circus appearances in Suffolk County in July and August. Think about it, there you are, with a host of other clowns, doing all kinds of crazy and funny things. The crowd roars with laughter. And your family, who will be sitting in special seats reserved for very important people, will be laughing as well.

Entries will be divided into two age groups, six to eight years of age, and nine to 12. There will be a grand prize winner, who will be a clown, fully made up and dressed like those funny guys, in each age group for each of the six circus stops in Suffolk County. That's 12 grand prize winners! And you can be one of them.

There will also be six runners-up for each age group at each opening performance in the six locations. Runners-up will receive a pair of general admission passes for the 4:30 or 7:30 p.m. opening day performances.

The circus will be in the Sayville-Bohemia area on Friday, July 30 through Sunday, August 1; in Mastic on Monday and Tuesday, August 2 and 3; at Commack from August 4 through August 8; in Riverhead on August 9 and 10; Greenport on August 11, and Middle Island from August 12 through August 15. We'll tell you more about times and places in weeks to come.

Deadlines for entries is Monday, July 19, so get started now!

# Pitfalls of campaign reform

To his credit, Suffolk County Legislator Steve Levy (D-Sayville) has proposed a number of measures designed to reform the way campaigns are financed and operated.

Levy has had grave difficulty in getting the measures out of committee. The one he succeeded in moving will ask the voters in November whether they want to finance the politicians' campaigns. The measure would redirect tax dollars to candidates and put caps on the amount of money that the candidates could individually raise. The intended purpose of this measure is to level the playing field, giving everyone equal opportunity.

Unfortunately, as well-intended as this measure may be, it will not create

a level playing field, for it allows the candidates to accept in-kind contributions from vested interests. In-kind contributions include workers, telephone banks and outside efforts which have often been used much more effectively than money raised for a media campaign. It also places in the hands of the media an unusual opportunity to control the destiny of the candidates as there are no restraints on the media's news and editorial coverage, and there shouldn't be. However, the media can create an image for the candidates through news and editorial coverage that an opponent would not be able to overcome.

On the same hand, an organized group, whether it be a tax action committee or a municipal union, can muster its forces, provide telephone banks,

educational mailings and grassroots organizational support for a candidate, ensuring his or her victory.

Do we need election reform? Yes. It should start with term limitations that would ensure a turnover of candidates and equal opportunity for new candidates to emerge. The span of campaigns should be limited from four to six weeks. No active campaign or fund-raising could be conducted beforehand. All media that are licensed, such as radio and television, should be required to provide specific coverage to each campaign. Newspapers and other print media should voluntarily provide space for the identification of the issues and a presentation of the candidates' positions. Most important is the need for the public, itself, to take the selection of its candidates seriously.

In New York State, as in other states, all voters should have input into the primary system. This would take the parties' selection of candidates out of the backroom and into the public arena.

The trouble with most election law reform is that it opens up more loopholes than it closes. Although elections in a free society are of vital importance, we question whether tax monies are best used for this purpose.

We commend Levy for having the gumption to address the problem. We are happy to see the measure will be on the ballot. A half a loaf is better than none. The legislators should have had the decency to put all questions out for voter approval.

And why not?

# Top BOCES salaries capped

As a result of the fiasco in which the former superintendent of BOCES III, Dr. Edward Murphy, manipulated the system, resulting in a million dollar ripoff of the taxpayers, the New York State Legislature enacted caps on the salary BOCES superintendents may receive, and implemented other changes in the BOCES operations.

The legislation caps salaries for Board of Cooperative Educational Services district superintendents at 98% of the salary of the state education commissioner, effectively capping such salaries at \$127,400. More importantly, it puts an end to the practice of accumulating unlimited sick and vacation time. It puts limits on what can be accumulated and what can be factored into a retirement package.

BOCES superintendents supervise

their member school districts. BOCES is a quasi-state and local agency. Since BOCES is the power over local schools, we wonder why the legislature did not carry this ruling directly to the school districts. It would seem that if they are going to cap the superior organization, they would have carried forth with caps on school district administrators as well.

During the last 10 years, while enrollments in local school districts have been declining, the cost of administration has gone up by as much as 10 times in some districts. Not only have local school boards provided lucrative salaries, often exceeding \$100,000, to local superintendents, but they have given huge benefit packages, including accumulation of liberal vacation and sick days.

Murphy's million dollar parachute

was the symbolic straw that broke the camel's back. In reality, it is only pocket change in comparison to the accumulated goodies the superintendents and other administrators will receive across the state.

The legislation also requires approval by a majority of the component school districts' boards of education for a BOCES budget. Should a majority of component school districts pass a resolution disapproving of the BOCES administrative budget, the BOCES board must adopt a contingent administrative budget comprising no increase for the prior year, with the exception of annual adjustments to employee benefit plans.

The legislation reduces the terms of BOCES board members from five to three years, continues state payment of the current \$43,499 state sal-

ary supplement given to BOCES superintendents, and preserves their role as quasi-state employees.

While this legislation effects some changes, we believe much more has to be done to breathe credibility back into the BOCES image. We suppose it's a step in the right direction. However, we do believe that the legislature missed a good opportunity to put the brakes on runaway school administrative costs.

In enacting this legislation we also believe the lawmakers have opened a Pandora's Box and will be forced to readdress the question during the next session. Maybe this time, facing reelection themselves, they will be able to muster up the courage to do what they should have done the first time around.

And why not?

## 'Open letter to a coward'

# 'Garbage, you almost killed my son'

Dear Editor:

This is an open letter to a coward who at about 10:30 p.m., on July 1, in a McDonald's parking lot not far from the Commack Multiplex Cinema, fired a .22 caliber pellet from a rifle pump pellet gun striking my 15-year-old son in the chest. The police report describes you as follows: "Above complainant reports that an unknown black male wearing green/maroon striped shirt operating a late model Toyota Tercel white...fired a shot from what appeared to be a pellet gun causing a puncture wound to his chest. Suspect fled in above vehicle--unknown direction."

Now, coward, we know you're also too punk to have hung around but in case you or especially your neighbors read this, let me tell you about my son. He's six feet, two inches tall, an A student who plays in his high school band, has a green belt in jiu-jitsu, is a member of the National Honor Society and is loved by all. As it turned out, God's love for my son intervened. Yes, you almost killed him. The

slug you put in him passed by or through his lung, missed all the vital stuff and stopped just short of his heart. That's right, garbage, you almost killed my son! He will carry the slug in him probably for the rest of his life. After spending half the night in the St. John's Episcopal emergency room, he was CAT scanned the next day and at about 3:30 p.m., sent by ambulance to Stony Brook University Hospital where a team of what I later found out to be some of the world's foremost cardiac surgeons were readying the operating room for him. But, alas, garbage, you weren't slimy enough--the slug miraculously missed the vital stuff and stopped before killing him. You came within an inch or probably less of killing my son. As things look now, scar tissue will form around it--no MRIs for him ever--and that should be it.

Now let me tell you what you did to my wife and me. You--to all intents and purposes--came within an inch or less of bringing our lives to an end.

I have been a prosecutor for almost 25 years. I've been told I'm good, I'm tough, I'm scholarly and I'm fair. How nice! I also have blood and tears, like any other father, and, along with my beloved wife, am certainly capable of agony. And agony is what you--slimy garbage--put my wife and me through. I have things I would like to tell a lot of other people about things in general, and their favorite or trendy labels and social theories in particular, but I shall keep these "tears" close to my heart and let those others simply use their consciences and their imaginations if they are so led. To me, coward, you're just a bum and that's all you'll ever be when they sweep you out of the gutter. I have no illusions that this outpouring will do any good but I owe it to my son. Maybe some parents who gave their kids cars will also take their other toys away from them.

Lawrence N. Gray  
Suffolk County

# Kissing our Main Streets goodbye?

It would seem an application of common sense for town officials to learn from the mistakes of the past, whether in their own area of jurisdiction or elsewhere. Unfortunately, that does not usually occur.

A case in point: years back the governing fathers in the Islip Town area approved a flood of requests for shopping centers and malls. The result: the downtown area of Bay Shore suffered a tremendous financial impact. The increased competition from the larger stores drove many of the smaller merchants out of business.

Fears have recently been raised that the same thing may well be happening further east. More than 100 business people were on hand re-

cently for a meeting of the Brookhaven Town Board to air their concerns about a proposed expansion of an outlet center in the Bellport area. The business people pointed out to the board that the small business owner is an integral part of the community, most usually the first solicited for funds or merchandise for local organizational activities. The larger malls and outlet centers are far less community-oriented or supportive.

For years, town officials have approved strip shopping center plans, one after another. The proliferation of these centers along virtually every major roadway in virtually every town is a common cause of complaint. They lead to increased traffic congestion, increased competition,

and empty stores. Rather than curbing new shopping center growth in favor of rehabilitation of older, mostly empty centers, town officials approve away, seemingly mindful of the overall impact of their actions.

Officials have claimed in the past if a tract of land has the proper zoning for a strip center, they are powerless to do anything but approve an application. While there might be some validity to that reasoning, we can't help but wonder if within the legal minds of town government there should be a way to say "No!"

In the case of those proposals which require a change of zoning to pave the way for construction, there is no such excuse. If property has

been zoned for industrial use, the town has the right, in fact the responsibility, to keep it in that zoning category unless it is in the best interests of the whole community to do otherwise.

At the very least, the town should be required to provide an economic impact statement before such a change of zone is given. That document should focus on the impact on other businesses in the area, the need for roadway improvements, and any other negative effect the proposed project may have.

What is the benefit of adding new stores when it only leads to the closing of others? How many stationery stores, pizza or Chinese restaurants can survive in any given area? How much can you dilute the limited supply of spendable retail dollars before you wind up driving out the Main Street merchants in favor of the outlets and malls in one area, while other malls stand half-vacant in others?

If this is proper planning, we're all in a whole lot of trouble! We might just as well kiss our Main Streets goodbye, watch them become empty storefronts that provide no benefit to our communities.

If the outlet centers or price clubs wish to become part of a community, and draw away the dollars from the stores that have been contributing to the community's needs and paying their share of taxes, let them locate in the empty facilities that exist in all too many shopping centers already. Let them become part of the community, to share in its burdens and its dreams.

The merchants in our communities have done that over the years, do we forget so fast? Shouldn't we be concerned for those who have helped us grow and meet our needs in the past rather than put out the welcome mat for any and all who wish to plop themselves down in our midst for their own financial gain?

And why not?

# Let the show begin

The Islip Town Board has, in our view unwisely, rejected a permit for the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus to hold performances in that town at the end of the month.

We say unfortunate because thousands of young children, as well as adults, will be denied a firsthand exposure to the fun and excitement of a circus performance, and animals they might not have an opportunity to see. Unfortunate because if you are not able to witness wild and domesticated animals in the flesh, you cannot develop a respect and appreciation of them.

Animal activists consider any utilization of wild or domesticated animals cruel and inhumane. Their demand that the town board capitulate to their view and not allow the circus, we believe, is wrong.

Over the years we have attended many of the Clyde Beatty circuses, both as a spectator and a journalist. We love animals and have a reverence for all life. We have seen these animals perform and have had the privilege of inspecting the behind-the-scenes facilities. The animals

have always appeared to be well-fed, well-groomed and well-cared for. They are a valuable and expensive asset to the owners of the circus. Inhumane treatment, starvation or cruel handling of the animals could lead to their premature death or even worse, turn these docile and disciplined animals into the wild creatures they are capable of being.

One must remember that the wild is the cruelest environment of all. In the wild, the law is kill or be killed. Every creature has been placed there for a reason. Every creature faces the threat of a superior species, each creature is a potential meal for that superior species, unless it hones its protective skills to the highest degree. Only by the development of these skills does it remain alive. When it becomes old or ill, it becomes the victim and its life is normally ended in an agonizing death as it is pulled down and killed by others.

Traveling circuses once had a very seedy reputation. With the multiple of regulations mandated by local, state and federal governments, these shows today are highly regu-

lated and very sensitive to the perception of the treatment of their animals as well as their health and their well being.

The Clyde Beatty circus has fortunately brought thousands of people into contact with animals that the public would never see and performances that should be cheered rather than jeered.

Animal activists should be commended for their vigilance and watchfulness over animals but, as with any other group, there are extremists and their views should be regarded as such.

The Islip Town Board would be wise to reconsider its hysterical reaction. It has, in this case, reacted to small pressure groups at the expense of the vast majority of the residents. Unless it can come up with documented evidence that the circus and its animals pose a genuine threat to the safety of the public, not expressions of "what if an elephant runs across the road" as the board did in rejecting the permit, it should stop clowning around and do what is right. And why not?

# LILCO's unreasonable rate of return

The Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) has a monopoly on distributing gas and electric on Long Island. It is granted an exclusive franchise for this service area. Corporately, it is regarded as a quasi-monopoly. It has monopolistic powers, but its rates and operations are supposed to be regulated by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The Public Service Commission serves as an adjunct of the governor. He appoints the member directors and they are confirmed by the New York State Senate. The Public Service Commission has a dual responsibility. A responsibility to make sure that the rates charged by LILCO are fair and equitable to the consumer and to the investors in that publically-held corporation.

LILCO is a for-profit corporation

just like any other business. The main difference between LILCO and the rest of the businesses in New York State is that it has monopolistic powers and, because its rates and operations are regulated by the PSC, LILCO is guaranteed a set profit. Investors in LILCO are almost guaranteed a set rate of return if the company is operated at all prudently.

The Long Island Lighting Company's ratepayers are charged the highest rates in the nation, as much as three times those charged by other utilities in other states. LILCO is permitted an opportunity to earn a 10.6% overall rate of return on its total investment in providing service to its customers.

A 10.6% net return on an almost foolproof investment was very generous, although not excessive, during

the 80s when inflation ran in the double digits. Interest on simple bank certificates of deposit, at one point, was over 15%. Today, passbook savings are paying less than 3%, one of the lowest rates in the past 30 years. Certificates of deposit are paying 3% to 8% for those going out 30 years. Governmental securities, tax-free municipals are paying similar interest. Most businesses are satisfied to have any kind of profit where once they expected a minimum of 10% to 20% on their investment.

Is it reasonable, is it prudent, is it fair to all concerned for LILCO to be locked into high, guaranteed profits? Why should it be guaranteed a minimum of 10.6% when the market says 6% is reasonable and prudent? What is the logic of allowing LILCO to petition the PSC for additional rate in-

creases to make up for reduced sales due to conservation programs initiated by LILCO and supported by the ratepayers? Why isn't the PSC reviewing these circumstances? Why is the governor not using his position to demand fairness for the residents of the family of New York?

LILCO's exorbitant rates have heavily contributed to the mass exodus of our businesses and productive residents from this once rich region. Is there any logical reason why LILCO should not be forced to reduce its profits as real, competitive businesses have had to do to survive?

We would be happy to print responses to these questions by LILCO, the Public Service Commission and the governor. Their answers are long overdue.

And why not?

# First casino in New York State opens

Upstate, off the New York State Thruway, near Syracuse, the first legalized gambling casino in the state opened last week.

Like Foxwood in Connecticut, which has been a resounding success, this casino has opened on an Indian reservation that has sovereign powers over those of New York. It is estimated that the casino will make at least \$100 million for the Indians during the first year of operation.

The casino will take advantage of the public's passion for gambling. Bus-

loads of people will be trucked in to be given an opportunity to lose their shirts in hopes of winning a fortune. To some it will be a day's recreation, for others, it will be their families' food and the rent check. To both classes of people, it's another outlet for those that gamble.

Presently, they have legalized gambling through Lotto and Off Track Betting (OTB), but most of the gambling that is conducted in New York State is done through illegal means. People, since before Christ, have gam-

bled. All the rules that the politicians can make will not stop this practice.

When the state says "no," organized crime says "yes." Many of the crime families got their start and still maintain their foundation through bookmaking, illegal card games and gambling houses. They profit by the stupidity of the state.

Over the years, proposals have been made to legalize gambling in New York. The moralists in our society have exerted their viewpoint and have thwarted all legislation that would make controlled gambling legal.

The Indians are getting around it by opening casinos on reservations. The mob has gotten around it by operating illegal gambling facilities that are winked at more than closed down by our law enforcement agencies.

Busloads of people from Long Island are trucked each day to Atlantic City in New Jersey and Foxwood in Connecticut. The state cannot stop these people. With them go lost jobs that could be here in the state of New York, not only in the casinos but in all of the support industries as well. The state not only loses the jobs, but loses the tax revenues that could accrue if gambling was legalized.

Shouldn't the state consider the enactment of limited gambling zones where casinos could operate throughout the state? Particularly, those zones located in tourist areas? More people would come to those areas, more money would be spent, more jobs created, more taxes raised. As the saying goes, if you can't fight them, join them.

Obviously, we have not been overly successful in controlling organized crime's gambling activities and we will be no more successful in benefiting from reservation gambling. Isn't it time to join them?

And why not?

## Time for aggressive action

Suffolk County legislators Joseph Rizzo (R-East Islip), Thomas Finlay (R-Brentwood) and Michael O'Donohoe (C-East Northport) proposed, earlier this year, that the county implement a fingerprint imaging system in an effort to weed out welfare fraud from the social services rolls. In order to do so, the county would require state approval to be included as a pilot program. The state failed to act, so Rizzo has now filed a bill that calls for the county to move forward with the plan without state action. We applaud the action.

Suffolk County is facing a fiscal disaster, with expenses mounting faster than revenues can be raised. We have often criticized our legislators for trying to solve the county's financial crisis by raising taxes, both property and sales, rather than making the necessary budget cuts required to resolve the deficit problems. This bill is a step in the right direction, as is the fingerprint imaging plan.

That plan would utilize the advantages of computer technology to properly identify welfare recipients. It involves a fingerprint imaging system which would then enable the storing of those fingerprints into a computer system for later recall. It could help eliminate any instance of a recipient collecting from different welfare centers under different names. It offers a fail-safe method of identification.

According to figures from the Department of Social Services, there are currently 18,848 welfare cases in the county, representing 46,146 individuals receiving benefits under the various welfare programs. In 1992, welfare fraud was uncovered representing about 2.1% of the gross Home Relief and Aid to Dependent Children expenditures. That amounts to just over \$3.54 million in taxpayer dollars illegally received. How much more is there? Let's fingerprint and find out.

The fingerprint imaging proposal is not without detractors. Some claim it is an invasion of privacy; others look at it as "picking on" welfare recipients. It is, in our view, neither. It is simply an effort to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are used for the purpose intended. Those dollars are designed to help those in need. Those involved in fraud are stealing from both the taxpayers and the legitimate needy. Stealing is a crime. It must be stopped.

The lack of action on the state level to approve the program--the Senate approved but the Assembly didn't--comes as no surprise. The state is all too ready to impose spending requirements--otherwise known as mandates--but actionless when it comes to applying common sense or needed taxpayer relief.

We urge the county legislators to approve Rizzo's bill. We dare the state to say, "No, you can't weed out criminal actions, criminal fraud. You must allow your taxpayers' dollars to be sto-

len by those who fraudulently file improper claims."

For too long now our county officials have gone hat in hand to Albany pleading for "mandate relief." Year after year they go back, and year after year they accomplish nothing. After all these years of trying, and vague promises by Governor Mario Cuomo and others, it's time to take another tack. Do it!

It's time for an aggressive stance. Time for action.

And why not?

## Not for re-election

The "Not Wanted" posters that have appeared as editorial cartoons in Suffolk Life have stirred some controversy and castigation among those who, by their actions, earned the privilege of having their pictures and names included.

The purpose of these "Not Wanted" posters was to draw specific attention of the electorate to the elected officials who were not voting in the best interests of all of the taxpayers. They have been effective.

For a change, the voters know the specific legislators who are voting to increase spending and taxes. They can

put a picture together with a name and an action, rather than just having to settle for the legislators doing it to us. These are single issues where legislators have, in our view, voted wrong. The "Not Wanted" cartoons target, however, only one, single issue. There are many others to be considered as well.

The term of office for legislators covers a period of two years. During that period, in our view, the votes cast by legislators are right on some issues, while on other issues they are wrong. It's the total sum that we, as an educated electorate, should look at. Those legislators whose photos repeatedly

appear on our "Not Wanted" posters because of a vote not in the best interests of the taxpayers should be eliminated. Those who vote right most of the time, however, should not be totally condemned based on one issue alone.

In this coming election, we hope to clearly identify those sitting legislators who have, in our view, been on the wrong side more than the right side. Identification of bad legislators is one thing, but of equal importance is the quality, the believability and the positions of those who are running against them.

We hope this year is different, but in too many races in the past, the challenging opponents were by far inferior, offering little hope of improvement over the known weaknesses of the incumbents. It is up to the challengers to prove, without question, that they are the superior candidates, are more honest, more believable and their positions are more in tune with their constituents than those of the incumbents.

Too often, we have found ourselves in the position of having to support the devil we know because of the devil we don't. What a wonderful, refreshing year of politics it would be if new candidates presented themselves as intelligent and well-versed on the issues and, above all, believable. The process of choosing the best candidate to represent the majority would be an easy task instead of a dreaded endeavor.

And why not?

## Breach of integrity

It has come to our attention that an editorial cartoon which appeared in Suffolk Life has been utilized, without permission, as part of the political campaign for a Democratic candidate for a county legislature seat in the Mastic-Shirley area. Suffolk Life is a copyrighted publication. The use of material without permission from this publication is a violation of the copyright law.

In order to prevent any further misuse of copyrighted Suffolk Life material, individuals involved in political campaigns should be aware of this publication's stance on the use of cartoons, editorials or stories which

appear in this publication. Permission must be secured before any such material is used. In some instances, permission to reprint an editorial may be granted, but the editorial must be reprinted in its entirety. Excerpts of only those portions of an editorial that may have been favorable to a candidate are not permitted. Cartoons originated by Suffolk Life are included in these restrictions.

We will consider any violation of these restrictions as a breach of integrity and will deal with each instance accordingly.

And why not?