

Giving credit where it's due

The Suffolk Republican Party's dream of sweeping back into the county executive's office based on the "High Tax Halpin" tag they have applied to the current incumbent may be headed toward nightmare status. The steps taken by County Executive Patrick Halpin in an attempt to meet the current fiscal deficit crisis appears to be earning him strong support from the public, and even among some poli-

ticians from the other side of the aisle.

Halpin's imposition of a four-day work week, involving a Friday furlough for the majority of the county's work staff, has made him a target of anger by the employees and the unions they represent. Last week, at opening ceremonies for Cupsogue Beach, which had been closed because of storm destruction of Dune Road, an angry swarm of county employees

surrounded Halpin's car, thumped on it with their fists, pasted anti-Halpin signs on it, and broke the antenna. While their anger might well be understandable, their actions should not be condoned.

Halpin can be faulted for participating in a needless beach opening ceremony during a time of fiscal crisis, an event that smacks more of politics and publicity opportunity than it does of good government. But Halpin should not be faulted for making the hard decision, one that was destined to earn him union anger and retaliation, of cutting the work week to realize a savings. County spending has to be cut. One way to do it is to cut work hours. The other way is to lay off employees. If the reduction of hours doesn't save enough dollars, the layoffs must come. We think it's better for the majority of employees to hurt a little than having some hurt a lot through loss of jobs.

Halpin has also earned the wrath of the employee unions by seeking concessions, some givebacks, to ease the county's fiscal crunch. The unions have taken a firm stand, no givebacks. Instead, they insist the county's sales tax should be increased to gain additional revenue to deal with the deficit. In other words, "We're not going to give; the public should give more."

To his credit, Halpin has said, "No." But there is a growing move on the part of some county legislators to push a sales tax increase through. These are the same legislators who buckle and cave in when unions apply pressure. The unions need only stack the meeting room when it's time to vote on a union contract which offers salary and benefit increases and the legislators--not all, mind you, but most--succumb to the pressure. The Republican legislators would, we're convinced, have pushed through a sales tax increase already, but they

want Halpin to go along with it so the blame is shared equally. Halpin, on the other hand, says, not until other options are tried. He's right. He deserves credit for taking a firm stand with the unions, and opposing a sales tax increase. If the majority of the legislators would join Halpin in demanding union concessions, the effort would have a better chance of success. But as long as legislators stand apart from this effort, enjoying the union blasts being aimed at the Democratic incumbent, little will be achieved. The legislators may receive union plaudits, but they will soon become the target of wrath from the public.

The public is not being fooled by the accusations being hurled back and forth. While those whose spending actions which have brought us to this crisis may well feel the sting of voter reaction in November, what the public really wants is to see some action to resolve the problem.

From the comments we have been hearing, Halpin is getting good marks for taking some hard steps to ease the crisis. Members of the public are offering expressions of support, encouraging him to "hang in there" against the actions of the employees and the unions. Public officials from other levels of government, including those of the opposite political persuasion, have joined in voicing encouragement and support for his actions, and rightfully so.

If the Republicans hope to offset this new measure of support being aimed toward Halpin, they had better get their act together. It's time to end the politics, time to end the finger pointing, time to start talking about spending cuts instead of higher taxes, sales or otherwise, and high time to join as public officials in a cooperative effort to bring fiscal sanity to the county.

And why not?

Cut The Pork

Governor Cuomo has threatened to use his line item veto power to cut the budget proposed by the legislature to bring it in line with revenue projections. We hope his promise is more than political rhetoric, and the cuts are made fairly and evenly without politics rearing its ugly head, as it so often does.

The first place the Governor should look is to eliminate 100% of the member items contained in the budget. These are the goodies Assemblymen and Senators sneak into the budget so they can say to the folks back home, "Look what I got for you." The items normally are luxuries, not necessities, not needed for the survival of the community. Pure luxuries, pure fat. During normal times they are a misuse of taxpayers dollars. During times of fiscal crisis, when cuts are being made to schools, communities, and important programs, they are an insult.

The Republican Senators bring home the bacon to their districts, the Democratic Assembly brings home the bacon to their districts. At this late

date it would be impossible to evaluate what is good, bad or indifferent. The Governor should take a hatchet to 100 % of the member items this year. Cut 100 % of the Assembly items and 100 % of the Senatorial member items. If any programs that are cut have merit and can stand the scrutiny of the entire membership of the Assembly and the Senate, let them be voted upon for their individual merits rather than packaged as part of Santa's bag of goodies. At the same time, the Governor should look to the budget for those special interest items he has placed into this document, and slash them too.

What we expect will happen is that the Governor will play politics with the document. He will eliminate the Republican goodies, keep those for the Democrats. The Governor is known for playing raw politics, but hopefully this year he will resist the temptation and rise above the politics that has helped bring New York State to its financial knees.

And why not?

For county employees

Show compassion, reduce burden

Joan Scariati, past-president of Suffolk County Tax PAC and now a candidate for a legislative seat, recently approached the Suffolk County Legislature with details of a state program known as Shared Work, A Layoff Alternative.

Scariati, known for her research and finding solutions to problems, came across the shared work plan while exploring ways to resolve the current county fiscal crisis. What she learned was this: In 1986 a pilot program was initiated, and made permanent in 1989, that provides unemployment benefits for workers whose hours and wages are reduced to cope with a temporary decline in busi-

ness or fiscal constraints. Employees who suffer a reduction in hours, and in wages, of no less than 20 percent and no more than 60 percent, are entitled to receive partial unemployment benefits to supplement their lost wages. The program was initiated to help avoid total layoffs, to allow management to cut labor costs evenly without penalizing single individuals.

Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin has furloughed county workers for one day per week. These county workers are losing up to 20 percent of their weekly income. This action was necessary to cut the cost of government because of a growing budget deficit. But the furloughs have put a

severe strain and burden upon the county workers. This burden might well be mitigated if the county were to become involved in the Shared Work Program.

We are dismayed to find that the county has not made efforts to determine if and how this program would help accomplish the savings needed while easing the financial impact on its workers. Why didn't the county executive's office know about this program? Why didn't county employee unions recommend this program to help protect its members? Why didn't anyone in the county legislature look for an alternative? Why was it necessary for this information to come from a private citizen rather than county officials?

The State Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance Division in Albany, which has sent out mailings on the program, should be contacted immediately and the program investigated. While we don't suggest the county jump into the program until they learn all the details, the future impact on the county's experience rating and how that could affect future unemployment insurance costs, an effort should be made to learn the facts. If the county can ease the hardship being felt by employees while, at the same time, helping avoid tax increases through cost cutting measures, it should certainly do so.

And why not?

LILCO is gouging us again

Won't it ever end? We paid for Shoreham during its construction through Construction Work In Progress (CWIP) funds and increased rates. We paid a second and third time for Shoreham through the governor's deal, which gives LILCO back every penny it laid out for Shoreham, the expected profits it would have made if the plant operated.

LILCO sued General Electric, the vendor who supplied the nuclear reactor for the plant. They made all the allegations we have made about this plant, about this reactor. LILCO claimed that the reactor was improperly designed, had numerous faults, was a threat to safety.

General Electric and LILCO were scheduled to go to trial this past week. Literally on the courthouse steps, they settled the suit. Although the terms of the settlement have not been released, it is expected that General Electric settled by agreeing to pay LILCO hundreds of millions of dollars. The terms of the settlement included agreement by both parties to keep the settlement amount confidential.

We were dumbfounded to read that the ratepayers who put up the cash for the Shoreham debacle will not necessarily be the beneficiaries of this suit. The stockholders may well garner the lion's share of this settlement.

It is up to Governor Cuomo's Public Service Commission to determine who gets what. For the life of us, if you apply fairness and common sense, the stockholders should not get a penny. It was the stockholders, through the approval of the board of directors, who brought us into the Shoreham debacle and kept us in it. They did it out of greed, and they have made out like bandits.

The ratepayers never had an opportunity to vote "yes" or "no" on this ill-fated venture. The only thing they had the opportunity of doing was pay the highest electrical rates in the nation because of the mismanagement

involved with Shoreham. Rates foisted upon them by Governor Cuomo and his Public Service Commission. Any recoveries made by LILCO concerning Shoreham should go back to the ratepayers who have paid, and will continue to pay for years, for this plant and all the normal profits that would have been earned by it over its lifetime.

LILCO, the corporation, and its stockholders, should not be entitled to triple dip. The Public Service Commission cannot, in good conscience, allow this rip-off to happen again. The governor can do something about it, but we doubt he will. He has shown himself to be part and parcel of the LILCO crowd, a buddy of Wall Street, so much so that the Wall Street Journal called his deal "the sweetheart deal of the century."

We encourage every ratepayer to write to the governor and tell him to stop ripping us off. Write to the Public Service Commission and vent your disappointment and anger. Both are located in Albany. If ratepayers say nothing, the stockholders will, indeed, profit greatly from the G.E. settlement. If you voice enough anger, you can let the governor know we've had enough of his coziness with the utility, and that it's time the ratepayers are given first priority.

And why not?

Where are their brains?

Do you realize we are in a financial crisis in this county? Do you realize we are \$60 to \$100 million in debt because revenues are not meeting expenditures? Do you realize we have put the county workforce on a four-day work week to try and meet our economic shortfalls? Do you realize the financial houses are threatening to lower our bond rating, which will, in effect, increase our cost of interest and even possibly make some of our debt out of ratio and able to be called?

Do you realize that the Board of Directors of Suffolk County, the Suffolk County Legislature, facing these inevitable facts, agreed to borrow \$50 million more to buy additional open space? Do you realize that borrowing will cost the taxpayers of this county another \$21.7 million in interest over the next eight years?

And they did not stop there. They then authorized the borrowing of another \$3 million to purchase additional land under the open space program. Some of the acreage included in this acquisition plan lies underwater. How those underwater lands are threatened by "immediate development," the usual excuse given for purchasing a favored tract, is beyond us. Could it be that someone is plan-

ning to build a submarine base? By the way, the \$3 million borrowing will cost another \$3 million in interest over 20 years.

A horde of environmentalists showed up at the Suffolk County Legislature's meeting, hooted, hollered, waved placards and killed whatever common sense or courage the legislators had. Typically, the legislators caved in to a pressure group and put us even further in debt.

Do you realize that 17 out of the 18 legislators have proven time and again they have no common sense, no understanding of finances? At the first sign of pressure, they buckled and continued the senseless spending which has brought us to our current fiscal crisis. The 18th legislator did not vote in opposition, he simply abstained. He didn't agree with the borrowing, but, apparently, did not want to offend the environmentalists on hand by casting a negative vote.

The county legislature, for more than six months, has been trying to figure out where it was going to find money to pay for the necessities of government. They failed miserably in this task. They are complicating the problem by adding even more burden

on your shoulders. At a time we can least afford it.

We believe the Suffolk County Legislature should be moved from Riverhead and Hauppauge to the former Central Islip mental facility where the legislators can be placed in padded cells. At least, there, they can do no one any harm, and they can be saved from themselves. More importantly, we can be spared their insane actions.

And why not?

Wonderful example

Rarely am I moved or touched by anything I see on television.

Last Wednesday night I watched the basketball play-offs. In a hard fought duel, the Chicago Bulls won the national basketball championship. The cameras quickly moved from the court to the locker room where the expected pandemonium was underway. Champagne corks were popped, bubbly was being sprayed over everyone. All of a sudden, a player fell to

the floor. Instantaneously, most of the team members joined this player and the audio picked up this group of athletes in the recital of The Lord's Prayer.

When the first player went down, I felt he had been stricken. As the others joined him and the familiar words were heard, I felt a warm feeling of relief and pride. Here were the best basketball athletes in America acknowledging God and giving thanks in the universal prayer that says so much so simply.

What a beautiful, warm and wonderful example for the millions of young people who were glued to their television sets that night, who hold these men in reverence. Yes, even the biggest and the best can show from where they came and pay respect and thanks to Him.

The Bulls proved they are more than superior athletes, they are a fine example of respectful, responsible role models. What a great change from the image of drugs, booze and abuse that has been associated with too many hero athletes. We salute the Champion Chicago Bulls. They make us proud.

And why not?

void will be filled by those less able to take care of themselves. They will come to the Cadillac welfare system of the nation and enjoy the life that the taxpayers could no longer afford.

We fail to see how the governor, our state senate or our assembly can feel very proud of the job they have done. In fact, they should feel a sense of shame for their failure to do the job they were elected to do.

And why not?

Budget woes: State disgrace

It took Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature the longest time in history to come up with the budget. The budget overall is a disaster from a taxpayer's standpoint.

New York State residents, who already are the highest taxed residents in the nation, will have to pay more. A billion-and-a-half dollars more on top of the \$50 billion they are already paying. This comes out to \$83.33 additional for every man, woman and child in the state.

What are we getting for it? If you are sitting there scratching your head, you are not alone. The state budget has more than doubled since Governor Cuomo came into office. The services received or utilized by the average resident have not changed significantly. What is changing is the continual loss of businesses which provide jobs, and people who work are fleeing the state for less oppressive tax areas. The exodus will continue. The

Scalpin' Halpin

Take your hand, place on top of head, if your hair is still there you probably have not come in contact with Patrick Halpin. Put your hand on your wallet, if you are a county worker at the staff level, your wallet is a lot thinner because you work for Scalpin' Halpin. If you own a home, or rent one, break out the rifles. Scalpin' Halpin is about to surround your homestead with a projected 60 percent increase in real estate taxes.

If you are at the top, where all his cronies gather, you probably still have your hair and one thing for sure, you have a fatter wallet. As the rank and file are losing one day's pay each week this summer, we learned that Halpin's top aides, the appointed bureaucrats, have received obscene salary increases ranging from 14 percent to 61 percent. One bureaucrat, Glenn Middleton, went from \$49,515 to \$80,210, a \$30,695 promotion during his tenure with the county executive.

While Middleton fared the best, others made out handsomely as well. Chief Deputy County Executive Tom McAteer went from \$84,838 in 1988

to his current salary of \$96,772, an increase of \$11,934. Deputy County Executive Larry Schwartz went from \$74,999 in 1988 to \$88,817 in 1991, an increase of \$13,818. Brad O'Hearn, Halpin's director of communications, started at \$70,304 in 1988, and is now making \$80,210, an increase of \$9,906. Four deputy county executives, James Couch, Steve Israel, Margaret Reese and Terry Pearsall, were also included in the list of salary hikes. Couch went from \$59,202 in 1988 to his current \$80,210, a \$21,008 hike, (35 percent). Margaret Reese went from \$49,024 in 1988 to \$62,010 currently, an increase of \$12,986. Israel went from \$50,535 to \$70,512, a salary increase since 1988 of \$19,977, a whopping 40 percent. Pearsall went from \$55,860 in 1988 to \$64,610 currently, a hike of \$8,750.

And Deputy County Executive Bob Kurter went from \$82,602 to \$95,966, a salary hike of \$13,364.

Halpin would have you believe that he has turned into a fiscal conservative. Typical of the liberal yuppies, he expects everyone to suffer except

those who are on his team. When Halpin came into office he was charged with hiring a lot of wet-nosed kids who had neither the experience nor the ability for the jobs they were appointed to. They were offered salaries which had been based upon years of experience and knowledge, not theirs, but of those who had formerly held the jobs. Some of his appointees had never earned \$25,000 per year, but were placed in jobs earning over \$50,000.

The result of this misjudgement and politically-motivated inane management decision is that Suffolk's finances are in chaos. The lack of knowledge and experience by Halpin and his staff resulted in his first budget increasing real estate taxes by 169 percent in some towns. Because of this, he was nicknamed "High Tax Halpin." Halpin had to know he had made a tragic mistake in selecting his staff, yet he did nothing to replace them with knowledgeable, qualified people. Instead, he chose to use your precious tax dollars to reward them with huge salary increases for their incompetence. Where are Halpin's

brains? Why does he feel Suffolk County is his personal piggy bank, that he can use your taxes as his own wealth, to be shared with his supporters and friends?

The raises that they have been given during Halpin's tenure are not only obscene, they are ridiculous. The raises have far outpaced inflation and come right out of the backsides of every taxpayer in this county.

Halpin is a disgrace as a county executive. He has proven he is worthless as a manager, he does not understand finances and his only loyalty is to those he depends upon for re-election.

Thank God the voters will have an opportunity this year to throw the bum out. For you to vote, you must be registered. If you are not registered, write to the Board of Elections today for an application and send it back immediately. The address for the Board of Elections is Yaphank Avenue, Yaphank NY 11980. Don't miss this opportunity to make your vote count.

And why not?

Hopefully, a new beginning

At first blush, the appointment last week of Raymond Cowan, a career Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) engineer, as regional DEC director to replace Harold Berger, who retired from the position, comes as good news. Cowan appears to have the qualifications of the job, experience and expertise, rather than the political connections that brought others to the post. Cowan could be the breath of fresh air that has long been needed in the DEC's operation.

Much will depend, however, on his method of operation. If Cowan establishes himself as the final word, and the one with the hand on the steering wheel of local DEC operations, he has a chance to turn the shattered image of that state regulatory body around. If he continues to permit staff members to call the shots, putting common sense aside for environmental hang-ups, the DEC will continue to be an agency running amuck, serving itself and special interest groups more than the environment or the people. Cowan must regain control of the position he now holds, he must wield the authority, based on one standard rather than a conglomeration of attitudes and agendas.

The DEC's record of insanity is mindboggling. Because the agency did "not have the manpower to inspect" the quality of bay waters, they stopped all clamming in East End waters, putting hundreds of baymen out of work. Even Governor Cuomo, who has been part and parcel of the DEC's antics in the past, saw the stupidity of that edict and overturned it.

In another instance, a roadway over a wetlands area was stalled until the DEC could decide what to do with the migratory habits of turtles. The decision was made to install a large conduit under the road so the turtles could travel through, from one side to the other. But then, because turtles "don't like the dark," the DEC ordered lights be put in the conduit.

Dredging projects have been a horror under the DEC. If one piping plover or other protected species is seen to land near a proposed dredging project, work is cancelled, stalled, or curtailed. Boaters can't use their boats because of shoaled waters. Projects are scaled back, with dredges required to do half a job and return at a later time, despite the fact this elevates the cost of the entire project. Meanwhile, the piping plover has taken off for parts unknown, but the fact it landed where it did is used as an excuse by environmentalists to oppose worthwhile projects that serve people.

The list goes on, but it is in the matter of solid waste disposal, and the DEC's interpretation of the state's landfill ban that the DEC has displayed an arrogance and total lack of common sense and concern for the taxpaying public. Decisions made by the DEC have continually benefited many who are alleged to have ties with organized crime. But the people are hit with escalating taxes to pay the bills of stupidity. In Brookhaven Town, for example, the DEC has been the prime pusher of putting ash, the product of incinerated garbage, into a double-lined landfill, despite the con-

trovery over toxicity of the ash. But garbage can't be put into that same landfill. No one knows why, except the DEC says so.

The DEC was the prime mover of incineration, forcing many towns into constructing incinerators. Now, because of minimum tonnage requirements for the incinerators, the towns are seeking outside garbage to meet these needs. The cost of the incinerators is driving taxes skyward to meet the escalating costs of waste disposal.

The DEC's hop, skip and jump plan of moving garbage from one town to another defies description. And the edict that, in some instances, garbage has to be "trucked off the Island" at exorbitant cost, benefits no one but the truckers. And the list of off-Island places that will accept our trash grows smaller each day, with the DEC offering no alternative when there are no more places to send the garbage. Islip Town got the blame for the garbage

barge fiasco, but, in reality, the DEC was at fault.

Cowan can change all this by applying a realistic point of view. He can sit down with town officials, assess their problems and help with, not order, realistic solutions. This would go a long way toward bringing fiscal sanity to the situation. The DEC has applied the threat of fines, consent orders, and just plain edicts in the past to force their desires. Compromise, or assistance has not been a part of the formula for cure. Cowan can, and hopefully will, change that.

We welcome Ray Cowan to his new position. He comes with a prime opportunity to bring meaningful change into the life of the local operation, and much needed relief to our problems and our people. Hopefully, he will have the stamina, backbone and desire to bring respect to an agency now despised.

And why not?

Attention motorists

**School is closed!
Please drive
very carefully**

