

Open Negotiation Meetings

Prior to last week's editorial on the negotiations going on between the county and the employee unions, we had received over 20 phone calls from county employees stating that because they had been nine months without a contract, negotiations appeared to be at a stalemate, and they were contemplating work actions which included slow downs or the ultimate, a strike.

We received comments and had contact with people who claimed they were speaking for the union. We also were in contact with people who were involved in the negotiations for the county. The editorial of last week was based upon information that had been given to us by these individuals.

We make no apology for the information that was contained therein. It was a synopsis and consensus of bits and pieces of information both sides were dropping, hoping to receive a sympathetic report to their cause from Suffolk Life.

Suffolk Life's obligation is only to the taxpayers. We have no allegiance to elected officials or to the unions that represent county employees. We supported Peter F. Cohalan in his bid to become county executive. We have both praised and criticized his administration as we saw fit. We will continue to do so.

We have long proposed that all information about what the unions are demanding and what management is offering be made a matter of public record at the start of negotiations, not only in county negotiations but in all municipal, including school district, salary disputes. If everyone knows at the start what the demands and counter offers are, there will be no surprises at the conclusion of negotiations, and the public would be fully aware of the ultimate impact upon their pockets.

We have also suggested that if negotiations are to remain behind locked doors, that interim reports focus on the progress that has been made, a factual outline of all the issues that have become bogged down and are deadlocking negotiations. This information is valuable not only for public understanding, but for the benefit of employees, many of whom admitted in calls this past week that they do not know all the facts and figures.

County employees are entitled to wage increases that are realistic and in keeping with the economic times and the burden of the taxpayers. Their unions have a right to demand increases, just as county officials, responsible for managing government, have the right to make an offer based upon current economic conditions and the ability of the taxpayer to absorb increased costs.

It has been our experience in the past, particularly in negotiations with public employee unions, the tendency is to ask for the ridiculous, far more than is right and justified. Management then comes back with an offer that could be justified to the taxpayers. During negotiations a compromise is reached that satisfies neither the worker nor the taxpayer. The union officials have promised these people the moon. The elected officials have promised the taxpayers they would hold the line on taxes. If both sides would make realistic initial proposals, they would not be disappointed in the end. Both sides would be forced to make much more realistic proposals if they knew that these demands and offers were to be scrutinized by the public from the onset.

We accepted several of the many phone calls we received from irate county employees in reference to this editorial. Three positions became the tone for all calls. First, there was denial that the employees were contemplating, as a union organization, going on strike. This information had come directly from county employees.

Second, that our facts were not straight. The percentages that were being asked by the union officials, and those offered by the management, had come from those who should have been in the know, but without open negotiations these are merely views, not hard facts.

Third, and the crux of many of the callers' arguments, is what the county pays is not a living wage. They outlined what they were making. In many cases, we agree, the wage paid by the county for the job that is being done is nowhere near enough to support a family. This is not the fault of the county. The wage being paid is for the job being performed. It is comparable to that in the private

sector. That is an economic fact of life that negotiations can't solve.

Some employees lack the skill level or the ability to function in a higher paying job. This is unfortunate, but a reality of life. The easy way out would be to say let's raise the wages for all these jobs up to what would be considered a liveable wage. This would only set into motion everybody else who is earning more for a higher skill level, rightfully demanding an increase in their wages. The end result is everyone moves up, but everyone still remains on the same economic level.

As wages were driven up, without increased productivity, cost of living increases to compensate for these

increases also increase. The only ones who benefit out of this are the State and Federal governments, who operate on a system of progressive income tax. The more you make, the more you pay, even though your buying power has been reduced.

The only hope for people who are caught in this economic dilemma is for training into better paying positions where the productivity results in better earning power.

We think it would be helpful to the union members and to the public if the negotiations for both sides made public a last "best offer." Let us all see from a position of fact, who is being realistic.

And why not?

Not In A Good Bargaining Position

County Executive Peter Cohalan has proposed in his budget for 1983 an increase in his salary from \$60,000 to \$65,000. He also proposed increasing the compensation for county legislators from \$23,000 to \$25,000. This is ludicrous.

County Executive Cohalan was elected to a job that had a stated salary, as was that for legislators. Suffolk Life feels these men and women have an absolute obligation to serve that term of office at that salary. If they wish to set a salary for the future legislators who will be elected to serve in 1984, that is one thing. This salary, though, should be, and must be, in keeping with the economic conditions of Suffolk County.

As we have said to the county employees, you cannot and should not expect increases beyond what the taxpayers themselves are experiencing. Raises for Suffolk County residents have slowed down

dramatically. In most businesses, particularly the executive level, they have been non-existent over the past couple of years. Raises have been kept to a minimum for the rest of the work force. A County Executive raise at this point should not, under any circumstances, be any more than is being offered to the rank and file workers who provide the manpower to keep the county running.

The position of legislator is a part-time position. Many of the legislators have other outside interests which produce income for them. If the legislators want big salaries they should consider doubling the size of the legislative districts, cutting their numbers in half, and making the position a full-time job.

We find it extremely unfair for this body to consider for itself wage increases for part-time work filled with fringes above that being offered to the public employees.

And why not?

The Able Must Work

There is probably nothing more frustrating than to work long and hard, in many cases at minimal paying jobs, and seeing somebody as capable as yourself refusing to work, but enjoying benefits and rewards that surpass those earned through honest effort.

The New York State welfare system has been made a lucrative, lazyman's dream. Like all welfare systems, it was designed to help those who, through circumstances, needed temporary assistance. Through loopholes, lack of firm rules and regulations, some have been able to make a living by being on welfare. They receive more in cash grants, assistance and free services than they could if they went to work. Second generations, growing up in the system are not uncommon.

Suffolk County will enter into a pilot program this coming month requiring able-bodied men and women who receive social services to go to work. The program affects all males and females over 18 who are not charged with taking care of pre-school children. These people who receive assistance will be required to report to assignments that will be made by

the Suffolk County Labor Department. Some of these jobs will be in government, others will be in schools and hospitals. If the recipient fails to show up for an assignment or, through their own actions, refuse to perform at minimal levels, they will be denied benefits for themselves.

We have often wondered why it has taken so long for such a program to become a reality. It is totally unfair for a segment of our society to sell their time and their services, have their compensation taxed, while others within our society scoff at these honest efforts and refuse to work. These people rob those truly in need of adequate money and needed social services. They put an unjust tax burden on those who produce.

We are a country of compassion, we traditionally have willingly helped those who couldn't help themselves. How we have allowed ourselves to become a country of suckers, paying people who are able, not to work is beyond simple common sense.

Without question, the program will be filled with problems but in the long run, it should work for the best of all concerned and put justice back into the system.

And why not?

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and Suffolk County Life

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General Information

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - We encourage our readers to express their views regardless of opinion through the letter to the Editor Column. All letters must be signed with author's signature and address. We will withhold names on request and assign a nom de plume.

NEWS AND PHOTOGRAPHS - Readers are welcome to submit ideas of interest and photographs for consideration of publication. All news and photographs become the property of Suffolk Life upon submittal and cannot be returned for any reason.

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Crime Is A Campaign Issue

Voters will have a superb opportunity of speaking loud and clear on their feelings about crime this November.

The Democratic candidate, Mario Cuomo, and the Republican candidate, Lewis Lehrman, both recognize this issue as being one of the more crucial. Both men attack the problem from a different perspective based upon their political and personal philosophies.

At the top is the issue of the death penalty. Democratic Cuomo, like Governor Carey, is opposed to a death penalty for the State of New York, based on his strong belief about the subject. For the last two years, the Assembly and the Senate have passed legislation which, if signed by the Governor, would have created a death penalty for first-degree premeditated murder. Carey vetoed this legislation. The Assembly was unable to find the necessary two-thirds vote among its membership to override this veto. As a result, we do not have a death penalty here in the State of New York.

Lewis Lehrman, the Republican candidate, says without hesitation that he will sign a death penalty bill for coldblooded murder. He is strong in his belief that a man must acknowledge the probability of losing his own life when he contemptuously takes another man's life in a premeditated, coldblooded fashion. Lehrman feels that knowledge of the probability of death will deter those who willfully contemplate taking another's life.

As important as the death penalty

is, of even more importance is the appointment of judges for the Court of Appeals. During the next Governor's term, five new judges will be appointed. This court has handed down rulings which have made law enforcement little more than turnstile justice. The judges currently sitting in this court have been more concerned with the rights of the criminals than those of the citizens. This is not surprising, considering the philosophical makeup of these judges. Over the last eight years, most have come out of the Liberal Democratic side of politics. Those appointed during the Rockefeller years were, more often than not, as liberal as was Rockefeller. It is natural for a Governor to appoint judges with views similar to his own political persuasion. Cuomo would be expected to continue to appoint men and women of liberal persuasion. Lehrman is on record saying he will go to extreme lengths to make sure those he appoints are tough minded, who believe that the rights of the citizen outweigh the rights of lawbreakers.

Voters who are concerned about the security of their homes, on the streets, should look at both these candidates carefully. We expect both candidates to make absolutely clear their stands on the death penalty, and on the current system of law and order in the courts.

Voters will then have the opportunity to decide the importance of these issues in their lives, and can make their choice based on which candidate's views are similar to their own. And why not?

Reform The System

As part of our election coverage, our editorial board spends approximately two hours with candidates from each individual race, consuming a coverage of 30 to 40 hours each week over a four week period.

During these interviews, we are able to get a pretty good look at the candidates, who they are, where they are coming from, their philosophical views and beliefs, their reasons for running and, as far as the incumbent

is concerned, the job that they have done in the past.

We have been conducting these interviews now for almost a decade and a half. These interviews and our election coverage are equally important. We hope they help you intelligently determine who will best serve you on election day.

The candidates who are fortunate to be selected should find a system of government they are going to operate in as democratically open as the

system that elected them. Unfortunately, the system of government we send them to work in in Albany is far from perfect. Both houses of the legislature operate under a system of a "democratic dictatorship." Leaders of both the Assembly and Senate are elected by the majority political party. This year the Democrats control the Assembly, the Republicans control the Senate. The Republicans elected Warren Anderson and the Democrats Stanley Fink.

In electing these men as their leaders, the individual legislators turn over virtually all their power. The leaders decide what measures will come before both of these bodies for debate and vote. They decide what the committees will discuss. They pick and choose bills not on their merits, but on their politics.

Individual Assemblymen and Senators are able to play games with this system. They introduce legislation requested by their constituents. It appears to the constituents they are doing their job, but they know full well these measures never will get out of committee. We have seen blatant examples of this, where legislators have introduced bills to please the folks back home, then instructed the leader to stop them in committee.

This system is used not only by the politicians, but by the powerful groups, the unions and the big business interests, both in defeat and passage of legislation. A classic example was the utilities' ability to have criminal sanctions removed from the Public Service Law governing violations by utilities. The grand jury report on LILCO's involvement in the Bokum-Ridge project was, in effect, an indictment of the legislature. Even after all the publicity surrounding this fiasco, the bill to reestablish criminal sanctions was successfully bottled up in committee by the utilities. It never reached the floor so the legislators who represented the people could be exposed to public scrutiny on their vote.

Likewise, the system was used by

LILCO's officials to keep the phase-in of LILCO's rates from going up 50 percent when Shoreham goes on line. The Assembly passed the measure, but the Senate defeated it. The president of LILCO personally was reported to have been in Albany twisting everyone's arm, from the Governor right on down. It was a foregone conclusion the bill would be defeated in the Senate, so for appearance sake, it passed the Assembly so as to give the illusion that democracy was in action.

The incumbents in the majority party whether they be Democratic or Republican love the system. Those on the outside of the majority party feel crippled by it. The fact of the matter is, the system stinks! It's pure politics in its rawest form; it's lousy government.

Good politics can make good government. Bad politics makes bad government. Hopes of the legislature ever reforming itself are dim because those within the majority party understandably will not give up their power. The answer is quite simple; limit the terms of Assemblymen and Senators to two, three-year terms. Seniority would be minimized. A change of leadership would be assured every other term. From a limit on terms, a system of government responsive to the public could be developed.

In our interviews, we have noted over the years, the longer a candidate is in office, the more arrogant, and self-serving he becomes. His responsiveness and respect for the voter diminishes as he insulates himself from the voters. This insulation becomes more pronounced as the opposing parties feel he is invincible and put up weaker, less experienced, capable candidates to oppose him.

The losers, of course, are the voters and the system itself, which is supposed to be government by the people and for the people.

Ask your legislative candidate for reform. Ask them if they would be willing to limit their term of office to six years.

And why not?

Readers' Opinion

Dear Mr. Willmott:

As a resident of Wading River, I am pleased each week to receive Suffolk Life. We certainly agree on the Shoreham Plant (I'm looking at it now looming right outside my sunporch window). And although we may not always line up together politically, I respect the spirit and conviction apparent in every editorial.

I am writing this letter with the endorsement of Elizabeth Lapham — local historian and lifetime resident of Wading River — who lives across the street from me (her arm is in a cast).

Our two homes in particular are plagued by a cat problem that began several years ago when Mrs. Lapham generously decided to feed a couple of strays that had found their way to her property. The cats have since multiplied. They are wild, often diseased and/or injured and, by any measure, a pitiful sight as from birth they fight to survive.

The problem is increasing. Local residents and summer tourists hearing of the cat situation here dump kittens on the Lapham's lawn, some not more than a few weeks old. These domestic animals are no match for the wild ones who've laid claim to the property

and they often suffer excruciatingly for their ill fortune.

Mrs. Lapham, in the past, and I, recently, have called numerous authorities about this problem. Everyone passes the buck. In the meantime the animals suffer and those humans walking through the neighborhood — as well as those of us living here — risk possible serious infection. (Children — and some adults, too — can't differentiate easily between wild and harmless animals.)

Can you help? Perhaps you could do a story on this dilemma or suggest a sympathetic Riverhead official we could work with or, barring that, a public health official we could call. Cats appear to come under no one's jurisdiction on the North Shore. In Southampton there is a program in which wild cats are trapped, then treated, or put to sleep or up for adoption whenever possible. It disturbs me to think that our lovely North Shore is no match for the South Shore's efficiency and caring. Perhaps the situation can be remedied. And why not?!

Yours sincerely,
Maggie S. Davis
Wading River

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and Suffolk County Life

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How Do You Stand?

In today's Suffolk Life you will find eight pages of questions and answers by the candidates seeking your vote. The development of these questionnaires, besides being an on-going project, are the result of over three months work by our editorial department. The questions are on the issues that you, our readers, have told us you are concerned about.

In late September, all candidates seeking your vote were sent these questionnaires and asked to respond to each question with a yes or no. Some candidates complained that they felt it was unfair for them to have to answer yes or no, without opportunity for an explanation. We answered that when a role call vote is held the elected officials can only vote "yes" or "no". There is no provision for "maybe" or opportunities for explanations. Space does not permit us to allow each of the candidates to explain how they arrived at their decisions.

The publication of this project, the questionnaires, requires eight pages of space and will cost Suffolk Life over \$15,000. We make this investment willingly, for we feel you, our readers, deserve to have the campaigns capsulized in an honest, unbiased fashion, which the question and answer format does achieve. This format gives you an opportunity, by reading the questions and answering them yourself, to see how

your views differ or correspond with those of the candidates. The questions the candidates answer and the publication of this information is, without a doubt, the most important aspect of our campaign coverage.

The questions themselves cover everything from philosophy to local issues which are only of concern to Long Island. Careful reading of the questionnaires and an analysis of the candidate's position can give you a good idea of where each candidate comes from and how they can be predicted to vote and act when elected.

Our only regret this year is that Mario Cuomo the Democratic-Liberal candidate for Governor, did not respond so that our readers could know where the man stands. His staff requested a week's extension on the deadline which was granted. An additional three days was also granted, which brought us right up to press time, but his answers were not forthcoming.

We encourage you to spend time with these questionnaires. First answer the questions based upon how you feel. Compare your answers with those of the candidates. Then make the choice of whom you will support.

We hope we have aided you in being a more intelligent voter by capsulizing the issues, the campaigns and positions of the candidates in an unbiased, non-partisan form.

And why not?

Making You Feel Bad

For as long as we have been publishing Suffolk Life, we have heard our readers cry out in anguish about the amount of money government demands in taxes to support its operation. And it has seemed year after year that no matter who the voters elect, our elected officials continue on their merry way, increasing the size of government, spending more money than the government could afford, then hitting the already overburdened taxpayer with more taxes to pay for excessive governmental spending.

Two years ago we elected Ronald Reagan as President of the United States. Unlike many of his predecessors, he was a man of action. His first act in office was to develop a tax plan which reduces income taxes by 25 per cent over a three-year period. By forcefully implementing fiscal restraints, and by exerting strong leadership, he has been able to drive down the inflation rate from double digit inflation, which he faced when he took office, to 5 per cent, where it is today.

When Reagan took office the prime interest rate was 21 per cent. It has been declining slowly, and just recently came down to 12 per cent. The high interest rate, which cut purchasing and crippled industrial development, has resulted in an unemployment rate nation wide of

over 10 per cent. Luckily, here on Long Island 95 per cent of those who choose to work have found, or can find, employment.

These accomplishments should be cause for joy and excitement, instead they have been bad mouthed by the ultra liberals in Washington and in Albany. They resent the public gaining back 25 per cent of their own income as a result of the reduction in income taxes. These liberals seem to feel it is a sin for the government to be denied taking all it can from the people. They apparently resent the fact they have had to cut back on absolute giveaway programs. Attempting to gain public support for their positions, they have resorted to efforts to confuse the issues, and try to make people feel guilty about enjoying what they have rightfully earned.

As an example: These liberals are constantly accusing the administration of tearing apart the heart of social programs when, in reality, the government has done nothing more than cut back on abuses. They leave you with the impression the old folks are going to be made to suffer, when, in reality, all that has been done is some long-needed tightening of eligibility standards. For example: a student who lost a parent, making him or her eligible for Social Security, could

receive tuition payments of over \$300 per month, regardless of need. Nelson Rockefeller died a few years ago, and his son, under those old standards, could have been eligible for Social Security assistance even though his father left him a multi-millionaire. The administration demanded changes to require financial need be a part of the eligibility requirement. But the liberals make it sound like the student is being denied an opportunity for an education.

Food stamps are another area in which the ultra liberals have had a field day. How many times have you stood on the check out line and watched as someone better dressed and driving a newer car, offset their grocery bill with food stamps. Many people on those grocery checkout lines make no more money than do those with the food stamps in their pockets. They simply work harder to make ends meet. Rent subsidies were cut for a family of four making over \$20,000 a year. Considering the fact the average family income throughout the country is under \$13,000 a year, why shouldn't the rent subsidy regulations be cut back to meet the \$13,000 income figure.

In almost every instance, when you look at the cutbacks on a one-to-one

basis, and clear away the rhetoric, they are achieving what the public has been demanding for years: eliminate the abuses. Yet, when presented in generalities, the liberals have conjured up a picture of massive cutbacks to the poor, the old, and the infirm when, in fact, the elimination of abuses would help stretch the dollars further and become more meaningful for those truly in need.

Reagan has not been able to cut-back on the federal budget. He has barely been able to control its growth through inflation. We believe his administration, given the opportunity, will put further restraints on the reckless spending that has been a way of life for over three decades. To do this, he needs the support of Congress and the backing of the American people. We hope between now and Election Day, all voters will look at government in relation to themselves. How has the administration personally affected you. Is government going in the direction you want it to go?

Make a personal decision and then turn out at the polls November 2 to affirm your decision by voting for the candidates who advocate and reflect your viewpoint.

And why not?

Clean Thy Own House

We have many times in the past questioned the integrity of the system by which the Judicial Committee of the Suffolk County Bar Association rates prospective judicial candidates. Recent actions by that same group have given cause, not only for us but for many in the legal profession, to take another hard look at the system and question the motives of those who pass judgement.

We remember well the actions of the Bar Association in regards to a County Court Judge who had, several times, been found qualified by the Judicial Committee. While seated on the bench, however, that particular judge grew weary of the stalling tactics by many lawyers, and the inconvenience caused to witness and complainants because attorneys were "not ready" or sought repeated postponements. The judge got tough on those attorneys, assessing fines and letting them know that such games would not be played in his courtroom. His reward? The very next time he ran for election, he was found "not qualified" by the same group which had previously found he would be a qualified judge.

A recent letter to this newspaper from a member of the legal profession raises new questions: "Soon after the nominations for Supreme Court Judges, I had several conversations with Suffolk County attorneys relative to the nomination of County Court Judge Nelvyn Tannenbaum," the writer informs. "The consensus was that the Suffolk Bar's finding of Judge Tannenbaum as qualified during a rare emergency Saturday meeting, after being twice rejected by the same body as unqualified, in no way represents the true feelings of the majority of attorneys practicing in Suffolk County."

The writer goes on to suggest that this publication "champion the cause of soliciting candid opinions from attorneys having knowledge relative

to Judge Tannenbaum's fitness to be elected to the Supreme Court bench, the results of such a survey may be surprising."

We suggest there is another, more ethical, way to handle the matter. If the attorneys of Suffolk County do not agree with the finding of a committee which is a part of the organization - the Suffolk County Bar Association - to which most attorneys belong, why don't they, themselves, act? Why don't they pose some questions to the members of their own committee: What mysterious information came to light during the "rare emergency meeting" that was not available before when the same candidate had been twice found not qualified? Why was the "rare" meeting called? What political pressures were applied?

In short, why don't the attorneys clean their own house?

Does the Suffolk County Bar Association represent the views of its members? Or the dictates of a chosen few? Do the attorneys who belong to this association have an opportunity to voice their views? Or are they afraid? If so, why?

We choose not to survey the views of attorneys on this one particular candidacy because we long ago lost faith in the rating system of the Bar Association, and give it no credence. We have long felt political leaders should stop perpetuating a system very obviously being used by the Bar Association to promote its own interests in the judicial system, and the judicial ambitions of its favored candidates.

The ball is now in your court, Mr. Letter Writer. If you, and your fellow attorneys, truly believe the Bar Association has come up with a rating with which you disagree, it's time to clean up your own Association's act!

And why not?