

Don't let yourself be suckered!

The question of converting the Grumman facility at Calverton to a jetport or to another aviation-related facility should be explored. There are a lot of questions that have not even been conceived relating to this project. There are numerous questions that obviously need to be addressed.

We, as a community, should be seeking these answers rather than seeing ourselves into an uproar based, in part, upon insinuations and exaggerations. The business community obviously has an interest in improving Long Island's economy. They are looking toward Calverton as being part of the solution. The residents surrounding Grumman should be aware of the ramifications of any future change concerning this facility.

We have been dismayed by the actions of Richard Amper, the executive director of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, as well as other environmental zealots. We have also been disgusted by politicians, led by Governor Cuomo, who attempt to have the public believe that a Long Island Transportation AUTHORITY was a done deal and in existence, one that would be responsible for the study and the implementation of its final recommendation.

Cuomo should know that this illusion was dishonest. The legislation for a Long Island Transportation Authority has never been introduced—and when it is, it will be subjected to vigorous debate. Its chance of passage, other than through a backdoor ap-

proach such as a Governor's Program Bill, is virtually nil.

Calverton is an existing aviation facility that rivals major jetports throughout the nation in terms of length of runways and total controlled acreage. It also has the buffer zones found in few other facilities. The major glide path that could be utilized is over watershed areas, agricultural preserves, parks and other undeveloped tracts.

Instead of taking part in helping to develop the questions that should be answered, to study and research, Amper charged that Executive Director Lee Koppelman was acting in concert with the supporters of a jetport and, as such, was suspect and not qualified to conduct the study.

Amper and Sherry Johnson of the North Fork Environmental Council walked out of the initial meeting. Since then, the anti-jetport people have held press conferences using exaggerated videos and claims to make their point. Many have questioned Amper's motivation in taking a zealous approach to the future. Many have asked: 'what is driving him? What is his agenda?'

Part of the puzzle was answered this past week when residents of East Quogue received computerized direct mail letters painting an exaggerated picture of doom and gloom if an airport was developed. The letter was a blatant appeal that can only be categorized as a scare tactic to extort money from the recipient.

The letter was brought to our attention by an East Quogue resident who asked what the furor was all about. He has co-existed with the Westhampton Airport for years, he pointed out. Even during the heyday of the airport, when it was solely an active Air Force facility, noise did not become a negative factor in his quality of life. His home was under one of the two major runways. The Air Force used the facility as part of the defense network and there were, every day, hundreds of landings and takeoffs. Today's jets are far less noisy than they were years ago.

The resident's comment on the content of the letter was that if he did not contribute to the fund, the jetport could ruin his quality of life. He felt like he was being extorted and was resentful.

Is the Pine Barrens Society using this issue to raise funds to justify its continued existence? What does the executive director get out of this? Will his salary and perks of office be reflective of fund-raising activities? Interesting questions that Pine Barrens Society members, or those who are being encouraged to join, should be asking.

Don't be suckered into joining an organization whose agenda has not been completely spelled out, one which is opposed to the truth being answered.

Calverton, whether we like it or not, is there. The federal government has jurisdiction over the land. Calver-

ton is an important part of our economic and financial future. What is the best use for this facility? How can it be used in the most positive way, with the least disruption to our quality of life?

The Koppelman study is addressing these issues. If Amper and company do not wish to participate in the study, then they should create their own study for alternative uses that fit into their agenda. Let them come up with viable projects that could utilize this facility which would benefit the community both economically and environmentally. Until they come up with positive approaches to the real problems of Long Island for today and tomorrow, we cannot personally give this organization credence or encourage their financial support.

When the study Koppelman is responsible for is completed, when the public has had an opportunity for input, when the final conclusions are reached, then it will be time to make an informed decision on this endeavor.

The one caveat to this is, if legislation is ever proposed for the creation of a Long Island Transportation Authority, friend and foe should join hands in stopping its passage. An authority which gives the government the right to ignore public opinion and force the damn thing down our throats cannot be permitted. Friend or foe cannot let this happen.

And why not?

Are state officials above the law?

The State Appellate Division has granted a request by State Attorney Robert Abrams for a stay in a trial concerning the state landfill ban in which DEC Commissioner Thomas Jorling was subpoenaed to testify. Abrams argued that as a state commissioner, Jorling should not be subject to a subpoena and not forced to testify. Hogwash!

Why does the fact that Jorling is a commissioner, the political choice of the governor, exempt him from testifying, under oath, about his reasoning in enforcing the landfill ban? Does the title put him above the law? Answerable to no one but the man who appointed him? Is that in the best interests of the people of this state?

We think not!

Jorling was subpoenaed to testify in a trial based on a suit brought by three East End towns, Riverhead, Southold and East Hampton, against the landfill ban. Their claim is the ban, approved by the New York State Legislature in 1983, exempted rural towns and that each township falls under that category. The towns argue also that the rationale behind the adoption of the ban, that landfills pollute the groundwater, is unfounded and undocumented. Riverhead Town

further argues that its landfill actually falls within an area originally designated by the state as a non-drinking water protection area, but the state has changed the boundaries to justify the closure of its landfill.

The entire matter of the landfill ban has been begging for a thorough investigation since it was first approved in 1983. Despite the cry that landfills pollute the groundwater, there has been no actual documentation concerning the landfills that have been polluted, the degree of pollution or the source of pollution. In fact, quite to the contrary, the Suffolk County Department of Health produced a report which indicated that landfills do not cause groundwater pollution. There was an effort under former County Executive Patrick Halpin to squash that report because it was a "draft" that had not, at that time, been scrutinized by the DEC.

The landfill ban has been slowly, but surely, bankrupting the taxpayer. At the outset, the DEC was pushing for local municipalities to construct incinerators to deal with the waste stream. Many towns complied. The choice was simply, incinerate or truck off the island. The cost of the latter was prohibitive, the ultimate cost of incineration, including cost of plant

construction and disposal of ash, will, it is feared, be as costly or even more.

The landfill ban has turned things completely around. Where once towns carefully watched to make sure out-of-town garbage did not wind up in their landfills, towns are now watching to make sure garbage from their towns does not go to other areas where dumping fees are lower. Why? Because contractual agreements between towns and the private operators call for a minimum amount of tonnage supplied by the towns to the incinerators, or face penalties. And strange as it may seem, some towns have that club hanging over their heads to the point they are now soliciting garbage from areas out of their own boundaries.

Because the cost of all this is going up and up, the taxpayers are getting poorer while those involved in the garbage industry, trucking, and the construction of incinerators are getting richer and richer. And the end is not in sight.

Yes, the entire matter should be the target of a thorough investigation. But it hasn't and undoubtedly won't, because politicians are involved in the decision-making process and politicians do not take kindly to such probes. The attorney general could

have, and should have, launched his own investigation to determine what the real motivation behind the landfill ban and interpretations of the law are. Why is it that many of those who are making millions from the landfill ban have, allegedly, strong ties with organized crime?

Doesn't anyone care? Who is protecting the taxpayers from needless costs and edicts? The attorney general, who wants to be a United States Senator, should, but instead he is trying to keep the head of the DEC, the agency which has been the vehicle driving the taxpayers into bankruptcy, from being placed under oath on the witness stand. He is trying to limit the questions that will be asked if, indeed, he is unsuccessful. Which leads to an interesting question: whose side is he on, anyway?

Smithtown Supervisor Patrick Vecchio once said, "every time the DEC makes a regulation, the members of organized crime hit a home run." Thus far, everything that has happened in the wake of the implementation of the landfill ban in December of 1990 makes Vecchio's comment more and more believable. Isn't it time to replace the pitcher? Isn't it time the truth came out?

And why not?

Warning: stop playing with fire

Suffolk County has a new county executive, Bob Gaffney. We believe he means well and is putting 100 percent of his effort into putting Suffolk County back on a prudent fiscal path. A new county executive, however, does not guarantee changes from the way things were done in the past. The county executive, although the chief executive, cannot force the county legislature to act idently or responsibly.

Last Wednesday was April Fool's Day, three months after the new executive inherited county government, one on the verge of bankruptcy. Gaffney inherited almost \$100 million in shortfalls from the previous administration. The new administration knew of the problems they had and put out their hand to bring together the legislature, their budget review director, the comptroller, the treasurer and the county executive's chief fiscal officer. They intended for

everyone to not only share information, but put politics aside, understand the seriousness of the county's dilemma and act as responsible, mature public officials. They had to put their politics aside, their own personal agendas, and in some cases, their egos, on the shelf, and they had to make hard decisions that would not be politically popular.

The legislature faced laying off over 2,000 county employees, slashing agencies and services, paring every expenditure under the county's control. The dire financial straits the county is in required innovative thinking, nothing was to be sacrosanct. Nothing that was not a vital priority should be left untouched.

Communication between the affected parties was to flow on a daily basis so that everyone knew how much cash was on hand, what debts must be paid on a daily basis as well as projecting into the short- and long-term future.

Last week, Gaffney presented the legislature with an omnibus package that would have cut budgeted expenditures by \$70 million. It failed to pass. Politics reared its ugly head. The Republicans who control the executive branch and the legislature couldn't even get their heads together. The Republican chairman, Howard DeMartini, who has been known to have very persuasive ways, wasn't even in town. Gaffney was unable to gain on his own from the Republican caucus.

Some of the defectors played petty politics. The Democrats, to a man, played partisan politics. The result, as it stands now, is the taxpayers of Suffolk County will be hit right between the eyes with another huge tax increase next year.

We are back to 1990, everyone's ox is sacred. No one is willing to give. The big difference between 1990 and 1992 is

that the financial community has already given about as many warnings as they can. Do not be surprised if their reaction to the legislator's inaction is to again place us in a junk bond status. Do not be surprised if a fiscal emergency must be declared to avoid the county being put in receivership.

Suffolk County's days are numbered. Gaffney has few choices. All legislators must understand that there is no time left for petty, childish, raw politics as usual.

Last November we re-elected many of the legislators and a new county executive. The legislators had told us they had seen the result of their evil ways of the past. They were going to reform. We believed them once again, they played us for suckers. The joke was on us.

We cannot offer a more sincere plea, a crying out to these people, to honor the words of their campaign and act as conscientious public servants. We must put aside what is good for our district or our party, and consider what is best for all the people. This county is dying. You are strangling it, you are killing it, and there will be no immediate resurrection.

The county will be placed into bankruptcy. A judge will become the ruler. The legislature will no longer be necessary as the decisions will be made by the courts. The county executive, if kept, will be solely there to carry out the dictates of the court. The harsh reality will be that government will no longer be by the people. They will not have a representative voice. What they will have is an unbelievable and unbearable tax burden as the court orders restitution to the creditors without having to take into consideration the ability of the taxpayers to fund.

Stop playing with fire, or you may all be consumed.

And why not?

State budget increases 7%

All of us are in the process, or have completed, filling out our federal and state income tax returns. Although the statistics have not been compiled, our guess is most of you had less income last year than you had the year before. If you are a worker, the number of hours you were employed were probably fewer. Overtime, in most cases, was not available. Many people had their hours reduced and some unfortunate individuals suffered unemployment.

If you are a retiree, your income was also less. The interest you had received from your savings and investments had been slashed more than 50 percent. Even dirty capitalists, those horrible rich, saw the profits from their investments devastated.

There are, however, a few exceptions

to this. The politicians who make the laws made at least what they made the year before and, in some cases, more. New York State government has not suffered as we have. They increased their take by \$7 billion last year. They have just passed a budget increasing it another \$7 billion--to \$56 billion.

As the budget vote came to a close, your state assemblymen, senators and your poor governor were wringing their hands saying that this is an austerity budget, it will be difficult to make ends meet. They ended with the same line they did last year--there will be dramatic cuts, layoffs and suspended programs.

We have two questions for you, our readers: did you receive a seven percent increase in your income last year? Probably your tax return will tell you 'no.'

Do you foresee a seven percent increase in your income this coming year? We doubt it. We have one other question, do you believe in Santa Claus and intend to spend seven percent more than you anticipate will come in? If you answer 'yes,' can you predict the date and time you will end up in bankruptcy court?

Cuomo and crowd in Albany have done just that. We offer the great governor of New York a suggestion for raising additional funds. Why not establish a Cuomo lottery for the person who picks the nearest day, hour, minute and second that New York is brought to its knees and is pushed into bankruptcy because of the games Cuomo and crowd have played with our finances?

And why not?

Don't let the outsiders get in!

A former high school principal, William Ciraco, who has been very critical of the budgeting and spending habits of BOCES, has made known his intent to run for a position on the BOCES board. He asked that a Meet the Candidates night be scheduled for school board members who vote on the board positions, offering an opportunity to hear the views of those seeking election. He was refused.

He then wrote a letter to the clerk of the board asking that the letter be distributed to board of education members. That effort elicited this response from Ralph Bell, superintendent of the Quogue Union Free School District and also the president of Chief School Administrators Association, which serves the BOCES I area:

"The clerk of your board of education may have received a letter from one of the candidates to the BOCES Board of Education requesting that copies of the letter be made and distributed to the member of your board.

"One of our colleagues, not employed by BOCES, called counsel and then me. As president of Suffolk 1 Chiefs, I am forwarding this information to you.

"Our colleague was advised NOT to have the clerk copy or distribute the letter since it may give this candidate an undo advantage over any other candidate. Furthermore a precedent may be established in that any individual, no matter what the cause or issue, would need to be granted the same privilege in the future."

Hold on a minute, now! Who's running the show here? Does the president of Suffolk 1 Chiefs have the right to say what mail will or will not go to the board of education members? Shouldn't they have the right to make decisions for themselves? What's wrong with withholding a Meet the Candi-

dates Night? Would it just be a waste of time? Do the board members already have their marching orders?

From where we sit, this smacks of a "Don't let the outsiders in" attitude which is in dire need of change.

We're happy to note that members of the neighboring East Quogue Union Free School District's Board of Education took serious exception to Supt. Bell's letter. In a letter to Bell, they noted they were "seriously disturbed" by Bell's actions. "The letter you sent to your colleagues, as president of Suffolk 1 Chiefs, contains information which advises all BOCES 1 superintendents to suggest to district clerks that they consider engaging in a federal offense, specifically the 'obstruction of correspondence.'"

The board's letter to Bell adds: "Our board has been in touch with the postmaster in Riverhead as well as the postal inspector in Garden City, both of whom confirmed that a federal offense was committed by you in your letter to fellow superintendents."

The East Quogue board members declared they were "outraged by your advice to keep us from receiving mail that was clearly directed to the school district." And, the board letter declared: "We would also like to inform you that according to state election law, all officially-nominated candidates for any public office are allowed to utilize communication means in order to campaign with the voters, who will ultimately decide the election. Your letter clearly attempts to restrict an official candidate's legal right under the law to campaign. We are also concerned about the possible motivations and influences behind your letter."

What could that motivation be? Could it be that Bill Ciraco, the candidate, has asked too many critical questions about the budgeting and spending habits of BOCES? Could

it be that the last thing in this world that they would want is to have Ciraco on the BOCES board? An outsider with an inside look at what is going on?

We applaud the actions of the East Quogue school board members in taking a firm stand against the censorship action suggested by Superintendent Bell. We would hope other board members, including those in his own district, also take a firm stand against such an ill-advised, arrogant action.

BOCES has a tremendous impact on the budgets of local school districts. More and more districts have begun to bring more and more students back into their own schools rather than continue to pay the high BOCES costs. The problem is there is no accounting of the dollars that go to BOCES. The public does not vote on their budget. The public doesn't even have a say in who will represent them on the BOCES board of education, the very same folks who make up the BOCES budget which impacts on the local districts.

There have been moves in the past to put the BOCES budget proposals up for a public vote. It's time to revisit that proposal. It's time for state legislation that would give the taxpayers an opportunity to fully scrutinize, and then approve or reject, the BOCES budget. And, based on this effort to control the mail of board members, it's time to put the board seats on the same ballot.

Accountability will not come when the insiders protect their own little empire by slamming the door on any possible outside involvement. BOCES should be subjected to the same scrutiny as are local school districts. They must also be forced to tighten their belts to ease the burden on the taxpayers. In order for this to happen, however, their empire must be dismantled.

And why not?

In your ballpark

Are you among the many taxpayers who have repeatedly complained about school boards who keep scheduling budget votes until the budget is approved? Are you among those who have complained time and again that "someone should do something" to stop these repeated votes? That once the budget has been defeated it should either be drastically changed, or stay dead? That at the very most there should be no more than two budget votes?

If so, this is to inform you that the "someone" who should do something is you.

Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-Port Jefferson) recently filed legislation in the State Senate which would have set a two vote limit on budgets. This is not the first time LaValle has filed such legislation. In previous attempts, his legislation passed in the Senate, but died in the Assembly. This year his bill did not get out of the Senate. It was defeated.

The LaValle proposal drew strong opposition from the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), which reportedly represents some 300,000 teachers. In a legislative memorandum, NYSUT declared: "Local school boards which represent the interests of the community are better placed to decide whether to resubmit defeated school budgets than the state at large. If in the judgement of the local school board it is beneficial to the educational program to resubmit a budget a number of times seeking passage, state law should not preclude them from doing so."

This being an election year for state legislators, and NYSUT being a strong lobbying force and big political contributor, it is not difficult to understand the political logic that doomed this bill.

So, that puts the matter back in your ballpark! If you are concerned, if you really want to see a limit on the number

of times a school budget can be put up for a vote, if you want your elected school board members in your school district to be responsive to your demands, it's up to you.

It can happen! The majority board members in the Lindenhurst School District recently approved, over the objections of educators and their followers, a district policy placing a two vote limit on budget votes. This board has come under strong opposition, to put it very mildly, because of their "cut costs" stance. In setting the budget vote limit, they have been responsive to the views of their constituency. Other boards could. And should. But haven't. And won't, unless you apply as much lobbying force as NYSUT did in Albany.

If you are really upset, and you really want to do something about bringing educational costs under control, you have to stop complaining and start acting.

The local school board members are the ones who approve the teacher contracts, who approve the creation of administrative positions, who control the spending in your local school. If you think that spending is out of control, that your tax rates are too high, that you can't afford to keep paying higher and higher school taxes, you have a couple of choices:

You can sit back, say and do nothing, and permit the board members to continue spending as they have in the past.

Or, you can take a stand, be involved in making changes, demand responsive representation and be willing to oust those who do not listen.

The choice is yours.

And why not?



Happy Easter

To our religious friends we wish both a Happy Easter and Passover.

Easter in the Christian world is the happiest holiday of the year. We celebrate the gift of God, His Son, His existence as a human being, and by His brutal death through the crucifixion and through His resurrection, the opening of the gates of heaven.

During the last six weeks, Christians have observed Lent, a time of fasting, a time to renew one's faith. During this reflective period we have been instructed to examine our life, its purpose and meaning. During this period of Lent we should have come to some profound conclusions about ourselves.

This Sunday, as we celebrate the resurrection, may we use our new found insights to make life a better place for our spouses, our children, our families and our world. If we do only one thing, let us each decide on one individual for whom we are going to go out of our way to make life better. Let us promise to our God that during the next year we will endeavor at every opportunity to help this person and to make for this person a better world to live in.

We wish all a Happy Easter and a meaningful Passover. And why not?



What is best for the common good

I don't like boats with loud motors on the bay. Don't I have the right to peace and quiet?

I don't like planes flying overhead; they might fall and injure me. Don't I have a right to be kept out of harm's way?

I don't like cars being driven at excessive speed; they might cause me to have an accident. Don't I have a right to a safe existence?

I don't like neighbors close to my home; they may create noise that might disturb me. Don't I have a right to peace and quiet?

I don't like garbage dumps, for I might get wind of the refuse that is decaying and someone else may have put something in it that might pollute the air or my water. Don't I have a right to clean air and water? The list goes on.

What I do like is to use the bay for my own pursuits, and I want to get there in a hurry.

When I want to go someplace, I want to have a plane available that is easy for me to get to and cheap enough so that I can afford it.

When I drive on an open road, I want the open road there and the straightest line from where I am to where I want to go.

I want neighbors close enough to me so when I want their help or their companionship they are within reach.

I like to eat and I want my house clean. I only create a little bit of garbage, but I want it removed from my prop-

erty. And the list goes on.

Each of us, individually, faces a myriad of contradictions which we must reconcile for us to have inner peace. The reconciliation process requires compromise, a weighing of pro's and con's.

Islip Town and its residents are going through such a process today. Years ago, Islip developed MacArthur Airport. It was located in the eastern portion of the town, which then was sparsely developed. The plan for the airport was to be a general aviation facility. It held promise of being the impetus to provide jobs and create economic development for the community. In those days, most people looked at an airport almost romantically. It was a thing to marvel at. Just a decade or two before, man didn't have the vaguest idea of how to fly. As the visions of the future became reality, it brought great human benefit and problems.

Today we are going through an evolution again. Air transportation has all but replaced train and bus for destinations over 300 miles. As the demands increase, so does the need for the enlargement of existing airports and the development of new ones. This requires compromise by all who will be affected. The basis of this compromise must be what is right for the most people.

The town officials in Islip, who throughout the history of aviation have attempted to be a leader in this field while attempting to provide for all residents of the town, are contemplating ex-

tending the runways at Islip MacArthur. Opposition has developed from local residents who fear being subjected to more noise and also danger from possible accidents.

Airplanes originally were much noisier than they are today and will be in the future. The potential for an accident is less today than it was during the early days of aviation.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), manufacturers, and airlines themselves, are working to decrease the noise factor by developing more muffled engines as well as other technology. The electronics and other systems developed in our war efforts have produced safer and more reliable planes.

Some of the new aircraft require longer runways as the takeoff process has been extended by the requirements for quieter aircraft. It can be argued that longer runways will mitigate the safety concerns and the noise levels currently being experienced. By the same token, it can be argued that longer runways will increase the load factor and subject the affected residents to more disruption in their lives. Probably both arguments have validity, but the argument that should be given credence is that economics driven by demand and need is the most salient point.

The town, to alleviate the burden of the homeowners in the most seriously affected zones, has offered to attempt to soundproof their homes by providing, at no cost to them, new siding, insulation

and central air conditioning. This appears to us to meet the needs of these residents more than halfway. The Islip MacArthur Airport is not going to go away. Many of these people who now are complaining knew before they purchased their homes about the existence of this general aviation facility, which would surely grow. They bought where they bought either because of the price or did not believe they would be affected by an airport.

MacArthur will continue to be operated as a commercial aviation facility whether the runways are extended or not. The extension of the runways offer a hope for a less noisy environment, safer takeoffs and approaches. We believe the affected residents are left with a choice between two scenarios. If the runways are not extended, they may suffer from more frequent flights as the economic demand for the utilization of the airport increases. Extending the runways could allow for more modern, quieter, safer planes that can, individually, carry a larger passenger load, which may make less frequent flights a reality, even as greater passenger demands on the airport are met. These are the two simple choices both town officials and the residents face. What choice is not available is the closure of the airport, so the best compromise must be found.

Life is a series of compromises and occasionally to survive, we can't have all we want. Let reason prevail.

And why not?

The symbol of Lindenhurst

We are in deep trouble with our educational establishment financially, structurally and morally.

The public is responsible for electing school boards or trustees. These elected officials are supposed to run the school. They hire a superintendent and appoint an administrative staff to run the day to day activities. But all too often, these citizen-elected school boards become nothing more than rubber stamps and "yes men" for the district superintendent.

Four years ago a tax revolt movement called Tax PAC was founded here in Suffolk County. It was founded to represent the taxpayers, to give them a voice to equal and offset the lobbying voices of special interest groups. Tax PAC members crossed every spectrum. They ran from young to old, rich to poor, highly educated and less. The initial concern of this group was twofold. Getting control of the expenditures be-

ing made which result in the high taxes being demanded. Secondly, getting value for our dollar. Although we are investing twice as much in education than comparable states, far too many of our mainstream children are graduating from high school without the ability to do basic math or read properly.

Tax PAC people were labeled by those in the establishment as anti-education. They were harassed and harangued and every roadblock possible was put up in their way.

They soon realized that defeating budgets was not always the best avenue for their anger and frustration. The real problems were with school boards who were pawns of the administration, and Senators and Assembly people who are impotent to change the laws that the legislature had created that protect the vested interest and added to the cost of education.

Slowly over the last three years, Tax

PAC has been able to win positions on school boards for candidates who would attempt to find a balance between cost and quality of education. As their candidates got to the inside, they began to realize the depth and nature of the problems that existed, problems they only suspected in the past.

A prime example of the problems they face came in Lindenhurst where they were able to gain a majority on the board and were astounded by the depth and pervasiveness of the problems. The superintendent, Dr. Anthony Pecorale, although he was an employee of the district of which the board were directors, arrogantly refused to cooperate with them. Board members have charged that Pecorale has encouraged others from the district, notably the teachers union, in a movement to discredit and oust the Tax PAC members on the board.

The clash between board majority and the superintendent took a strange

turn when several majority board members, following up on questions raised about a private organization, CLASP, which was utilizing a school facility for an after-school program, were threatened with arrest if they did not clear such visits with the superintendent. Interestingly, a teacher from that program, which, incidentally, is headed by a minority member of the Lindenhurst board of education, was indicted on charges of sex abuse. The charge, the subject of rumor which has floated around the district for several months, was the subject of an indictment handed down last Wednesday and involves a fire-year-old girl. Although the guilt of the individual charged must be proven in a court of law, the very nature of the charge leads to questions about the administration of the CLASP program, and it cries out for a thorough investigation. In fact, it calls for much more scrutiny by board members about what is going on in school facilities, without the threat of arrest of those doing the investigating.

Out of the bitterness of the Lindenhurst situation, we see a structure within the district that has allowed a situation to build that has absorbed an enormous amount of taxpayers' money under the guise of quality education while in reality, the quality of education of children had little or nothing to do with the investment that was being made.

What has been accomplished is the investment made by the taxpayers has created a superstructure of all-powerful government officials that has been self-perpetuating and self-serving. Huge salaries, unprecedented perks, governmental dictatorships have been the result. The children's education and welfare were far down the list of the insiders' priorities.

Lindenhurst is no different than almost any other school district. They have become powers unto themselves. They use the guise of a quality education to build their empire while allowing children to fall further and further behind in the basic skills they so desperately need for the future.

We pay almost 70 percent of our local taxes for education. Yet, few of us vote on school board members or budgets, and very few who do vote bother to explore the abilities of the people we are entrusting not only with our money but our children's future.

This year, as school board votes come up, it's imperative that all vote. Throw out of office those school board members who have gone along like obedient children, marching to the superintendent's tune. Put into office residents who care, who have a concern for the taxpayers who are footing the bill and the mainstream children who are getting zip out of education.

We must break the system now. We must take control of our schools. The establishment will never clean up itself.

Lindenhurst is only symbolic and a small example of the abuse and cover-up our children have been subjected to in our school districts. There have been numerous complaints from parents concerning other wrongs their children have been subjected to. They told us they were ignored by the administrators, the boards refused to act upon their complaints. It's up to us to clean up the mess. These are our schools. These are our children. It's our tax dollars that are not being used as we intended. It's up to us. Shall we continue to avoid our responsibility by ignoring the obvious? Do we have the will to right the wrongs?
And why not?

Little things mean a lot

Some are questioning whether County Executive Robert Gaffney is seriously attacking the financial dilemma Suffolk is in. A recent announcement by a Gaffney administrator gives an indication of how well Gaffney is seeing the big picture.

The administrator announced that starting this spring, the county will no longer cut the grass on the median dividing the highways. Traditionally, each spring, highway workers equipped with the latest in trucks, mowers and other apparatus spend days, and even weeks

from spring to fall, mowing this grass while other public works projects need attention.

The county will now save thousands of dollars that were allocated for this project and be able to redirect the personnel and the funds toward other more needed projects, such as filling potholes, painting county buildings and a myriad of projects that have a higher priority.

The side effect of this move is that not only grass and wildflowers will be allowed to grow, but so will trees and bushes that, once mature, will provide an additional safety feature as lights

from oncoming traffic will be screened. The trees and the over-growth will add an additional barrier, stopping cars from crossing the dividers and causing head-on crashes. And they will help cleanse the air we breathe.

Gaffney is looking for every way that will save taxpayers' money and preserve services. If you have any ideas on how the county can be better run or can save money, why not drop Gaffney a note. Your idea could spark an avalanche of ideas that could make Suffolk a better place for all of us.

And why not?

Where is the justice?

We were brought up with the notion of liberty and justice for all. Justice was the same for everyone, rich or poor, black or white. If you committed a crime, the penalty would reflect the seriousness of your actions.

We have begun to think long and hard about our justice system because penalties that have been recently imposed on the rich and famous have attained such notoriety.

Democratic New York State Assemblyman Mel Miller was the Assembly Majority Leader, one of the three highest state officials. He was charged with and convicted of fraud. He was, laughingly in our view, sentenced to community service. We have always believed our elected leaders, by the stature of their office, were placed on a higher plane than the average citizen. A breach of this position of trust, the trust of the people, should be, therefore, more of a violation than that of someone who cheated on their taxes.

Someone who was charged with cheating on taxes was Leona Helmsley, an arrogant multi-millionaire who has probably paid hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes over her lifetime. Helmsley has a reputation of being vicious and arrogant in her treatment of people. She is in her 70s. She was tried and convicted of her crime. Although she protested her innocence, and agreed to make restitution, she was sentenced to four years in prison which, conceivably, could very possibly be considered a death sentence.

Why the difference in the penalties? Undoubtedly, both of these individuals were bad people. Isn't a conviction for fraud, and the violation of a sacred trust by a governmental official, more of a crime than someone failing to pay their full taxes when due? Why should a politician be able to walk free, while a millionaire is sentenced to incarceration and virtual death. A death that would greatly enhance the government's treasury as a result of estate taxes. Is money more important to our judicial system than honor and people's trust? Does the political clout of one have so much more influence than the wealth of someone else?

Our feelings of distrust have been further alarmed by the judicial handling of the Gotti trial. There are few who question that Gotti is a member or head of an organized crime family. As a leader he probably has been involved in almost every major crime that one could commit. That belief, however, bolstered by the publicity, is not the same as being convicted by his peers in a court of law. Gotti had been tried three times previously and the government could not make its charges stick. He was acquitted. When Gotti was charged in the latest round, he was denied his choice of counsel. In the court ordered warning that police must give upon arresting a person, it is stated you are entitled to be represented by your choice of counsel and if you are unable to afford counsel, the court will appoint an attorney for you. It certainly would appear the denial of Gotti's own choice of counsel may

well be in violation of his constitutional rights.

There were a number of other instances where you would have to question whether Gotti's rights had been violated. At the end of the trial he was found guilty. But in obtaining his convictions, were his rights violated as a citizen of the United States?

If Gotti's rights were violated in such a highly publicized case, what chance of justice do we have if we are ever brought before a court of law? One of the strengths of democracy has always been our time-tested and proven system of justice. Most Americans want organized crime's back broken. Few Americans would justify breaking the law to do so. If we do, we then are in favor of anarchy, and if that's what we believe, why not just go out and shoot the S.O.B. and save the cost of such a monumental trial?

There are those who are cheering the conviction of Miller and his ability to walk free because he was inside the system. There are those who are cheering Leona Helmsley's being carted off to jail. "The wicked witch got hers," they exclaim. And there are those who are cheering that the government finally got Gotti and, in their joy, will not question how the government did it.

Instead of cheering, we should be thinking and demanding that the same justice system be applied evenly to all of us. Shouldn't justice be equal for all? This is what America is suppose to be all about, isn't it?

And why not?