



Now that there is one proposal that's been presented, the developers will have to negotiate a lease with the county and then they need to go through the planning and zoning process in the town of Hempstead, which has single-use zoning.

Q: That will be a real challenge.

RC: Well, it's a long process with a good start. I think there's probably support for it, but we haven't really tested out community concerns at this point. There's nothing to say that Uniondale and the surrounding communities will not have issues, such as the traffic and congestion and adequate transportation around it. The housing being proposed is on the area that's being leased from the county. This is an intriguing part of the proposal.

Q: So the county owns the Coliseum site, but the idea is to coordinate it with privately owned complexes like EAB Plaza?

RC: Yes. The reason this project is so important is it could shape the kind of development within the town of Hempstead for years to come. I think, when you build a project, so much interest is generated in economic activity in the area. So our objective is to make certain that the project is built union and I believe there's a very good chance that will happen. It seems like those agreements will be there. And also that the people who maintain those buildings and clean them will be in unions. Both of those objectives are likely to be met with the developers. And then we want to create good union jobs in the retail outlets that are built.



Roger Clayman

Q: But how can unions make that happen? Wouldn't that have to be something that was ongoing over a period of decades? How do you intervene with the project to make that happen?

RC: Well, there are several ways to do it. In this case, we believe that the construction trades will reach an agreement with the developers. And SEIU local 32BJ has broken new ground in reaching an agreement with Reckson covering commercial properties on the proposed site and other existing office facilities on Long Island. That demonstrates how important this project is to everyone. The Nassau County Legislature has clearly lined up behind good unionized jobs with benefits. So there was lots of pressure that might have been applied.

Q: Because the developers then would be subcontracting with additional individuals developing the property? Is that how it would work?

RC: In some other communities around the country where t

RC: A lot of the inspiration for developing community partnerships came from some early, successful efforts. Los Angeles is a good example. LAANE, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, was founded in 1993 and recognized as a national authority on issues affecting the working poor. The organization's vision calls for social justice and practical social change. LAANE's most basic principles demand fair wages and benefits, as well as decent working conditions. In 2001, LAANE launched its new Community Benefits program to ensure that developers provide quality jobs and community benefits in exchange for public subsidies

Q: So you're saying that issue at least is pretty much a done deal here on Long Island?

RC: We think that we're in good shape there. There is less hostility from the developers than what the labor movement has faced in other cities, at least at this point. And it's being faced now by San Diego with their downtown development. They want to do it totally nonunion. This comes up in community after community. We attended the founding meeting of a group called the Partnership for Working Families. Fourteen

Q: So the crucial difference between the Hub and the Pilgrim development project is who owns the land. Nassau County owns at least the central big chunk of land and that gives the politicians a lot more control over what happens.

RC: Yes.

Q: And that is potentially an entry point for community and labor movements to influence?

RC: And the goal of our work is: we want housing; we want jobs; we want healthcare; we want good roads. When we say “economic development,” what we really mean by that is a growing economy that meets the needs of the communities. It's going to provide jobs and opportunities for young people to stay on Long Island, so it's a very broad concern.

Bringing those communities together around it is going to be probably more of a challenge in Brentwood, even though we have a good sense of the different groups. But the project has been so ill-defined, at this point, that nobody has really gotten very excited about it yet, I don't think.

Q: Do you have a sense of the timeline for the Pilgrim psych center site moving forward?

RC: I don't, because we're waiting for some initial agreements with Jerry Wolkoff that would allow us to be his partner in getting past some of the regulatory hurdles he faces. And the community can be partners or we can go

The Senate has suggested that there are other ways and they're going to make a proposal before the session ends. So we're anxious to see what that will be, because they understand the problem, d-6bd(h)20(e)4(y)4(a)]TJ 255 ()

Q: This is interesting, because, of course, there are elements in the progressive political movement that see the Massachusetts law as a step in the wrong direction, because they're afraid it would lead to sort of under-insurance and let's say we solve the problem when people get insurance that is really very inadequate for inadequate coverage.

RC: Yes. One of the problems is trying to make the proposal meet the restrictions of the preemption of insurance laws. Under ERISA, where states and local communities can't mandate insurance, they can mandate healthcare provisions; there's a fine line of distinction. You probably know this better than I do. So that's why the laws may fall short, because we agree that the real answer is a national healthcare program. It would solve the crisis that we have, not only at the state level in the cost of public services and Medicaid, it would also probably alleviate the federal contribution to Medicare by balancing out the pool, but also result in prices in manufacturing and put us on a par with our alnai

RC: They have been. And, as we deepen the relationship, we hope to get into the community more and tie together both leaders and congregants and community-based organizations into a coalition that can work on specific issues that come up.

Q: Getting back to the issues of tensions among labor groups: one of the things that's very clear is it's becoming a much more diverse work force with the passage of time. If you saw the Brookings report on the older suburbs, this was really highlighted. And you also see it on Long Island. This raises issues both of different cultures and different languages, but also documented versus undocumented workers. What do you think is the role of the labor movement in this context?

RC: The labor movement has to be a voice for working people on immigration issues, because there's nobody else who's going to raise the issues that we'll raise.

some questions that have to be answered later on. It's also grade-crossing upgrades that the communities are supporting, but these are awaiting an environmental impact study.

Also, the Long Island Fed recently helped create a local chapter of Jobs with Justice. This is a national organization that we felt would help us in our outreach to the community. Jobs with Justice can help us to respond to all of the challenges we face in collective bargaining and economic development and neighborhood concerns, so that we can have an effective outreach to the religious community, community leaders and political leaders. And, as part of that outreach, Jobs with Justice created a workers' rights board, which will hear its first case relating to Mayco over at *Newsday*. Community leaders will listen to the facts and take action based on what they hear.²

Q: So this is like a quasi-judicial process?

RC: Yeah. The motivation for a workers' rights board is the ineffectiveness of our National Labor Relations Act and the National Labor Relations Board. But the real value, I believe, in our Jobs with Justice operation is that we've gained greater access to and better contacts, deeper, more meaningful contacts with the religious community, in particular, throughout Long Island. There's a lot more to be done, but that's one of our specific objectives and that'll enable us to have a lot more success when we unite the community.

Q: And you've been finding that the response from the religious community has been positive?

RC: Yes. I think a lot of them share the goals we have and the members of their congregations are working people, including many members of our unions, and they see it as a responsibility to provide for their membership in effective ways and to work together and have an outreach. And I think it's kind of an exciting opportunity for all sides.

Q: Finally, on a somewhat different topic, could you comment briefly on the split of some of the major unions like the SEIU and Teamsters from the AFL-CIO. How has that affected the Long Island scene and, in particular, impacted the ability of the federation to pursue some of these coalition-building activities that we talked about?

RC: Well, for now, we're very lucky; it hasn't affected us. We've been able to maintain unity and we have not lost membership because of the national split. The differences between the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win coalition are not being played out on the local level and there's a consensus that we need to keep together a

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NOTE

¹ Charles Wang, former chairman of Computer Associates and owner of the Islanders hockey team, is partnering with Reckson Associates Realty Corporation, Long Island's largest commercial landlord and the owner of EAB Plaza, on the Lighthouse Group proposal to develop the Nassau County Hub.

² Before the hearing took place, Mayco signed a contract with SEIU Local 32 BJ.