

## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Cat Was A No-Brainer

The ripoff of \$42 million of ratepayers' and stockholders' money by LILCO Chairman Bill Catacosinos, otherwise known as The Cat, was a no-brainer.

The Cat ran a monopoly—a monopoly that, with the Public Service Commission's (PSC) sanction, allowed a 14% return. LILCO basically operated under a cost-plus contract. This economic power was granted to it by the PSC which guaranteed LILCO a right of return on all capital investments.

The PSC guaranteed LILCO a profit on all operations and generation of power, provided its management ran the company prudently.

With most businesses in the real world, where competition dictates profits, net returns range from a 1/2% to 10%. In some rare cases where companies are run very prudently and there is a lack of competition, businesses can earn 15% to 20%. In the real world, profits are never guaranteed and returns are not ensured.

In the make-believe business world of a state-sanctioned monopoly, because of the guarantee of profits, returns on investments should have been minimized.

The PSC, a governmental arm of Governor George Pataki, did not provide either the proper restraints or appropriate oversight of LILCO. It allowed an overweening rate of return for the stockholders. It did not take any brains or business acumen to show a profit for stockholders with such guarantees. All one needed to do was buy the governmental officials and influence the PSC in any way possible. That guaranteed a profit, no matter how incompetently one ran the company.

There are those who say Catacosinos' golden parachute was deserved because

he brought the company back from the brink of bankruptcy, outsmarted two governors, and sold his company at a huge profit.

Yes, he did outwit Cuomo and Pataki. He did have the PSC eating out of his hand. This is tragic, because the PSC has a dual responsibility. It is responsible for making sure the expenditures and rates of the utilities are prudent and justifiable. This includes executive compensation. It also has a responsibility to Wall Street and the utility's investors to make sure the company is financially stable.

The PSC failed miserably on the consumers' behalf. It allowed itself to be lobbied, pressured and bought off by the utilities. It granted steep rates, the highest in the country, to LILCO at the expense of the consumers.

Big payoffs for the executive staff are not uncommon in the world of real business. But the ripoff Catacosinos perpetrated on the ratepayers and stockholders was totally unjustified in what was supposed to be a controlled monopoly. The risks are not the same and the rewards should not be either.

There are those who say the ratepayers were not ripped off, they claim instead that it was the stockholders who were robbed.

Guess what, folks, the money to fund Catacosinos' golden parachute came first from ratepayers, who were charged the highest rates in the nation until the money flowed to the stockholders. It is still ratepayer money.

The Cat should hang his head in shame. What he has done may be legal, and therefore allowable, but it shows no ethics, morals or respect for the consumers

## Raising Expectations

For nearly two decades, as taxpayers invested record levels of revenue into our educational system, standards for achievement were consistently lowered because more students were failing to absorb knowledge. This phenomenon was brought out during the taxpayer revolution against excessive educational spending.

The New York State Regents board has finally acknowledged this fact and ordered more stringent Regents examinations that students will be required to pass in order to graduate.

For years, colleges have been complaining about the poor education students receive in public schools. A few years back, the head of the Suffolk County Community College asserted that 65% of the students attending that institution needed remedial help at the high school level before they could take college courses. On average, they needed nine months of remedial work before they were up to par.

We have read reports of much moaning and groaning about the new standards being set. Students are wondering how they are going to be able to achieve a passing grade. They have a right to worry. We are the ones who allowed the system to let them down. Now they are going to have to

work extra hard to get up to speed.

Educators are bemoaning the fact that they are going to have to put in extra work to bring the students' levels up, and, of course, looking for additional compensation. We have little sympathy for them. If they had been consistently doing the job they were hired to do (and for which they are handsomely compensated) they would not be facing this dilemma.

Nor should the Regents stance come as a surprise, it has been debated for more than half a decade, and anyone who cared to look would have had to realize that we could not continue to shortchange our kids' education solely to benefit the teachers' unions.

Children are in school to get an education first and foremost. All the rest of the nice things we do for our children and the educational establishment is fluff. It feels good, but does not prepare children to enter the real world as intelligent human beings, able to read, write, and have a basic knowledge of math and science to help them understand the world around them.

We applaud the Regents board's effort and hope it does not compromise its standards for any reason.

And why not?

## Final Chance To Sign Petition

This is your last chance to have any say on whether there is a referendum placed on November's ballot regarding the LILCO-LIPA fiasco. Your signature is needed on the petitions currently being circulated by volunteers in your community.

Although the deal has gone through,

Town	Volunteer	Phone Number
Babylon	Suffolk Legislator Maxine Postal	854-1111
Brookhaven	Nanette Essel	924-5292
	Richard Johannesen	821-4683
East Hampton	Naomi Lazard	324-6104
Huntington	Councilman Steve Israel	351-3173
	Nat Wright	643-5714
Islip	Quota Met	
Riverhead	Quota Met	
Shelter Island	Quota Met	
Smithtown	Jack Kulka	543-3570
Southampton	George Guldi	852-8200
Southold	Quota Met	

who have been bled dry.

Governor Pataki should also be hanging his head in shame for betraying the ratepayers by rallying his troops—particularly our Republican state senators and loyal Republican assembly members—using the excuse that it was “the best deal around.”

The sad part is, none of them has ever read the entire deal. Our state representatives must now accept the full scorn of the voters for betraying them. They were either too dumb to read or too loyal to the boss to question what was right there in front of them in black and white.

This unforgivable ripoff has tainted the new corporation, MarketSpan, and is quickly earning it the same disrespect and hatred earned by LILCO. There is already talk that MarketSpan may not be able to withstand the ill will that is brewing.

Flush with \$2 billion of LILCO's ill-gotten gains, MarketSpan will become a prime

target for takeover. There is already speculation that Con Ed may make a bid in the very near future.

Before this happens, the question must be answered, “What is the Cat's golden parachute from MarketSpan in case there is a change of organization in this company?” Is it unreasonable to expect that the Cat hasn't already negotiated a bigger and better exit bonus from MarketSpan than he was able to bamboozle out of LILCO?

The PSC should be examining this question right now. Although it has probably forgotten that it has a responsibility to the people, and that executives of monopolies, who are already very well compensated, should not be allowed the excessive compensation that most businesses reward their executives with.

Let us hear from the PSC. That is, if the governor will allow it.

And why not?

## Bashing Budget Constraints

The United States Supreme Court overturned a law allowing the president line item veto powers. This is tragic, because it was the one hope left that in this century constraints would be placed on the wild spending practices and the pork that congress uses to buy votes.

Prior to the line item veto—which congress recognized it needed in order to put restraints on its excessive spending—the president was forced to accept or veto the entire budget sent to him by congress.

The federal budget is an approximately 3.5-foot-high document. Hidden in these thousands of pages are tax breaks for people who can afford high-priced lobbyists and fat that is not necessary spending, but goes a long way toward getting a local congressman or senator reelected.

This sort of spending can include projects in the home district that may be nice to have but are not necessary and are not particularly wanted by the majority. They do, however, offer favorable treatment for groups in the know.

Clinton was the first president to have this ability to strike pork barrel items out of

the budget and made full use of it. He very judiciously used this newfound power, but was challenged in court and lost.

Now it is up to congress, which could show some restraint, but we doubt that it will. Instead of incorporating thousands of pork barrel bills into the budget, it could pass each individually and let each measure stand on its own merits. The chances of this happening are about as good as a bull giving birth.

American people must take this bull by the horns and pass a constitutional amendment. They must tell the supreme court, “We are tired of your interfering with the legislative government by overriding legislation that was meant to protect the American taxpayer.”

The enacting of a constitutional amendment is no easy task, but it must be done. The effort must begin with each and every one of us, by letting our federal representatives know that we want the process initiated and we want them to support it.

And why not?



## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

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## Veto The Court Study Expense

There is a serious need for the Suffolk County Legislature to make good on a promise to build a new civil court complex in Riverhead. This agreement dates back to the early eighties. Riverhead is the county seat and its downtown area, where there is an existing court complex, badly needs an economic shot in the arm.

This is the same reason the \$130 million, 40-courtroom Cohalan Court Complex in Central Islip was constructed—it provided that area with desperately needed economic relief.

During the eighties, the Suffolk County Bar Association, the county legislature, the county executive, and town officials were trying to stem the hostilities between western and eastern Suffolk officials and attorneys, so everyone agreed to spread the wealth by placing court complexes in western Suffolk and in Riverhead.

A year ago, the county legislature, the administrative judge's office and the county executive conceded that it was Riverhead's turn for a boost and that a \$42.7 million, 16-courtroom complex was needed in Suffolk. They also agreed that Riverhead was the place to build it.

But now that it is finally Riverhead's turn to benefit from such an expense, eight western Suffolk legislators suddenly decided that it is necessary to spend \$200,000 to hire an expert to analyze Suffolk County's courtroom needs. On top of that, the other 10 legislators, including two East End representatives, agreed to spend the money on the study in some deluded show of political fairness.

It would appear this latest move by these legislators is a blatant attempt to expand the Cohalan complex, claiming it may be too inconvenient for some if these courts are located in Riverhead.

State Senators Jim Lack and Ken LaValle are also pushing for more court-

rooms in Central Islip to provide court clinics for the Touro Law School, which has relocated to the Cohalan complex from Huntington.

The county executive's capital budget calls for spending almost \$6 million to expand the Cohalan complex. If our western county legislators and state senators believe these additional courtrooms are needed in Central Islip, then perhaps that money should be used accordingly.

As for the convenience issue, no one was concerned about convenience when the county agreed to have the Cohalan court and administrative office complex constructed, or the H. Lee Dennison court and office complex in Hauppauge.

Instead of following through on the agreement like honorable people, these eight legislators think we should spend another \$200,000 to conduct yet another study in order to find the "appropriate" location.

They capriciously ignore the fact that a study already exists. Suffolk's State Administrative Judge Mary Margaret Werner went before the county legislature last week and explained that the proposed Riverhead complex is part of the county's Courts Master Plan Update which was completed in 1996.

It is ridiculous to think that courtroom needs have changed so drastically in only two years. The only reasons for a new study is to change the facts to fit whatever argument the legislature wants to support.

The county executive must veto this measure. Spending another \$200,000 to study something that has been studied extensively is a complete waste of taxpayers' money. Bob Gaffney must stand firm on this issue and not simply go along to get along.

And why not?

## A Case Of Missing Money

What became of the almost \$2 billion missing of Long Island Lighting Company's customers' money? It somehow got lost in the transaction between LIPA and LILCO and no one, from the governor on down, is speaking out about it.

During the eighties, the federal tax laws were changed. LILCO had already collected taxes from its customers—taxes it was supposed to pass on to the federal government. A change in federal tax law did away with these taxes, but the money already had been collected by LILCO.

The government ruled that because LILCO was in poor financial health at that time, it could keep this tax money and not pay it back for up to 30 years. It is estimated that LILCO is holding more than \$1 billion. We have yet to see an accounting of this money collected from the ratepayers, or any plan for LILCO to refund it, now that the company has been dissolved.

The two major certiorari suits resulted in LILCO obtaining a judgment first for

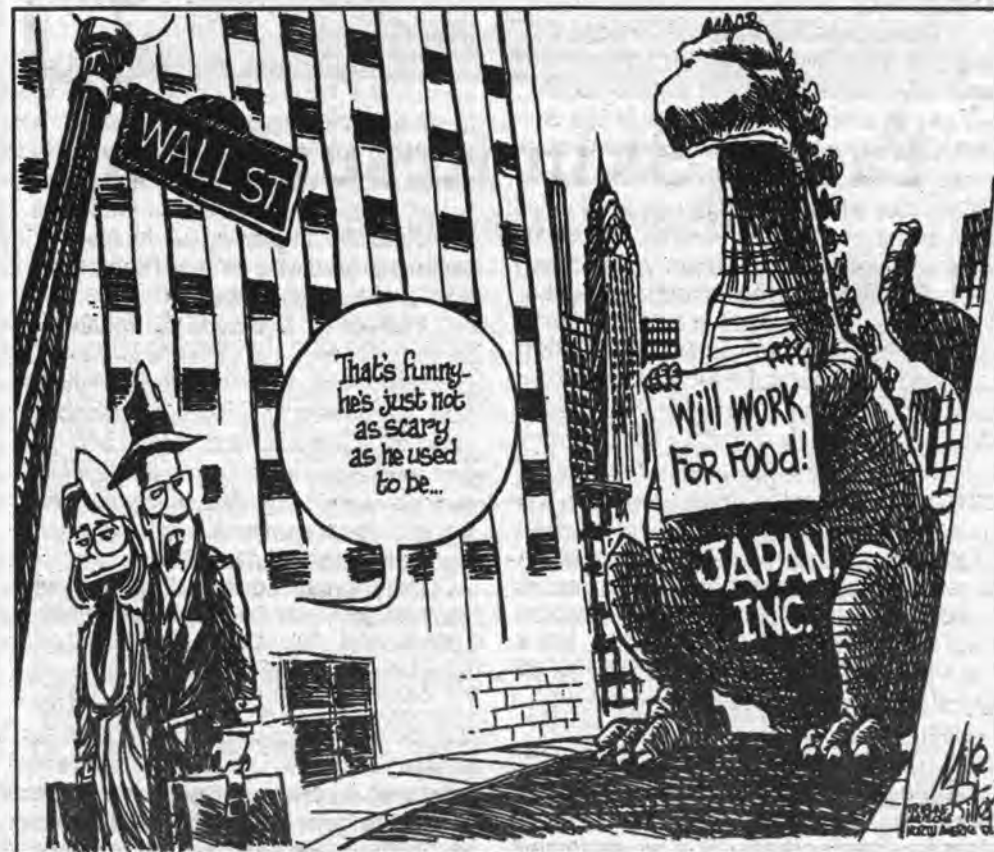
\$100 million plus, and second for \$1.2 billion. LILCO's customers were billed for the overcharge. When LILCO obtained the judgment, that money rightfully should have flowed back to its customers. This was not a LILCO asset, it was a ratepayer asset.

What is the mechanism for this money to flow back to the customer? LILCO has supposedly settled the second judgment for \$650 million. Suffolk County ratepayers are being charged higher electrical rates to pay this judgment off, but how is the money being refunded to them?

It's their money, it does not belong to LILCO, and we don't see any mechanism in place for returning it to the people who were overcharged.

In all good conscience, the governor owes Long Island ratepayers an explanation. A couple of billion dollars is a lot of money to let slip through the cracks.

And why not?



## Think Before You Act

True to form, Brookhaven National Laboratory has come up with half a plan to clean up the radioactive materials (radionuclides) and heavy metals dumped into the Peconic River.

These radionuclides include plutonium, cesium-137, cobalt and strontium-90. The heavy metals found in river sediment are mercury, silver, vanadium and PCB.

In the fifties and sixties, the lab operated a Graphite Research Reactor that used uranium, which produced plutonium. Much of the plutonium was trucked away, but several barrels were reportedly dumped in the old hazardous waste management area (the swamps) of the 5,200-acre former army camp.

The heavy metals apparently also leaked into the river, because the plant's sewage waste system discharges into the swamp, which runs into the river through drainage trenches on the property.

When BNL discovered the new contamination, it quickly alerted the authorities and surrounding residents. It began a study to find out the extent of the contamination and make recommendations to resolve the problem.

BNL and county health officials—who, by the way, initially said the river was not contaminated—have proposed what they are calling a "sensible cleanup process" which involves diverting river waters, drying out the river bed and planting several crops of sunflowers, pumpkin, Chinese cabbage, and Indian mustard seed plants along the shore and in the riverbed to draw the heavy metals and radionuclides from its sediment.

This process, phytoextraction, uses plants that absorb metals through their roots and deposit contaminants in the stem and leaves of the plants. The plants are then removed and disposed of. This treatment will take almost a year, and will

be funded by the federal Department of Energy.

This is all well and good and has a positive ring to it, but does not address the ecology of the river and all life that springs from it. It does not address the natural plant life that has grown in and along the river, nor does it address the impact that such contamination will have on the fish in the river or animals which have lived along the banks and cannot survive without the river.

What does the DEC have to say about this plan? What is the reaction of the conservationists and the environmentalists? Tiger Salamanders live in the swamps and on the river banks. Are they no longer endangered? How do you divert a river? Pipe the water underground?

Long Island is flat. You cannot build dams to hold back this kind of water. Either idea would take years to come to fruition and billions of dollars to fund. Where are you going to dispose of the plants that may contain the radioactive particles? You just cannot dump them in the local landfill.

Coincidentally, a couple of weeks ago, the DEC reported a fish kill where several thousand fish died in one of the ponds down river from BNL. The official story is that the fish died from a depletion of oxygen in the water. The best guesstimation is that many of the river vegetation is dying and therefore depleting the oxygen in the water, but no one has any idea what caused the problem.

The lab's approach to this problem is typical of the thinking that got them into this problem in the first place—acting without thinking, which only brings bigger problems later on.

BNL should really learn to look before it leaps.

And why not?



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## Let This Law Stand

The Suffolk legislature and Suffolk Planning Commission must shun a request by Former County Executive John V.N. Klein to allow any changes in the county's farmland preservation program.

Although he has not approached the legislature yet regarding the issue, last week Klein unsuccessfully petitioned the Planning Commission to allow his client to withdraw 100 acres from the program, although the development rights to the property were purchased in 1977.

In the Farmland Preservation Program, the county purchases the development rights for \$8,000 to \$30,000 an acre and then provides the farmer with up to 80% in tax abatement each year.

Klein argues that his client is looking to build a 450-acre golf course and needs 100 acres of an existing sod farm to do so. The sod farm is part of the county's Farmland Preservation Program, but Klein's client, William Talmage of Riverhead, is willing to switch the development rights agreement to another 100 acres that he claims is much more suitable for preservation.

The interesting point is that Klein is

considered one of the fathers of this legislation since he helped establish the program specifically for agricultural use when he was county executive. At that time, he was heralded throughout the region as a progressive thinker and benefited greatly from this legislation.

But now, as a developer-attorney, he is attempting to circumvent the law by trying to convince the county legislature and planning commission to revamp the preservation law to allow for an administrative or committee decision instead of the required public referendum.

Talmage's family has been farming in this area for the past 300 years and the 100-acre parcel in question was one of the first put into the program.

The family's 450-acre golf course complex proposal sounds like a good project for Riverhead and should be seriously considered, but when the farmland preservation program was established in the mid-seventies, part of the law included the restriction of holding a public referendum

on any changes, making it difficult for anyone in the program to get out of it.

Making it difficult to leave the program was to prevent farmers from taking cold cash in troubled years and opting out of the program during stronger economic times. It was also a move to convince the public—which is footing the bill through taxes—that these programs were permanently preserving specific farmland.

## Stark's Decision Revisited

We had an occasion to re-read Judge Thomas Stark's decision in the LILCO certiorari case that resulted in the billion dollar judgment in favor of the utility.

LILCO had argued that the plant was only worth \$1. This was the price the state had agreed to pay for it in the deal that former Governor Mario Cuomo had made. It is normal in legal transactions concerning a sale to use the terminology, "\$1.00 and other valuable considerations."

The valuable considerations LILCO received were the Shoreham Regulatory Asset and a right to receive revenues from the plant's generation of electricity and the profit accrued.

Expert witnesses for Suffolk County had argued that although the plant was technically sold for \$1, its real value was the cost of construction, the resulting regulatory asset, and the profits that would accrue from this asset.

Stark threw out the experts' testimony, basically attacking their credibility, contending they could not be believed

To change that perception now on a parcel that has been in the program for more than 20 years would simply provide another reason for the public to lose its trust in government.

If there is a sound reason for swapping the development rights purchase from one parcel to another, then let the property owner and his attorney make their case in a public forum, but the law should not be changed arbitrarily.

And why not?

## Good Work, More Needed

The Regents Task Force On Teaching should be applauded for its recommendations for improving the state's teacher certification and continuing education process. However, its suggestions do not go far enough.

Beginning in 2003, in addition to the currently required bachelor's degree and master's degree in education, the task force's proposal suggests that new teachers will have to achieve qualifying scores on the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST), Assessment of Teaching Skills (ATS), and Content Specialty Test (CST) before earning an "Initial Certificate."

These new teachers will have to also spend a year with a mentoring teacher and another three years of "satisfactory" teaching experience before obtaining a "Professional Certificate." In addition, they will be required to meet certain criteria every five years in order to maintain that certification.

Teachers already licensed by the state will be issued the professional certificates, but will have to go through a minimum of 175 hours of professional growth training every five years to maintain that license. The growth training criteria will be established by the 18-member Regents board according to the needs of the state's students. Failure to maintain certification will be grounds for dismissal, even for tenured teachers.

How well a district does each year will be presented in a statistically-based district "Report Card." However, all the history classes available will not rid our ranks of incompetent teachers.

The Regents task force's proposed legislation suggests that each local district should be responsible for establishing more objective and fair teacher evaluations. This would be accomplished by requiring administrators to be trained in staff evaluations based on proven criteria to be adopted by the Regents board.

That training should include guidelines

for establishing district or regional criteria for administrators, so that they, as well as the students can effectively evaluate each teacher. Such a mechanism should include peer evaluation.

This administrator-student-colleague information should then be sent to an independent third party who could provide the residents through the district with a "report card" on each teacher.

Because this would be public information, it would accomplish two major goals: It will guarantee that teachers will be held much more accountable, thereby inspiring students to become more responsible in their studies.

Many teachers are good, conscientious professionals who work diligently to educate our students, but there are too many bad teachers out there who are brazenly protected by the union.

Many of our students have been failing because of disciplinary problems and because the academic system is not demanding enough, but there are also students who have failed because of bad teachers.

The Regents board and state legislators must support the legislation being proposed by the task force, but it must also take the additional step of developing a realistic process for monitoring and terminating teachers who have been deemed as bad teachers.

State legislators must further streamline Education Law, Section 3020-a, which deals with disciplining and dismissing teachers. A few years ago, the restrictions within that law were relaxed, but it still costs a school district about \$180,000 to engage in teacher discipline action.

These changes would go a long way to improve the education process in New York State, but it is equally important for the state legislature to address any cost to the taxpayers that would be created.

And why not?

## Justice At Last!

Taxpayers should be dancing in the streets. Congress just passed an IRS reform bill that dramatically changes the rules under which this agency operates.

Our American system of justice operates on the premise that you are innocent until proven guilty. Prior to this reform bill, the IRS operated under the premise that you are guilty until you can prove your innocence.

Last spring, Congress held a series of hearings during which taxpayers testified to horror stories of losing their homes, businesses and farms—even lives—because of the IRS' strong-arm tactics. In some situations, taxpayers were completely innocent, but the IRS put them through hell and they had little ability to defend themselves. Their assets were seized, their lives ruined.

When we listened to these hearings, we thought Congress would address the problem up to a point, but we really expected the crux of the problem to be swept under the rug as usual.

We were pleasantly surprised to read that Congress has passed a sweeping reform bill and that President Clinton has promised to sign it.

With the new reforms, it will be up to the IRS to prove your guilt before convicting you; and, you will have the ability to defend yourself before they can seize your assets.

because they were biased against LILCO. Stark bought LILCO's argument lock, stock and barrel. It has been reported that parts of Stark's brief explaining his decision were taken directly from LILCO's original brief, complete with typos and other errors.

Stark's ruling is still being appealed. The Appellate Division is expected to render a decision sometime this fall. We hope the Appellate Division will take into consideration the fact that LIPA and the Long Island ratepayers just purchased Shoreham for a third time.

Shoreham may not have had a tangible value, but it was sold as if it did, and this should have been considered by Stark. We were not comfortable with Stark's decision when we first read it and were even less comfortable when we read it again.

Hopefully, the Appellate Division will see the error of Stark's ways and reverse his appalling decision.

And why not?

Under this IRS reform legislation, Congress will establish an independent commission which taxpayers can turn to if they feel they are being unfairly treated.

This bill goes a long way toward removing some of the harassment tactics the IRS has employed in the past; however, it does not address the need for this country to have a simplified tax code.

We still like Steve Forbes's flat tax idea. Everyone would pay an equal portion of their income to the federal government. Plain and simple. You would put down on a card what you made, whatever percentage the flat tax is—estimated to be between 13% and 17%—and send the Treasury a check.

We have a sneaking suspicion that a lot of people currently evading taxes, either legally through various loopholes or illegally by doing business and not declaring that money, would be forced or encouraged to comply.

There still would have to be an enforcement arm for those who prefer to cheat rather than pay their fair share, but this bureaucracy would be much smaller and more manageable than the existing one.

Congratulations Congress! You have done the right thing for American taxpayers!

And why not?



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## Support Your Local Fire Department

Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, your neighbors, your friends, and perfect strangers stand ready to serve you if you have a fire or a tragedy at your home. They are volunteers who willingly give of their time, endure countless hours of training, and are ready to respond at a second's notice.

From the moment they step out the door, their life is in peril. The adrenalin is

pumping as they race to the firehouse, as they scamper onto the truck or behind the wheel and race to the scene and every second counts.

It can be as small as a brush fire in the backyard or a fully engulfed house or building fire. They are organized, they are unified, and they willingly put their lives on the line to save other lives and protect property.

Each year, the men and women of our local fire departments hold various fundraising drives. Some use direct mail solicitation. Some of the volunteers go door to door and solicit contributions. Others hold carnivals, clambakes, barbecues and open house. The purpose of all these endeavors is to raise funds to support activities that are not covered by taxes.

Taxes pay for the buildings, the equipment and the normal operating expenses of the departments. They do not pay for the conventions, the drills, or the community activities the departments support, such as Little League, the bands or the parades.

Some of the funds raised are used for coffee, cake and sandwiches for the tired volunteers at fires during and after they have fulfilled their duties. They fund the annual dinners and award ceremonies. They fund the social activities that keep the volunteers together, which demonstrates that the community does support the efforts of the volunteers to protect their neighbors.

After wildfires raged through Westhampton, the support of the volunteer fire departments was at its height, as it should be. Men and women gave up days and weeks to gain control over those fires. Some labored for more than

24 hours straight. Some came very close to being killed. Thank God they weren't.

Communities got behind their fire departments that year, but unfortunately, eaten bread is soon forgotten. Although we were spared tragedy on Long Island this year, volunteers from across Long Island went north to assist with cleaning up the damage from the ice storms.

Just recently, some volunteers took their vacation time to go to Disneyland. No, not to meet Mickey, but to assist the Florida fire fighters in trying to control the huge forest fires that burned throughout Florida.

Most of us do not volunteer for anything; we do not have the time. What we can do, however, is open our wallets wide to show those who so generously give of their time to protect all of us that we appreciate them.

If you cannot find the time to attend one of these fundraisers, why not do the easy thing? Sit down, write out a check, and perhaps even a note of appreciation. Send it to your local volunteer fire department. The address is in the phone book.

And, yes, if you have the time, you too can be a volunteer.

And why not?

## Disciplining The Police

The whole controversy over the police allegedly cheating on tests is a sad scenario that has mixed police authorities with politics.

If the charges are true, any officer proven to have cheated on the test should be dismissed. Police must, by the nature of their position, be above reproach.

Although there are allegations that as many as 55 police are under suspicion, some insiders say the numbers really could be as high as 350. It is not only county police but town police who have been hired from the list.

While no police officers have been formally charged, many of them have been identified through insinuations and are living in hell.

The allegations concern answers on the personal portion of the entry exams. These questions pertain to biographical responses dealing with the number of family members in the police force, how many years of college they had, grades obtained in high school and college, and whether the candidate took part in sports.

Some within the department have alleged these officers were given what would be considered the "right" answers. They were supposedly tutored by a coach who told them what the "preferred" answers were that the testers were looking for.

For instance: for some reason, two years of college was preferred over none or four years. Three family members in the police department was better than five or none.

Some of the candidates are alleged to have given false answers in an effort to boost their test scores. Over 30,000 applicants took this test. The competition was clearly keen.

A pattern developed that certain people in the know scored in the top percentile. When the allegations surfaced, Police Commissioner John Gallagher ordered a review and announced that the department had come up with a list of at least 55 officers.

The Civil Service Commission then reviewed the answers of those suspected and verified some of the information by contacting schools. Some of the answers required the officers to go back over a decade to recollect the grades they had received. At best, it was a guesstimate, but it put the officers'

integrity in question.

County Executive Robert Gaffney appointed a three-member commission to review the evidence and make recommendations. Instead of going to the outside and appoint human relations specialists from commerce and industry, Gaffney chose Frank Jones, a retired supervisor of Islip Town and former chief deputy county executive during the Cohalan administration. Jones lives in Florida but still has strong political ties to Suffolk County.

In addition, Gaffney put two Civil Service members on the board. Civil Service was the organization that developed the test and did the testing. This is like putting a fox into the hen house.

On one hand, you have at least 55 officers of Suffolk County and the towns' police departments living under the threat of losing their jobs. Although they have not been officially named, they have been identified.

Allegations of cheating concerning the police is extremely serious. However, allegations of political favoritism and inclusion are just as serious, and the two should not mix.

This matter must be brought to a judicial conclusion as quickly as possible. Cheaters do not belong in the department and those who may have been falsely accused should not have to live under this threat one day more than is necessary.

At the bottom of this whole scenario is the question of who should control the Suffolk County Police—management appointed by the county executive, or the unions, who are not beyond using strong-arm tactics to obtain ultimate control?

The union has charged that the county executive has been derelict in providing strong and effective management. The county has suggested the unions don't like to be brought under control by management.

This fight is still under the surface and not yet quite visible to the public. The most unfortunate part is that the officers allegedly involved may be pawns being used by both sides.

Let's get past this moral killer. If it can be proven that officers cheated, they should be out. Let management manage and the unions protect the rights of the workers.

And why not?

## Fish Recovery

Nobody likes regulations, particularly when it impacts upon one's livelihood or recreational activities.

A number of years ago, fishery regulators and fishermen came to the conclusion that something had to be done to assist the migratory finfish. We are fast depleting all fisheries because of over-harvesting.

There were those who argued that these regulations were not necessary, that fish were cyclical: One year you have a great spawn and the next almost nothing. This is true, as it is true that we were taking too many fish, particularly those fish most capable of reproducing themselves.

After several years of restrictions, a number of fish are making a huge comeback. Striped bass is the most notable. Just a few years back, we were down to almost nothing. Restrictions were imposed on gill netting along the beaches which took a terrible toll. Recreational fishermen in New York were limited to one fish over 28 inches per day.

In the beginning, you were lucky to catch one bass of any size during the year. Then school-size fish under 28 inches became rather common and the trophy fish again began to be captured in larger numbers. Now, legal striped bass are relatively plentiful and the schools are in greater numbers.

Fluke have been in abundance close to the beaches and the recre-

ational harvest remains good, provided the draggers do not come in close to shore. The draggers are limited to one box containing 200 pounds so that the commercial incentive is not great. Recreational fishermen are limited to eight fish per person, and the fish must be longer than 15 inches.

In the off-shore waters, blue fin tuna have made a huge comeback. Fishermen are reporting tuna catches that rival the fifties. The only difference is the anglers are restricted to one fish per day, per boat. All others must be returned to the sea.

Last week, one boat reported a catch of 19 blue fin. Care was taken not to damage the fish on the capture, and they were returned to the water.

In New Jersey, anglers are allowed to keep one fish per angler, per boat, which is a more reasonable restriction.

While the feds establish the regulations, their port of return is the final governing factor, even though boats from New Jersey and New York are fishing in the same waters.

These rules do need massaging to make them more equitable. That is the purpose of the Fishery Advisory Councils. As much as we may not like them, the regulations do seem to be paying off, and hopefully, the fisheries will rebuild so that we once again can enjoy the fishing for which Eastern Long Island is renowned.

And why not?



# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## This Is A Simple Political Hoax

Nothing has changed with the buy-out of LILCO by LIPA except for the "executive" names and the cost to the ratepayers.

Thanks to Governor Pataki and his Republican cohorts, Long Islanders will be paying \$7.8 billion (more than \$30 billion over the next 35 years) for this political hoax.

Bill Catacosinos has adroitly unloaded LILCO and 18% of an obsolete upstate nuclear power plant and is walking away with a \$42 million retirement package. LILCO's other top 24 executive officers are walking away with more than \$1 million each; and Richie Kessel, who was a prime negotiator with Catacosinos on the LIPA deal, was appointed by Pataki as chairman of LIPA and bestowed with a salary of \$84,000.

All of this was supposed to provide Long Island with reduced electric rates and utility competition, but if you make a telephone call to LIPA (LILCO's number), you will be advised that "LIPA and LILCO are the same company, LILCO as a name no longer exists, but there is no difference in the company."

That is why any previous balance

due to LILCO must be paid to LIPA, and why there is no difference in bills for ratepayers on balanced billing.

LILCO employees have confirmed this, noting that absolutely nothing inside the company's operation has changed except that their paychecks come through the holding company established by LILCO, and the company's vehicles now have LIPA or MarketSpan printed on them.

The literature sent with July's bill states that electric rates will "go down ... immediately."

Ratepayers who have their meter read each month will actually see their discount, a discount that has been created not because the cost has been reduced but by using a portion of the \$7.8 billion bonds already sold to investors.

This front-loaded rate paydown is expected to continue for the next two years before rates begin to increase drastically, according to utility specialists.

Balanced billing customers this month received bills stating "LIPA delivers immediate rate reductions of 0.0% for electricity ... LIPA has lowered electric

rates 0.0% for all Suffolk customers—your electric savings are \$.00 this bill. Your total LIPA savings to date equals \$.00." It figures!

LIPA claims, "During the transition period some bills will overlap with a portion of old rate and a portion of the new lower rate. It may take a month or two for all bills to reflect the new, lower rates completely" for those on balanced billing.

This is because everyone's meter was not read in time for July's promised rate reduction. Does this mean that ratepayers on balanced billing will not receive the complete 19% reduction other ratepayers do?

In addition, Pataki's judges keep ruling against lawsuits challenging the legitimacy of having to pay LILCO \$4.5 billion for the defunct Shoreham nuclear plant and \$1.2 billion for its overassessment.

No one seems to care that LILCO was funding the construction of Shoreham through money collected from the

ratepayers, or that the ratepayers are the ones who paid the price for overassessment, not the company.

Any funds incorrectly collected by Brookhaven and Suffolk County through the overassessment of Shoreham would have to be returned to the ratepayers anyway, so why are Pataki's judges forcing the ratepayers to pay this money in the first place?

Pataki and his Republican yes-men, who were supposed to represent the public interest, have not "saved" the ratepayers from a double-digit disaster, they have simply postponed it—to the tune of \$7.8 billion.

This is why the public has not been allowed to vote on this issue. Our elected officials know it is a bad deal and they know we know it is a bad deal and that they have sold us out.

This political hoax must be remembered in November's state election.

And why not?

## Long Island, Education Island

Long Island is truly an island of educational opportunities. From Southampton to Jamaica, from the Sound to the Ocean, there are institutions of higher learning within commuting distance of most students' homes. We are indeed fortunate that we have so many good colleges and universities in close proximity to where we live.

These are not just places of higher learning, but exceptional schools; and their vast array puts higher education within the reach of even the most economically disadvantaged students, allowing them to live at home, work part-time and still acquire a two- or four-year degree.

Students save thousands of dollars each year in room and board and transportation costs. In addition, they have the advantage of staying within their family support system, close to their friends and local employment opportunities.

Those who wish to can pursue a technical field of study or a professional one, such as medicine or law, all right here in Suffolk County.

Probably the crown jewel of the educational network is the exceptional Suffolk County Community College. With three campuses conveniently located in Brentwood, Selden and Riverhead, SCCC is within commuting distance for all Suffolk residents.

For students who only want an associate's degree, the school does a fine job of covering the basics in their chosen field, preparing them for practi-

cal and productive careers.

Those who choose this path to a four-year degree will save as much as 75% of the college costs, and in many cases, end up far ahead of their peers who attended a four-year college directly after high school.

Recently, a number of students who transferred to Stony Brook from SCCC graduated in the top 10% of their class. They credited their success to the solid, comprehensive educational foundation they received at the community college. Moreover, a college education is within nearly everyone's reach at Suffolk County Community College, because a full year's tuition is just over \$2,000.

Many people who have already entered the work force often experience a need to improve their skills or acquire more knowledge. Suffolk County Community College, as well as other schools on Long Island, offer excellent continuing education and advancement courses that allow Long Island's work force to keep up with the latest in technology and the advances in their field.

Remarkably, many of the students in the continuing education courses are not youngsters, but people in their fifties and sixties.

We are proud—and we think all Long Islanders should be—that we have such excellent higher education facilities right here at home. We don't have to export our children in order for them to get the best education.

And why not?

## PRESIDENT CLINTON'S \$2 BILLION ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN



## Collect The Money, Change The Rules

When I first started paying Social Security, back in the early fifties, the premise was simple. Put away a few dollars a week, your employer would match this contribution, and when you retired at 65 years of age, you would have a retirement benefit package. If you decided to take early retirement at 62, you could, but your benefits would be reduced by 20% if you chose this option.

A few years back, Congress changed the terms of this contract. It raised the retirement age to 66 and it will go to 67 by the year 2000, then continue to rise as the years progress.

All these years, we have been paying into our Social Security with the belief that we could retire at 65 without penalty. The government has broken

this contract with us.

It would appear we have had the audacity to live longer than they calculated we would. Now we are going to be penalized for taking better health measures and financing modern medicine.

Can you imagine what would happen if a private insurance company changed the terms of the contract after you had agreed to the terms and you had paid the money? Congress would be clamoring for restitution and threatening to put the insurance company out of business for fraud.

Why isn't Congress upset with the Social Security Administration? What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

And why not?