Last week Mr. Churchill alluded to a letter to the editor from Dick Caldwell calling for an investigation into the purchase of the Koorn property. The record should be reminded that it was largely due to Dick Caldwell's adamant insistence that no Board he was a part of would ever condemn the property of a taxpayer in Island County, that the then seated Board looked for a solution to the Koorn property problem that did not involve condemnation.

Also, the record needs to be reminded that Dick Caldwell voted for the adopted solution, specified how the solution would be carried out and signed all the papers required for the land transfer.

Dick Caldwell's call for an investigation at this late date is sufficiently strange as to be startling. Is he now questioning his own prior motives and competence to act in representation of the public? Mrs. Koorn refused to sell a small strip of the property without recompense that seemed excessive. The options she presented were:

1) Move the existing house back to an acceptable location, complete set up and landscaping;

2) Purchase the entire property for $450,000.00.

3) Purchase the right-of-way and damages for $65,000.00 plus hook up to city water; or

4) Purchase right-of-way for $30,000.00 down $6,000.00 per year for the next six (6) years and a city water hook up.

Being effectively blocked from the condemnation option by Dick Caldwell's and, to a lesser extent, Gordon Koetje's opposition to this action, the Board was left to select the least costly option from the four presented.

That selection was a judgement call. The Board unanimously agreed to pursue purchase of the entire property at a reduced price of $350,000 as the overall least costly option to the Island County taxpayer. The Board further agreed, at Dick Caldwell's suggestion, to sell the excess property at the first financially reasonable opportunity.

The property will soon be offered for sale and at this date, there is no reason to think the net cost to the county taxpayer will not be the least of the four options, just as anticipated.

Mr. Churchill has examined the record and is as aware of these facts as I am. Yet, knowing these facts he insists on some action that will cast the leadership of the county in a bad light and cost the taxpayer a bundle of money.

I am told that he went to Olympia and tried to convince the State Department of Transportation that they should withhold the County's gas tax because of the State Auditor's finding. Next he asked the Superior Court Judges to convene a grand jury. While he did not specify any criminal action on the part of Board Members during his presentation on Monday, March 14th, he evidently did to the Superior court judges since grand juries only investigate criminal action.

Mr. Churchill's motivation for trying to make this action by the unanimous Board of County Commissioners into something it patently was not is obscure but will perhaps be revealed in the future.

A question was raised last Monday about the authorship of the County's official response to the State Auditor's preliminary finding that the purchase of the entire Koorn property was not legal. The Chair responded that Commissioner Colby authored the response. It is important to set the record straight on that point. The response was authored by the Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney.

The only changes to the original draft were made at the request of Commissioner McDowell and they were minor. Commissioner Colby in his capacity as Chair of the Board signed the document and sent it to the County Auditor for inclusion in the County's response to the State Auditor. While I did not author this official response, it is factual and true to the best of my knowledge.

Having said all this, I must now address the request made to this Board -- a request to take some definitive action over and above the examination of this issue already conducted by this Board.

Should this Board or any other entity wish to further investigate this particular Board action, I will cooperate in any way I can. I do not, however, feel that, as a participant in that decision, I should vote on any action to further investigate or to not investigate. I therefore ask to be excused from any deliberations on that particular issue."

Chair approved Commissioner Colby's request to be excused, and Commissioner Colby left the meeting.

The Chairman believed it was important that Mr. Churchill and Committee members be given the response they were promised. He explained that at this time the Superior Court Judges had taken the matter under advisement, enlisted the support of the Attorney General's Office, and the decision to call a grand jury or not, or to proceed in some other investigative way, would be made by the Superior Court Judges of Island County. He believed it was appropriate to go on record that the legal route the Board is taking in terms of investigating the Cackle Corner situation and the ultimate solution was something the Board was supportive of.

Commissioner McDowell went on record stating his opinion that was a very good alternative; the Judges apparently knew something more than the Board based on public testimony last meeting. He was very supportive of the Judges continuing to look into the matter.

Mr. Churchill thanked the Commissioners for their attitude of support in allowing the problem to be drawn to a conclusion. Comments today gave the taxpayers of Oak Harbor and Island County the attitude that the Board was interested in making sure there is good government all the way around. Responding to what he termed as Commissioner Colby's personal attack, Mr. Churchill stated he had never been to the Department of Transportation in Olympia, did not know anyone there and did not even know where the building was located. When allowed to be brought to a personal level, Mr. Churchill felt that government did not work because citizens then were afraid to come out and question how government was working. He reaffirmed the fact that it was not George Churchill before the Board, but a group of citizens in Island County that found a problem and only wanted to ensure that the questions raised were answered. He felt that the direction that the investigation was going was acceptable to the group.

Commissioner Colby returned to the meeting.

TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT: JOHN & KAREN STRANDJORD

By unanimous motion, as presented and recommended by the County Engineer, the Board approved a Temporary Construction Easement with John and Karen Strandjord, associated with the Karen way Stabilization Project, Phase 2, Lots 59 through 65, Sunnyshore Acres, Camano Island.

RESOLUTION #C-13-94 INCREASING SOLID WASTE CHANGE FUND

As presented and recommended by the Solid Waste Manager, the Board by unanimous motion, adopted Resolution #C-13-94 increasing the Solid Waste Change fund from $1,700 to $2,200.