

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Will Cablevision Escape Scrutiny?

Cablevision is quickly becoming LILCO's competitor for a utility to hate.

Subscribers to Cablevision are becoming vocal in their opposition to its incessant rate increases and programming changes. More than 5,000 people, primarily from the North Fork, signed a petition recently, protesting Cablevision's 74% rate hike for basic service, which went into effect in March.

The petition demanded that the federal, state and local governments get involved. The federal government, through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), is supposed to regulate basic and standard television rates. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is charged with monitoring rate increases on a state level. The towns negotiate contracts that allow Cablevision to run wires over the town's rights-of-way to service homes.

The trouble is, all three governmental entities point at each other and say, "it is their responsibility, not ours." The buck-passing doesn't stop and consumers continue to be abused.

In an attempt to resolve the problem, Assemblywoman Pat Acampora tried to set up a meeting between local town officials, delegates from the state PSC and representatives of the FCC. She said, "let's stop the finger-pointing, find out what the rules and regulations are, and who is responsible."

Town officials jumped at the opportunity. They are getting heat from their constituents. The state PSC said it would come. But, lo and behold! the FCC cried poverty and said, "we do not have any money in our budget to send a representative."

That is pure hogwash.

The Long Island Congressional delegation, as well as New York senators D'Amato and Moynihan, should be bouncing off the walls in anger. They should be threatening to cut the FCC out of the budget if it cannot do the basic job of regulating what it is there to regulate. They should be looking into the FCC to find out if someone bought this decision

or if some politicians are receiving huge contributions from the cable industry, which could be the cause of this malarkey coming out of Washington.

Constituents must flood the offices of D'Amato, Moynihan, Forbes, Lazio and Ackerman with phone calls and complaints. These officials are elected and if they cannot get the FCC to provide representation, they do not deserve to be reelected. This is a bread and butter issue and they cannot hide from it.

Several years ago, the federal government deregulated cable television. It promised that deregulation would lead to more competition and lower rates for the consumers. This has not happened. In fact, just the opposite has occurred.

Part of the solution was the hope that satellite technology would offer competition. Satellite transmission has been priced relatively high and lacks any local news coverage, a basic right of every subscriber. The banning of local news shielded Cablevision from direct competition and made satellite transmission less attractive.

Congress should order the FCC to mandate that satellite television be required to provide local network affiliation with its basic packages.

Remember, federal officials, it is not the big things that get you reelected, it's paying attention to the homefront and protecting your constituents.

And why not?

Suffolk's Federal Representatives

Senators:

Alfonse D'Amato - 212-947-7390

Daniel Patrick Moynihan - 212-661-5150

Congressmen:

Michael Forbes - 345-9000

Rick Lazio - 893-9010

Gary Ackerman - 423-2154

People Join In I&R Fight

The Initiative and Referendum effort to put the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal on the November ballot is underway after a slight delay, but petitions have now been printed.

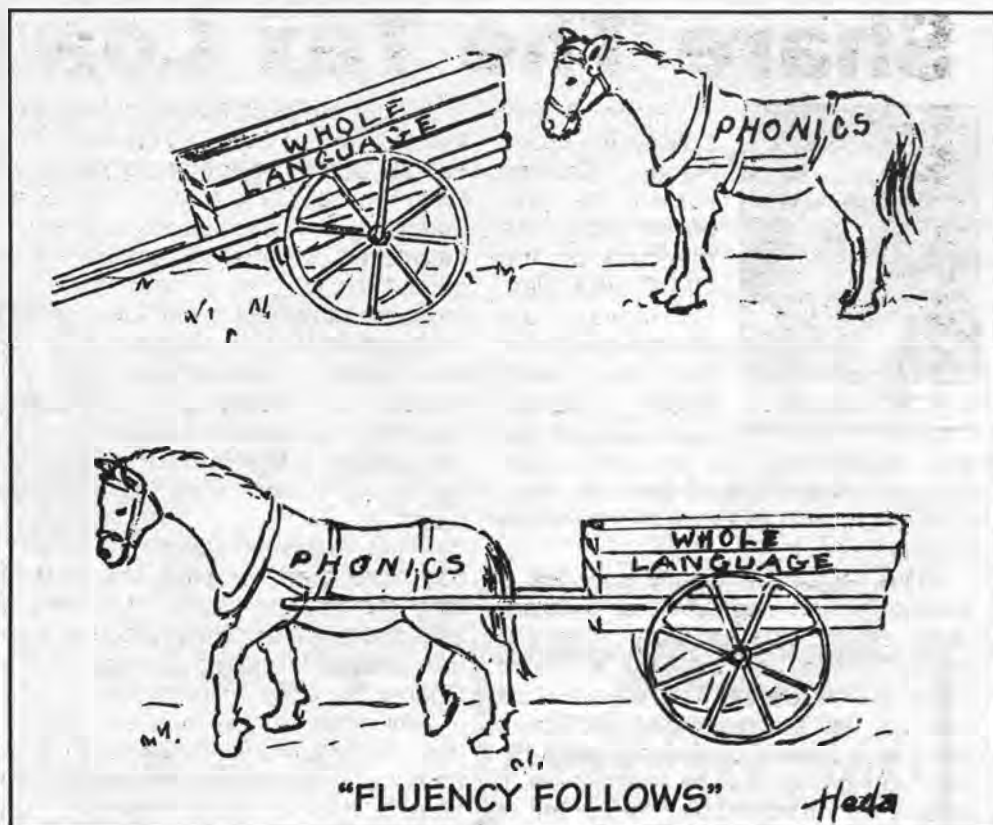
The printing was delayed by a legal requirement designed to discourage all attempts to use the county's I&R legislation. The provision states that the entire text of the I&R proposal must appear on the cover sheet of each petition. This requires paper of a particular size and a printer equipped to handle it.

We have some dedicated and bright people working on this effort, and they

overcame this obstacle. So the petitions are ready and are being distributed. The 10 town coordinators are preparing to reach out to more than 500 volunteers who have been waiting to begin gathering the signatures of those who want the deal referendum on the ballot.

We will announce next week where petitions can be found within each town. We invite you to sign a petition at any of these locations, and perhaps pick up some petitions to join in this grassroots effort to have a voice in this important matter.

We will also have instruction sheets



available on the requirements for gathering petitions and telephone numbers of individuals who can answer any questions you have.

We hope to gather at least 50,000 signatures in order to overcome any signature challenges those who wish to silence the public's voice will undoubtedly make.

This has truly become a people's effort. The amount of support this effort has received is amazing. Notary publics have volunteered their time to ensure petitions are properly notarized. People have contacted *Suffolk Life* to make sure they are not overlooked when the petition signatures are being gathered.

The amount of time already spent on this effort and the time that will be need-

ed to reach our goal is significant. Donations have been offered to pay some of the expenses. The dedication in this effort is something to behold.

We believe the politicians felt they could run roughshod over the wishes of the people in this matter. We believe they and LIPA officials thought they could buy off the ratepayers with an insignificant one-time refund check.

We think they are wrong. We think the people should have an opportunity to tell them so with a November referendum.

What do you think? If you agree, join us in this effort to show the politicians how wrong they are.

And why not?

The Next War

Energy issues never seem to die. As soon as you think they have been put to rest, they spring back up and bite once again.

There are those who once claimed the Shoreham issue is over, but here we are being told we have to pay for LILCO's defunct nuclear plant once again.

Some are saying the LILCO takeover has been put to bed. They claim it is over, it is finished, and we might as well just sit back and accept it.

Well, we do not agree; we see the war as obviously just beginning. The real war will come under the guise of "exit fees," the fees the utilities will want to impose on ratepayers who take advantage of self-generation to cut their electrical costs.

The utilities and Wall Street will argue that customers must not be allowed to escape their grasp for economic reasons; that people must forever be indebted to the utilities and pay fees

toward their overhead, whether they are customers or not.

Utilities will want to charge customers who get off the electric service grid thousands of dollars in exit fees or require them to pay a monthly meter fee to cover their share of the debt load and the overhead.

Our state legislature must make sure this does not happen. It must pass tough laws that prohibit the utilities from charging customers for leaving the utility.

This is a free enterprise system. If customers want to stop buying oil from one company, they do not have to pay a fee to stop doing business. No customer is charged for switching from one telephone company to another. This should be the case for electric utilities!

This will be an issue in the November legislative and gubernatorial races. Where the politicians stand on this issue will tell you who they represent—you, or the utilities and Wall Street.

And why not?

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Pinching Taxpayers To Save Nothing

It is almost amusing to see Governor Pataki attempting to resurrect himself as a fiscal conservative by sharply cutting close to \$2 billion out of the state legislature's proposed budget which was earmarked for member items and special interest programs.

We say "attempting" to resurrect himself because in making those cuts, Pataki claims he is doing what he was elected to do—look out for the welfare of taxpayers. That is indeed what he was elected to do, it is he really looking out for the welfare of all New York State residents?

Cutting the \$740 million in proposed spending and the \$840 million in proposed bond issues from the state legislature's recommended spending plan is expected to save the taxpayers of this state a significant amount of money.

But those savings are nothing compared to the expense he is ramming down

the throat of every Long Island resident with his proposed \$7.8 billion LILCO-LIPA deal.

Throughout the LILCO-LIPA debate, which officially began just over a year ago, the governor has claimed, "We want to save the Long Island ratepayers money."

But that is the exact opposite of what is going to happen. Over the next 30 years, Long Islanders will be expected to pay more than \$23 billion to cover the cost of this LILCO bailout. That means, before anyone pays any electric rates to LIPA, the average ratepayer will have to fork over approximately \$766 a year—or \$63 a month—to pay off these bonds, and we will still have the highest electric rates in the country.

State and private energy groups have presented report after report disputing the projected cuts that Albany and LIPA officials are claiming. Under this proposed

plan, the rates will drastically increase in less than three years, with absolutely no regulating mechanism to protect the public.

Pataki has completely ignored information presented by the state Assembly Standing Committee on Energy, the county Environment, Energy and Transportation Committee and several private energy analysts who have tried to demonstrate that the deal sounds better than it actually is.

At first, LIPA officials promised a 17% rate reduction, then they "guaranteed" only 14%, then they claimed 20% savings, and now they are asserting the "possibility" of a 21% rate reduction.

Hell, why not claim a 50% rate reduction? That is what it would take to bring Long Island's rate down to the nation's average energy rate so the area's market is competitive.

Four years ago, Pataki was elected to office predominantly because of the support he received from Long Island voters.

Once elected, he went on a national hunt for fiscal conservatives to help him reel in what was considered an uncontrollable budget. He cut jobs and benefits, he slashed programs, he told everyone life would be uncomfortable for a while, but in the end we would all be free of debt.

New York State actually has a fund surplus now because of his fiscal conservative approach to government, and a booming Wall Street economy. Everything appeared to be on track. Until LILCO decided it wanted to get out of the electric business and move into the gas business.

After years of rejecting a LIPA buyout, Long Island's only electric company changed course and agreed to negotiate a partial buyout. It wants the public to purchase its aging transmission and distribution system.

After publicly criticizing Rich Kessel for bumbling the liberal Cuomo-LILCO deal to close the utility's now-defunct

Shoreham nuclear plant, our fiscal conservative governor then appointed Kessel chairman of LIPA and chief negotiator for this \$7.8 billion LILCO-LIPA deal.

Since Kessel gave away the store the first time on the Cuomo-LILCO deal, why would Pataki appoint him to do the same thing all over again?

Pataki has put Long Island in a position unlike any other in the entire country. Con Edison has agreed to cut its rates by 10%; Connecticut's Northeast Utilities has agreed to cut its rates by 10%; several other New York State utilities have agreed to drastically reduce their electric rates; New Hampshire, California and other states have forced their utilities to significantly cut their rates; but LILCO will continue to benefit from the highest rates in the continental United States, even if this deal is consummated.

While the \$200 billion national industry of generating and transmitting electricity is in the midst of a complete change from regulation restrictions to open competition, our fiscally conservative governor is twiddling his thumbs and allowing his spokespeople to tout this as the best possible deal because there are no alternatives.

But there are alternatives. The Suffolk legislature's Committee on Environment, Energy and Transportation has already met with a number of energy providers interested in offering their services to the county and to Long Island businesses and residents.

Will these competitors be discouraged from leaving LIPA due to the huge exit fees charged by LIPA, Pataki and company and therefore unable to self-generate electricity at a fraction of the cost?

All that Long Islanders want from their fiscally conservative governor is the same honest chance they gave him four years ago.

And why not?

Call For Federal Investigation

If there was ever a need for a federal investigation, it is over the LILCO-LIPA bailout. New York has its own scandal, and President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno should take notice and open an investigation into what appears to be predominantly a corrupt Republican partnership.

We have said from the beginning that this deal was wired and laws were being circumvented to push it through without proper hearings.

The Wall Street Journal, in a lead front page article last Wednesday, revealed how federal security laws have allegedly been violated, rules ignored, and contributions made to ensure that the bonds would be offered for sale. With the permission of *The Wall Street Journal*, the article is republished on page three of *Suffolk Life* this week. It is a must read.

Back in the late eighties, a jury found LILCO guilty of violating the RICO statutes. The company was charged with racketeering. The prosecution proved that LILCO had lied, deliberately misleading state and federal regulators about the need for, and the cost of, Shoreham.

The governor and state Attorney General Dennis Vacco have the authority to appoint a special investigation, but they will not. Pataki appears to be involved in these misdeeds, and when we asked Vacco to intercede, he showed us how subservient he is to the governor by declining to investigate the issue because he might have to go head to head with Pataki.

Under state law, the New York State Commission on Investigations would be reviewing this issue because it involves elected officials, but that commission is controlled by the governor.

Here is the perfect opportunity for the federal government to protect its constituents on Long Island. The Attorney General of the United States should appoint a special prosecutor to pursue an investigation into the whole LILCO-LIPA debacle, and how political contributions,

in an apparent violation of the law, cleared the way for this deal.

We believe that many of the players have consistently lied to the public and offered conflicting testimony to various governmental agencies. The first question we asked was "Please give us an accounting of how much the public has paid toward Shoreham to date." We still have received no answer to that question.

The prudent cost of Shoreham was \$2.8 billion. According to calculations made by those who have studied the issue, the public has already paid \$8.4 billion, but has not been given proper credit for it.

This buyout deal requires the public to once again pay \$4.5 billion for LILCO's useless asset. If we have already paid over \$8 billion for a \$2.8 billion asset, how is it that we are now being charged another \$4.5 billion for it?

Reno should appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the various statements made by LILCO and LIPA, specifically because they have offered such contradictory information.

What was the basis for granting LILCO a \$2 billion capital gains forgiveness by the IRS? What forces were brought to bear in this private letter ruling that will require every man, woman and child in the United States to contribute \$17.25 in additional federal taxes?

Why didn't FERC hold hearings on the LILCO-LIPA bailout? Such hearings might have brought out the anti-competition nature of the deal. Who are the contributors and who are the beneficiaries of the reported illegal campaign contributions? What did the recipients do to warrant the payoffs? Was the public trust violated? Are the ratepayers being forced to assume obligations that are not rightfully theirs?

President Clinton should order Attorney General Reno to open the floodgates and let the truth be known.

And why not?

A Day To Remember

This Monday is Memorial Day, a day set aside to pay homage to those who have died in defense of this country.

To the younger generation, the day holds little meaning. They have been fortunate enough not to have seen their friends and neighbors drafted and sent off to war. They have not experienced the pain and grief when family members and friends failed to return. Nor have they been forced to confront the fact of those they grew up with being sent home, their minds disoriented, their bodies ravaged.

But they also missed the euphoria of all citizens united in a common cause and the sacrifices made so that we may remain free.

The threat to America was very real then. Leaders of foreign nations with delusions of grandeur envisioned their military machines conquering the entire world. People of all cultures and religions would have become their slaves, subjugated to their will.

It was only through the dauntless courage of our volunteers and draftees that America was able to withstand the crisis and save the world from itself.

In most communities across Long Island, veterans' groups will hold ceremonies this Memorial Day. Some will be prayer services at community monuments, other communities will hold parades and visit the sites memorialized to our Armed Forces.

Take time out of your busy holiday schedule to show your respect and gratitude by attending one of these ceremonies. If your plans prohibit you from taking part, set aside a moment to at least remember those who fell defending our country and our freedom.

Think about the sacrifices they made and the lives tragically cut short. Offer up a special prayer of thanks that we are not at war, and say one for this great country we call home.

And why not?

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

SUFFOLK HALL OF SHAME

In my 38 years of being in this business, I have never quite felt as disillusioned or disheartened as I did last Tuesday when I watched the Suffolk County Legislature vote on whether to give us, the taxpayers, the right to vote on the LILCO-LIPA deal.

Just a year ago, with 16 legislators in favor and two abstentions, the legislature managed to put the question on the ballot. It was thrown out by the judicial system on a technicality. The legislature voted again this year, with 12 in favor and six abstentions, to place the issue on the November ballot.

Disappointingly, County Executive Robert Gaffney, in an attempt to get back in Governor Pataki's good graces, vetoed the measure. Last year, Gaffney issued a "certificate of necessity," paving the way for the question to be on the ballot. This is the same man whose campaign platform three years ago relied heavily on the theme of stopping the LILCO bailout.

Through the LIPA deal, LILCO will not only get bailed out, it will be handsomely rewarded. It stands to gain nearly \$7 billion, plus forgiveness of another \$2 billion in capital gains to boot. On top of that, it divests itself of its interest in an upstate nuclear power plant which nobody wanted anyway, and gets paid a fourth time for the Shoreham albatross.

Wait, it gets better.

LILCO will also continue to profit by managing the transmission and distribution system for LIPA. LILCO will benefit by selling electricity from that antiquated, written-off generating system and then walk away with the biggest plum of all, the emerging gas business on Long Island.

After the deal goes through, gas—soon expected to become the biggest competitor to electricity—will substantially eat away at LIPA's revenues.

This deal has been 100% wired from Washington to Albany to Suffolk County.

During this entire process, we have become more and more disillusioned with our government. It is no longer a government of the people; it is a government of the people who can buy it. Our future, our children's future and even our grandchildren's future has been mortgaged away.

The last hope, besides a people's initiative, was the Suffolk County Legislature. Now it has let us down. Last Tuesday's vote had nothing to do with LIPA or LILCO. What it had to do with was the political machine and how it totally disregarded the principles of democracy.

The only issue at hand was whether Suffolk County residents should be allowed to vote on this critical matter and whether the public was allowed to exercise its constitutional rights under our system of democracy.

Legislators Binder and Tonna hid behind their alleged connection to LIPA

and Brooklyn Union Gas, citing conflict of interest, and abstained. But neither LIPA nor BUG was the issue. The only issue was democracy itself—the right of the people to choose, to express their opinion.

Republican legislators Hackling, Towle, Caracappa, Haley, Tonna and Binder sold out their constituents by abstaining.

Michael D'Andre, who bragged about being



Joseph Caracappa



Michael M. D'Andre



Fred Towle



Bob Gaffney



Stephen Hackling



Alan Binder



Michael Caracciolo



Paul Tonna



Martin W. Haley

At the last minute, he apparently called Powell and then abstained, which is tantamount to voting "no." Towle proved he obeys John Powell, not the voters in his district.

Martin Haley was just plain arrogant. He made the ludicrous statement that not one person who had contacted him really

Joe Caracappa is John Powell's creation. He has consistently carried Powell's water and appears to have learned early in life that you always walk in lock-step with the leader.

And finally, Presiding Officer Steve Hackling, who is said to have abstained (a "no" vote) reportedly in return for the promise of a judgeship.

Democracy took a terrible beating last Tuesday. Our elected officials became spineless cowards and would not stand up for the people's right to express their views in a ballot.

The only thing left to do, in what may turn out to be nothing more than a symbolic gesture, is for the citizens and ratepayers of this county to circulate and sign petitions ordering Suffolk County government to put this issue on the ballot.

Thousands of signatures have already been gathered. Solicitors have reported back that everyone who has been asked to sign the petition has done so. This is a democracy, and we demand the right to express our opinion.

We encourage all residents of Suffolk County to sign the petition when asked. If you would like to do more than sign a petition, call the Citizens' Advisory Panel at 537-8282 and they will get you petitions to circulate. The only thing keeping us, the people, from being enslaved is our right to petition the government. This is our last chance to make democracy work.

And why not?

You Must Be Ever-Vigilant

I remember when a swimming pool was installed at our home years ago. It was an above/below ground pool, surrounded by decks that were four feet off the ground.

On top of the deck, there was a three-foot chainlink fence enclosing the entire structure, as well as a heavy gate with a lock on it. The children were told they could only use the pool when we allowed them to and under our supervision. Having done all this, we felt quite secure.

Not an hour had gone by when I glanced out the window and saw two of my sons jump up, grab the chainlink fence, scamper over it and dive into the pool in a flash. Needless to say, they were out of that pool faster than they went in, well chastised and probably wound up with reddened behinds.

They soon got the message they were not to go into the pool without permission.

After dinner that night, as I sat there looking at the pool and thinking about what had happened, I realized that no

matter how many precautions we take, our kids will find a way to outwit us. They must be taught, the rules enforced, that a pool is not only a source of enjoyment, but can pose a safety hazard and even kill them.

Every year we read of children tragically drowning in pools. We do not believe there is any other way for some of these tragedies to be avoided than by educating our kids and being constantly vigilant.

At the very least, pools should be enclosed, gates locked, and kids scared to go into the pool area without parental supervision.

In a child's mind, a pool is just a place for having fun. Children should be made fully aware of the dangers and that kids can and do die every year. They should understand that the calm and serene pool can also be a death trap and they must always have an adult close by who can help them if they get into trouble.

Talk to your kids, scare them if you have to, but keep them alive.

And why not?