

# A coalition's sorry beginning

We noted in an editorial last week we are pleased about the creation of a coalition between school officials, PTA's and educational unions on Long Island. We expressed the hope that such a group could work for a better way to educate our children at a more reasonable cost. If the manner in which this coalition began is any indication of what is to come, our hopes will not be realized.

The coalition is the product of two community relations conferences held at Gurney's in Montauk. The cost per person for the Friday to Sunday conference, including meals and lodging, was about \$400 per person. One school district that we know of sent six people. Three administrative officials submitted bills to the school district. The costs for three others, including the president and vice president of the board of education, were supplied by the district's teachers' union. One conference was held in November, the second just recently.

Is there a conflict of interest in having the board president's and vice president's bills paid by the teachers' union? We think so, but the district superintendent does not. These two individuals will be asked to approve or reject contract settlements between the district and the teachers' union. Having their expenses paid by the union they will say "yes" or "no" to in future contractual matters raises, if nothing else, the specter of a conflict and constitutes, in our view, very poor judgement. The superintendent counters the next contract is three years away. That doesn't change our view one little bit.

Why Gurney's? Sure, it is a very nice place, but in this day and age of financial crisis, defeated budgets and austerity restrictions, what kind of an example does it set when those who run our school districts run off to a resort to hold a conference? What's wrong with using a school facility as is the case when teacher conference days are held? What's wrong with setting an example for others in the districts to follow?

According to the superintendent, the costs in a school would have been the same—which we doubt—and the nature of the conference was so intense that it continued during the evenings and Saturday and Sunday. But if the conferences were held locally, there would have been no need for the taxpayers to foot the bill for meals and lodging. Let's put that money to use helping to educate the kids.

The subject matter for these conferences was "Speaking up for Long Island education," with handouts on how good Long Island education is, how to deal with the media, conducting public relations to get the most out of it, how bad consolidation of schools would be. And a seven-page handout providing information to answer the question: "Why would consolidating districts, limiting salary increases to the rate of inflation, and reducing the number of teachers and administrators compromise the quality of education in Long Island school districts?"

One of the attendees of the No-

vember conference at Gurney's informed us a major topic of discussion was how to combat the impact of tax groups—most especially Tax PAC, which has included school district operations in its focus.

What a shame these districts had to go to Gurney's to seek answers to that last question, at taxpayers' expense. They could have received some answers right here at home, and utilized the dollars spent for educational purposes, educating the kids, not the district officials on how to sell their programs or budgets. Districts that illustrate an honest concern and attempt to overcome the increasing costs of education while student populations decline don't need to learn how to sell their message to the people. Their actions will speak louder

than words. Those districts that start cutting down on their overloaded administrative positions won't need to articulate that action. The impact on the budget will be more meaningful.

What troubles us most about the Gurney conferences is the attitude they display. At a time when the taxpayers are being driven out of their homes, any operation funded by tax dollars needs to be especially cognizant of the need to cut costs. School districts should curtail needless spending, concentrating instead on how to get the best education for the least possible cost. Any expenditures by school districts to combat the complaints of residents about the cost and quality of education are really nothing more than a slap in the face for those who must foot the bills.

Taxpayers are not trying to deprive the children of a meaningful education. They want waste eliminated. They want new ways of doing things, and they want results for their dollars. Every time a new study comes out that indicates our kids are coming out of school unable to read, write or do the basic things they will need in the future causes the taxpayer to feel cheated. Costs go up, but results go down.

Meaningful conferences don't need to be held at oceanfront resorts. They can be held in schools. The content of the programs is important, not the quarters. Austerity should not be targeted only at the students, it must begin with those in charge of the districts.

And why not?

# Bright light, dark doings

News late last week that state and county legislators will hold hearings on the operations of the Suffolk County Water Authority comes as a bright light in a dark tunnel.

The Water Authority, under its present chairman, Leon Campo, has arrogantly proposed and approved an increase in rates of at least 45 percent over three years, has curtailed a high-user rate schedule that will add even more to the ratepayers through increased taxes for sewer districts, governments and schools, has become involved in duplicative land preservation purchases despite the sorry state of many of its own wells, and is in the planning stages for a new \$10-million headquarters.

The problem is the Water Authority is an entity all its own. It proposes rates or rules, holds hearings, and then has the ultimate power to make the final decision. The only oversight comes from the appointment authority of the elected officials to seat trustees. Once that is done, however, the authority officials are off and running on their own.

Another problem is the Water Au-

thority has been a hotbed of politics through the years. It has been used as a political welfare system, benefiting those well-connected politically. Despite claims to the contrary, the current makeup of the authority is still political, and its operations still suspect.

Assemblymen Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst) and John Cochrane (R-Brightwaters) have announced they will hold public hearings jointly with county legislators to explore the operations of the authority and to determine if legislation is needed to provide oversight into its activities. Bravo! The hearings are needed to cast some light into the authority's actions in recent months. Let's get a good look at the books, let's audit the expense accounts of authority officials to find out who is spending money and what they're spending it for.

Campo claims the hearings are nothing more than a political witch hunt engineered by Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin. Hogwash. The call for the hearings is a bipartisan effort, Sweeney is a Democrat and Cochrane a Republican, in fact

the head of the Suffolk County Republican Party. There are people on both sides of the political aisle in both the state and county governments who realize the need to scrutinize this agency run amuck. And we applaud the action. It's not only commendable as an effort to protect the ratepayers, it's long overdue.

Campo's political connections—he has been a staunch ally of former Legislators Gregory Blass and Wayne Prospect, who were ousted by the voters—have held him in good stead. He is also a member of the Long Island Power Authority, and was the choice of the governor's men on that body to sit on the LILCO board of directors. He has failed miserably in that role. Instead of representing the people, he sat back and said nothing while top LILCO officials were getting over \$600,000 in bonuses for getting LILCO such a good deal in the agreement to close the Shoreham plant. He is also a business administrator in the East Meadow School District.

The people of this county, both ratepayers and taxpayers, have had enough of the arrogance displayed by Campo and the water authority. Although the county is spending millions to purchase land for preservation, Campo and his group are spending millions of water authority dollars for the same purpose. Instead of using land purchase by the county for water preservation to place new wells, Campo and his group have gone off on their own tangent and with their own agenda to do their own thing.

What is needed here is a meaningful probe of water authority operations and spending of ratepayers' dollars. Subpoena powers should be used to get every scrap of information needed to look into the books and spending of Campo and his group. It is our sincere hope that these hearings will ultimately provide the people the authority serves with the oversight power needed to end the public-betrayed happenings of the past.

And why not?

# Question of the week:

Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin has thus far refused to approve the appointment of two positions in the Suffolk County Clerk's office, positions filled during the time his Democratic ally, William Holst, served in that post, citing concern about a deficit in county finances as the reason for his action. Interestingly, the salaries for these two positions, and one other, will be \$27,000 less than the salaries paid under Holst.

Question: where was that concern when Halpin approved the appointment of former legislator George Nolan to the county attorney's office at a higher than usual salary?



# The DEC, agency of truth or fiction?

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has been the target of criticism for a long time. The department's "we are the enforcers, you will do as we say" attitude has impacted on the lives of many, and has even responsible for millions of dollars being yanked from the pockets of the people in the form of fees, fines and increased taxes.

The most recent instance of DEC dictatorial action came by way of an order closing some 16,000 acres of shellfishing grounds on the South Fork because the department had not tested the water. The impact of that closing cut deeply into the finances of baymen who earn their income from shellfishing. It effectively put them out of business, cut off their opportunity to make a living to provide for their families. And, the specter of fear was raised about the quality of shellfish, causing economic disaster for the shellfish industry's sales.

The baymen, joined by the Town of East Hampton and later by Suffolk County, won a court order keeping open some 15,500 acres. Now, after being ordered by Governor Mario Cuomo to expedite the testing of 500 acres the DEC pushed to keep closed because of concerns about the water quality, those waters have been tested and the results show the water quality sufficient to open these acres. Which means, quite simply, the order to close the bay bottom lands should never have been issued at all. Surely the safety of the public must receive top priority. But just as surely, this can be done without hurting others needlessly.

The DEC's claim was, as long as the waters had not been tested, there existed a threat that they were polluted and therefore they had to be closed. The kicker is, the DEC also claimed it did not have enough people to do the testing. Coming as it did during the midst of the state budget preparations, we are given cause to wonder if the DEC action was nothing more than a ploy to illustrate the need for more funds to hire more people. If there is one shred of truth to that thought, it would be an illustration of the callous disregard the DEC has for the impact of their edicts.

Since the results of the recent water tests prove the DEC wrong in their "close it first then we'll test to see if it's okay" attitude, some serious questions are raised about many of the other DEC orders and actions that have been issued. Many towns have felt the sting of DEC "consent orders" which are, most usually, accompanied by a stiff fine. One example: Riverhead Town has been cited for operating a landfill without a permit. When town officials file for a permit, they are refused. And so it goes, around and around and around.

If the DEC is anything, it is not cooperative. A prime example is the manner in which the department is going about enforcing the landfill ban which goes into effect later this year. The battle between the Town of Islip and the DEC, which led to the infamous Garbage Barge fiasco, is legend. The DEC push toward incineration is another. A major fear of town officials, and most

people with some common sense, is that the federal Environmental Protection Agency may, in the future, change the regulations concerning air emissions which could have a tremendous impact on any incinerators built. A spokesperson for the DEC told Suffolk Life recently, "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." Nice! Will the DEC also provide the bucks to upgrade incinerators they have pushed the towns into if the emissions rules are changed? Hardly. Did they provide the bucks needed for the landfill liners and caps the department ordered when leachates and methane became a problem? Taxpayers shelled out millions of dollars for these Band-Aid-type solutions which ultimately were scrapped when the landfill ban came along.

The state legislature and the DEC are responsible for the landfill ban, but have yet to prove that all landfills are polluters of the water supply. In fact, the Suffolk County Health Services Department has repeatedly stated that the ban is ill-advised. That it would be far more efficient to correct what pollution plumes exist than embark on this total switch to other methods of handling our waste stream. Interestingly, the residue left from incineration will be permitted to be placed in lined landfills. Doesn't that make you wonder why, if landfills

are bad, toxic residue from incinerators will be disposed of in that fashion?

Since Governor Cuomo's lack of control over the DEC—and apparent lack of concern for the impact of its decisions—is a major reason for the many criticisms of the department's actions, it is hard to bestow upon him too much credit for pushing the DEC into action on the shellfish closure fiasco. But he did finally say "you will find the manpower, and you will do the testing," and the matter was resolved. So for that action we offer some applause. Not much, but some.

Now if the governor would only get involved in the landfill issue, come down to Long Island and sit down with the town officials who have taken too much of the blame for the lack of action, perhaps we could make some progress. If the governor came down and took a direct hand in the planning, ordered the creation of regional markets to handle the material collected in recycling programs, perhaps something would be done. If the governor insisted on finding out which landfills are the polluters, and which are not, and ordered the DEC to target the guilty facilities, perhaps we would be able to proceed with some common sense toward solutions at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. Should towns which have suf-

ficient landfill capacity, landfills which do not pollute the water supply, be forced to spend millions to build new facilities which may not be absolutely needed at this time?

Might it not be a better idea to establish a test program of incinerators already in place to determine efficiency and possible problems? Find out more about composting and the part it could play in the disposal of the waste stream. Might it not also be possible to come up with a standardized plan so that each town does not have to spend millions for new designs and plans? Who is more important, governor, the taxpayers who have to foot the bill, or the people who are getting rich from the landfill crisis?

How about it, governor, do you care enough about Long Island and its taxpayers to come down here, to provide the leadership and the muscle to help find the best possible solution, one which the taxpayers can afford to pay for? What we've had are threats: build the resource recovery facilities, do it our way, or truck the garbage off the island. To other states. At exorbitant costs. There has to be a better way!

How about it, governor? Can we count on you?

And why not?

## A word to the wise

Those in public and elected positions seem to sometimes forget that they have a responsibility to represent the people rather than their own personal desires or vested interests. They embark on actions that are not truly designed to serve the people or, in the case of school districts, the children. Instead, they act in a capricious and self-serving manner. Their attitude is, in a word, arrogant.

A prime example occurred last week in Miller Place following the overwhelming defeat of a \$16.2 million school building proposal. Initially the plan included a cost impact of over \$17 million and an atrium court in the design which drove up the costs. That proposal was defeated last March, and the atrium was eliminated, cutting the estimated cost.

The community had been in a turmoil for weeks preceding last Wednesday's vote. One group strongly supported the construction plan, echoing the district administration's views that the quality of education was being affected by overcrowding conditions. An opposing group declared the taxpayers could not afford higher taxes, and called for an alternative which would be less costly. "What we are saying to them is, if you can't afford a Cadillac, buy a Ford, that's all. We are concerned with education, not bricks and mortar," a member of this group was quoted as saying.

The results of last Wednesday's vote gave evidence that both the administration and the board of education have lost touch with the community. The voters overwhelmingly trounced the proposal by a vote of 2,241 to 873.

During pre-vote hearings held in the auditorium to accommodate the large

crowds, the board urged residents to attend a post-vote meeting that was to be held last Thursday. Many did, but the meeting was not held in the auditorium, but rather in a small room which prevented all of those in attendance from fully participating, or even hearing, what was going on. An overflow crowd was forced into the hallway.

We do not believe it was an oversight on the part of the board and administration to provide a larger room for the meeting. We have seen this ploy used too many times as "crowd control." The Suffolk County Legislature did the same when it came to facing irate taxpayers in Hauppauge. Many were in the hallways there, and locked out of the building because of occupancy limits. There was an empty gym in the same Miller Place building last week. Why wasn't it used? Why wasn't the auditorium used again? That one word comes back into play again: arrogance!

And then the board and administration got really cute. They named a special committee to study a shifting around of students, to ease their claim of overcrowding. And they named a board member who was opposed to the building plan, and an opposition leader as its chairperson. They never asked these people if they would serve in that capacity. Simply announced their names. And then to add some spice to the ingredients, they named strong pro-building proponents to, in our view, stir things up a bit.

In our view, their plan is transparent. First, those named to head the committee were against the building plan, so let them come up with an alternative. Not an alternative that might well produce additional space—such as portable class-

rooms—or an addition, at lower cost, to the present school. No, an alternative we choose, shift the kids around. Then, when parents get angry because their kids are shifted, we can blame it on them.

What the school officials in Miller Place—as they have in many other areas—seem to forget is that they are not only playing games with the leaders who dared to oppose their plans, be it school building or budget, but with all those who voted in opposition. In Miller Place, this amounts to the 2,241 people who voted against the plan. Mess with that number, and you're really buying big trouble.

A word to the wise: with school budget time fast approaching, school district officials would be smart to develop a working together relationship with its residents rather than foster a pro-board group in opposition to those with another point of view. School officials should have learned a lesson from the record number of defeats registered at the polls last year. And Miller Place officials should have learned long before this that it will take more than repeated votes to pass a bad plan. Work together with the community to provide the best possible education at the least possible cost and the kids will benefit. This goes for proposals to meet space needs as well.

We have seen some fascinating events coming out of Europe in recent times as people fight for a right to be heard, for an end to tyranny. People in our land are no different. They want to have a say in the matters which affect their lives, and if it takes the outpouring of anger that brought about the changes in other governments, then so be it.

And why not?



*Discussion of garbage*

# A roundtable to nowhere

A roundtable discussion held last week at Islip Town Hall was designed to bring state and local officials and others together for a discussion of the current garbage crisis. While the premise for the roundtable was good, the results were less than impressive.

Four state senators were on hand to discuss the law passed in Albany which bans landfills, with certain exceptions, after December 18 of this year. They heard from the town supervisors in attendance about the problems faced by the towns in meeting this landfill ban. They heard the problems, but whether they listened carefully enough to realize the full impact of the crisis and the need for common sense solutions is open to question.

From our perspective as a participant at that roundtable, much of the discussion centered around the same rhetoric we've heard for years. One, the law was passed because the towns have done nothing. Two, the towns have wasted the last seven years since the 1983 passage doing nothing. Three, "we (the state legislators) are not the bad guys, it's all the towns' fault."

A question we posed brought no answer. What has the state done to help the towns meet the deadline for landfill use? What has the state done to help create regional markets for the recycled material collected by the towns? What has the state done to provide alternatives? Or leadership?

The answer, unfortunately, is nothing.

Senators wondered what level of government, the state or the towns, should pay for the multi-million dollar facilities the towns are being forced into constructing. The obvious answer is that no matter what level of government pays, it's the taxpayer who gets the bill. That's elementary. One senator wondered how the monies needed should be raised, through increased sales taxes or a surcharge on income tax, both on a regional basis. This is

another prime example of looking for new revenues to pay for costly solutions, rather than seeking ways to bring the costs of the solutions down to an affordable level.

State officials voiced another view: if the towns want the state to share in the financial burden, the towns would have to give up homerule. The state should then make the decisions about siting regional facilities, such as ashfills. This would eliminate the "not in my backyard" opposition of residents, the proponents of this view declared. Actually, however, giving state officials the power to make such decisions does nothing more than put that power into the realm of politics.

A case in point: when the move was on to locate a regional ashfill site, the stipulations concerning location were written in such a fashion as to eliminate any possible site in Nassau County, most especially a controversial landfill site in Port Jefferson. It was quite obvious that the Nassau Albany delegation outfoxed the Suffolk state legislators. As a result, Suffolk was the only possible site those stipulations would permit.

Sure, NIMBY is a problem. But we'd rather have the people involved in the decision as to what is going to affect their neighborhoods rather than having that power granted to scheming politicians.

The state passed the landfill ban without providing supporting documentation as to which landfills were causing pollution, and which weren't. The sensible thing to have done, of course, is to close the bad ones and seek solutions for those, rather than issue a broad based edict closing all landfills. What they could have done is create a pilot project, learn the problems, develop a standardized plan to help save millions in consulting and engineering costs. They could have addressed the matter with common sense rather than political edict. And they did not even follow the require-

ments of the SEQRA process, which requires detailing the financial, social and environmental impact of their law. Why not?

What troubled us most about the roundtable discussion was the "we are the state, we have the power, we will tell you what to do" attitude that was expressed by the DEC, with no support for the local towns forthcoming from the state officials. That was the time for the state officials to look Harold Berger, regional DEC director, straight in the eye and say, "Harold, we want the DEC to work with these towns to help resolve their problems rather than being a major problem," which is what most town officials say the DEC has become.

Unfortunately, in our system of government the state has the power to supercede local laws, to mandate but escape responsibility of costs or implementation. The state mandates down, but the towns cannot mandate up to the state level.

There is, however, one group that has the power to mandate both ways: the voters. It's time, and most important, for the voters to set some mandates of their own. The state legislators cannot escape responsibility for the financial burden the taxpayers must shoulder because of the way they imposed their mandate, and their lack of action in finding solutions. Nor can they escape responsibility for the added costs the taxpayers must bear because they, as state legislators, have not established regional markets for the recycled material the towns, under state edict, have been collecting.

Therefore, the voters should put forth this edict to state legislators: you have until Election Day 1990, when you run for reelection, to establish the markets desperately needed to curb the costs of dealing with our waste stream. If those markets are established by then, we will consider you for reelection. If not, look for another job.

And why not?

## Somber reminder

Members of the Suffolk County Police Department are grieving for one of their own, an undercover narcotics detective who died last week after a bomb placed underneath his vehicle detonated when he entered his car. Although most of us did not know Detective Dennis Wustenhoff, we must all grieve the loss of this brave police officer who put his own life on the line time and time again in his dedicated fight against the insidious narcotics dealers. All of us were losers when the life of Dennis Wustenhoff ended.

His tragic death is a somber reminder of the risks taken by those who work at bringing the narcotics plague under control. He and the scores of others who work on the front lines of the battle against drugs are all that stand between us and an even worse epidemic than that which we currently face. Without their efforts, the drug lords of this world, those who ply their trade by spreading misery and broken lives, would run rampant, much more than they, unfortunately, do. Last week's bombing brings home to this area the ruthless nature of those who deal narcotics.

Dennis Wustenhoff's death must not be in vain. We know that his fellow officers will not rest until the person or persons responsible are apprehended. We wish them well in that task, and hope sincerely that anyone with any information at all that might shed light on the identity of the killer forwards this information to the proper authorities. The number to call is 345-6580.

The family had asked, prior to the funeral earlier this week, that in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Police Benevolent Association (PBA). One way we have of expressing our great sorrow that this brave officer, husband, and father of three children, was the victim of such a heinous crime is to make contributions to the PBA which, we are sure, would be of help to the family in the trying days ahead, and could help meet future educational expenses for the children who have lost their dad.

Dennis Wustenhoff has been described as a "true fighter" and it is our fervent hope that his death will motivate us all to join in the battle against drugs. Each of us, in our own way, however large or small an effort we can offer, should dedicate ourselves to bringing the drug death lords to their knees. We should carry on Detective Wustenhoff's fight as a clear message that taking the life of anyone fighting for us will only cause others to take up his cause. While we cannot actively pursue the killer—that is the job of the police and we wish them God Speed in those efforts—we can, and should, support with all our might those who carry on Dennis Wustenhoff's dedicated mission.

Dennis, rest in peace. Rest with the knowledge that those you sacrificed so much to protect will not let your death be in vain. That your loss will result in the ultimate victory against the slime responsible for your death.

And why not?

## The field is growing

The recent news that Smithtown Supervisor Patrick Vecchio has changed his enrollment from Democrat to Republican adds another potential candidate to the 1991 race for Suffolk County Executive. The field is growing.

Vecchio's entrance into the field brings the increasingly important issue of tight fiscal management into the spotlight. His 12 years as Smithtown supervisor have been somewhat unique in terms of conservative spending. He has no town car of his own, as do most other town supervisors. He utilizes his own, private vehicle to and from his office, and uses a pool car when he travels about for town business. While headlines focus on renovation expenses for official

offices, he sits at a secondhand desk which was once used by a town attorney.

Whether Vecchio will get the nod as Republican candidate for county executive remains to be seen. He refuses to comment on the issue, declaring, "I just joined the church, so I can't talk about being Bishop." One thing is for sure, however, with Vecchio in the field of potential candidates, next year's campaign looms as one that will be anything but dull. And guarantees that tight-fisted management of the taxpayer dollars will be a top issue of discussion. Which, in these days of soaring taxes, is the way it should be.

And why not?



# Looking For Voter Approval

School boards are in the process of developing their budgets for the 1990-'91 school year. Last year, almost half the initial school budgets went down to defeat. Taxpayers reeling from huge increases in real estate taxes said, "No, we can't afford no more." We cannot afford these incessant rises in our real estate taxes.

During the past year, a taxpayers' political action committee was organized. Tax PAC, Inc. has attempted to work with the school districts, to educate the board members that school costs must be contained, and the quality of education improved.

This past summer, Lee Koppelman, amongst others, produced a report for the Nassau/Suffolk Planning Commission that indicated that a basic education could be achieved for about \$4,500 per student here on Long Island. Expenditures of approximately \$2,000 more would provide a whole host of enrichments, but expenditures above \$6,600 appear to be wasted and in some cases, counter-productive. These figures were based upon 1985 dollars.

Last year, the average cost of educating a student on Long Island was close to \$10,000. Some districts spent close to \$20,000. The educational budget is broken down into three factors: first, the basic requirements and curriculum that must be given so that any student completing the prescribed courses can achieve a Regents diploma, and be educated sufficiently to get into and perform at college level.

According to the New York State Senate's educational specialists, 45 to 48 percent of the average budget finance core requirements. The school boards then select a host of additional courses and curriculums that the school

boards feel, in their judgement, should be offered to the students from the district they represent. Some of these courses and curriculums are at the request of special interest groups, parents, teachers and the administration and superintendents. Those enrichments above the core curriculum generally are representative of 30 to 40 percent of the total budget. These items, once offered by the board, must then follow the state mandates and it is the reason why school boards can loosely claim that 85 percent of their budget is mandated by the state. On the surface this statement appears to be true, although it is, at best, a half-truth.

The balance of the budget is for items that are purely electives offered by the school boards. In this category of items we find transportation limits which provide busing for students who live closer than a half-mile of their school. Extracurricular activities are offered ranging from chess clubs, modern dance, coin clubs to the popular programs such as football, plays and other luxuries. In addition, there are a host of other activities that are not necessary, but nice to have if you can afford them.

Tax PAC, Inc. this year has recommended to all school boards throughout Suffolk County, that budgets contain menu items on the first ballot. Some school districts have offered the voters a budget broken down to cover such items as basic core education, enrichments, busing within a half-mile of the school, football and sports, and a separate category for all other extracurricular activities. This menu approach makes sense and, if offered, can possibly lead to better relations between the taxpayers and the schools.

Individual voters can support the items they can afford, reject the items they can't. Proponents of special categories can lobby and campaign for the passage of their favorite aspect. Core curriculum, as required by the state, must be passed. This provides every student with the opportunity of obtaining a prescribed education. Some programs come under taxpayer options and it puts the choice in the hands of the people who must pay for them.

Tax PAC will be circulating petitions asking for your support in encouraging your local school boards to offer you the opportunity of this type of budget voting. School boards, when presented with these petitions, should give serious consideration to the request. Their willingness to meet the voters at least half-

way can do away with some of the feelings which currently exist that the boards are totally arrogant and not in tune with the taxpayers' needs or requests.

For your convenience, we have printed a coupon below for you to sign. There is an additional box for you to check if you would be willing to circulate a petition among your neighbors and friends. A representative of Tax PAC will contact you with their petitions.

School taxes make up more than 60 percent of your real estate tax burden, whether you own a home or rent one. This is your opportunity to become involved in a meaningful way. Coupons should be sent to President Joan Scariati, Tax P.A.C., Inc., c/o P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

### Gentlemen:

I, as a voter, request that this year's school budget be presented for approval in a menu form, outlining the various choices to be offered to our students.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I will do my part. I will circulate petitions in my area.

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

# Much Too little and much too late

The award of substantial bonuses to top level officials of the Long Island Lighting Company is not a new subject. LILCO's chairman, William Catacosinos, and others, got some hefty financial rewards for their part in negotiations between the state and the utility over the Shoreham nuclear plant. That agreement, which enriched LILCO at the expense of the ratepayers, will double electric rates over the next ten years.

Last July, the LILCO executives got some more hefty bonuses from a generous utility board of directors. One of the first to raise a hue and cry was the head of the State Consumer Board, Richard Kessel, who was, incidentally, the governor's chief salesman for the LILCO-Cuomo Shoreham agreement. Kessel wanted the state Public Service Commission, which played an important part in coming up with the Cuomo deal figures, to rescind the bonuses. The PSC, which has been the target of charges that it is more concerned about LILCO's financial status than the financial burden on the ratepayers, refused.

And now, it has been revealed that LILCO's board of directors has sweetened the controversial "Golden Parachute"

with which Catacosinos will float into retirement some day, to the tune of more than \$900,000. And what's more, they have agreed to include the bonuses Catacosinos has been given in tabulating his retirement payments. That will sweeten the pot even more for Catacosinos, with the people who are struggling to survive on Long Island footing the bill.

The members of the Long Island Power Authority voted last week to renew their fight against the LILCO bonus giveaway. They seek to limit compensation for LILCO executives, and outlaw bonus payments. What's interesting about this is that LIPA, as part of a proxy battle, was supposed to have a member of its board of directors seated as a member of the LILCO board. Leon Campo, who is also the head of the Suffolk County Water Authority, and a business administrator with the East Meadow School District, was handpicked by the governor and his men to fill that position. At the time that selection was made, it was assumed that the selection was a reward for Campo's immediate support of the governor's deal with LILCO.

There was also discussion that the

Cuomo-LILCO agreement was to have provided for a LIPA seat on LILCO's board as well. It turns out, however, that despite the pre-agreement statements made by the governor and his men about the benefits of the deal—which supposedly included a LIPA representative as a LILCO board member—this provision was not included in the written document. And, while Campo was originally designated as a LIPA pick for the LILCO board, at the end of the first year that changed drastically. It was Catacosinos who nominated Campo for a new term on the board, and the LILCO stockholders who elected him.

Which explains, of course, why the LILCO bonus gifts were never revealed until after the fact. Why the "people's representative" never sounded an alarm or waved a red flag. Why, if as has been reported, the financial gifts were approved by a LILCO board "executive committee?" the public and the stockholders were never made aware that a handpicked group was enriching the executives. The fact is there is no people's representative. The person who was supposed to be a representative of the people has turned out to be LILCO's. Campo abstained when LIPA voted to fight the bonuses.

Unfortunately, the effort now being made by LIPA is far too little, far too late. When the head of the consumer board serves the governor on his negotiating committee in coming up with the Cuomo-LILCO deal, works closely with the PSC in preparing the figures designed to put LILCO in good financial health, then becomes the governor's salesman in promoting the controversial agreement, and later is chosen as the chairman of the LIPA board, we have little hope that the public will be a consideration in the final decision. It is impossible to serve that many masters and do justice to those on the bottom of the power ladder—the public.

The Long Island Power Authority was the idea of a group of people who wanted a say in their future energy destiny. State elected officials were successful in having legislation passed creating the authority. Unfortunately, Governor Cuomo then successfully manipulated LIPA into his own power through appointments.

We've had enough politics and power grabs. It's time to give the people a voice by scheduling a vote.

And why not?