

A very poor and costly beginning

The Suffolk County Legislature, by a 14 to 4 vote last week, ended a financially disastrous year on a very sour note, and one which spells trouble for the new year. The legislature approved a contract with the county's civil service work force in a "spend now, worry later" action which will, according to its own budget review office, create an \$8 million deficit in the 1990 budget.

And that's only half the story. That same contract includes a provision that would create a panel to study county jobs, with an eye toward boosting salaries of some positions to make them comparable with others. The financial implications of this "comparable worth" provision is not yet known, it depends upon the final action by the panel which will be made up of six members, three chosen by the employees' union, and three by the county executive's office.

An effort by Legislator Stephen Levy to revise that provision to give the legislature final say in any salary adjustments was rejected because, according to Levy, the union opposed the move. We don't doubt that at all. With three of its own representatives constituting one-half of the panel, the union is in a commanding position to pressure to force its will.

Approving a contract that will create a deficit, without clear indication on how that deficit will be resolved, is fiscally reprehensible. Approving a contract with a "comparable worth" provision that is little more than a blank check written in red ink for an additional deficit in the future is lunacy.

The legislature had an alternative. The Halpin administration, which had negotiated the contract with the union, began pushing at the last min-

ute for a plan which would have forced county employees to take an involuntary, non-paid five-day furlough, either in days or at one time, to ease the total cost of the contract. This would, county officials predicted, have saved \$3 million, and left a \$5 million deficit. The union opposed this too, and the legislators buckled to those wishes. That's unfortunate. The furlough proposal would have spread the impact over the entire work force. The only alternative now is layoffs, which will severely impact those affected.

As a result, some severe belt tightening is going to be needed to meet the shortfall in next year's budget, and the legislators will, according to the budget review office, be called upon to pierce the spending cap for the 1991 budget. Here we go again! This is the same "spend now, worry later" attitude that got us into the fiscal crisis that has spawned a taxpayers' revolt

the likes of which has not been seen in this county before.

The union will insist, and the legislators apparently agree, that the contract provisions, which call for salary increases in the 4.5 to 5 percent range per year each year over the next three years, are reasonable. What they don't say, however, is that at least 50 percent of the county's civil service work force, according to county estimates, will also receive normal step increments which boosts their increase to about 8 percent, for a cumulative total of over 25 percent.

Wages on the county level account for the bulk of the taxes we have to pay. The legislature has almost guaranteed that taxes will have to be raised by 25 percent during the next three years to fund this giveaway and blackmail by the unions. Tax PAC had demanded the legislature cut back spending 10 percent a year over the next three years to bring Suffolk's taxes somewhat on par with the nation's average. The legislature, in passing this contract, has declared war on the taxpayers, on every single resident in the county. They have proved that they have no more courage than in the past, they are as spineless as ever, and don't know the difference between right and wrong.

Unfortunately, only four legislators, Steve Levy, Wayne Prospect, Joe Rizzo and Fred Thiele, stood firm against voting for a measure that creates an immediate deficit. All the rest went along to get along, spend now, worry later.

For those who voted for deficit spending, and blank check provisions, we have this message: It's going to be a long, hard two years if you continue to ignore the taxpayers' demands of the past year. Their message was very clear. Cut spending. Now!

And why not?

Rewards of management

Becoming a manager in private enterprise has its set of rewards, a bigger salary, power, prestige and the ability to put your ideas into motion. Mid-managers, according to the Wall Street Journal, work an average of 56 hours per week. Top managers average better than 60 hours per week.

Managers in private enterprise normally do not receive additional compensation for longer hours, nor do they receive compensatory time off. Additional hours go with the territory. You are hired to do a job whether it takes 40 hours or 60. Government, like private enterprise, has managers also. They receive higher salaries and the perks of the office.

Up until a few years ago, here in

Suffolk County, they were hired to do the job, and not by the hour. Now, managers in the county receive not only the high salaries, but are granted overtime in the form of compensatory time off for each hour above 40 hours they may work. If they do not use their compensatory time, they can take a cash payment for the equivalent of this time when they leave the county. This, combined with unused sick and unused vacation time, which in some cases can amount to six weeks per year, allows these managers to receive huge cash settlements upon leaving the county. There have been some documented cases where some of these employees walked out of the county with checks over \$100,000.

Managers generally are involved in the political system. More often than not, their jobs are patronage. It is hard to distinguish whether they are working for the people of Suffolk County or for the political party that helped them secure the job in the first place.

This is a rotten abuse of the trust that we have placed in our elected officials. Cumulatively, it is costing us several million dollars a year. The county executive and the legislature should call a halt to this abusive practice immediately. Any manager who objects should be given a choice, accept it without complaint, or don't let the door hit you on the derriere when you leave.

And why not?

Let's make '90s a Decade of the People

We ended 1989 in a strange way. In America, particularly here in Suffolk County, the taxpayers organized and rallied against the government. The elected officials took note, then trembled, but have not substantially changed their ways.

In Eastern Europe, the communist bloc leaders who had an iron clad grip on their people, holding them virtually in bondage, have been swept out of power and the walls of tyranny have come down. In some instances the changes came about without violence, in others however, such as Rumania, blood has been shed.

We live in a democracy in which our government is supposed to be of the people, by the people and for the people. We have freedom of speech, freedom of press and religion. We are able to express our dissatisfaction with our leaders and the populace. We are able to

throw the leaders out of office by vote. Tragically, half the citizens who can vote are not registered to do so. During this last election, half of those who were eligible to vote by being registered, failed to vote.

Democrats and Republicans don't fear the voter because the voters, through apathy, have become impotent. We are to blame for our own weakness. That is why this past year congress voted itself a 50 percent increase in salary. Congressmen like Thomas Downey and Robert Mrazek, who voted for this measure, don't fear the voters in their own districts.

As the cold weather hit, oil companies have jumped the price of fuel oil by over 50 percent. In one recent two day period, the price of oil went up ten percent one day, 15 percent the next. Is greed, corruption and circumvention of the law involved? You can bet your sweet bippy it is.

Howls of protest, screams of indignation are, in reality, little more than laughter in the wind for those who make the laws on the federal level, the state level and in the county. They know we will howl and they will laugh, but we will never get off our lazy duffs to throw those who are so arrogant in power out of office.

The county legislature, which is comprised of our local citizens, felt the fear of the organized taxpayers' movement. Some went down to defeat, but most retained their seats. Our local political organizations put up poorer candidates than the sitting members of the legislature and we had to choose between the lesser of two evils. The legislators quickly forgot their pledges to the people, and on the last day of business in the county, voted an open checkbook to county labor over the next two years.

Both Republican and Democratic parties, from the town levels on up,

need a thorough house cleaning. Leaders and their committees who select the standard bearer's candidates for their party must be close to the people and aware of their concerns. Our country, our state and particularly our county and towns, are at the breaking point. The taxpayers have no discretionary income left to fund increased new additional taxes or user fees, particularly captive user fees such as garbage tipping costs which will hurt only the people.

Taxpayer organizations such as Tax PAC may have to become much more aggressive and demonstrative. It is plain to see that being ladies and gentlemen is not necessarily the most productive way to go. If we are in a war, we're going to have to fight a war and use whatever means it is going to take to break the backs of arrogant and insensitive elected officials.

And why not?

Students' and taxpayers' needs

Students in the United States, and right here in Suffolk County, are being poorly educated. In comparable tests against other industrial nations, we are coming out very poorly. Last year it was revealed that in science and mathematics we were fifty-ninth and sixtieth of sixty surveyed industrial nations.

The Ford Foundation recently released a report indicating that over one-third of United States' seventh grade students cannot do a simple, two-step mathematical calculation, whereas students in Europe and Asia scored in the high nineties. The conclusion of the report was that our system of teaching mathematics was flawed, and that it did not teach the students to think and use logic.

Dr. Richardson of Huntington, a reading and education specialist, has for years deplored the methods we use to teach our children to read. Back in the late forties and early fifties, we changed from phonics to whole language, which again discourages a child from thinking and reasoning.

The United States spends more on education than any other country in the world. Suffolk County spends, on an average, 138 percent more than the nation's average. Forty percent of our educational costs are funded by state aid, and approximately 60 percent is funded through real estate taxes. The average cost of educating a student here in Suffolk County is rapidly closing in on \$10,000, the cost of a college education including room and board.

In a report released last September, conducted by the Long Island Regional Planning Board, under the direction of Dr. Lee Koppelman, statistics indicated it is difficult to justify an expenditure above \$6,680 (in 1985 dollars) per pupil. That report states that an expenditure of \$4,000 per student offers a performance level 5 to 10 percent above the 1985 level. An expenditure of \$6,680, 68 percent higher, produces a performance level of only 15 percent higher than 1985.

Homeowners and renters are being forced off Long Island because of the economic conditions and the heavy toll taken by taxes. During 1989, war broke out between taxpayers and the educational establishment. Almost 50 percent of the initial school budgets presented went down to defeat. Taxpayers said, "Enough is enough. School taxes have been increasing too fast. Our ability to earn money has not kept pace, we cannot afford any more." The educational establishment responded by labeling those who protested the increased taxes as "anti-education." They enlisted the support of parents who had students in school, often using dishonest and unethical means, including blackmail, to get their budgets passed. They threatened to withhold student-sensitive items, such as extracurricular activities and busing, as a means of forcing the passage of budgets. Some parents blindly jumped aboard the educational bandwagon. They failed to ask why, with all the taxes we are paying, our students aren't per-

forming educationally at the top of the heap. Why can't our children read? Why can't our children understand? Why can't our children do simple mathematics, as well as advanced? Why are our children 59th and 60th in science and math? Why are we spending 138 percent more than the nation's average, but are not achieving a significantly better education? Is it fair to ask all taxpayers to fund extracurricular activities, which are luxuries, as part of the budget? Why should all taxpayers, who have had to cut back on their nutritional spending to meet their own tax obligations, be continually asked to pay for all the extras the parents of today demand for their children?

We have spent the past year of the tax revolution attending hundreds of meetings of outraged citizens. In all these meetings, we never heard one person say we should not be giving our children a good, solid education in preparation for college or future employment. Many have questioned why administrators are being paid over \$100,000. They have questioned why there have to be as many mid-managers as is currently in vogue. They have questioned the need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for supplements for teachers, increases for them to be advisors or leaders of chess clubs and golf clubs. In one district alone, there are over 100 extracurricular activities being offered to the students. Each offering was headed by a teacher who received supplemental income to his or her base

salary, which averaged over \$48,000. These supplements ranged from as little as \$800 to over \$5,000.

A third element in the mix is the governor, the state legislature and the state education department, who have mandated schools to take on the responsibility and the cost of social human relations problems. The education of the handicapped, as well as those who refuse to learn. They have made our school system and the funding of it a catch-all for all social programs for state residents under 21 years of age. The cost of educating those in need of special, psychological and physical handicaps averages over \$22,000 per student. These are clearly state responsibilities that simply cannot be funded through property taxes. Because these costs have been mandated onto the backs of the local school boards without compensation from the state, school taxes have accelerated astronomically.

1990 should be a year of maximum cooperation between the educational establishment, students and their parents, the taxpayers relied upon to provide the funding, and the state legislature, which is making the rules of the game. We should have two universal goals: the first is that the method of education be changed so that American students can achieve, and reach the level of our foreign neighbors. We are in an era of world competition. We can't afford to be second-best. We will be annihilated if we continue to be 59th and 60th.

The cost of education here in Suffolk County must be revamped to bring us on a par with the rest of the nation so that taxes can be reduced and our residents can continue to afford to live on Long Island. The cost of education can be contained through full utilization of classrooms, getting ourselves back to having 20 or 30 students per classroom, per teacher.

This may be achieved as recommended by the recent report issued by the county which advocates consolidating many of the smaller school districts, although much information needs to be compiled on the full benefits, if any, of the proposed mergers. It can also be achieved by the regionalization of "super" high schools geared towards the high achievers, emotional or physically disabled, and those who would benefit from trade preparatory schools.

The state monkey must be gotten off of the local taxpayers' backs. Those social programs requiring high expenditures designated to aid the handicapped and impaired must be funded through federal-based taxes collected by the state government. Setting up war zones, pitting students and parents against non-participatory taxpayers, is futile, and does not address the need to improve education or provide taxpayer relief.

As Dr. Koppelman's report indicates, expenditures above \$6,680 are wasteful. School boards should look at their forthcoming budgets with this figure in mind. Strip the fat, strip the waste, strip the luxuries. Return the schools to their rightful place as educational establishments where the emphasis is on learning the basics, and the frills are left to the parents to provide as they can afford.

Cooperation is the only way we shall reach this goal, which is no longer an option, but an absolute necessity.

And why not?

Garbage can be an asset

Governor Cuomo's DEC has mandated we look at garbage as a liability.

Garbage is bad.

Garbage is costly.

Garbage is dangerous to our health.

Garbage must be disposed of in an expensive manner.

Garbage must be incinerated.

Waste from incinerated garbage should not be an issue until the plants are built.

These are the mandates of Governor Cuomo's Department of Environmental Conservation. In their mandates, and in the thinking behind them, common sense and logic have been sadly missing. Let's be practical, see what happens if we get away from the state bureaucratic mindset and approach garbage from a business-like viewpoint.

Garbage is an ooey goey mess of combined natural resources that can be mined and produce a profit. In those big heaps are glass, plastic, metal and paper that can be separated and reused after refining. Let's look at where the natural beginnings of this ooey goey mess come from.

Trees were a natural resource that were harvested, cut and dissolved into pulp. From this we manufacture cardboard, paper and paper by-products. The tin and the steel were nuggets in the ground that were mined, cleaned of

their impurities, smelted into a liquid and, by mixing other ingredients, transformed into the finished product designed for its intended use.

Glass came from stone which was dissolved and made liquid and then refined and cast into finished images. Plastics came out of the ground in the form of oil. Through a change of chemical composition, it was refined eventually into plastic and made into containers and parts.

Food and other waste by-products at one time or another came from the earth, destined to be returned to the earth. All came from natural resources and should be able to be returned to natural resources.

Technology is already in existence to re-pulp paper, refine manufactured metal, rehabilitate plastic. Other waste, particularly cellulose materials like paper and cloth, can be refined and made into ethanol.

This covers over 95 percent of the waste stream.

Looking at garbage as a natural resource allows for the renewal of our discards. A redemption of what is costly waste. These ideas are not new, nor is the technology. Many of the methods that have been proposed don't date back 10 or 20 years, they date back hundreds of years. The only thing that is different is our refusal to look at garbage in a practical way.

Instead, Governor Cuomo's DEC, in its arrogant, insensitive and blatant stupidity, has mandated costly solutions to problems rather than money-making opportunities. This may be the American way, the way of the eighties, but it is not a way that we can afford to look at our problems and the worldwide economy of the nineties.

We must stop wasting our precious resources, our workers' incomes on false programs that are designed to fail before they get started. Over the past several years we have met with a number of people who have had practical ideas for handling our garbage problem. Their ideas have been shot down, their concepts not given credence without explanation.

If Governor Cuomo wishes to be re-elected, wishes to be known as a good governor, let him demand, in no uncertain terms, that his DEC explore every possibility, turning our wasteful garbage into a natural resource before imposing fines and harsh taxes upon the citizens of the good, great State of New York. Let him show leadership rather than arrogance. Let him show that our garbage can be a natural resource, rather than a natural disaster.

The ideas and the technology are there. Let the state demonstrate how we can best use this information before they foster more wasteful practices on the citizens.

And why not?

How much more are we going to take?

Mario Cuomo is the governor of the State of New York. As governor, he appoints the commissioner to head the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). He appointed Thomas Jorling as the commissioner. The DEC is directly under the governor's control via his commissioner. He is responsible for its actions.

The DEC has awesome power and control over our lives. It has the power to make laws through regulations, to be accuser, judge, jury, finer, jailer, and operate without due process of law. Under the DEC's mode of operation, you are guilty until you prove yourself innocent. The DEC is out of control, and it is affecting every one of us.

Let's just take a look at a few instances that have happened over the last few years. The DEC said that striped bass contained dangerous levels of pollutants. It issued a ban on striped bass that wiped out the livelihood of numerous fishing families. This ban severely curtailed the resort and tourism business, and contributed to a shortfall in sales taxes which had to be made up by increased real estate taxes. The DEC nullified its decision and allowed one bass per angler over 33 inches. Does this strike you as strange? The bigger the fish, the higher the concentration of contaminants. By these rules and regulations, the DEC threw logic to the wind and showed that it has no real concern for the health of those who catch and eat bass.

The same DEC is involved in the enforcement of a law ordering the landfills here on Long Island to be closed as of December 18. The closure will double the cost of local governments. You will pay twice as much in local taxes to fund your local government in 1991 because of the broad brush of the DEC forcing towns to build incinerators and other very costly facilities to replace the landfills. When Suffolk Life inquired about possible future federal EPA regulations that may seriously impact on the operation of incineration facilities, a DEC spokesman said: "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." Sure they will, with taxpayers' money to redo the very plants they are forcing upon the towns today with their "this is what we want you to do and we don't care what it will cost the people" attitude.

The Suffolk County Health Department has stated that a number of landfills in Suffolk County are not an environmental hazard and can be kept open without any ill effects. The DEC does not care. It wants all landfills closed regardless of the cost to the taxpayers.

The DEC forces towns into "consent orders" to do things its way. It levies fines, refuses to give landfill permits and then fines the towns for not having them. It causes one to wonder if this isn't all a scam to raise dollars for the state treasury.

This past summer DEC officials announced they were increasing the fees for permits on bulkheading, piles and other shoreline work by tenfold. They said they needed a thousand percent increase to cover increased costs. The DEC, in making these arguments said that it only wanted this increase for permits in salt water areas. In other words, just on Long Island and metropolitan

New York. Can anybody explain why the cost is 1,000 percent more on Long Island than it is in Buffalo or Lake George, or any place along the Hudson?

The DEC announced this week it was closing most of the clam beds on Long Island to harvesting. The DEC has ordered clam beds in different parts of Long Island closed periodically when there was a change in the salinity and the bacteria count. Clammers have learned to work around these periodic closings, for they knew that the beds would be reopened in a short period of time. DEC officials announced they were closing these beds, not because they were polluted, not because they were a health hazard, they were closing them because they feel they do not have

the manpower to check every ounce of water to make sure that it is pristine. The arbitrary closing of these clam beds will, overnight, wipe out the livelihood of the baymen who have worked these waters, in some cases, for as many generations as America is old.

There are hundreds of other examples we can give of a governmental agency, the DEC, being out of control, not serving the people, but serving itself. The DEC must be reined in and brought under control. The governor does not seem to have any desire to do so. If the DEC is an example of the governor's brand of government, then the governor should go. He obviously does not give a damn about the taxpayer. He obviously does not give a damn about the health

of Long Islanders. He obviously does not give a damn about the economic well-being of the baymen specifically, or the Long Island region in general. He is either unaware, too sheltered, or too arrogant to pay attention to our cries. Mario Cuomo is a smooth talker, and very glib, but his actions are speaking louder than his words.

Years ago, we read about the coming of "big brother." We didn't know his name was going to be Mario Cuomo. The governor has two choices: rein in the DEC, make it responsible and responsive to the needs of Long Islanders, or face an angry and growing electorate which is disgusted with the mandates and the control that is arbitrarily being placed upon Long Island.

And why not?

Good Guy? Bad Guy?

Is the new LILCO, after Shoreham, a good guy or a bad guy? Most of us like to think of our utility the way we think of motherhood and apple pie. Good community citizens providing a needed service at a reasonable rate.

LILCO shattered this illusion in its attempts to build and operate Shoreham. Their incompetence and mismanagement has resulted in our being charged the highest utility rates in the nation. LILCO pays taxes on its properties. These taxes are passed on to all of us, dollar for dollar, in our LILCO bills. The management of LILCO has been, for many years, protesting the assessment placed on their Shoreham plant by the Brookhaven Town Assessor. Utility officials claimed it was too high, and have launched a lawsuit in an effort to have the assessment, and thus the taxes, reduced.

LILCO announced last week that it would withhold its second payment of taxes, amounting to \$32 million, unless Brookhaven Town agreed to negotiate a settlement.

On one hand, LILCO is fighting for each of us as individual ratepayers, as the taxes that Brookhaven assesses are paid by everyone throughout the county. On the other hand, we all contribute to the county taxes through our

real estate taxes. So, when it comes down to us, the average citizens, we have a choice of either being raped by the government or raped by LILCO. It doesn't make any difference to us whether we pay LILCO rates or government taxes, we are paying either way, as far as the county portion of the taxes go.

The assessment benefits the residents of Brookhaven Town because the Shoreham assessment adds significantly to the tax base, since the plant is in Brookhaven Town. Even more specifically, the Shoreham-Wading River school district is totally impacted by the taxes collected on Shoreham as almost 90 percent of their school taxes are paid by this plant. Actually, the people of Long Island are the ones who subsidize this school district because the LILCO rates they pay include the Shoreham-Wading River tax bill.

In one sense, LILCO is acting on our behalf and, on the other hand, it is acting like the bad guys of the old days, the bully who is saying "you play ball according to my terms, or I am taking my ball and going home."

If LILCO withholds its taxes this June, the county is going to be forced to borrow these revenues. The cost of borrowing this money will have to be made up through our tax dollars. LILCO

would have to pay a penalty for not paying its taxes and, unfortunately, we will probably have to pay for this too, because we cannot count on the Public Service Commission to protect the ratepayer. LILCO will also build in the cost of its lawyers, and we, as taxpayers, will face added county costs as well as paying for added legal fees. Anyway you look at it, LILCO is again the bad guy who will cost us, the ratepayers and taxpayers, more of our income.

LILCO's excuse that "it is unfair" to charge for a facility that has been "rendered worthless" is a farce. LILCO is getting back the costs of the plant's construction, and then some, via the governor's infamous LILCO deal. If the plant has had no value, as LILCO claims, why did the governor give LILCO such a huge plum?

We suggest that if LILCO does withhold the county taxes, the county, all businesses and homeowners refuse to pay their bills to LILCO until this matter is settled. Let's put an end to the waste of our money for senseless utility and government costs.

Turnabout is fair play. If they don't pay, we won't pay. Then let's see who has the upper hand.

And why not?

Guilty By Insinuation

We didn't like Joe McCarthy because he ruined many people's careers by insinuation. He insinuated they were communists without having to prove that they were. His tactics were condemned quite bitterly, not only by the liberal press but by the conservative as well.

We have noted, with some alarm, the same tactics are being used against Senator Alphonse D'Amato. He has been accused almost daily by insinuation of scandalous actions he may not have been responsible for.

Newsday, with regularity, has been publishing reports attempting to link him to the HUD scandals. Many of these allegations Newsday has been dwelling upon have been made by his

former opponent. They may have credence, they may not. They will be proved or disproved in an investigation that has been started.

D'Amato has neither been formally charged nor convicted. Yet, he is being treated as guilty by insinuation. We resented McCarthy. We resent Newsday using the same tactics in their news columns. If it is their opinion that D'Amato is guilty, then let them use their editorial columns for this opinion. They do not belong in headlines and news stories.

The main thing that Newsday is accomplishing at this point is tearing down the reputation and the effectiveness of one of our two New York representatives to the U.S. Senate. The

continued barrage against D'Amato is making him ineffective and impotent as a needed New York State representative. They may not like D'Amato, they may not like his politics or the fact that he is a Republican in what they consider should be a 100 percent pure Democratic state. They are entitled to their opinion as long as it remains on the editorial pages, and is not camouflaged as news.

Give D'Amato his chance to meet his accusers. In the meantime, allow him to act as an effective representative of the people in Washington. That's only fair and good for the people of New York State and, particularly, Long Island.

And why not.

Are New Schools Necessary?

Several school districts across Long Island are considering asking the voters to approve new schools.

Years ago, when Long Island was booming, new school construction was commonplace. The superintendents gave the school boards awesome projections of increased school enrollment. They decried dual sessions or full use of the schools, and proclaimed the need to construct now to meet the needs of the population while costs were still low.

Most school districts across Long Island have faced declining enrollment, yet the superintendents still want new schools, bigger schools with increased staff. This, despite the fact the county recently released a report outlining an overage of school build-

ings, classrooms, teachers and administrators. That report recommended consolidation, which they said, could offer savings of up to \$70 million per year.

County officials have heard the voice of the citizens and the taxpayers. We must cut back on taxes. We must make our tax dollars work harder. Yet, some superintendents and some school boards persist in trying to sell new schools to the residents and taxpayers. Using the taxpayers' money and their facilities, they mount aggressive public relations and publicity campaigns to sell the concept of new schools. They develop hand-picked commissions as space advisory groups, who come back with reports based upon hand-fed information de-

signed to come to one single conclusion: The superintendent and the school boards are right. The schools are going to be overcrowded and the taxpayers should say "yes" to new ones.

They do not look at alternatives, less costly ways to meet legitimate needs. They do not give the taxpayers the true cost of personnel to run these schools. They only give them the raw construction cost. They do not tell them how much the bonding or financing will cost. They do not tell the taxpayers how much their total taxes are projected to be increased to fund the cost of construction, the interest and personnel, the utilities and maintenance over the life of the bonds.

A number of years back, the Riverhead school superintendent and the Riverhead school board asked for a series of new schools. The enrollment in Central School District No. 1 at that time was 4,500 students. The superintendent projected that enrollment would increase to 6,000. We had to "build now" to meet the enrollment expectations. Enrollment in 1990 in Central School District No. 1 is at 3,600 students. A 25-percent decline from what it was when the new schools were built. Forty-five percent off the projected enrollment figure that the new school construction was

based upon. Now, in 1990, the superintendent and the school board and their advisory committees are saying they do not have enough room, they want new schools. If our schools were built a decade ago to house 6,000, why don't they house 3,600? Did the figures lie? Or were the residents lied to?

Education as we know it today will not be repeated throughout the nineties and the new century. Classes will be consolidated. Special education may well be handled on a regional basis. If Long Island is going to survive as an economic region, taxes must be reduced to meet the earning expectations of the citizenry.

Until the smoke clears, voters, whether or not they have children, should put a halt to any more new school projects being proposed. They should question hard and long the advocates of new schools. They should well remember that every classroom, every new administrative office created will have to be filled with a teacher or administrative personnel, and rarely are these costs ever projected accurately for the future.

We must stop building empires for superintendents using the cry "it's for our kids," while failing to address the question of why our kids can't read, write and do basic math.

And why not?

Welcome response

We congratulate the governor on his fast response in addressing his DEC edict closing our bays to clamming.

The DEC, in its usual display of arrogance, claimed it did not have sufficient personnel to test the waters clams grow in, and since they could not test them, could not guarantee the quality of the water and the safety of the people who consume clams. And so, they decided to close the baybottoms. It didn't matter there was no proof a problem exists; because we don't know, we'll close the areas.

The governor ordered the DEC to re-allocate existing personnel and expedite the testing procedures so that those waters that test within standards could be certified clean. That makes sense. It's what should have been done to begin with, before any ban was put into place.

The DEC is directly under the governor's control. Now that the governor has shown that he can be sensitive to the needs of Long Islanders, let him continue to show his concern in getting the DEC to look at Long Island's solid waste problem from a common sense viewpoint.

State officials and the DEC have applied the same lack of common sense used on clams on landfills. Before testing, before determining scien-

tifically which landfills are polluted, they have ordered every landfill on Long Island closed. The closure of all landfills on Long Island, whether necessary or not, will result in town real estate taxes being doubled in 1990. That's plain stupid.

We understand from Suffolk County Health Department officials that they feel there are landfills that are not a threat to the environment. They can be maintained without any health hazard. Closure of these landfills is not scientifically necessary. That the ill-advised landfill law will result in an absolute waste of taxpayers' money. The sentiments expressed by these health officials have fallen upon deaf ears at the DEC.

The DEC has utilized the landfill law to force unnecessary compliance by towns, and has levied hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines against the towns. These fines paid to the State of New York, which enhances the state treasury, must be funded through increased real estate taxes and is adding to the burden and cost of local government.

If Cuomo can recognize how ludicrous the DEC has been on the clam issue, he should do the same on the landfill issue.

And why not?

A Giant Thank You

"The Group," which helps those in need at Christmas, does not individually acknowledge either financial contributions or the work performed in the name of "The Group." For everyone who took part in this year's efforts, we collectively say to each other, "thank you for a super job well done."

A special thanks to the two women who gave untiringly of their efforts to pull the whole thing together. A special thanks to all the shoppers who spent hours and days searching for the right clothes and the perfect special gifts for their assigned kids.

To the wrappers who spent tireless hours creating decorative packages and endured backaches and sore feet and to the drivers who took time out of their busy schedule, thanks cannot

be enough.

To those who contributed and shared their well-being with others less fortunate, your dollars were well spent. Not a penny was wasted on administrative or overhead costs. Every dollar did double duty because of the skills of the shoppers and the discounts offered by participating businesses.

Each of us had our own reason for becoming involved. Probably the most salient is "there, but for the grace of God, go I," which has been our motto for the past ten years. Collectively we have reached out, and we have provided a memorable Christmas for kids who would not otherwise have had one.

God Bless

And why not?

Why Put Foxes in the Hen House?

Our state and federal leaders are developing a commission to study the cost of local government, and make recommendations for streamlining the operations and eliminating duplication which, they claim, will result in a reduced tax burden for the residents.

This all sounds good on paper. It's political pap. It gives the suckers who pay the taxes a glimmer of hope. The only problem is that the 10-member commission will be composed of out-of-office governmental officials and

people from academia whose heads are still in the trough. A few ex-officials might be able to make valid contributions, but if you really want to make meaningful headway, select people from the private sector who know how to make a buck by streamlining operations and produce productive and efficient operations. Put into the mix a few people who are community activists who have been the movers and shakers in the tax movement. People who know what it is to try to

maintain a house, support a family and educate their kids on an income under \$40,000 or \$50,000 per year. People who really know what is an essential governmental service and what is not needed or even wanted by the majority.

For all too long we have had governmental commissions and blue ribbon panels that are drawn from the same pool of people who have gotten us into the problems we are in. They may be out of office, but they are still heavily involved through their respec-

tive political organizations, their law and consulting firms. Too many of those, although out of office, are still feeding at the trough, billing for their legal or consulting fees. They aren't about to upset their troughs.

Let's make it government by the people, for the people and of the people. Let's draft real people from grassroots America who have the interaction with everyday people and a proven track record of successful business management.

And why not?

Please, no more smoke and mirrors

Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin, in his State of the County address last week, declared the decade of the nineties as the decade of the environment. He vowed he was prepared to hold the line on taxes for two years or, in other words, until he runs for re-election again. All of this is great rhetoric. It makes headlines even if it doesn't make any sense.

Without a doubt, the decade of the eighties was the decade of the environment. A very costly decade. We passed, on the state level, billions of dollars in borrowing measures to protect the environment. We voted for and pledged a quarter cent in sales taxes to protect water. The State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the County Health Services Department and local planning boards have passed rules and regulations that have added thousands of dollars in pre-ground breaking costs to the cost of constructing a home. We have, allegedly, added these costs onto the residents' backs to protect them from hurting themselves and to save the environment. A law passed in the eighties that mandated all landfills be closed on Long Island this year, to protect the environment. This law will double the cost of town taxes in the nineties. We have done a lot for the environment in the eighties.

Isn't it about time we did something for the people? Something as simple as containing the cost of government and reducing taxes? Suffolk County government is one of the most expensive county governments in the nation. We spend 154 percent more here than the average costs of other county governments throughout the nation.

Halpin entered office by pledging to roll back taxes. At the end of his first year he increased taxes up to 169 percent on the East End, and up to 50 percent on the West End. His pledge to hold the line on taxes during the next two years is not enough. The citizens of Suffolk County want their taxes rolled back to meet the nation's average, or at least to the same level they were paying when Halpin took office.

Halpin's pronouncement made headlines, but it did not make sense. Typical of so much out of Halpin's mouth is smoke and mirrors. Halpin has just increased the cost of labor to run the county by 25 percent. The cost of labor is approximately 85 percent of the county budget. If 85 percent of your costs are going to increase 25 percent over the next three years, how can you hold the line on taxes? Does Halpin have a big building boom up his sleeve? Are the taxpayers going to be encouraged to put a mortgage on their spouses and children like they did on their homes with equity loans to provide incremental income to finance a spending spree that will result in increases in sales taxes?

Is Halpin going to lay off 50 percent of the county work force and motivate the remaining workers to work

twice as hard? We do not see how Halpin can hold the line on taxes without some sort of miracle. He will be unable to keep his promise unless he is willing to do the unpopular, cut government down to size. He has no room in his budget and we do not have any room in our own budgets to finance more environmental measures.

Residents all over the island are trying to bail out because they can no longer afford to live here due to taxes.

Many of our residents have already eliminated the luxuries, have cut down on the necessities. They just don't have any more to give. If Halpin cares at all about humanity, about his fellow man, he will start acting like a reasonable county executive instead of a slick politician.

Please Pat, give it to us straight, honest. Give us the facts. How are you going to hold the line? What costs are you going to eliminate? What positions will be cut? How are you going

to finance environmental programs, afford increased salaries? Will you simply substitute new user fees as a side door to increased revenues? Will you cut people sensitive programs or eliminate political welfare patronage positions? The day and the age of political rhetoric, smoke and mirrors has passed. You made promises before and you didn't keep them. We don't need any more promises, we need facts.

And why not?

School Coalition Forming

We are happy to note the recent announcement that a coalition between school officials, PTA's and educational unions is being formed.

School problems on Long Island have become a crisis. The cost of education is way beyond the norm for the rest of the country, and substantially higher than states surrounding New York.

The quality of education students are receiving, when measured against performances by countries we must compete against, is positively appalling. We hope that the coalition is willing to address both problems, and will seek out more affordable educational alternatives that are guaranteed to produce better educated students.

We are in a world economy. The children we are raising today will not compete against Sam and Sally who live in the same town, the same state or in the United States. These children, when they become adults, will compete against adults of the world who have been educated far better, who have the abilities to

analyze and calculate far better than most of our own.

Currently, the United States spends more on education than any of the other industrial nations in the world. Here in Suffolk County in recent times, we spent 137 percent more than the average of districts throughout the country spent to educate students. The cost of educating our students eats up better than 60 percent of all real estate taxes paid, plus approximately one-third of the funds raised by the state government.

A recent report released indicated that to provide an adequate education, expenditures of \$4,400 in 1985 dollars was needed. To provide an education covering the norm, plus all the enlightenment necessities to bring the education to full steam, amounted to \$6,680. Last year, the average district spent just over \$10,000 to educate a student, 50 percent more than might have been necessary.

We did this because we want the best for our children. Even though

the report indicated that we might be wasting a lot of money. We hope the new coalition that has been formed will make the primary goal of their organization the improvement of the quality of education for our students, rather than allow themselves to become nothing more than a lobbying effort to enrich those who are involved in the educational establishment.

We have thrown enough money at education, and the expenditures have not proven to be totally productive. Those on the inside know the reasons why better than we, on the outside, do. They are in a position to make every one of our tax dollars work productively. We are looking to the coalition for the ways and means to better educate our children at a more reasonable cost.

Come up with the answers and the coalition will have the support of parents, taxpayers and the community as a whole.

And why not?

Congratulations, L.I.

Years ago I felt extreme pride in my fellow Long Islanders. A young boy had been trapped in a Manorville well. Volunteers spent almost two days trying to get him out. They were successful. Many of the volunteers belonged to the Riverhead Rescue Squad, an organization I had belonged to before going to college. I was at college when this tragic accident occurred. Hearing of the dedicated and heroic actions of my fellow volunteers made me personally feel very proud and happy.

Last night as I watched the rescue efforts at the tragic Cove's Neck airplane crash site over a satellite feed, I felt the same emotion. Over the feeds I was able to see a lot of the background that is not normally presented on commercial television. Shots of the community hospitals, particularly Huntington, showed they were fully manned and staffed with both medical professionals and volunteers. The ambulances racing in and racing out. The volunteer fire fighters and EMT's working diligently on the injured and the dead from the twisted wreckage. These were

scenes of efforts far beyond what any of us can imagine.

This was not an exercise they had spent hundreds of thousands of hours in preparation for. This was the real thing. You could see on their faces the grim realities. Although trained, the horror of multiple victims, the death and the suffering, was something they were not prepared for. Even though their emotions showed, they worked as pros, making every second count.

Many negative things have been said about Long Island. Here is something positive to shout about. Volunteerism on Long Island is very much alive, and of the highest caliber. We all should be proud of our fellow citizens who gave tirelessly for their fellow man. They are the spirit of Long Island; we congratulate them and thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

And why not?