

America has been soiled

Our nation is in shock and mourning. The Oklahoma City bombing has left all of us numb. Whether it be a terrorist from the outside, or a wacko from inside, America has proved vulnerable to the terrorist attacks which are a daily occurrence in countries around the world.

Gone is our naive innocence. Lost is our belief that we as American citizens are safe at home. We have been violated. We have been trespassed against. God help us.

The reality, what can we expect? International terrorists have long spread their hate. They have used bombs to kill and to maim their own citizens and brothers.

We have spent the last 50 years

training people for war and training specialized groups of our citizens in explosives and terrorist tactics. We desensitized them. We teach them it is alright to kill if you do it in the name of your government or God. If civilians get hurt they are the victims of war. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As a nation we have been desensitized as civilians. We witness the daily slaughter of people, planes being blown up, parts of bodies strewn over the landscape.

Most of us didn't even utter a flicker of protest when 100,000 Cambodians were slaughtered right after the Vietnam

War. Few of us were driven to raise our voices in anguish at the slaughter in Africa last summer. What was the number, one thousand, a million people killed? Men, women and children bludgeoned and tortured to death. That's life, that's death, please pass me the butter. Will someone switch the channel?

Right here in this country we are amazed at the lack of outcry over the Waco massacre. Eighty men, women and children burned to death by our own government's forces. There was but a peep of protest. Maybe we have been desensitized by the Jonestown massacre? Maybe it was our mistaken belief that our government would never do any-

thing to hurt us and, somehow, these people were not citizens.

We do not know what was to blame for the Oklahoma City massacre. We have no idea whether it was done for political purposes, national or international, or was done at the hands of some whacked-out anti-government citizen. We know what we would like to do with them. There are few people who would not take part in tearing them limb from limb.

Whatever their reason, they were so horribly wrong. Innocent victims have been slaughtered. Families have been devastated. The country has lost its innocence and sense of protection.

We now must be more vigilant, less tolerant of the radical extremes. But, by the same token, we should not rush to pass laws that stifle our freedoms. Reasonable dissent from the left or the right is healthy. It allows for a middle ground to be found.

At the same time our government is looking for new ways to protect its citizens, we should look for new ways to restrict our over-abusive government from violating our citizens' rights. We all must realize that we have created a world where technology and terrorism has developed the means to create devices that instantaneously can kill hundreds or thousands with the flick of a switch.

As awesome and fearsome as this reality is, is it any different than the fears of entering a wagon-train, going across the hostile lands that our pioneers set foot upon less than a century ago? You are just as dead from a hatchet in your skull as you are exploded by a terrorist bomb.

Our pioneers learned that by joining together, being ever-vigilant, they could persevere and safely arrive at the end of their journey. We too must join together, be vigilant and progress with determination. We are our brother's keeper and he is ours.

And why not?

Is this mean spirited?

As part of Governor George Pataki's welfare reforms, the administration wants homeless people to be ejected from shelters if they fail to follow a variety of rules.

Suffolk County Commissioner of Social Services John Wingate spoke of these problems recently at a welfare task force meeting. He illustrated examples of recipients not being satisfied with the accommodations that they were placed in and demanding changes, creating havoc, doing acts of vandalism and, instead of being ejected, were placed in other accommodations. Mandated rules coming down from the state tied the department's hands and made chumps of them.

Advocates of the homeless called the proposals "mean spirited," according to a front page story in the New York Times. The advocates of increasing social welfare programs have been using this phrase a lot lately. Anytime anyone attempts to curtail their inexhaustible appetite, they jump up and scream in anguish. They use half-truths and outright lies to create the illusion that any politician who is trying to respond and curtail the runaway welfare programs is heartless. They draw out two mothers with a baby carriage or an old woman in a nursing home who might be affected to some degree and create the illusion that they will be thrown out into the streets at the mercy of the wolves.

When we listened to Wingate illuminate how some recipients had the department by the throat, our mind reflected back to our personal attempts to bring up our children during their teenage years.

The children wanted all the freedoms they alleged their peers had. They wanted to ignore proper behavior and do whatever felt good, without regard to the consequences. I often said to my children that my home was a benevolent dictatorship. I will house you, feed you, clothe you and educate you and because I love you, you will follow my rules. The day that you are able to take your feet from under my table and put them under your own table, is the day you will be able to make your own rules. In the meantime, you will do as I say.

Thank God, my children grew up well and today are successful in their various endeavors. Was I tough, was I demanding and was I fair? I tried to be. Was it easy on them? Of course not. If they had their way they would have lived in a palace and done as they

pleased without taking responsibility for their own actions. Was I being mean spirited? I am sure the children would have told you at the time, yes.

Today, as they are marrying and having their own children, I suspect they will raise their children not much different than they were raised.

Welfare recipients should be treated no better than we treat our children. When we, as a collective society, provide them with a roof over their heads, we should not expect gratitude, but neither should we accept criticism, vandalism or lawlessness. Our attitude should be, "don't like it, leave, get a life, get a job."

Yes, we have been into too many homes that are supposed to be temporary shelters and have seen the deplorable conditions. Some of the culprits are greedy, unchristian-like landlords. At times it is the social agencies themselves which accept these units without first checking on health and zoning qualifica-

tions. As Wingate said, sometimes we have no choice. We have no units available and they are the best that can be found, but, at least it is a roof over their heads.

Since January, New York City has developed tougher regulations for qualifying for home relief. Potential recipients must produce Social Security cards and other proofs of citizenship. Instead of being granted automatic eligibility, they face extensive examination of need. Guess what? Applications for home relief in three months are down 29%. More people are being turned down who do apply because they cannot justify the need than ever before in the history of New York City. Mean spirited? There are those welfare advocates who claim so.

We are at least on the right track and we must support these elected officials who are daring to be different.

And why not?

LILCO as arrogant as ever

Just about everyone agrees that if we conserve energy we conserve our finite resources. There is one major exception, however.

The federal government has ordered that all utilities develop conservation plans that include inducements and rebates to consumers to use energy efficient appliances, bulbs and lighting fixtures.

The Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) in the past has been no shining light in this endeavor. They did the minimum, but no more. They were far behind many of the utilities throughout the nation. Recently, LILCO hit a new low. Without warning, or legitimate justification, they suddenly pulled the plug on even their minimum effort at conservation by withdrawing their rebate program designed to encourage conservation by switching to fluorescent light bulbs.

The light bulbs are expensive, around \$20 a pop. To mitigate this high cost, LILCO had been forced into offering \$6 rebates. They withdrew this program without prior notification, leaving the retailers who were in the process of promoting the savings, holding the bag.

LILCO gave as its excuse their inability to raise rates. The New York State Public Service Commission (PSC)

had approved a LILCO plan which included no rate increase for 1995. Oh, woe is me, those poor babies. LILCO ripped off Long Island last year for a billion dollars in profits. They drained the lifeblood right out of Long Islanders' veins. They not only received in their rates a reasonable rate of return guaranteed to them by the state, but we as consumers are being forced to pay the third time for their folly, the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant.

Former Governor Mario Cuomo, when in office, gave away the store and our children's future in the infamous deal he struck with LILCO's Chairman William Catacosinos. While the ratepayers have been unmercifully bankrupted financially by being at the mercy of LILCO, the monopoly, the chairman of this lustful corporation has increased his salary several hundred thousand dollars since the settlement, granted by the board of directors as a reward for the tribute that he has extracted from the ratepayers.

We are paying the highest electrical rates in the nation, not for the best run corporation in the nation, not for superior electrical service, but for corporate profits. LILCO rates are tearing the guts out of our economy and no one wants to do what is necessary to put an end to this financial disaster.

The PSC, New York State's utility

regulatory authority, has the power and the means to correct this situation, but not the will. Unfortunately, the PSC, from the commissioners right on down to the staff, are in bed with Wall Street. Governor George Pataki could do something about it. He hasn't. The New York State Senate, which confirms appointments to the PSC, could do something about it. They haven't. The Long Island delegation in the Senate could do something about it. They haven't.

The Long Island delegation is the strongest single delegation within the Senate. Why aren't they acting like it? It is time for Senators Kenneth LaValle, James Lack, Caesar Trunzo, Owen Johnson, Carl Marcellino and Norman Levy to enthusiastically represent us or resign. We are crying for help. They know the problem. Do they have the courage, the intelligence and the desire to be our representatives, or are they going to stay forever in the hip pocket of the utilities?

This issue has been talked to death while the ratepayers suffer. If our Senate delegation stood firm as a block, and used their muscle to concentrate on bringing relief to the ratepayers, there would be light at the end of the tunnel. It's time for a concentrated effort to resolve the crisis LILCO has forced upon our economy and our people.

And why not?

But its impact lingers

Shoreham plant is dead

Last Monday afternoon, I attended a ceremony that marked the final chapter in the closing of Shoreham. On Tuesday, May 2 at 12:01 a.m., the Nuclear Regulatory Commission officially revoked the license for this nuclear power plant.

The day had started stormy, but at mid-morning it turned sunny and spring-like. By 1 p.m., it was again cloudy and a cold wind bit at our backs as we sat there and listened to speeches. The weather mimicked the Shoreham scenario. There never was a level playing field on the Shoreham saga.

I had often wondered what my reaction would be if we were successful and closed this plant. There wasn't any. I didn't feel joy. I didn't feel victorious. I didn't even feel relief after fighting 20 years to stop this monster from harming my readers, the residents of Suffolk County.

Costly fight

The fight cost Suffolk Life dearly in time, energy, lost advertising and the huge amount of space we devoted to the coverage. In retrospect, it was worth everything we put into it. If we erred, we erred on the side of safety. This we had decided in the beginning; to do any less would have been a dereliction of our responsibilities. We realized this more and more as we learned and became more educated on the subject.

My mind reflected back to the early days when we questioned, seeking the truth from the officials at LILCO. They lied, they stonewalled, they mocked and they treated us like stupid hicks. They questioned our audacity to ask intelligent questions and belittled us when we would not accept rhetoric and plain bull. When they were not forthright with answering our questions, we became cynical, then doubtful and then outright distrustful. There were too many loose ends, too many untruths, too many statements uttered as fact that could not be substantiated.

'Become involved'

My staunch involvement with this issue and this paper's commitment into seeking the truth and educating the public was brought about by two factors. My beautiful, then eight-year-old daughter came home from school where they had been discussing the pros and cons of nuclear power in science. She had a host of questions and raised innocent doubts. As I tried to answer her questions, and expressed reservations, she said to me, "Why don't you become involved?" I could not put aside this challenge and we started digging deeper. The deeper we dug, the more apparent it became that the plant had been poorly constructed and posed a potentially dangerous situation.

A few years later, a project engineer for the prime contractor settled in Hampton Bays. He had purchased a cottage in the community and told all this was the last project he was going to be involved in; he was going to settle in Hampton Bays and raise his family. He was a good natured guy; he always had

a smile. About a year later, on a hot July day, we noticed after we had returned from off-shore fishing, he appeared glum. When I inquired as to what was wrong, he said that he had put the cottages up for sale. He was moving his family as far away from here as he could get. Shoreham was a bomb, an explosion waiting to happen, and he did not want to be anywhere near it. We were stunned and knew then that all our energies and the power of this publication had to be brought into play.

Coverage begins

From then on, we devoted as much as 10% of our news hole to stories relating to Shoreham. Many weeks, we had more stories than we had room to print. We relentlessly editorialized in an attempt to awaken the residents of Suffolk County.

Citizen activists came to the forefront to help marshal the forces to get the message out. We were a group of divergent political philosophies, yet we were bonded together in our desire to keep our Suffolk residents free of the devastation that we believed was more than a mere possibility.

During the 20-year fight, we became frustrated and angered. Wall Street, LILCO and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had the power and made the rules. It often seemed that there wasn't any way in hell we were going to stop the opening.

'No chance'

One of Suffolk County's Washington attorneys told Assistant County Executive Frank Jones that "you have as much chance of stopping Shoreham from opening as you have stopping the world from rotating on its axis." Maybe it was our determination and our benign belief that we could make a difference. Maybe it was the millions of prayers that God heard.

The County of Suffolk had agreed with LILCO to develop an evacuation plan for Long Island in case of a major catastrophe at the plant. At a cost of over \$1 million, the county brought in experts in emergency evacuation, crowd control, traffic movement. The conclusion of these experts was that a plan could be developed, but Suffolk County could not be safely evacuated within the time frame allowed.

No safe plan

Peter Cohalan was Suffolk County executive at that time. He was under a constitutional oath to protect the health and welfare of the community. In good conscience, he could not sign off on an evacuation plan that would not safely protect the residents of Suffolk County.

Although the issue had been on the front burner for almost a decade, people still did not seem to comprehend the dangers that they faced. This abruptly changed when LILCO installed the early warning sirens at the 10-mile perimeter. When people saw these sirens going up, they realized that they were within the danger zone, and they reacted.

The plant, at this point, was 95% completed. Ironically, at the onset, Babylon attorney Irving Like, during Lloyd Harbor hearings, raised the question of evacuation to the Atomic Energy Commissioners who were in the process of granting the first licenses. In Washington arrogance, the commission said this was not the time to address evacuation. "We will build the plant and then we will consider evacuation and the safety of the residents." They did not know Long Island or even recognize what the name meant. A stretch of sand extending 140 miles out into the ocean with limited land exit. This callous decision led to the waste of well over \$5 billion in the construction of a nuclear power plant at the wrong place, at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons.

Shoreham Commission

I was appointed a member of Governor Cuomo's Shoreham Commission, which was also known by the name of the Marburger Commission. Over nine months of hearings were held and voluminous reams of material had to be read. When the commission was first convened, there were only two members who had serious reservations about the plant, Marge Harrison from Nassau County and myself. The panel appeared to be stacked. We knew we were in for a fight. Subsequently, Leon Campo, another doubter and pro-safety person and Herbert J. Kouts from Brookhaven National Lab, a pro-nuclear advocate, were added to the commission.

The commission was not charged with reaching a conclusion, but rather to gather the facts. It seemed apparent that the report would end up being pro-nuclear. The three of us were determined that our research would be included in the final report even if it was a minority report.

Over the summer, we worked nights and weekends to prepare this report. At the last minute, Campo decided he wanted to issue his own report and Harrison and I jointly issued what we thought was going to be the minority report. We had it printed and bound and submitted it to the commission. They were so overwhelmed by the depth and the intricacies of the report that they decided that it would be included as a major portion of the final report.

Alarming statistics

In the minority report, mention was made of a study done on the Millstone Plant across the Sound from Fishers Island. This plant was built upon bedrock, had not had a major accident or any kind of major release. Yet, the study indicated that there were 3,400% more cases of childhood leukemia within the five-mile radius vs. the 10-mile radius around the plant. There also were several thousand percent increases in other forms of cancer that affected adults. The only thing these people had been exposed to were low levels of radiation from washing the floors and the exchange of air that was needed to ventilate the plant.

I had placed into the record the re-

sults of the Wash 800 Study conducted by the Sandia National Laboratory. It was a case study of what could happen at each of the operating nuclear power plants in the United States. The study had reported that if an accident at Shoreham occurred, 40,000 people would die immediately, there would be 75,000 injuries, 35,000 latent cancer deaths within a fatal radius of 17.5 miles. Economic loss would be \$157 billion. The total area of impact would range from Boston to Washington, DC. An independent study had concluded that there was a likelihood that one out of the 100 operating plants, including Shoreham, had the potential of having a Class I accident, the worst kind, during the next 20 years. It could happen on day one or the 365th day of the 20th year, but, statistically, one of these plants is calculated to suffer a major accident at the 20th year.

Cuomo joins foes

Fabian Palamino, former Governor Mario Cuomo's top aide, read the report on a trip between New York and Albany. His wife was suffering from cancer and the report reportedly had a tremendous impact upon him. Cuomo then joined the pro-safety forces, which led to the closing of the plant.

As I looked around the gathering last Monday, many of the people who had been instrumental in the closing were there. We were aged, yet in each of us there still burned that flicker of independence. We were the radicals. We were the terrorists who stopped corporate America, the state government and Washington. We beat back Wall Street, the insidious tentacles of LILCO into the Senate, Congress and the President's office.

The Cuomo deal

At the beginning, nuclear experts claimed electricity produced by the plant would be "too cheap to meter." When it was closed, oil had to be \$55 per barrel for the plant to be economically viable. Oil today is approximately \$20 per barrel. In the end, a deal engineered between Governor Cuomo and LILCO gave the utility financial viability and the ratepayers the highest rates in the nation, rates that have caused the evacuation of many businesses and residents fleeing to escape their devastating impact.

As I looked up and saw that American flag flying so briskly in the wind, I thought of our Constitution and the protection it afforded us so that we could speak out. That we, the citizens of the United States, had the right to voice our feelings, to speak out against the government and make the Constitution work.

I thought how lucky we are to be Americans, free to the core. How different this fight might have been today, after the Oklahoma bombing. Would we still be able to oppose a popular concept? Will those actions, out of fury and frustration, restrict our voices in the future? It's frustrating to fight the government, but with our Constitution, as it was written, it can be done and the people can win, without war or loss of human life.

And why not?

It's not the legislators' business

After almost two years of raucous debate, a compromise bill was recently passed by the Suffolk County Legislature that imposes a restrictive ban on smoking in restaurants. The compromise bill was authored and pushed by Legislator Tom Finlay.

About one year ago, the legislators, wearing blinders, passed a bill banning all smoking in restaurants, bars, bingo parlors and other places where the public gathers. No smoking, period!

Restaurant owners, upon becoming aware of the ramifications of the bill, were up in arms. The ban went

into effect around the first of the year. Many restaurateurs reported a drop of over 50% in business this year as compared to what they did for the same period last year. The restaurant owners faced the angry wrath of their customers. They are hosts and hostesses, not policemen. They petitioned the legislature for relief, for some common sense.

Legislators did not want to hear from the restaurateurs until public pressure grew too much for them to ignore anymore. The compromise bill allows for smoking in the bar areas, with

this area not more than 20% of the restaurant's total seating capacity. This is a temporary exemption and will sunset in three years.

To us, it is a lousy compromise. Restaurant owners generally are small business people. Ownership of most restaurants comes from years of hard work as cooks, bartenders and waiters. By skimping and saving, and often going into partnerships, they are finally able to open the establishment of their dreams. Because of the nature of the business, they know they face 16-hour shifts and, during the busy season, seven-day work weeks.

The government does not give them money to start their businesses. They are not partners, and they should not be allowed to make rules and regulations about who they can serve and who they can't. This should be the decision of the entrepreneur alone. They should be able to declare their restaurant smoking or non-smoking. Allow the customer to make the decision whether they want to patronize the restaurant or not. If a restaurateur, investing his capital, decides he wants a smoke-free restaurant, let him decide and notify the public. Likewise, if he chooses to allow smoking in his private enterprise, let him so state, and those who are offended by smoke need not patronize the establishment.

We all know that certain foods aren't healthy, they are high in fats and cholesterol. If we are going to impose restrictions on smoking, shouldn't we ban the establishments from serving unhealthy foods? Aren't we allowing people to make an individual choice on whether they want to eat healthy or kill themselves on foods that are not politically correct?

Do we, collectively as a society, have a responsibility to save people from themselves? Do we, collectively as a society, know better than the individual does? This is what we have come down to in Suffolk County. In our quest to bring laws of the future, landmark legislation, we impose restrictions upon those who are the weaker element of our society.

If there is one lesson that should have been learned out of this utter waste of time, energy and money, it is that the business people must join together to keep out of office people who think they know better than the individual knows what is good for them.

Suffolk County has developed a reputation for being anti-business and pro-regulation. We are not known as a good place to do business. People from outside of Long Island turn away from us because of this factor.

A few years ago, I was talking to an executive who owned a nationwide chain of businesses. I was encouraging him to develop his operations on Long Island. He emphatically stated to me that he considered New York State the worst place in the nation to do business, and the worst place in the state was Long Island. "It's the land of 'no,'" he said. There is no way that he was going to invest his capital in a region that hates business so much.

Keep passing laws that restrict the rights of people to make choices and in doing business and, eventually, the legislature will be made up of the last 18 fools who call Suffolk home.

And why not?

The LILCO refund

Government malfeasance

Last week, a New York State Supreme Court ruling that the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant had been over-assessed by the Town of Brookhaven was upheld by the State Court of Appeals. This means LILCO is entitled to a \$78 million refund, including interest.

This was bad news for the taxpayers of the Shoreham-Wading River School District, the Town of Brookhaven and the County of Suffolk. The ratepayers of LILCO supposedly will be the beneficiaries of this legacy. The refund to LILCO should, indeed, go back to the ratepayers who paid these taxes through their LILCO bills during the time of the over-assessment, which came about through the greed of the local taxing entity.

Suffolk Life warned Brookhaven Town that they faced a serious financial setback by continuing to overassess the value of the plant when it became apparent that Shoreham was going to be stopped from operating.

Brookhaven Town officials ignored our advice and continued to use the tax revenues from the inflated assessment from the plant in hopes of postponing the financial dilemma that the town found itself in because of overspending.

To make matters worse, even while in litigation with LILCO over the alleged over-assessment, town officials increased the assessment by \$10 million during an election year, no doubt to ease the impact of a pending budget. The politicians who were running the town at that point felt that even if the courts ruled in favor of LILCO, they would be long gone, having moved out or up on the political ladder. They wanted to look good then, and recklessly disregarded the financial impact it would have on their town residents. This was governmental and financial malfeasance.

The impact of the suit will be mitigated. The county, which is in the first position to pay back the \$78 million award, will issue bonds which will be paid back over probably 20 years. This

will spread the cost over a like period. It will mean that our children will pay back for their parents' sins.

The litigation, itself, cost the town, county and school district taxpayers millions of dollars—wasted money that will not feed a hungry mouth or put an idea into a child's mind. The cost of the \$78 million will probably be doubled when bonding fees, legal fees and interest are calculated. All told, the residents of Suffolk County, Brookhaven and the Shore-

My hero

One of the fondest memories I had as a boy was gathering up the beverage deposit bottles and returning them to the store. This was during the Second World War and the years after it.

Soda bottles brought two cents, quart beer bottles were worth five cents. Two cents in those days bought a couple of penny candies and a nickel was representative of wealth. In those days, deposits were collected and paid by the beverage companies. They didn't recycle the bottles. They washed them and re-used them.

During the fifties, with the advent of the cans and the nickel soda becoming a dime, deposits were done away with. Changes in technology made it more economical for beverage makers to use virgin glass rather than re-use the old. Containers became a nuisance, litter. Dump space was limited and these beverage containers were causing problems.

Governments passed legislation mandating a beverage deposit. This time it was a nickel on beer and soda. Many citizens started to save their cans and bottles, returning them when they bought new beverages. Others continued to throw them out. Those who did created opportunities for the more industrious. They are my heroes.

Some people snarl at seeing men and women pushing shopping carts or toting big bags on their backs along our highways, in the parks and places where people gather. You see them stooping, picking up, salvaging the nickels that we so quickly disregard. The nickels add up and give these people a break from life.

One gentleman I became acquainted with had a whole route set up. He particularly zeroed in on the boat yards. When

ham-Wading River School District will have spent over \$100 million on nothing. The lawyers have gotten rich. Bond counsel has a windfall and the investors in these bonds will have sweet, tax-free interest.

The Brookhaven Town officials who created this scenario pulled off the biggest heist in Suffolk County's history. We are out \$100 million and there is not one thing that we can do about it. They bought time and we are paying the bill.

And why not?

the boats returned from fishing, he was there to pick up their discards. Some of us even prepared packages for him. He was always appreciative and occasionally would drop off some fresh clams as a return of the favor.

One evening as we were leaving the marina and he was picking through the dumpster, a crass individual who obviously had made money too fast or had been given it to him by his Daddy, snarled at the old man and said, "Why don't you get a real job."

The old gentleman was crushed. You could see the hurt on his face. I went over to him and told him that I admired him. He revealed to me that he was in his mid-seventies. When faced with forced retirement, he had only his home, a small savings and his earned Social Security. His income level was such that he would qualify for various public assistance programs. Being proud and independent, he refused. He said what started out as a supplement had become a living.

The old gentleman had earned enough to pay for his wife's cancer medical bills not covered by Medicare, and he still had enough money left over to buy a new car. He asked, "What's wrong with this country when somebody who probably doesn't know what real work is can criticize me for working? What's wrong with this country when those who can work won't work when there is work right in front of them?"

This guy was my hero as are the many others who are cleaning up the mess that we create. My hat is off to them.

And why not?

The state budget compromise

The New York State budget is almost 90 days late. Technically, New York State government should be shut down but, because of a loophole, the clock was kept from striking midnight on April 1.

The hold-up has been because of the differences between Republican Governor George Pataki, the Republican Senate and the Democratically-controlled Assembly.

The Republicans heard the call from the citizens of New York State that is entwined with the voices that have been calling out from the heartland and on both the East and West coasts. Government has grown too big. Our social programs are too generous. Stop the spread of these social programs. Stop the increases in these programs that go beyond inflation. Make all people work. Dismantle the system that allows some segments of our society to enjoy better benefits and a better quality of life than those who work.

The Republicans have attempted to reform welfare in New York State. It's been a dirty battle. The Democrats, through the Assembly, have fought needed and realistic changes tooth and nail. Recently, a tentative compromise was announced. It is a start, but it is far from a finish. There are some items in the compromise which we are sure will stick

in the craw of everyone who works full-time, often working two and three jobs to keep a roof over their heads.

The one item that I am sure will anger everyone, and has me incensed, is the compromise that allows people to rip off the system three times through deliberate fraud before they become ineligible for welfare assistance. Give me a break! Someone can make a mistake once and inadvertently rip off the system, but three times? That's ludicrous.

We are talking about fraud. Things like getting a welfare card in multiple counties. Claiming you are responsible for 10 children when you only have two. Claiming you are indigent while working off the books and not declaring this money as income. Pull one of these stunts more than once, and you should be out permanently. There is no need for three strikes and you are out.

The compromise has enough loopholes in it that it is questionable whether this reform will be meaningful to any degree. It's a start, but that is all.

The Democrats who have resisted all changes in welfare reform have to get the message, particularly the Assembly people from the suburbs who are representing hard-working districts. Their constituents cannot afford the tax bills they are being

asked to pay. They are being driven out of their homes. They are not being afforded the life and liberty that is guaranteed under the Constitution.

The Assembly is solidly Democratic. Their strength comes from New York City, and you are not going to change that mentality. The Democratic Assembly persons who come from suburban districts throughout the state, and particularly here on Long Island, have to be made to realize that they represent a different culture.

Either they realize it and start supporting reform measures, or they will have to be replaced with people who come from the suburbs and think like suburbanites.

And why not?

Memorial Day 1995

Their life is ours

Make this Monday, Memorial Day, a day of observance as well holiday activities.

Many of Suffolk Life's readers are too young to remember the agony and the sacrifices brought about by war. They are not personally aware of the weeping and the tears of their parents, their friends, their relatives and neighbors. Cries of anguish for those so near and dear who willingly went to war, not only because they were asked but because they were needed. Bright young men and women with their entire lives ahead of them, serving their country, serving their fellow citizens, offering their lives in sacrifice to keep this country free.

Make no mistake about it, our opponents, the Germans and the Japanese, planned on and, in fact, did invade the United States. They were world opportunists. They wanted the world enslaved from cradle to grave.

Then there were the wars in South East Asia, Korea, the Gulf war, and Vietnam, where our military fought with one hand tied behind its back, and

leadership that didn't know why we were in the war and had no commitment to end it.

On this Memorial Day, we still are not free from those who want world domination. The Yugoslavian war is not only an internal conflict, a religious war, but is a war of expansionists.

Iran, Iraq and North Korea, all are on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons. They are not developing these weapons to keep their own people in control. They see opportunities to advance their exploration through fear, intimidation and actual strike force.

This Memorial Day, let us all take a few moments out of our busy lives to bow down and give thanks to God for the protection He has afforded this country, and especially pray to Him for the souls who have answered the call of freedom. They sacrificed their lives so we can remain strong and free. Let's not forget them.

And why not?



Your children are your responsibility

It was probably an election year move, and surely a quest for publicity, when Suffolk County deputy sheriffs recently rounded up a host of "dead-beat dads." These are guys who have taken part in bringing children into this world, walked out on them and said to the wee ones, "Fend for yourselves, your old man does not assume any further responsibility."

To set the record straight, it is not only "Dads" that walk out—it's "Moms" too. Most times, the abandonment by the parent of the child is brought about by the parents dissolving their relationship.

Sometimes, it is the result of an illegitimate conception that may have been brought about by a one-night stand or a long term premarital relationship. Whatever the reason, there is no acceptable reason for a parent to abandon their responsibilities.

Our children are our responsibility from the day that we take part in conceiving them until the day they are adults themselves. We are responsible for their financial support.

Years back, a parent who walked out on his or her children was considered a bum. Such parents were ostracized; society held them in low regard.

Community pressure usually forced them into living up to their responsibilities.

As our society changed, it no longer was a shame to have an illegitimate child. It was no longer a public matter that you did not support your child. Laws have finally caught up with the walk-away parents, and they are now being enforced.

We hope last week's sweep becomes a long-term endeavor. Society is fed up paying for the children of other's children. As my Dad often told me, "Play, pay; you can't walk away from a responsibility."

And why not?

No solution, just more of same

The trials and tribulations of local governments and school districts struggling with eroding tax bases and escalating budgets are legend. They lead to higher taxes for property owners, and a constant stream of pleas to state legislators to eliminate non-funded mandates or find new ways to fund these services.

Instead, time and again, state legislators come up with proposals designed to curry favor with special groups, but do not dip into state coffers to pay the bills. Instead, they put the burden of financing the currying favor schemes on the town or county tax base, which is used to determine the tax rates and bills for the remaining property owners.

An example: several years ago, our state legislators came up with legislation that would grant tax exemptions for veterans. They passed the legislation in Albany and then sent out a flood of press releases telling the veterans what great concerns they have for those who sacrificed to serve our country. The kicker is the legislation put the onus on town governments, which had to approve the exemptions on the local level. Governments that didn't because of concerns about an eroding tax base were strongly criticized for being "anti-veteran" and non-caring.

It's happening again! Assemblyman Fred Thiele (R-Bridgehampton) has introduced legislation which would allow towns and villages to offer members of volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services real property tax exemptions of up to 20% of assessed valuation. According to Thiele, under current law, towns cannot offer real property tax exemptions to volunteer fire and ambulance service members, and villages are limited to exemptions of \$500 or less. Thiele's legislation would increase the maximum for both towns and villages to 20% of assessed valuation.

This is not about veterans, or firemen or ambulance volunteers. Suffolk Life has always been fans of these groups, and we have often editorialized on their behalf. It's a no-brainer for an elected official to propose legislation, creating a tax break for a specific group when it is financed by the town or the county. No bucks are coming out of the state. The burden to finance the tax breaks is on the local government and your local real estate taxes.

Thiele should know better. Up until his election to the state assembly, he was the Southampton Town supervisor. He knows full well that if this legislation is passed, the town will be besieged by the firemen and the EMTs demanding they approve the exemptions.

Organized groups which give to the community are hard to turn down. The town is caught in a Catch 22 situation. If they say "no" to the firemen and EMTs, the local officials are considered "bad"

guys by these groups. If they say "yes," all the remaining taxpayers have to pick up the burden of the reduced assessments. Their taxes have to be increased. There is no Santa Claus. The state is not coming up with the bucks.

Thiele's legislation is mean-spirited. He knows the damage he will do. He is pitting the community against itself. The whole burden is passed along to others, the taxpayers. There's no responsibility being taken by Assemblyman Thiele of others who offer these proposals. It's a fact of life that when the tax base goes down, the tax rates needed to support the governments and school districts go up. Taxes for those who benefit from this kind of legislation go down, but the tax burden must then be picked up by the remaining local taxpayers. In Suffolk County, there are an estimated 10,000 volunteer firemen and another 4,000 to 5,000 ambulance volunteers. The 20% tax relief they would receive would be added to your bill.

If the tax bill for the average fireman or EMT is \$3,000 per year, and they were to receive a 20% reduction in their individual assessments, the total cost of this mischief would be over \$9 million in Suffolk County alone.

Thiele's legislation would have some merit if the payback came from state funds in the form of a reduction in state income taxes or an outright state grant. That's not the game that is played in Albany, however. For those legislators who might not have experienced the problems of an eroding tax base, we might be able to accept a plea of ignorance. For Thiele, however, who was a town official until a few short months ago, there is little excuse for jumping on the Albany bandwagon at the expense of the local folks he left behind.

The problems faced on the local levels in financing governments and education are very real. They have, in large part, been responsible for driving people and businesses out of the county, seeking financial relief elsewhere, which has caused an erosion in the tax base. Instead of meaningful relief from Albany to resolving this problem, we get "more of the same solutions" which make the problems worse.

The time for rhetoric must end. Non-funded mandates must be eliminated, and state legislators must provide state dollars for their proposals instead of passing the burden down to the local levels.

And why not?

No guarantee, no check

LILCO wasted no time in billing Suffolk County for its court awarded refund brought about because of Brookhaven Towns over-assessment of the Shoreham nuclear power plant.

LILCO has demanded the money--now. In a letter dated May 15, they demanded payment by May 22. They want their \$78 million up front. The money that LILCO wants does not belong to them, however. It's ours, the ratepayers of Long Island. We paid for this over-assessment in our electrical rates. It was part of what LILCO called "their legitimate costs." We, as customers, should demand immediate and direct reimbursement by LILCO for these overcharges.

We want our money in cash. We don't want any gobbledygook that they are going to blend it into their future rate base. They took the money out of our hides for Shoreham. They are demanding a rebate in cash. We are entitled to no less than they are.

In prior litigation against LILCO over Shoreham, when awards have been made, LILCO has petitioned the Public Service Commission to allow them to be paid out to the consumers over years. We, as ratepayers, never see any evidence of the refund of these amounts. No one audits LILCO to ensure the refunds are being made. They are lost in the gobbledygookland of regulatory accounting. The Public Service Commission, who is supposed to regulate LILCO, never identifies specifically,

when or where these monies will be applied. There is no clear accounting on the bills.

The money that LILCO is being refunded was taken out month by month through increases in rates. It is specifically owed to the people it was taken from, not the consumers of the future. And certainly not the stockholders. Every penny, every dollar that the people of Long Island were over-assessed should be refunded to them by check. It should not be allowed to be built into future rate bases or mitigate against future rate increases. This is our money; we want it--now. And we should be granted interest at the same rate LILCO receives for each day we have to wait.

There should be a full accounting of the return of these funds to the ratepayers by an independent accounting firm. The PSC is not to be trusted when it comes to LILCO or any other utility. The cozy relationship that has existed over the years between LILCO and the PSC has already cost ratepayers millions of dollars.

The county should withhold the payment of this refund until LILCO presents them with a very simple and concise plan for directly refunding the ratepayers' money in the same form they are going to get it--cash. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Our public officials can't let LILCO get away with another shell game.

And why not?

Supreme Court strikes down term limits

In a narrow split decision, by a vote of 5 to 4, the United States Supreme Court struck down the ability of states to enact legislation limiting the terms of senators and congressmen. They swept aside the majority opinion of the citizens. In states that have brought term limits to referendum, the measures passed 60% to 70%, indicating widespread support.

The United States Supreme Court said that if it is the will of the American people to limit terms of congressmen and senators, it must be done through a Constitutional Amendment.

The United States Supreme Court justices increasingly, through their decisions, have interfered with state's rights. The Constitution gives to the fed-

eral government special powers. They are limited to these powers, with the remaining powers belonging to the states.

United States Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas wrote an extensive minority opinion arguing that terms of elected officials are the prerogative of the people, not the politicians. He stated that these rights are vested in the states, not the federal government.

America's discontent with its government will be further antagonized by this United States Supreme Court ruling. The Supreme Court, during the last 40 years, has had a tendency to rewrite the Constitution instead of interpreting it.

United States Supreme Court justices are appointed for life terms. They are not selected by the people, nor are they responsive to the will of the people. In most courts, judges are required to retire at 70 years of age. These term limits were set both because it's questionable about the functionality of some who are in their 70s, 80s and 90s, and the fact that there comes a time when terms should end and new blood be brought in.

Congress should get its back up, and pass a Constitutional Amendment limiting the terms of all federal elected officials. And while they are at it, establish an age limit for federal judges, including those who serve in the United States Supreme Court.

And why not?