

When word was a bond

Wall Street recently reacted to the turbulent financial affairs of Suffolk County; they downgraded our bond rating to "speculative." This is about as low as you can go before you are bankrupt. Currently, secure municipal obligations are being floated at record lows of 3.5 to 5 percent. These are tax-free bonds on which investors accept lower rates and the revenues earned are a percentage of taxes.

Because the bond raters feel that Suffolk County's finances are in such poor shape, their speculative rating means that if Suffolk County tries to borrow any money, it will have to pay a tax-free interest rate of 9 to 10 percent.

The cause of Suffolk County's financial dilemma can be summed up in one word, politics. This is not necessarily a bad word, but bad politicians in Suffolk County have done their best to make it so. At one time, politics was considered honorable. For the most part, people who took part in politics were community leaders, people who cared about the well-being of others. They volunteered their time, they served short terms, making the contributions that they could, and when they no longer could productively contribute, they had the good

sense to resign and let new faces and ideas enter the system. The reverse is true today. People who can't get good jobs in the private sector go into politics. Once elected to office, it becomes a career. Their time and energy is spent getting re-elected, rather than serving and governing the people. Decisions are based on getting re-elected. Their last consideration is what is good for the public.

Those men and women in the past had one thing in common—they were ladies and gentlemen, they were respected, they were trusted and their word was their bond. They came from different philosophies, Conservatives, Liberals, Republicans and Democrats. They argued their viewpoints, they stood fast where they had to and they compromised where they could. Once they had committed themselves by giving their word, they stood fast to that commitment. If they did change their minds, they had the common courtesy of letting those who might be affected know ahead of time. They were honorable people in an honorable profession.

Government worked smoothly from the day they took office. For the month or two prior to an election, they played politics as they jockeyed

for advantages. This was considered the silly season by those of us in the media who covered their activities.

About the same time, the sexual revolution took hold, and political values went out the window with moral values. "Meism" took the place of public service. What's in it for me? What's good for me? The heck with others who will be affected. The devil with the future. Ideologies were shattered; it became hard to tell a Republican from a Democrat, a Conservative from a Liberal. They all fed at the public trough and spent the public's tax money in a year-round campaign for re-election.

The problems Suffolk County has experienced is the result of "Meism" at its ugly worst. When Patrick Halpin was elected, he was totally inexperienced as a manager. He surrounded himself with people who were inexperienced in management or government. They had been brought up in the Democratically-controlled New York State Assembly where raw politics is the way of survival. Many of Halpin's aides had not been residents of Suffolk County, they were out of the New York City liberal jungle. They did not understand the geography of Suffolk County, the govern-

ment of Suffolk County, or the politics. They had never really heard the words 'compromise' or 'government without politics.' They bullied and threatened and quickly proved themselves untrustworthy, not only to the loyal opposition but to members of their own party.

The Suffolk County Legislature, during the first two years of the Halpin regime, was evenly split, 9 to 9. Even with having a non-partisan controlled legislature, Halpin misused this by causing distrust, by going back on his word. The legislature was in chaos as both sides jockeyed 12 months of the year for position. The legislature became Republican in 1990 by a slim majority. The bad blood and distrust between the legislature and the county executive heightened as each side tried to lay traps and blame on the other. Spending got out of hand. There isn't either a short-term or a long-term financial plan.

Neither the legislature nor the county executive could come to grips with the crisis that was building. It was bad politics for politics' sake. Halpin is the chief budget officer of Suffolk County. How much we spend and on what, was, in reality, his decision. Although the legislature approved the budget, Halpin did not have to spend the money that was allocated. During the Halpin administration, both county workers and his executive staff of bureaucrats received outlandish increases, substantially above inflation. Halpin played games with staffing levels by using smoke and mirrors. He would have you believe he was cutting staff while, at the same time, he was increasing staff. The difference was he would knock out civil service positions and appoint political hacks at much larger salaries.

Halpin has awarded huge contracts to favored law firms and consulting companies. As an example, he has spent over a half-million dollars on outside counsel to fight for the acquisition of Robins Island. The firm that owned the island has gone bankrupt, which nullifies the county's contract and Halpin has persisted in wasting your tax dollars to chase this futile endeavor.

There have been a number of other outside legal expenses that have been questionable, costs a more prudent manager would never have authorized. Halpin has failed to grasp the impact of the worsening financial condition and, as a result, we are now on the verge of bankruptcy. We believe there are a number of communities in a similar financial condition whose bond rating has not been reduced. We believe the bond companies recognize that Suffolk politicians, the county executive and the legislature, cannot be trusted, their word is not their bond. The result of this action is chaos for the people of Suffolk County.

We brought this upon ourselves, we elected a political county executive who was pretty but was not able to surround himself with a competent staff of governmental professionals. We have continued to keep the county legislature, which most agree is the funny farm of politics. We can change it. Hopefully, we will, this November. And why not?

Point of view:

Shame, shame, shame!

By Lou Grasso

The operation of the Vanderbilt Museum and Planetarium in Centerport has been the target of controversy for many years. It was, for a time, the playground for political figures who have been accused of using the facility for their own personal benefit. Last year an action by the board of trustees which operates the county-owned facility resulted in layoffs, salary slashes, and concerns about the future of the planetarium. And now another controversy has arisen—this one, in our view, worse than all others before.

As noted in an article in last week's Suffolk Life, a Northport widow has been trying for ten months to get the death benefit to which her husband was entitled. But ever since Rolf Moller died last September 20, the response Shirley Moller got to calls to the museum has been "be patient."

How patient can you be when you are grieving the loss of your husband of 42 years? And how much patience can you be expected to have when you are trying to survive despite the loss of your husband's veterans' disability, his union pension from a former position, and the loss of a Social Security check each month?

Finally, when her patience began to grow understandably thin, Shirley Moller contacted the president of the CSEA union local at the museum, where her husband worked for four years as a maintenance worker. "I should have gone to the union much sooner, but the people at the museum kept stringing me along," she said one day recently.

Trustees of the museum were not made aware of the problem until two months ago. A committee was established to explore the matter. While the chairman of that committee, Trustee Steven Gittleman would not comment, we have learned the committee report favored giving Mrs. Moller the \$50,000 death benefit called for in the union contract. But the trustees, based on advice of counsel, we learned, voted to negotiate with Mrs. Moller in an attempt to reach a settlement.

There are many ramifications to this problem. The museum officials switched insurance companies. They did not pay the premium for several of the older employees, Rolf Moller among them. A claim is now being made that the union contract stipulating the \$50,000 death benefit, up from the previous \$32,000, was not officially signed, although a memorandum of agreement had been signed by both parties, according to a CSEA official.

Whatever the reason, the "have patience" stall is deplorable. If there was a valid reason why Mrs. Moller is not entitled to the full \$50,000 benefit, why wasn't she told immediately? Why didn't museum officials have the compassion to meet with the grieving widow, explain the details, and work to settle the matter? Why wasn't the board told immediately, so that they could be involved in the settlement of the problem? Is this matter a prime example of gross mismanagement? If so, by whom?

In a recent meeting with a union representative, Mrs. Moller said last week, the museum's attorney made an offer: \$32,000 paid out over a three-year period. Mrs. Moller considers this offer an insult, and so do we. She expects, and

should receive, the full amount due her, plus interest.

The members of the board of trustees now have a choice. Do they do the right thing? Or will it take a court case to settle the matter? The ball is now in the court of the trustees, who include: Anthony Dimino, Elizabeth Hanse, Steven Gittleman, Carl Luecke, Charles Mancini, Leo Ostebo, Robert Mills Smith, John Stevenson, chairman; William Talmage, and Angie Carpenter.

From a number of sources, we hear the board is split on many matters, with Gittleman, Mancini and Hanse in the minority. They have expressed shock and dismay at this matter. And they are right in doing so.

When the concerns over the future of the planetarium were aired, a committee of the Suffolk County Legislature, which appoints the trustees; held hearings. They urged changes and voiced their own concerns, but the trustees have, thus far, ignored their recommendations. If the trustees do not act swiftly to resolve the plight of Mrs. Moller, the legislature should get involved. Let's find out what this is all about, who did what and why, or who didn't and why not. How many others may suffer the same problem in the future?

It is a shame that this matter has to become the subject of public attention. It should have been resolved long ago, in a compassionate way. But since museum officials chose not to do so, we are left with no recourse. We will not sit by, we will not "have patience" while a 66-year-old widow, who grieves the loss of her husband of 42 years, is treated in such a manner. The shame that is now targeted at this matter would be rightfully aimed at us if we did.

Where has all the money gone?

"Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" was a popular Vietnam War era song. It had a haunting melody and after each stanza "Where have all the flowers gone?" was repeated. In reality, the song was asking not about flowers but our boys who had been lost in the war. The song can be sung today and instead of flowers, money can be substituted.

In just a few short years, we have gone from a land of plenty to a land of poverty.

Where has all the money gone?

This is particularly true with our governments. New York State last year operated on a budget of just over

\$48 billion. This year's budget will be \$52 billion, an 8 percent increase in spending, financed through new and increased taxes.

Where has all the money gone?

During 1991-'92, local municipalities will have state aid reduced by two-thirds. School districts on an average have had their share of state aid reduced by 40 percent. If the state has increased taxes, increased its revenues, but cut local aid--

Where has all the money gone?

Governor Cuomo will tell you that the state suffered cutbacks in federal aid. "Change New York," a new public interest group, documents that

Cuomo is wrong. Federal aid to New York has been increased by over 12 percent.

Where has all the money gone?

State workers have endured an additional week of lag payroll. Supposedly, agencies have been cut back and state employees laid off. If this is true--

Where has all the money gone?

Cuomo has proposed closing our beaches and other recreational facilities.

Where has all the money gone?

Long Island, which produces a disproportionate amount of taxes for the

state, will receive less this year from the state than it has in other years. In addition, we will be hit harder than other parts of the state because of the new petroleum taxes and the huge increases in income taxes on individuals who make over \$100,000 per year. Long Island has more people with combined incomes of over \$100,000 a year who will be subject to this tax than any other part of the state.

Where has all the money gone?

Mario Cuomo was governor last year, he is this year. We, the people, are entitled to some answers.

Where has all the money gone?

And why not?

No more smoke and mirrors

Cuts are the only thing left

With the unprecedented cutbacks in state aid to local municipalities and school districts, cuts in programs and staff are the only thing left. The average homeowner and taxpayer here in Suffolk County cannot stand any further increases.

The bottom is still out of the real estate market even though home prices have been reduced an average of 25 to 40 percent. Because of these reductions, many homes are good values, but interested buyers are forced to say "no" when they calculate the cost of taxes and utilities.

We understand a few foolish school districts which had originally projected receiving larger proportions of state aid when they calculated the expected tax rate for '91-'92 are now seriously thinking of increasing the tax rate to make up for the decreased state aid. This is morally wrong.

Budgets were passed, not on the amount to be spent, but on the amount projected to be taxed to finance the spending. As hard or as painful a procedure as it may be, school boards must cut expenditures to stay within the projected and promoted tax rates. To do less would be unethical.

Towns that are likewise thinking of conducting such shell games should think twice. If aid from the state is not there, you can't spend it. Real estate taxes must not be increased. They are far too high at present; they are beyond many people's ability to pay.

Most people, both in private and public sectors of the economy, have suffered cutbacks in hours, elimination of overtime, layoffs, furloughs and reductions in profits and other income. Regardless of the economic sphere, we have found people hurting. There just is not enough money to go

around.

Voters have said for years, "Cut back on government." Now we have no choice but to do so. Cutbacks should be made prudently, with forethought and reason, with politics being the last consideration.

Those programs mandated by the state which can be curtailed, should be. Suffolk politicians, whether they

are at the county, town or school level, have often gone far beyond what was mandated. All programs must be cut back to a bare bones minimum. With Suffolk County's bonds now considered junk, all municipalities will be affected. We can't borrow on tomorrow anymore.

Politicians must start practicing good government and stop relying on

smoke and mirrors. The truth may hurt, but it will prevail. The county is broke and so are the taxpayers. The fantasyland we have been living in has ended. Let's turn this "land of ooze" into a land of reality. The only way we can do this is by digging in our heels, doing what is right, and being honest about it.

And why not?

Citizens abused again

The year was 1959. I had a small office in Patchogue. A new resident to Brookhaven told me a story I found hard to believe: A knock came upon his door. Upon answering it, the visitor stated he was a Republican committeeman for the district. He was inviting the new resident to become enrolled to vote. He handed the individual an enrollment card and asked him to fill it out, then said, "I am also an assessor from Brookhaven. While you are filling out the card, I will look around your house." The man was incensed, as he should have been. He felt he was being blackmailed and his assessment would be determined by his registration. These were the days of hardball politics in Brookhaven. Leaders have come, leaders have gone. There has been some reform and we thought the practices of old had died a timely death.

Friday morning we learned that the New York State Division of Equalization and Assessment has overruled a new gimmick in the town assessor's office. When residents indicated that they wanted to grieve their tax assessment and asked for the re-

quired forms, they were given an affidavit to fill out, which had to be notarized, listing any contributions they may have made to candidates or political parties during the past year. The New York State Board of Equalization and Assessment ruled this practice is illegal. It darn well should have, for we can see no other reason for it than for the assessors to look at the form to determine who had given to Republicans and who had given to the Democrats. This should never be considered in setting a tax assessment on a property.

Brookhaven Town Assessor Art Malaussena, smarting from this ruling, perpetuated another abuse on grieving Brookhaven taxpayers. Traditionally, in a grievance procedure, a protestor researches the comparable taxes being paid by other like properties and uses these comparables to make the argument that his/her property is over-assessed. The main tools for this procedure are the real estate comparable books, which list all lands and the taxes assessed on properties recently sold. Traditionally these books have been opened to everyone, but on Friday morning, Malaussena removed

the books, and petitioners were told the books were not available to the public. The computers which list the same information were closed to the public. They were told that they wouldn't know what they were looking for anyway.

In past years, standard forms have been provided by the assessor's office to aid in grievances. They also were removed. Personnel in the assessor's office last year helped citizens to fill out these forms. This year, petitioners reported they could get no aid and the personnel was surly with them.

The Brookhaven assessors are appointed by the supervisor. They serve at the will and the pleasure of the supervisor. Henrietta Acampora, the supervisor of Brookhaven, who recently has been absent more than present, may be giving her constituents one good, last hurrah. It is a disgrace and an insult to the public which has supported her all these years.

Councilman John Powell called this office just prior to deadline and stated he had just learned of the situation and promised to have it reversed and corrected immediately. We'll see.

And why not?

The smoking gun

There is a tremendous amount of hysteria about guns. Most of this hysteria is based upon a lack of knowledge and is perpetuated by people who know little about guns and other weapons.

This hysteria has been brought to the forefront by three particular instances. First, the proliferation of assault weapons that were made popular during and since the Vietnam War era; second, the shooting of President Ronald Reagan and his press secretary, James Brady, and third, the shooting of innocent civilians, many of them children, in the streets of New York.

Assault weapons, Uzi and K47's and the like are arms of war. They are automatic in nature, they hold a high volume of firepower. They are not the typical type gun a sportsman or a person who has a pistol permit for legitimate reasons either desires to own or seeks to buy. They are predominantly the element of the underworld, the drug pushers who use them as a defensive and offensive weapon against the police and rival gangs. That is not to say, how-

ever, that there aren't law-abiding people who own these weapons. Most are Vietnam War vets who were taught how to use them. They are basically gun buffs and they utilize these guns on ranges or they are part of their gun collections, which is as much of a legitimate hobby as stamp collecting or collecting Hummels.

The shooting of the President and Press Secretary Brady renewed the call for national regulation of handguns. Under the provisions of the Brady Bill, anyone who wished to purchase a handgun would have to wait seven days while authorities check on the credentials of the applicant.

On the surface this is not a bad idea, but below the surface it does have frightening realities. The federal government would end up with a list of every person who has ever applied for a gun permit, and if the government decides that the citizens no longer have the right to bear arms, as happened in Germany, the government would know where to look.

We believe that our forefathers,

when they developed the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which specifically gave citizens the right to bear arms, foresaw this possibility and issued the constitutional amendment giving us the protection.

We do not think it is unreasonable that the government should have seven days to check on an individual. We can go along with the provision, provided that the government then has a maximum of seven days to issue the permit. In Suffolk County it can take up to six months for the bureaucracy to issue a permit for legitimate purposes, after the application has been made, and that is wrong. If a citizen wants a gun, he can acquire one in a matter of hours. If he is acquiring a gun for unlawful purposes, he is not going to give a damn about violating another law. It would only be legitimate citizens who are impaired from legitimately purchasing firearms by the permit system. That is wrong and it does not solve any of the problems, nor will it lessen the number of the crimes committed with a gun.

Senator D'Amato offered amend-

ments to the U.S. Senate omnibus Crime Bill of 1991, passed in the senate, which revised the house approved Brady Bill. D'Amato's amendments, we think, made excellent sense, and were approved overwhelmingly. One would make it a federal offense, punishable by death, to use a gun in the commission of a crime, including murder, if the gun had crossed over state lines either legally, through transport from the manufacturer, or illegally. As a federal crime, the federal government could come in, if requested by the local prosecutor, to prosecute the crime. A second amendment sets mandatory sentences for drug traffic crimes committed with a hand gun.

The Crime Bill also sets a five-day waiting period, but stipulates the police must apply a sincere effort to check the gun buyer out through a computer system. The bill calls for a nationwide computer system for this purpose, and provides funding for the computers.

The criminal element, those who use guns illegally, do not fear our weak-kneed liberal laws. That is why the D'Amato proposals made good common sense.

The Crime Bill must now go back for consideration in the house.

The shooting and killing of innocent victims in New York, which have produced headlines, have mostly been the result of drug gang wars. New York City has the toughest gun law in the nation, the Sullivan Law. Yet, New York City is considered the wholesale center of unregistered and illegal guns. The cops either look the other way or have been made powerless by the magnitude of this illegal activity. Anybody, literally, can go onto the streets and buy anything from a simple Saturday night special to a fully automatic assault rifle. These guns come from both within the United States and from overseas. If there is a profit in crime, somebody will take the risk. The cops don't seem to be able to stem the tide.

More hysteria has been spewing forth from the likes of politicians such as Governor Cuomo and Assemblyman Bill Bianchi. Under New York State law a permit must be obtained to own a handgun or pistol. Long guns, single shot, bolt action, double, pump and semi-automatic rifles and shot guns, require no permit. These weapons are used for hunting and target practice. These are legitimate tools of the sportsman. To hunt you must be licensed. To obtain a hunting license, you must be instructed by a certified instructor and pass a test.

The two politicians named above are attempting to lump all long guns in with assault rifles. For someone who knows guns, there is a world of difference between a semi-automatic rifle and a shotgun that you must aim, squeeze a trigger to fire, re-aim, squeeze a trigger to fire, compared to a totally automatic weapon you can point, pull the trigger and a spate of bullets is discharged rapidly.

Once outside of the urban areas in New York, a great portion of the population is involved in hunting and shooting. There have been few crimes committed with guns of sport. There have been millions of crimes committed with illegal guns. Why punish and overly regulate legitimate citizens when the person you should be targeting is the criminal who will not pay attention to any law the politicians may write?

And why not?

Let a dying dog die

Shoreham is a dying dog. It was a dog of an idea from the day it was conceived, and has been a leech on the ratepayers ever since. The plant was closed by what the Wall Street Journal called "the sweetheart deal of the century." The deal was orchestrated by Governor Mario Cuomo and LILCO.

President Bush's Department of Energy initially squealed like a stuck pig, but when the NRC gave up its objections, the fight was considered over.

The Shoreham-Wading River School Board, frantic to protect the Golden Goose which provides its unrealistic tax base, appealed the decision and protested to the Justice Department.

When the war broke out in Kuwait, oil was predicted to be in short supply, and nothing was done to revitalize the Shoreham fight. The war is over, and the predictions were wrong. A shortage of oil did not materialize. There was no need for Shoreham. Recently, President Bush's Department of Justice joined the effort to stop the decommissioning of the plant.

Fortunately for LILCO ratepayers—because any delay in the decommissioning could add \$400,000 a day to your utility bills, the amount it costs LILCO, per day, to mothball the plant—the efforts to keep the plant alive have been rejected by the courts. Continuing to put the quest for dollars above the safety of the people, the Shoreham-Wading River School District has tried to persuade a U.S. Supreme Court Justice to intervene. He has refused. They vow they will keep trying, hoping to get another justice to agree to hearing the case.

Let's stop playing games with the safety of the public. General Electric, the reactor manufacturer, has already conceded, through a recent settlement of a suit brought by LILCO, that the Shoreham reactor was defective. In our

view, the settlement was offered to prevent a full and open disclosure of all defects through a trial.

Still, officials of the Shoreham-Wading River School District continue to keep their Golden Goose alive. They apparently have become so used to exorbitant spending habits that they can't face the facts. The operating license has now been revoked, and it should stay that way. When the state takes over the facility, according to the terms of Cuomo's agreement, a phase-out of the plant's taxes—which we all pay for the benefit of the school district—will begin. Just recently, the district put forth an elevated budget proposal designed to elevate the dollars they would get in the phase-out. That's dishonest, and thankfully, district residents rejected the plan.

Isn't it high time district officials stop playing games and get on with learning how to live with a future without Shoreham? Isn't it time they start looking at their past wasteful spending and come to grips with reality, as other school districts have had to do? Isn't it

time they stop adding to the burden ratepayers have to pay to satisfy their greedy urges?

If the Bush administration wants to keep Shoreham alive, it should become a participant in the proposal to replace the nuclear fuel with natural gas. That would be constructive. That would certainly be legitimate, since the federal government must shoulder the primary responsibility for the plant's high cost and its impact on the public. In the past, through regulatory decisions and back room deals, they kept the plant alive. Now is the time to allow it to die.

Lord, why do they do this to us? Are we not the highest ratepayers in the nation? How much more agony can we stand? The monies wasted on this plant, which continue to be wasted each day because of the stalling tactics of its proponents, will not feed one child, clothe one person. They won't even buy a plane or a tank. Yet, we will pay, pay and pay...until we have sense enough to say "no more!" Recent court decisions have said so. Now it's our turn!

And why not?

Color senators yellow

The majority of the current United States Senators are yellow-bellied cowards. In the fleeting moments of this session, when observers and the press had gone, without warning or debate, they increased their own salaries by \$23,200. In a 53 to 45 vote, they increased their salaries from \$101,900 to \$125,100.

If they felt they were worth this kind of money, why didn't they take their case to the public and encourage the voters to support the increase?

They knew that if word had gotten out that they were attempting this dastardly act, the public would have come down on them like a ton of bricks. So instead, when nobody was looking, they brought the motion up, passed it and ran.

Senator Moynihan from New York voted in favor of this pay raise. Senator D'Amato voted against.

President George Bush can still veto the measure. Write to him, encourage him to stop this charade. But don't hold your breath! The President should veto this bill, and tell the senators that if they want a pay raise they should be honest enough to put forth that proposal with integrity, in the light of day, not the darkness of night.

And why not?

Too many questions, peculiar odor

Just as is the case in other towns, the garbage scenario being planned for Riverhead residents is giving off a very peculiar odor.

The Riverhead Town Board called a special meeting for the evening of July 23 to discuss garbage districts and recycling. At this time of year, most citizens' interests are not centered in town hall. There was little advance publicity or notice about this meeting, yet this public hearing was probably one of the most important and critical for the town—not for today, but for the future.

The town is about to enter into contracts and agreements that will bind the town and its residents over the next several decades. Part of the special meeting dealt with the establishment of garbage districts. Garbage districts are monopolies granted by the town board to private carters. Contracts for pick-up of garbage within these districts are granted to a

single and sole operator. The process of acquiring the district is supposed to be competitive, but there are few who have the courage to bid against the organizations that control the carting companies.

The normal scenario, as has been carried out in other Suffolk towns, is for the bids to come in low the first year, and then, in subsequent years, the rates are increased, as there is no opposition to the bids. Because of Mario Cuomo's garbage plan, as perpetuated by the DEC, the towns are forced to turn garbage into a liability where it might become an asset in the future.

The DEC has ordered all landfills closed, allegedly because they were originally thought to be a threat to the water. This original theory has been disputed by the Suffolk County Health Department, which, after conducting hydrological and scientific studies, concluded landfills do not need to be closed to protect our pure water. Even

though this recent information has become available, and is more scientifically correct than the original information used for the closing law, Governor Mario Cuomo's DEC is persisting in the closure of these landfills. The question that jumps to everyone's mind is, "why?"

The alternatives to closing the landfills constitute very costly scenarios that require millions of dollars of public investment in incinerators, composters, resource recovery and recycling centers, as well as long-haul trucking off Long Island. People have already become rich, and some organizations which are already rich will become much richer because of this strange mandate from Mario Cuomo. Part of this enrichment process is the establishment of garbage districts and transfer stations.

To force compliance with all garbage going to the garbage czars, the town is about to enact legislation giv-

ing them absolute control over all garbage and solid waste within the town. The current law would even require residents to gather their grass clippings and other yard organic matter and have it hauled away by the town. Composting is discouraged and, in fact, outlawed by the bill which was the subject of the public hearing.

Suffolk Life, like many other progressive businesses, entered into contract arrangements for the reclamation and recycling of most of our waste stream. This made good economic and environmental sense. The proposed law, as written, would give the town ownership of our waste, which is our property until we make the decision to discard it as garbage, without due compensation. If we are trying to cut down on the waste stream, why enlarge the waste stream going through Riverhead?

In communities where they were constructing expensive incinerator plants, the owners of these plants demanded long-term contracts over the ownership of the garbage. We warned these communities before they set their contracts in place that garbage may well become an asset rather than a liability. Keep your contracts short-term, we suggested, so that you can take advantage of the fluctuations in the market. Some of the leaders of these communities argued that for the operators of these plants to get the financing needed to build the plants, they had to have long-term guarantees from the municipalities. And now, because they have agreed to a minimum tonnage to be delivered to these plants, some towns are scrambling to meet these minimums, facing financial penalties if they don't. Where towns once took steps to make sure outside garbage was not brought into their towns, they now pass laws and launch investigations to make sure garbage is not being taken from the town. Insanity reigns.

Riverhead does not have similar pressures. We are not part of a deal to build an incinerator. There is no reason to enter into long-term contracts, yet the original contracts were proposed for 20 years. The recent proposals that were put out for bid were for 10. What is motivating Riverhead Town Board officials to consider such an unrealistic commitment on the town's part? What if the bids come in calling for the town to pay \$60 per ton, plus trucking, to dispose of their garbage when five years down the line we find that people are willing to pay for our garbage and do the trucking themselves? This is a very real and possible scenario.

There are a number of other disturbing ramifications concerning garbage in the Town of Riverhead. The odor is ripe. As we cautioned Brookhaven Town residents when they were in the middle of the ash-for-trash deal, watch your ash.

Start attending your town board meetings, read the law and see how it pertains to you. Understand that no matter what the scenario, you will pay for it. Your vigilance now may well mean a smaller bill in the future.

And why not?

Patient's Right to know

Almost a year ago, we cried out in anger in this editorial column when the New York State Health Commissioner ruled that surgeons, doctors and other health care professionals did not have to reveal to their patients that they have AIDS. The commissioner ruled this would be a violation of their rights and, in effect, said patients had no right to this knowledge.

We now know that a dentist in Coram knew he had AIDS, but continued practicing, and has died. We can imagine the horror, the fear and the trepidation of his patients. 'Have I been infected, am I going to die?'

AIDS is a horrible disease. We have little sympathy with those who, through their own choices and actions, deliberately put themselves at risk. But we have great concern and compassion for those who contract this disease through birth, accidental exposure or medical procedures.

We sympathize with the medical profession and understand how they feel about their right to privacy, but we believe it is paramount that the patients be made aware of the practitioner's condition. Is the right to privacy more important than the right to live?

The Senate is considering a bill that would mandate all health care

professionals to be tested for AIDS and, if they test HIV positive, would have to inform their patients of this condition before performing any invasive medical procedures. Failure to tell their patients of the condition could result in jail sentences.

Patients have a right to protection. Doctors and health care professionals have a responsibility to ensure the maximum safety of their patients. Those unscrupulous care providers who know they are infected, but continue to perform invasive procedures or do not adhere to strict, sterile procedures, must be stopped.

And why not?

A badge of shame

The Long Island Lighting Company has reached a new status level, but hardly one which is a reason for pride. LILCO, a recent study reveals, ranks as the utility with the highest industrial kilowatt-hour rate in the nation, and second in the world. That ranking should be considered a badge of shame!

The impact of this LILCO rate has already cost the LILCO service area a host of jobs as businesses bail out for areas where energy rates and taxes are lower. That trend is continuing.

According to LILCO, the causes for the high rates include the high level of taxes imposed here on Long Island, the need to import foreign oil, and strict environmental regulations which cause the company to burn the more expensive low-sulphur oil.

While there is certainly truth to this claim, it's only half the story. Additional factors include outlandish salary increases to top officials, greedy "Golden Parachute" retirement plans for the top officers, and the company's wasteful spending on a nuclear power plant that would have endangered the public had it gone on line.

While taxes are indeed high, over the years LILCO has successfully fought for and received tax relief. Since LILCO constantly claims it is only a "pass through" for taxes, which make up a large portion of the bill, one would think this relief would result in reduced costs for the ratepayers. We haven't seen it.

LILCO recently was successful in litigation against General Electric, the company which built the Shoreham reactor which LILCO claimed was faulty. This also provided an influx of funds, which should go to the ratepayers, who have paid for the plant. But the stockholders will also get a chunk of these dollars, thanks to the 'whatever LILCO wants, LILCO gets' attitude of the state's Public Service Commission.

Despite the staggering rate structure that threatens to bankrupt this region, LILCO continues to pour money into questionable projects. One came to light recently in Riverhead, where the company is completing construction of a walk trail around its Doctor's Path facility. From good sources we hear the cost of that trail was first esti-

mated at \$100,000, but will exceed that original estimate. A company spokesperson would not reveal the cost.

The trail, the spokesperson said, is part of the company's "Wellness Program" for its employees, a program which encourages good nutritional and exercise efforts. And Riverhead is not the only site for such a trail. At least two others have been built, and according to our source, others are planned.

Now, we have no problem with a program that benefits the employees. They are the heart and soul of the company, and they have not been beneficiaries of LILCO's give-away programs of the past which have enriched the top brass, not the people who do the job. But this is a company which has delayed improvement of a deteriorated natural gas line on the East End and in other portions of its service area. The money would be better spent in improving the gas lines.

Such costs should come out of the pockets of the stockholders, not the ratepayers who are already drowning from the flood of rate increases.

And why not?