

They're finally getting the idea

Small wonders never cease. A couple of our state politicians have awakened to the idea that there would be a better turnout for school board balloting if one, uniform election day was held for these important votes.

Suffolk Life has repeatedly editorialized on this matter. We have recommended that all elected office holders in the State of New York be voted upon on Election Day. Currently, we have a patchwork of special election days for school boards, library boards, fire boards and other

special districts. Traditionally, only a small percentage of the electorate turn out. Often these elections do not draw the proper publicity and people find it difficult to take part in the process.

In many cases, particularly those concerning schools, the elected officials selected control the vast majority of the monies raised through real estate taxes. Schools account for up to 70% of the total tax levy. Because so many everyday, average residents find it difficult, or are uninformed, about the importance of these elections, special interests are able to de-

termine the outcome.

The school teacher unions and the educational establishment get out the vote for their candidates. Residents then complain when the teacher-supported candidates give away the store in negotiations. This practice has allowed the teacher unions to financially cripple the Long Island community.

Today, wages for teachers are on average in excess of \$60,000. Many districts have teachers that are pulling down close to \$100,000. Wages far in excess of those wages earned by

taxpayers, both husband and wife, who are working more hours and more days in other jobs.

Too often some, not all, teachers, administrators and the whole host of people who are involved within the system are not satisfied. They want more and do not want the current system to change.

The only way the general public is going to be able to regularly elect the best qualified members for the board is to select these members on the same day they pick their town supervisor and their county and state officials, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, Election Day.

Senator Ken LaValle has proposed a simplified Election Day for all school board votes. The bill is good, but it is deficient in that it does not combine the vote on the same day that he runs for re-election.

The bill should be amended to be Election Day. There is no reason why it shouldn't. The bill should have the support of every senator and a companion bill in the assembly should be supported by every assemblyman.

It won't be. The teacher unions, the most powerful lobby in the state, will oppose it tooth and nail. They do not want to give the citizens an opportunity to crack the stranglehold they have.

Unless your senators, your assemblymen hear from you, the education lobbyists will have won once again, and you will have paid the price.

And why not?

The 'all or nothing' mentality

Another case of extremism

The zealots on the Pine Barrens Advisory Committee, most especially Richard Amper, have once again demonstrated their all or nothing attitude.

The Longwood Youth Soccer Association applied to create some recreational fields on a plot of land owned by Brookhaven Town. The land is located within the pine barrens. The town granted that request.

The pine barrens zealots immediately attacked this proposal as a desecration of the pine barrens, claiming that this was a start, a wedge that could lead to widespread building within this area.

This overreaction could preclude the proper human use of this resource. There are those who feel that any human inhabitation of this area might damage their perceived notion of its fragile ecology. The only purpose of the human animal, in their view, is to provide the taxes and funds for the maintenance and upkeep of these lands.

The pine barrens came to fruition

on the basis that these lands were needed for pure water protection. During a visit to our office one day, Amper, the chief cheerleader for the pine barrens, admitted that pure water might not be the most important reason for preservation for pine barrens lands.

There are huge quantities of fresh water outside of this area, particularly when you consider the huge dome of fresh water that lies underneath Great South Bay, a dome that extends southward for several miles. Lee Koppelman, the author of the 208 Study which is the basis of all our water preservation projects, acknowledged the existence of this dome as does Michael LoGrande, the head of the Suffolk County Water Authority.

Amper acknowledged that if the water from the pine barrens was needed to be piped to the west end of the Island if their water was depleted, it could create a massive public works project that would make the South West Sewer Project look pale by comparison.

Amper acknowledged to our editors that the creation of the pine barrens was not only for water, but for ecological, open space and recreational reasons. Putting a recreational field into this area cannot seriously disturb the ecology of the area, or our pure water goals. It could enhance the value of the land as it would become a people's asset, improving their quality of life and giving them a direct return on the investment they are making.

It's a common sense approach, rather than a manufactured "wedge" that will lead to widescale development.

The fringe environmentalists should pick and choose their fights carefully before they shoot their foot so many times their credibility won't stand up to scrutiny.

And why not?

True Long Island grit

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Frank Lyon of Coram. Frank was one of those rare individuals who possessed the qualities of true grit.

Frank was born in Coram, his father was a blacksmith, a trade he told me he learned as a boy. With the advent of the automobile, the blacksmith shop became a repair shop and then a car dealership, which later was expanded to other locations.

In the early days of my career, I owned a display business, which is how I first made my acquaintance with Frank. I had secured a contract to decorate his Ford showrooms for Christmas. As I was putting the final decorations on a Christmas tree, Frank came out of his office and stood below the ladder I was on. He said, "Willmott, you know I could go broke tomorrow and it wouldn't make any difference. Unlike the other car dealers in this town, I was poor once. I know how to survive being poor. They never were, so they wouldn't survive." After making this statement, Frank promptly walked off, leaving me to think about this wisdom.

The dealership eventually did go under due to a prolonged Ford strike and overexpansion of the family enterprises. Suffolk Life was a newspaper

then and they owed us a couple of thousand dollars. Frank came into my office and said, "Willmott, I owe you this money fair and square. You are entitled to take a judgment out against me. I won't fight it. But, I am asking you not to. It is going to take me 18 months to two years to work things out. When I finally settle, I promise you that you will be paid every dollar you are owed."

I took Frank at his word. I didn't hear from him for a couple of years. One day he walked into my office and said he was there to pay up his bill. Frank wanted to know the exact amount he owed. When I told him, he said, "You left off the interest, you're entitled to it." He quickly calculated the interest, wrote out a check, said thank you, he appreciated my understanding and quietly left.

This is the Frank Lyon I knew. Frank leaves behind a legacy of involvement with family, friends and a long history of community activity. He was the kind of guy that helped build Long Island.

I was proud to have made his acquaintance.

And why not?

We need spies

President Bill Clinton and official Washington publicly reacted with indignation, surprise and disbelief when a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) insider was arrested for allegedly being a Russian spy.

The new world order folks seem to be crestfallen that Russia would have the audacity to have a spy in our midst. Don't get us wrong. If the CIA agent, Aldrich Ames, is convicted of spying, he should be hung as high and as publicly as is politically acceptable in today's polite society.

Guess what folks! Spying by the Russians or the United States is not going to stop, and it shouldn't. There are those who believe that the recent peace treaties entered into by our respective countries guarantee peace, life and liberty to all. We leave them with their little, perfect dreams, but we live in the world of reality and we say, hogwash.

To have peace you must be ever vigilant. You must know exactly

what your friend and foe are up to. You can't take their word on anything. It is up to you to make sure that their words and actions are those of substance. To do this, you must place your agents inside their countries and, wherever possible, inside their governments, particularly inside the halls of the elite and the intelligence bureau. To do any less would be a malfeasance of office.

To be able to deal with your adversary or your friend, or those who may be both, you have to understand what they are thinking, what their actions mean, both on the surface and below. This is self-protection. You can thwart or eliminate potential problems if you know about them beforehand.

It there is going to be a lasting peace, we need spies. We can't survive without them.

And why not?

Governor for the right reason

Here we are into March, just eight months away from the 1994 gubernatorial election. But the Republicans have still not come up with a candidate for the governor's seat.

Speaking to people from all walks of life, liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Republicans, Governor Mario Cuomo has little support. Four years ago he was not in good shape at this time of year, but he won re-election, garnering the support of less than 15% of the eligible voters in New York State. Another 40% of the voters who had voted had failed to register. Of the 60% who were registered to vote, only half did. The result: 30% of the residents went to the polls. Cuomo

got a little less than half of the votes cast, with the balance split between the Republican candidate, Pierre Rinfret; the Conservative candidate, Herb London; and assorted other minor party candidates.

Rinfret was an independent who became the Republican candidate and only then registered as a Republican. He was a financier who came across as short on common sense, and the media made him out as a buffoon.

London was a Republican who had garnered the Conservative nomination. He was a dean at New York University who had an excellent grasp of the issues, and offered realistic solutions to the multiple problems facing the state.

He should have been the Republican nominee, but he had been sabotaged by a small group of monied, influential Republicans who have persisted in casting the image of the Republican Party as moderate Democrats.

The state Republicans are in no better shape today than they were four years ago. Senator Al D'Amato (R-New York) had tentatively thrown his hat into the ring last summer, but withdrew it last fall.

London has traveled from one side of the state to another seeking the nomination, meeting with leaders and citizen groups. To his credit, London has not let up since his defeat. His visits to both upstate and downstate has ex-

posed him to a myriad of citizens. He has felt their frustrations, their anger and probably has a better grasp of the magnitude of New York State problems than any candidate, including the governor.

The group of wealthy, armchair Republicans who every four years emerge to flex their flacid muscles still want a liberal to be the Republican standard bearer. Although they have become impotent, and have been unsuccessful in producing a Republican liberal capable of beating a Democratic liberal, they still cling to the old Rockefeller images they were instrumental in creating. They are doing their darnedest to block London without coming up with viable candidates of their own.

There is no question that Cuomo can be taken in 1994 if the Republicans field a solid, grass roots candidate, one who is comfortable with the farmers from Niagara and the fishermen from Montauk. The candidate must direct himself to the people issues of taxes, schools, crime and welfare. He must have principles and be willing to stand by them, and not be compromised as a weak-kneed figure.

If we had a magic wand and could influence the Republican Party, we would insist that the leaders draft their last best standard bearer, Lou Lehrman, who came within a whisper of defeating Cuomo in his first bid for governor.

If Lehrman had been governor, New York would be an entirely different state today. In fact, the entire northeast might still be an economic center rather than a welfare state. The position of governor of the State of New York is an enormously important and powerful office. It not only affects our everyday life through mandates, taxes, rules and regulations, it is the office that can provide the impetus for private growth, ingenuity and profitability.

New York desperately needs a governor for the right reasons. We don't need any more self-serving politicians. We need a person who is up to the job, has the intellect, the ability, the expertise and the wherewithal to fix New York, turn it around and make it the great state it once was.

And why not?

Include the 'whole village'

"It takes the whole village to raise a child." The words of an ancient African proverb are prominently featured in the New Compact for Learning advanced by the State Education Department, a plan of the future which is being imposed upon school districts throughout the state. In the local creation of committees to implement the New Compact, however, many of the members of the "whole village" are being left out.

"If we want children to learn and develop well, the entire community—parents, institutions of higher learning, other educational and cultural institutions, religious institutions, business, law enforcement agencies, volunteer and civic organizations, social service and health agencies—must be engaged in a partnership with the school. 'It takes the whole village to raise a child:' it takes a living, growing network of mutual support for the child's whole development, education, personal, social." The words sound encouraging. They make it sound as if, finally, the educational establishment is going to open the doors and invite all segments of the community to be an integral part of the school's operations.

Those words have a hollow ring, however, in the real world of education

here on Long Island. In one area school district, Middle Country, a "Statement of Assurance" indicating compliance with Section 100.11 Participation Regulations, assures "that the district's plan for the participation by teachers and parents with administrators and school board members in school-base planning and shared decision making was adopted at a public meeting held January 10, 1994."

The document reports, "The school board developed the district plan in collaboration with a committee which included: the superintendent of schools; administrators selected, where represented, by the administrative bargaining organization; teachers selected by the teachers' collective bargaining organization; parents...selected by a school-related parent organization(s) or, where no organization exists, by their peers under a process developed by the board." So much for the "whole village." Apparently senior citizen civic members, businesspeople, not represented by a collective bargaining organization, don't live in the right village.

The agenda for the January 25 meeting in the Hauppauge Union Free School District had this very interesting notation: Workshop Session: Share

decision making. Please note that residents may attend this session, but participation in the discussion is not permitted."

The New Compact for Learning, with a concept of "shared decision making" might have value if, indeed, the educational establishment had a genuine interest in involving the views of others outside their own ranks. They might discover that there are views in the community worth hearing. That the knowledge and experience of those in business and other walks of life could be of great value for those involved in the operation of our schools.

The educational establishment has come under much criticism in recent years over the reported decline in the quality of education despite its escalating costs. That criticism will not diminish as long as all of the residents of the "whole village" are not participants in the shared decision making process.

We strongly urge school districts to open their doors to include the "whole village" in establishing their shared decision making plans. The "whole village" provides the funds to maintain the schools and educate the children. Representatives of the "whole village" should be involved in the decisions.

And why not?

Point of view

Designated drivers are 'Key to Life'

By Dr. John F. Cooper

What would St. Patrick's Day be without parades and parties?

Unfortunately, some people who are law abiding and responsible the rest of the year make excuses on holidays for driving drunk. St. Patrick's is a time of good cheer, they reason. What is the harm?

The harm is that alcohol-related traffic fatalities, while generally declining, remain unacceptably high. In 1992, there were 117 alcohol-related traffic fatalities on Long Island, which led the state in both drunken driving crashes and fatalities.

To help make Long Island's roadways safer, Project Long Island: A Century Council Coalition is kicking off its "Key to Life" designated driver program on March 17 at Bennigan's restaurant in North Babylon. More than 3,500 local bars and restaurants in the two counties have been invited

to participate in the effort, aimed at reminding partygoers of the dangers of driving drunk—on St. Patrick's and every other day.

And, in fact, the "Key to Life" program will extend well beyond St. Pat's. It is the first long-term program of its kind on Long Island geared toward changing social behavior. Its message is simple: "Before You Celebrate, Designate." Its goal: to get drunk drivers off our roads and ensure a safer environment for everyone.

The North Babylon Bennigan's and many other participating establishments will reward designated drivers with free non-alcoholic beverages or other incentives. The Long Island Chapter of the New York State Restaurant Association and the Nassau and Suffolk chapters of the United Restaurant, Hotel and Tavern Association, are "Key to Life" co-sponsors. Their support is vital to the success of the program. How-

ever, it also depends on us, the community-at-large.

If you're going out to celebrate, select someone from your group to be a designated driver. Better still, volunteer to be one yourself.

The designated driver concept has been strongly endorsed by many groups and agencies involved in the fight against drunken driving, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Commission Against Drunk Driving and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

I am proud to serve on the advisory board of Project Long Island: A Century Council Coalition. (Proud, too, that students from member colleges in the Long Island Regional Advisory Council on Higher Education are disseminating "Key to Life" materials on campuses all over the Island.) Just three months old, Project Long Island has already begun to make an impact.

Together with the Long Island Taxi and

Transportation Operators Association, the coalition sponsored "Home Free" during the Christmas and New Year's holidays, a program that offered free taxi rides home to nearly 2,000 Long Islanders who had consumed too much alcohol to drive safely.

Long Island is one of six pilot community programs supported by the Century Council, a national not-for-profit group funded by concerned beer, wine and spirits companies. Our efforts here could have significance for hundreds of similar communities across the U.S.

Let's keep those efforts going by designating a driver at throughout the year. With the proper commitment, we can ensure that our friends and loved ones won't become tragic statistics.

I intend to be the "Key to Life" this year. Why not join me?
(Dr. John Cooper is president of the Long Island Regional Advisory Council on Higher Education.)

Long Island's virtual reality

Reaction to the announcement of Grumman being swallowed up by Martin Marietta Corporation should be virtual reality for Long Island. Grumman has been synonymous with Long Island and Long Island synonymous with Grumman. We lived off of each other. Grumman helped provide a better quality of life for thousands of middle class Americans.

Over the last couple of years, Grumman started leaving Long Island, piece by piece. Just a few months ago, they announced they were moving most of their operations south to locations where their workers could afford to live. Where they could afford to do business free of some of the strangling regulations and high utility costs.

This unnerved many on the Island, but there was an optimistic hope that somehow Grumman would find products to manufacture that could be sustained in this high cost of doing business area.

A week ago Monday, when the announcement came that Grumman

would be no more, the virtual reality of their demise set in. Grumman is going and there is no one in the foreseeable future to replace them. Not only is Grumman going, but hundreds of their local subcontractors have already left or are planning to leave. Many businesses that were once supported by the workers of Grumman and the other companies have closed their doors and shut down their operations. No one should be surprised.

For almost a decade, Long Island has not been affordable. Companies who survived only by making a profit were losing jobs and orders to areas where the cost of living was affordable. Wages are in direct proportion to the affordability of an area. If workers can achieve an equitable standard of living for \$25,000, one that takes \$50,000 per year here on Long Island to achieve, they are just as happy making half as much and living as well.

One of the big costs of living on Long Island is the cost of owning a home. Homeownership is a composite

of principle, interest, insurance, taxes and utilities. Banks have traditionally used as a gauge to determine if a person can afford to buy a home the following formula: combine the cost of principle, interest, taxes, insurance, utilities and maintenance on a monthly basis. This figure should be no more than 25% of the gross income on a monthly basis of the person seeking to buy the house.

This well-established formula worked well for years. As the cost of maintaining the home rose, it generally was in proportion to increases in the owner's earnings. During the 80s this formula was thrown totally out of whack as school boards increased the number and the cost of administrators, and doubled the salaries of teachers while keeping as many teachers on despite declining enrollments.

The county and towns face huge increases in the cost of law enforcement brought about by unrealistic settlements or arbitrator awards that failed to take into account the ability of

the community to pay the increased taxes needed for these settlements.

These two situations in particular have left many Long Islanders paying far over the 25% budgeted figure for housing, and has resulted in the proliferation of "for sale" signs and residents fleeing the Island. The virtual reality of this is that homes that were once affordable can no longer be afforded by their owners.

On Long Island, real estate taxes are three to four times higher than those in other parts of the country. Utility costs, likewise, are two to three times higher than other competitive areas that Long Island must compete against. This is virtual reality.

Taxes are the result of the cost of government. On Long Island, our school taxes eat up 70% of the real estate taxes. It costs Long Islanders two to three times other areas to educate our children, yet, our children are only average in achievement on national tests. This is virtual reality.

The cost of utilities have gotten beyond the average person's ability to afford. Efforts made to cut back on usage to conserve on electricity have brought about additional rate increases granted by the Public Service Commission, so that the utilities could continue to reap the same exorbitant profits from their ratepayers through less sales. This is virtual reality.

One of the benefits of living on Long Island traditionally has been its safe environment, but even this is now gone. Crime has moved into the suburbs with a vengeance even though we have enlarged our police forces. We are paying most police, individually, 50% more than the combined family income of its residents. These salaries must be funded through real estate and sales taxes, the highest in the nation. That's virtual reality.

In addition, the state has made Long Island a welfare haven. Only now are our political leaders giving lip service to control these costs. We have all witnessed town-by-town, hamlet-by-hamlet, fine residential communities being turned into welfare slums. This is the virtual reality of the 90s. The causes and the problems are evident. The cure is sticking out like a sore thumb, yet, no one is willing to enact or change the laws to correct the injustices.

For Long Island to be affordable, taxes must be reduced. The cost of education must be brought back to the nation's norm, this is what we can afford. The cost of law enforcement must be brought back to at least the cost of the state police force. "Not welcome" signs must be put up for welfare. We can barely afford our own homegrown problems in taking care of the disadvantaged. We can't afford the importation from out-of-town, out-of-state and out-of-country.

Government and governmental services must be reduced to only the necessities, the things that we can't do individually and are better done collectively.

The virtual reality is with Grumman's demise, its associated businesses, the incredible exodus off the Island, there are fewer and fewer people left to pick up the burden.

The end of Long Island as a Utopia is here. We can continue to flounder in our muck or we can change the laws that are taking us down. If we don't, we're dead and that's the virtual reality of last resort.

And why not?

Do mothers know best?

The government, through the National Cancer Institute, has long recommended that women over 40 years of age undergo routine mammograms. These mammograms are a specialized x-ray of the breast that provides information on possible signs of potential or existing breast cancer.

Breast cancer has been growing at an alarming rate. It is a prime concern of most knowledgeable women. Mammograms are expensive. Most governmental health plans, particularly those for lower income people, allow them. Until recently, most private health plans did not pay for them as they were considered preventive care and elective.

Once cancer has been discovered, the patient and the insurance company become involved in very costly medical care. The Clinton administration has addressed the high cost of medical care. Their answer is for the National Cancer Institute to change the rules and recommendations that only women over 50 be encouraged to have mammograms. Needless to say, this has created an uproar from women advocates. They have reacted by saying, "Tell the millions of women who, because of early detection, have had their lives saved that this procedure was not necessary."

Mammograms are a procedure utilizing x-ray equipment to examine the breast to detect tumors before they can be felt by palpation. Many women wait until they reach the age of 40 before having their first mammogram done. This becomes a baseline. Subsequent mammograms are compared against the first. If there has been a change in tissue or masses are detected, it raises the possibility of a cancerous situation. Further procedures either eliminate this possibility or determine it as a fact.

Early detection of breast cancer is critical. Breast cancers have a tendency to metastasize to the lymph nodes, lung and bone and then rapidly spread throughout the entire body.

As the cost of healthcare has ex-

ploded, driven by the new technologies that allow early detection of illnesses, there is a governmental desire to contain these costs. Women advocates have suggested that the administration, in trying to control healthcare costs, is willing to sacrifice the health of women for cost containment. They charge the recent action by the National Cancer Institute in changing its guidelines is an indication of that sacrificial attitude.

This very well may be the case. The Clinton health plan is based around the philosophy that government knows what is best for you and has a right to limit your healthcare. The mammogram controversy is only the first blush of the type of meddling that people will see in their lives if the government becomes the controller of your health.

The administration, under the Clinton health plan, will determine who will live, who will die, who will receive medical care and who will be denied it. The 1,326-page bill that the President wants passed makes it a crime for an individual to pay for healthcare over and above what is allowed by the government. There is no choice. A doctor who provides healthcare outside of the plan can be charged with a felony.

This is pure socialized medicine,

Value your privacy?

The Clinton administration, through the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), is considering regulations that would require the manufacturers of phone and transmission equipment to place into this equipment a chip, known as the Clipper Chip, that would enable the government to monitor all communications.

The FBI and the administration claim they need this authority for national security purposes. They need to circumvent the Constitution to eliminate court orders for wiretaps, to have the ability to eavesdrop on all 260 million Americans.

No, this is not fiction. It is not a thought out of a futuristic book about

where we give up our right to live to the determination by the state. Is this what you want? Are you willing to allow the government to control your health or the health of your loved ones? If not, get involved. Write, call or petition your congressional representative and senators to stand firm against the proposed Clinton health plan which puts dollars before health.

And why not?

The names, addresses and phone numbers of your federal representatives follow:

U.S. SENATORS:

Alfonse M. D'Amato (R), Room 520, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. New York office phone number: 212-947-7393; Washington phone number: 202-224-6542.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D), 464 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-3201. New York phone: 212-661-5150; Washington phone: 202-224-4451.

CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES:

George Hochbrueckner (D), 3771 Nesconset Highway, Suite 213, Centereach, NY 11720, 689-6767.

Rick Lazio (R), 126 W. Main Street, Babylon, NY 11702, 893-9010.

Gary Ackerman (D), 229 Main Street, Huntington, NY 11743, 423-2154.

our society. It is a very live proposal made by the administration that could become law unless Americans speak out loud and clear.

This proposal is counter to everything this country represents. It is an invasion of privacy to the nth degree. Just the idea that it has been proposed is preposterous and shows you how closely we are coming to a total socialistic country where big brother knows best.

Write to the President, your congressmen and senators or this may become law.

And why not?

Responsibility for our own actions

The Suffolk County Legislature has approved two moves to force people to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Under the current Social Service system, welfare, people can continue to have as many babies as they want. Every time there is a new child, their welfare grants and allocations are increased. This has led to multi-generation and lifetime dependency upon welfare.

New Jersey and some other states have recently enacted laws that would limit the basis of a welfare grant to the amount of money a family is receiving

at the time that they make application. The Suffolk County Legislature has now adopted a similar law.

The intent of those legislators supporting the measure is to take away the monetary incentive to have additional children. Some say this will be unfair to the children as the monies received previously will have to be stretched further to feed the additional mouth. This is true, but it is no different than what working families find themselves faced with when they have another child.

Employers do not pay wages based upon the number of children that you have. Consumers do not patronize

businesses based on the number of mouths that a business may be feeding. When a working family is faced with a planned or an unplanned child, they must adjust their standard of living, work harder or take a second job to make up for this additional cost.

People are coming to the realization that our government is treating its nonproductive citizens better than they can treat themselves. They want an end to it.

Welfare recipients have birth control information and devices at their disposal through the county health clinics. When faced with not being able to

afford another child, they can also be responsible and practice abstinence. Our system should not reward irresponsible behavior. All of us are responsible for our own actions.

The second bill approved by the legislature eliminates welfare payments after two years in the system for able-bodied people who are capable of working.

Two years is a long time to find some form of employment. No, the job that you find may not be the most desirable. It may not pay enough to cover all the necessities and the desires of life. Most people would prefer to be in a higher paying job, but the realities of life are that we must accept the employment that we can find that is commensurate with our education and our skills and abilities.

Welfare was intended as a temporary measure, a helping hand to those in need to get them over a short-term rough spot. It was not intended to be for a lifetime, living off the system and the sweat of the brow of those who regularly go to work, pay taxes and live on the balance of their incomes.

The welfare system as it is currently structured is breaking the backs of the worker. For those on the lower end of the economic ladder, the temptation to join the system is great. These people, once in the system, have given up their pride, and the system, itself, keeps them slaves. To break out of the system is incredibly difficult as the system not only provides them with housing, food, heat, and medical coverage, but provides them with cash that they are free to use as they see fit. No, they are not going to get rich by it, but, they don't have to work and they don't have to toil or pay their dues as productive society must.

Being in the system without any end gives them a tax-free annuity and they do not have to contribute a thing back. They have idle time on their hands. This time leads to boredom and, in too many cases, the boredom leads to alcoholism, drugs and crime. It is a vicious cycle that our leaders have a responsibility to break before it breaks this society entirely.

We congratulate the legislature for taking these daring steps. They will be controversial and bring an outcry from the social engineers who haven't been able to meet the needs of the truly needy or come up with a formula that is fair to the taxpayers who are funding their endeavors.

But the courage of those who dared to take these actions benefits those who are struggling to keep their own heads above water, the average taxpayers. That deserves our applause.

And why not?

Memories of Passover

During the past year a number of anti-Semitic outbreaks have plagued Long Island. I was thinking about this the other day, saddened by the insensitivity.

I was lucky to have been brought up in a very tolerant home—a home where religion was considered important and different people's rights to practice different religions was considered sacrosanct.

We were taught that people were different, yet they were human beings and as human beings were entitled to respect.

We were Christians and the Easter season was very important to us. We took part in religious services, remembering the cruel crucifixion and death of Jesus followed by His resurrection Easter Sunday morning, and the opening of Heaven to us.

Mixed into this are very fond memories of a Jewish woman who was a very close friend of my parents'. Her name was Annie Weiss. Annie would come to our house with a box of matzos and some grape jelly. We and our friends would gather around our kitchen table as Annie explained the meaning Passover had to her and its importance in her religion. We didn't know it at the time, but we were taking part in a Passover service. The tales she spun had great meaning and reverence to us. Although Catholics, we learned about Judaism, tolerance and respect in a positive atmosphere.

Annie and Arthur were present at most of our Christmas celebrations also. They helped Santa come and set up the presents. Annie and my mother would attend midnight Mass and upon their return home, with the toys having been put together, the children were awakened to find that Santa had arrived.

The Weiss' participation with the Willmotts' and the Willmotts' participation with the Weiss' on their respective holidays had a pronounced effect upon me.

How I wish that those who are filled with hate had the opportunity to learn about others through the simple means of communication that my parents provided for me. Passover starts this coming Saturday. It might provide an opportunity for those in the Jewish

community here on Long Island to invite some of their Christian friends to participate and join them in celebrating Passover. Their Christian friends could do likewise and invite their Jewish friends to join them in their Easter holiday. Both would be better educated and gain more understanding.

Long Island would be a better place if we took the time to put out our hand in friendship rather than in hate.

And why not?

If there's a surplus

Governor Mario Cuomo, the Assembly and the Senate are projecting that there will be a budget surplus this year. These three branches of government have persistently raised taxes in past years, so there should certainly be excess dollars. They are talking about anywhere between \$250 million and \$500 million. What do we do with it?

The most logical answer should be to cut taxes. But this is something that is totally foreign to politicians. So, let's consider what is the next best thing to do with these funds.

The best thing that could be done for all residents of New York State is to eliminate the cost of basic education off the backs of local school boards. The state should add the surplus to the funds it is already providing in state aid. With these funds, they should take over all local costs for the basic education that leads to a Regents diploma.

In the majority of the states, the state funds the basic education. It is the constitutional requirement of the state, not the locales. If every student could be guaranteed a quality, basic education, our state would be better off. Local school districts, controlled by local

boards, could then put optional electives to the voters, which are extensions of the basic education, for their approval and funding. This would lead to a tremendous drop in local real estate taxes as the voters could choose the degree of extended education they could afford and would be willing to fund.

The second item that should be considered is the state takeover of Medicaid. New York, although it sets the rules and regulations and mandates Medicaid coverage, leaves it up to local county governments to find the means of funding this huge expenditure. This has helped drive real estate and sales taxes to the highest in the nation here on Long Island.

If the state would assume its obligation in these two areas, Long Island could once again be an affordable place to live and our economy could grow. Failure to apply these surpluses in these two very specific areas will continue to cost us jobs and depreciated real estate values.

And why not?

Why not a POW/MIA stamp?

If you have had occasion to lick a postage stamp, you have become aware of the fact that stamps change almost as often as the weather. They have honored movie stars, rock singers, flowers, birds, and a host of other causes. Repeated efforts, however, to have a commemorative stamp produced honoring the POW/MIAs have been rejected, the most recent rejection came earlier this year.

If we can honor rock singers, why shouldn't we honor those who have suffered through service to our country? The questions that continue to center on those still listed as missing in action will not go away by imposing silence on the issue. Nor will these questions be resolved by bureaucratic refusals to acknowledge there are still those who went to war, but never returned.

Somewhere in the bureaucratic maze called Washington, there apparently exists a mindset that seeks to stifle

the issue. A special committee created to approve the designation of new stamp design operates out of sight, and beyond reach. Efforts to contact a spokesperson for this group to determine the reasoning behind the repeated refusals to recognize the POW/MIAs on a postage stamp have proven unsuccessful. Buffered by bureaucracy, one call leads to endless calls, without success.

Enough. It is time for our congressmen and senators to demand this issue receives the attention it deserves. It is time to designate a POW/MIA stamp, or come up with a rational reason why it should not be done. A simple rejection noting the request for such a stamp "has not been approved" is not acceptable.

It should be interesting to see how the members of our congressional delegation react to this matter.

And why not?

Happy
PASSOVER
Holiday Starts Sat., March 26th

Emission fantasy land

Do you believe in Santa Claus? The Easter Bunny? Or the Tooth Fairy? If you do, you will most likely believe, as state officials claim, that seven emissions testing stations in Suffolk County, with a total of 42 lanes, will whiz through 496,000 vehicle emissions tests, with each test taking no more than 15 minutes, and some, perhaps, as quickly as five minutes. We don't.

The testing is mandated by amendments to the 1990 federal Clean Air Act and rules issued by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The new program is to replace the existing annual emissions inspection program now being done through independent automotive repair stations as part of the annual state vehicle safety inspection program. Implementation of the program in Suffolk will begin in 1996, while in 13 upstate counties it will be launched January 1, 1995. The emissions test will be required every two years, but the state safety inspections will continue on a yearly basis.

According to the EPA, 70% of the vehicles subject to the tests, will pass. Repairs for those that don't, according to the EPA, will range between \$38 and \$120. In a worst-case scenario, a waiver will be given for extreme cases in which \$450 in failure-related repairs are completed and the car still does not meet the standards.

We are not alone in questioning the accuracy of claims by the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in support of the centralization of these tests in the limited number of testing stations as opposed to the larger number,

and wider spread, local repair shops, which are licensed to conduct the tests presently. Auto dealers claim centralized tests would be more costly than the current system utilizing upgraded equipment.

"Remarkably, regulations developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency arbitrarily declared that no decentralized program would be deemed 'equally effective' to a centralized program, regardless of its design or its level of funding," State Senator Owen Johnson (R-Babylon) recently declared at a committee meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature. It makes one wonder why putting all the dollars in one centralized pot is such an attractive option for the feds and the DMV officials. In fact, the only option, enforced by the threat that federal highway dollars will be withheld if the states don't go along with the EPA's edicts. This threat is the basis of a lawsuit brought by the Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association, which has also questioned the validity of the average repair figures offered by DMV officials.

There are reports floating around that indicate that Envirotest, of Arizona, the leading contender for the emissions testing contract in New York State, has a prominent list of stockholders. Before New York State inks a deal with this firm, it should unveil a complete list of stockholders, and the campaign contributions, on both the state and federal levels, given by the principals of the firm. Who are the people involved in Envirotest, which appears to be the beneficiary of the EPA's speci-

fications for the emissions testing program? Who are the high power lobbyists who have been involved in promoting Envirotest? What have they offered? What have they given?

Governor Mario Cuomo favors, supposedly, a search for alternatives to the EPA directives. Will he stand firm and continue to pursue that course? Or will political powers cause him to cave-in under political pressure? We'll see.

Johnson urged those who have concerns about the centralized testing proposal, and this should include motorists who will be subject to the testing, to join him in putting pressure on members of Congress to appeal to the EPA. "At this late date, the fate of New York's decentralized inspection program will not be decided in Suffolk County, nor even Albany. It's now up to Washington. The federal EPA is ever eager to unilaterally impose their will on our state, but only through the actions of our elected representatives in Congress will New York be able to move forward in exploring alternatives which will achieve our shared goal of clean air within the framework of a decentralized emissions inspection system," Johnson said.

Sounds like good advice to us. If you agree, here are some people and numbers to call: Congressman George Hochbrueckner (D-Centerach), 689-6767; Congressman Rick Lazio (R-Babylon), 893-9010; Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-Huntington), 423-2154; Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-New York), 212-947-7393; Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York), 212-661-5150.

And why not?



Happy Easter

Christians throughout the world are preparing to celebrate a very happy and meaningful occasion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to wipe away the sins of man. We offer a wish of happiness for this important day, Easter Sunday, which is a time to celebrate the promise of eternal life for all those who believe in Him.

Sunday's celebration of the resurrection follows a period of somber reflection throughout the days of Lent, a time for Christians to reflect upon their lives, their faith. Lent offers a time of examination of our lives, its purpose, its meaning. It offers an opportunity to come to conclusions about who we are, why we are, and what we should be.

With the celebration of Easter we should be keenly aware of these new insights into our own personal and religious lives, and use them to establish goals for the way we will deal with others throughout the coming year. It is a time to offer a promise to God, in return for his great love for us which is manifested in the story of the crucifixion and the glory of resurrection, that we will strive with all our might to offer this same spirit to others with whom we come into contact. That we will put aside our prejudices, our selfish ways, and follow as best we can the examples of love he has bestowed upon us.

We offer you our best wishes for a blessed and happy Easter.
And why not?

Plight of two taxpayers

'Can't afford to retire, yet can't afford to live'

Dear Mr. Willmott:

I hope you will excuse the paper I'm writing on but I just had to write.

My husband and I are in our middle 50s. We have lived on Long Island since we were small children. We grew up, married and had our own children.

At this time in our lives, we were looking forward to enjoying all the years of hard work. Today my husband has to work twice as hard as he ever did.

We started our own business about 16 years ago. We were doing well and for about four or five years it even got better. Then the sky fell down on us. Our medical insurance went up drastically; liability and truck insurance, also.

Each year since has been devastating to us. We can no longer afford medical insurance at all. We are backed up on all our bills, business as well as personal. We have not had any money to make repairs on our home.

Our savings is gone. We have no car and we can't remember the last time we could afford the luxury of going to the dentist.

The land of opportunity means nothing unless you are an immigrant from another country. I'm surrounded by homes that are rented by welfare. They're a disgrace, with three and four families living together. There are so many cars that they pack them on their lawns or double-park them in the street. Yet our town worries more about the rules and regulations for all the industrial parks. Because of the disgusting way some of these people live, we were told the value of our home is less than it otherwise would be. Isn't it time someone makes some laws or rules about the condition of homes?

Yet, these people are on welfare. Welfare pays their rent and buys their food. They can go to the doctor and the dentist and they all have great cars.

Something is wrong. The harder we work, the less money we have. Between the people on welfare and our politicians, the average family can't make it.

Our politicians have nice fat salaries, their secretaries and aides have nice fat salaries. I just read about all the overtime hours that bring their salaries above six figures. They all have the best medical coverage, and when they retire they get whopping pensions. This is my money. I need it. I desperately need it.

I'm sorry to say I'm disgusted with my government. They are corrupt, greedy, unorganized and have mismanaged our money long enough. We are living with "taxation with misrepresentation."

I don't know if this is true, but I've heard that the state of New York and Long Island have more politicians than anywhere in America. Is this true? Don't these people work for us anymore? Since when do the employees make more money and live better than the employers?

I'm tired of living day-to-day under worry and stress, worrying how I'll pay my bills.

My husband works very hard. Our gross income is great. Our net income stinks and what's left isn't even ours. No matter what we do with it, it's taxed. Whether it's clothes or food or utilities or anything, it's taxed and taxed and taxed.

When does it end? We are both so afraid and worried about the future. We can't move out of New York. Where would my husband at 55 find a job. He can't afford to retire, yet we can't afford to live.

We haven't had a vacation in over 15 years; we haven't gone out to dinner in the last five years. We don't know what to do. Nobody cares. No one wants to hear your problems. LILCO (Long Island Lighting Company) doesn't care; they want their money. The telephone company doesn't care; they want their money, and on and on.

The government overspends and they tax the people because they need more money. The people don't overspend, they just try to get by, but can't. Who do we tax? Where do we keep getting this money from?

Whatever happened to "the government for the people, by the people and of the people?" The government is for the government, by the government and of the government!

Tell me where I go for help? Anytime I tried calling anywhere for help, I was asked if I was a minority. Nice!

My husband and I are very, very disillusioned. There's nowhere to go and no one to turn to. No one cares.

You have to pay your taxes; it doesn't matter whether you can eat. You have to pay your taxes; it doesn't matter if you can't afford to go to the doctor or the dentist.

Again, the bottom line is no one cares. I don't know whether you'll print this letter or not, but there are thousands of families just like us. We all need help.

Please understand but I cannot sign my name, it would be too embarrassing. I had to write because everytime I read your paper, I feel such hope. You feel what we feel and you understand what we're going through.

I look forward to your paper. Reading it gives me a lift and makes me feel as though there is someone who cares. I can't send any money, I wish I could, but I do so look forward to each issue.

Please keep fighting for us. May God bless you and keep you safe, healthy and happy.

Just one more thing. It felt good to write down all I was feeling. Thank you so much for being the people's advocate.

Signed:
Two friends