

## Filing for Freedom

Yesterday we submitted to the Clerk of the Suffolk County Legislature petitions gathered in all 10 towns containing 50 percent more signatures than required under the Initiative and Referendum law.

The issue: to set into motion a referendum on your choice of the type of government you wish.

It is now up to the legislators. They have four options. They can recognize the sponsors and signatories' intent for a vote on the question, "Which form of government, legislative or weighted Board of Supervisors?"

The first option the Legislature has is to draft their own legislation, placing this question on this November's ballot. This will satisfy the sponsor's intent and allow adequate time for debate on the question. The second option is to wait for the issue to come back after having been reviewed by the County Attorney's office and the Board of Elections, then vote "no."

An immediate "no" vote conceivably still allows time for gathering the necessary signatures to force a vote in 1980. The sponsors will secure enough signatures to match 5 percent of the total vote cast in the gubernatorial election, or 17,000.

We, as sponsors, have 150 days to accomplish this objective. These petitions must be submitted to the Legislature and to the Board of Elections in sufficient time for validation and at least 90 days before the general election, or by August 4. We can gather the necessary signatures within the time span called for. But without official cooperation from county agencies, it is questionable whether we make the Aug. 4 deadline for the issue to appear on this November's ballot. We will, though, have the signatures necessary to place this issue on the 1981 ballot.

The third alternative available to the Legislature is to pocket veto this

measure, using up the entire 60-day limit. A pocket veto also will guarantee the will of the people will be circumvented.

The fourth option is to totally disregard the will and the intent of the public by finding technicalities in the petitions, forcing the sponsors to start the process all over again. Once a clear definition has been established through the court on exact requirements for the affidavits and petitions, the sponsors would be required to go forth once more and regather the initial 1,000 signatures. This we will do if we have to.

In gathering the initial petitions we met with strong emotions and feelings within all 10 towns. Some were pro and some were con. All favored their right to choose the type of government they wish. Options Nos. 2, 3 and 4 should be considered carefully. They will require the legislators themselves to run for re-election for an office that may well be abolished in the same vote. The legislators will be forced into a position of defending their records as well as the function of the Legislature as a whole. For purely political reasons, we would think legislators would prefer to have this question answered once and for all in 1980.

We have set the wheels in motion by demonstrating there is notable countywide support for the citizens' right to choose their form of government. The current Legislature can take the initiative and develop the necessary legislation to put this question on the ballot in 1980. Or, they can throw it back into our laps, a challenge we fully accept.

But, short of a miracle, this means the issue will be delayed until 1981. The choice is up to the legislators.

We, as citizens of Suffolk County, are determined to give this choice to the voters, this year or next.

And why not?

## Should parties field school candidates?

By tradition, political parties have shied away from fielding school board candidates. Over the years, school board elections have become more popularity contests than contests between qualified candidates. Schools were considered an institution that should be free of politics.

This attitude was developed when school boards generally directed relatively small budgets which affected a small percentage of the overall tax bill. Currently, school taxes account for 60 to 70 percent of the property tax levy. Educational expenditures account for almost one-third of the state budget, which is raised through income and sales taxes.

Voters in selecting candidates to fill school board posts often are left in the dark as to who the candidates are, what their beliefs are and what philosophy they espouse. The average person going to the polls goes ignorant. Yet, a phenomenon has occurred on Long Island during the last decade, resulting in certain candidates being backed secretly by a specific group for selfish reasons. In more than one election, candidates have been backed by the organized educational unions and groups. Frequently, candidates running for school board seats are teachers, teachers' spouses or others with a vested interest in district finances. Their salaries and income would be

affected, however indirectly, by the settlement reached by the district they seek to serve, even though they may work for some other district.

For example, each educational union demands as part of the negotiations parity with the highest paid district in the region.

Suffolk Life has learned teachers' unions in the past have set specific districts as targets. In these districts, they put the full force of their organizational abilities, their manpower and their financing behind select candidates. On the surface, these candidates appear to be normal citizens espousing to serve the community, while in reality, they are running to serve the educational bloc.

Teachers' unions have become a political force unto themselves. They are more knowledgeable about the political system than some who make their living in government and

politics.

Would it not make more sense to have political parties present candidates, identifying with the parties and their philosophies, thus eliminating confusion and making the politicians' party accountable? Teachers, themselves, have the security of tenure, and cannot be fired for their political beliefs. The infusion of politics into school board races wouldn't necessarily bring about the mixing of politics with education, but would give the voters an identifiable outlet to influence the outcome.

This particularly makes sense when you consider that the greatest proportion of tax expenditures is controlled by school boards. However, elected officials for towns, counties and state offices must bear the brunt of the taxpayers' frustration.

And why not?

## Readers' Opinion

### "A bunch of puppets"

Open Letter to Mr. John Linehan:

When members of the South Shirley Civic Association attend a William Floyd School Board meeting out of concern for the education of their children and are called "a bunch of puppets" by the school board President Mr. Linehan, it's a sad day for our community.

The members of the South Shirley Civic Association, at the May 5th meeting, were not there to be insulted by the board President John Linehan, but were there for the concern of the children and the school district.

We attend school board meetings to hear about: 1. Teaching programs, 2. New initiative learning processes, 3. The children's safety and welfare, 4. School policy and remedies for the problem child, juvenile drug addicts, alcoholism and handicapped children, 5. The end to split sessions by use of portable classrooms at minimal taxpayer's expense, 6. New ways to get increased state and federal aid for our school district to keep the school taxes low, and 7. New and increased exemptions of school taxes so senior citizens can keep and maintain their homes.

This is what we are expecting to hear about

and what we look forward to seeing some action on at the local school board meetings.

Instead, John Linehan, you are conducting school board meetings like a three-ring circus, causing chaos and dissension among your own school board members. You are so obsessed with getting Mr. Poulos that you have made a mockery of our school district throughout this state with your "hoax releases" to the press of the Gloria Rosenblum investigation.

It seems to us that all you have done is to use the School Board for your own re-election campaign and political gains. Name calling and insults seem to be your style rather than your concern for our children.

We, the officers and directors of the South Shirley Civic Association, disagree with your negative policy of trying to drag our school district down the drain, and for our objections, we are called "puppets."

Mr. Linehan, name calling will not change our pride in nor our concern for the William Floyd School District.

Officers & Directors  
South Shirley Civic Association

### "Reshaping the County"

Dear Mr. Willmott:

I want to thank you for your presentation on the County Legislature referendum which was presented before the Suffolk County Supervisor's Association recently.

It certainly was a very productive meeting and I believe that due to your great efforts we are on our way to reshaping the County to something that makes far better sense. I

must tell you that all of the Supervisors felt that it was probably one of the most exciting and productive meetings they have had since their creation 7 years ago.

Best regards,

Very truly yours,  
Michael A. LoGrande  
Islip Town Supervisor

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# SUFFOLK LIFE

NEWSPAPERS

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# Willmotts and Why-Not

David J. Willmott, Editor

## Which Year?

Last Tuesday we submitted 1,534 signatures starting the Initiative and Referendum procedure which we hope will lead to a vote on the type of ruling body desired here in Suffolk County.

This is the first time the Initiative and Referendum mechanism has been tried since its passage in 1978. The law itself is full of ambiguities and lacks direction. We believe we have met not only the letter but the intent of the law. It is now up to the legislators to decide what course to take.

The question is, "Should the residents of Suffolk be governed by a weighted Board of Supervisors or continue on with the Legislative form of government?" Having received the petitions, the legislators can decide to put this question directly on the ballot

themselves, insuring a vote during the 1980 general election in November. Allowing the procedure to run its full course, almost by necessity, delays this question until 1981. If the legislators decide on this option they will be confronted with running for re-election for a job that may be abolished by the voters.

We would think from a purely political and common sense standpoint, the legislators would opt for a 1980 vote. That would give them an opportunity to campaign for their side without having the issue confused or be judged on the records of individual legislators.

This issue will come before the voters one way or the other. The choice of the date is up to the collective wisdom of the legislators.

And why not?

## What Happened to the Tax Cuts

One year ago, the gang of three -- Noto, Feldman and Grant -- were outbidding then County Executive John Klein in cutting the county budget and real estate taxes.

Klein, preparing to run for re-election, announced he mysteriously had found a way to cut the county budget so real estate taxes would be reduced by 10 percent. Not to be outdone, the gang of three, led by Legislator Martin Feldman, subsequently announced they could cut county expenditures by 30 percent, reducing real estate taxes a like amount. Klein was defeated in the primary by County Executive Peter Cohalan. Feldman in the general election was defeated by Cohalan.

The 30 percent tax cut became lost campaign rhetoric. Cohalan, during the campaign, said he could live with whatever the people wanted to allow for running the county. Tony Noto, as presiding officer of the Legislature

and the man responsible for making the 30 percent pledge to the people, has failed to deliver.

Noto, instead of ranting and raving about trivia to gain headlines, should be making headlines by telling what he is doing to live up to his promise. If Noto fails to deliver within the next few months, the public should consider using the Initiative and Referendum system, putting a cap on the county budget themselves.

During the campaign last year, legislators and county executive candidates alike indicated the county could be financed at the 1975 level of \$500 million. Currently, the budget is in excess of \$700 million.

If Noto and Cohalan are unable or unwilling to come up with a workable plan to reduce the county budget, then let us, the people of Suffolk County, mandate it through referendum.

And why not?

## What's Wrong With Enterprise

A recent complaint from some parents of students in the Shoreham-Wading River School District at first blush appears a little strange.

The parents apparently object to the students who have been on a door-to-door solicitation drive, selling things to raise money for student projects. The projects are school trips and a student foreign exchange program.

Evidently, the parents object to the students trying to sell. They insist

they have felt pressure to buy; therefore, it should stop.

Possibly. But, what seems unacceptable to us is the fact some parents would prefer to have the money come out of district funds rather than have the children try to earn some money themselves.

Unbelievable. Parents should want to have their children show some enterprise. What's wrong with trying to earn money rather than having the trips and special projects handed to

them on a silver platter? Isn't there already too much dependence on handouts? We think so.

The parents have raised some possible issues: the pressure; students helping with the fundraising who don't participate in the trips -- for example, chaperoning parents having their expenses paid.

But those are far from legitimate reasons to stifle children willing to get out and work for something. They'll appreciate it more.

## We Fear Authorities

At the beginning of the 1979 County Executive primary race, John Klein announced he had a magic wand to solve all the problems with the Southwest Sewer District. He proposed developing an authority.

An authority is a special corporation with powers of eminent domain that are above the will of the people. As a general rule, we dislike authorities; we fear them because of the lack of control by the people. Having watched Klein and the Southwest Sewer District, with no trust in either, we looked at this idea with great trepidation.

Recently, County Executive Peter Cohalan again broached the idea of an authority as a mechanism to bail out the sewer district. Initially, our reaction was negative. We trust Cohalan, but distrust the concept of an authority. We have discussed with Cohalan the options available to directors of the sewer district and the citizens of Suffolk County. The picture is bleak.

Currently, the full faith and credit of the entire County of Suffolk is behind the Southwest Sewer District. If the sewer district falters, goes bankrupt, the county must pick up the tab. Starting in 1982, one-third of the sales tax from throughout the county will be tapped to make up deficits of the sewer district's operating fund.

If sewer taxes are raised within the district to meet outstanding obligations, the cost will be so high they will border on conscription. Many residents and businesses of the district will be unable to meet this burden, their mortgages will go into default.

Cohalan proposes to create a sewer authority to buy the Southwest Sewer District. The sewer authority as a

We understand school district officials are working on some way to make school funds available in future budgets. Quite frankly, we hope they don't.

It seems to us we may have less cumbersome budgets at all levels of government in future years if we encourage our youth to show some initiative, rather than depend on Big Brother.

And why not?

private corporation can get around federal tax laws, enabling it to borrow money and invest those funds in high-yield bonds. Profits can be used to reduce payments required to meet the initial bonds issued to fund the district. The formula is elaborate and confusing to the ordinary citizen. But, in theory, according to Cohalan and Allen Smith, architect of this plan, it will work.

An authority seems the only alternative left to avoid the complete catastrophe of this ill-conceived project. We still have grave doubts about the plan. Before supporting it, we would insist there be definite boundaries, both geographical and fiscal, under which it would operate. The directors would have to be elected by the people and serve no more than one term, with a maximum of four years. Most important, we would have to be guaranteed creation of the sewer authority removes the obligation of the full-faith-and-credit of the county, both with existing bonds and any new ones created. Residents would have to have some control over rates charged by the sewer authority.

There are a number of other restrictions needed to make it palatable for the public. These restrictions might well make the authority unpalatable to the financial community, thus cancelling its intended purpose. But without these we could just be opening another Pandora's Box. It could prove more unmanageable, less responsive and more harmful to the residents of the county, particularly those within the district.

Let's approach an authority with extreme caution. Now is the time for foresight.

And why not?

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## The Cubans are coming

At a recent Suffolk County Legislative meeting, representatives of the Hispanic community addressed this body about what they felt was an injustice on the Suffolk County Human Relations Council: failure to have a fair representation of Hispanics.

One gentleman of Hispanic background promised Long Island would soon see an increase in the Hispanic communities due to Carter's open door policy for Cubans. We look at the Hispanic immigration to this country as we do toward any other national groups. This is a big country in need of fresh blood, in need of people who can assimilate, become productive, contribute as well as take.

The only thing that bothers us is the change in official attitude toward the native tongue -- English. When all other minorities immigrated to this country, they accepted our national language, learned it to assimilate. Some had a relatively easy time, notably the Irish. For although many spoke Gaelic with a heavy brogue, they understood and could be understood. The French, Germans, Italians, had more problems, though less than the Asiatics, notably the Chinese and Japanese.

Yet, all immigrants, if they wished to succeed in this land of opportunity, had to give up their native tongue. They had to learn to read, write and speak the common denominator -- English.

Representatives of the Hispanic community were right in approaching the Legislature. There are more than 100,000 people, about 8 percent of the population, in Suffolk from Hispanic

speaking countries. They are a minority; they deserve and need representation on the Human Rights Council. Part of their reasoning, though, is faulty. The more we cater to these new immigrants' refusal to speak, to read and to write in English, the longer they stay in an immigrant status. It retards their assimilation into the American scene.

We open our doors freely. We welcome people of all colors, creeds, religions and national backgrounds. But to become American, to become part of this great country, they must be willing to make the effort to think American, read American and talk American. This country does not have a dual language and we shouldn't. We only have to look to our north. Canada is split -- economically, geographically and politically -- because they have allowed, even encouraged, a bilingual tongue. This has led to the continuing feeling of separatism which may bring about the partitioning of Canada, the development of two, smaller and weaker countries.

America's strength is with residents from throughout the world who have settled in the 50 states. They share a common goal, common interests and a common language. We say, welcome Hispanics, come join us, bring us your strengths, your abilities, your ambitions and your desires. As aspiring Americans learn our tongue so we may all communicate and break down the barriers that lead to racial pressure, distrust and disharmony.

And why not?

enough so the Legislature isn't overwhelmed with harebrained schemes and proposals. But, the mechanism should be understandable to the average person.

The current law makes it extremely difficult for anyone without resources to use. The law, as proposed by the Charter Revision Commission, doesn't consolidate and make the procedure more workable. It makes it more cumbersome and difficult. The Charter Revision Commission was supposed to be non-partisan, yet members of the commission were selected by their political enrollment. This could be the problem.

The Charter Revision Commission will hold hearings on June 4, June 9 and June 11. We expect to attend the hearings and give our recommendations. We are the only ones who have worked successfully with this legislation. We know first-hand the problems of the current law and the areas needing change. We believe in the Initiative and Referendum procedure. It's a great tool so citizens can bring issues to a referendum when the government itself lacks the foresight or the courage.

Let's make the mechanism simple, unencumbered and workable.

And why not?

## Does New York Love Long Island?

Did you know that according to the N.Y. State Department of Commerce, there are only four campsites on all of Long Island, from the city border to Montauk Point? Did you know there isn't one tourist or vacation site on all of Long Island worth a publicized picture?

The State Commerce Commission recently published a 24-page brochure entitled, "I Love New York Camping - 1980." It lists 150 campsites in the Adirondacks; another 150 different locations in the Thousand Islands region; the Catskills boast more than 100, and most other areas throughout the state list 50 to 75 potential places for campers to stay. But on all of Long Island, according to the State Department of Commerce, there are only four campsites.

The tourist book hasn't a single picture of Long Island's beautiful beaches, abundant parks, numerous fishing facilities. One would have to believe, looking at this brochure, Long Island is not part of the State of New York. We were furious when we picked it up in Assemblyman John Cochrane's office in Albany. Our Long Island tax dollars were used to produce this piece to tout spots off Long Island rather than bringing us tourists.

A call to Ken Hunter, the man responsible for compiling this information, revealed his office had sent out a questionnaire to every Chamber of Commerce in every town and hamlet on Long Island. In addition, it claims to have polled the Long Island State Park Commission, the Long Island Association of Commerce and Industry, the Long Island Tourism Commission, Nassau County Commerce and Industry, and the Suffolk County Department of Economic Development, and written to known private camping sites.

Hunter maintains he received feedback only from State Parks and the K.O.A. Campgrounds in Greenport, which made up the four listings for the entire Long Island region.

We find this hard to believe. We asked, did he not know of the Suffolk County Parks Department, the Fire Island National Seashore? Both have large holdings of parkland and developed campsites. Somebody, whether it be the state or here on Long Island, has screwed up royally. Camper tourism is big business. Suffolk County alone has invested millions of dollars acquiring parklands and developing almost 700 individual campsites.

A recent conversation with Hank Berger of the Suffolk Parks Department revealed that our parks are being underutilized because the people they were created for don't realize their availability. Long Island is a wonderland of ideas, places and things to do for summer vacations, weekends and day hops. The State Department of Commerce is spending millions of dollars to promote New York, yet incredibly, ignores Long Island.

The mountains are beautiful; they have their place, but they should not be allowed to supercede, or in this case obliterate, what the seashore has to offer. The Long Island Delegation in Albany should be hopping mad at this affront. It shows their inability to collectively promote their own area.

We can't imagine why Judy Hope, Gov. Hugh Carey's special assistant for Long Island, would have allowed this slight. This year's supply of brochures have been printed. Let's hope in 1981 the Department of Commerce realizes there is a Long Island, and touts our local assets.

And why not?

## Revisions Are Needed

We have just finished reading the proposed Charter Revision dealing with the Initiative and Referendum Law. It's a disaster.

The Initiative and Referendum mechanism was supposed to enable the average citizen under controlled circumstances to bring forth and introduce legislation the government refused to address. The mechanism

should be simple and uncomplicated. It should be a tool non-politicians can work with. The current Initiative and Referendum Law is a nightmare of technical ambiguities and conflicts, with no consensus even among lawyers.

We understand and support the concept of making the Initiative and Referendum procedure difficult

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## Readers' Opinion

### Boycotting the Summer Olympics. . .

Dear Mr. Willmott:

Boycotting the Summer Olympics is the most peaceful, non-aggressive and symbolic response the Free World has to the aggression by the Soviets into Afghanistan.

I do not agree with John Behan, in his article "Behan Against Olympic Boycott."

It proves we are becoming more civilized -- a significant trend.

Perry