

Are they equal to the task?

"The day of paying the Pied Piper has come. Suffolk has lived in a fantasy world we no longer can afford. We are broke, and we might as well accept the fact. We have borrowed on tomorrow, there are no more tomorrows to look forward to."

Those words were included in an editorial last week focusing on the fiscal crisis in Suffolk County. The same message was delivered by Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney in detailing his decision to declare a fiscal emergency in Suffolk County, and outlining the necessary cost containment measures that would be necessary to deal with a county deficit now declared to be \$90 million.

Those measures go deep and will be painful. But some are necessary. They include laying off 1,341 county employees, including 300 police officers; severe funding cuts for outside agencies; the elimination of the Cooperative Extension and all cultural affairs funding; the closing of county parks after Labor Day with the exception of revenue-producing facilities. Gaffney also called for the elimination of the sales tax exemption

on home heating fuel, and new and increased fees for various county services, closing the county infirmary, and elimination of school crossing guards. That's for starters, for even with such cuts the savings this year will only be about \$15 million, \$75 million short of the \$90 million deficit figure which many feel will grow even higher.

Predictably, Gaffney's message drew loud screams of protest from a host of groups, agencies, unions and from many of those who carry a large share of the guilt for the deficit situation we are now in—the county legislators. "It goes without saying that the problem we are currently facing did not come about in the past five months, it came about as a result of the last four years..." Gaffney told the legislators. And he is absolutely correct!

If Gaffney had any political sense he would have taken the easy way out by telling the legislators, "you broke it, you fix it." Since he was not part of the inept county government that spent us into a tremendous deficit, he could have put the burden on the legislators who are largely responsible for the spending

frenzy that broke the county's financial back, and escaped the heat he is sure to get. He didn't. He took a tough stand, perhaps the only stand possible. And now, to hear some of those legislators take pot shots at Gaffney for trying to stem the flow of county dollars and put the county back on an even keel is disgusting.

Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburgh (R-Smithtown) earned a special award for political gall with his tirade against Gaffney. Blydenburgh moaned that Gaffney did nothing for the four-and-one-half months he has been in office, and complained his proposals were little more than rehashed versions of what had been expressed before. Blydenburgh is now into his role as presiding officer for the third year. He has surely been part of the past spending which brought us to this point. He was part of the one-shots in the past which brought an infusion of fast dollars to ease immediate pain, but added more to our debt load in increased interest that is bringing more problems today. He expected Gaffney to wipe out the sins of the past in four-and-one-half months, when he and the legislature he leads have done precious little to resolve the problem in past years? While Blydenburgh has, belatedly, presented a deficit-reduction proposal of his own which is being considered by the legislature, only time and very careful scrutiny will determine the merits of his proposal.

The county's employee unions have also raised their voices in pain and condemnation. But it is these very same unions that have played the largest part in the county's financial dilemma. Back in the early 1980s, the county's CSEA (Civil Service Employees Association), now known as AME (Association of Municipal Employees), successfully negotiated a mind-boggling contract with a hefty salary increase, double step jumps which boosted the salary increases, and a number of increased benefits which add to the cost of government.

Suffolk Life raised the warning flags back then and said that the contract would lead to the county going bankrupt. We said that by 1987 the accumulated impact of that contract over the years would bankrupt the county. It has. We said then the increases would require layoffs in the future. That is now necessary. Cutbacks will be required. The union now faces this reality: make concessions or lose jobs. How many jobs, or how deep a salary reduction, depends on how many concessions are made.

The PBA, which represents the po-

lice force, has also won contracts which have made their members the highest paid force around with a greatly reduced work schedule. The PBA also faces reality: the loss of jobs, or concessions.

Suffolk Life was lambasted by the CSEA when we voiced those concerns, a boycott was launched, other viciousness was hurled our way, just as it is going to be launched against Gaffney. But we were right then, and Gaffney is right now. All the screams, viciousness and opposition in the world is not going to change one basic fact: the county is broke, the days of riches are over. The greed and hunger of the past has come home to roost.

Some legislators are expressing their opposition to layoffs, and some of the cuts that have been proposed. Yes, they are going to be painful. No one really wants to see anyone lose a job, or have a salary cut, or important services eliminated. But those who say "no" have a responsibility to come up with alternatives. They must provide the same dollar savings produced by any option they reject. They are going to have to make hard choices. They can no longer bask in the glow of saying "yes" to every special interest group request. Anyone can spend money. It takes talent, skill and intelligence to manage the affairs of the county, or a business, to keep it solvent. Are the nay-sayers equal to the task? We shall see!

Fairness must be applied. Cuts must be made from top to bottom. Gaffney must make cuts in his own staff, in the top level positions, put an end to patronage hiring. And the legislators must also bite the bullet, feel the pain. They must combine offices if need be, eliminate staff, cut their budget, get rid of their cars, put an end to every needless expense. Any proposals that hit the rank and file, without cutting deep into the legislative and administrative empires, is without merit. There can be no sacred cows or favorite empires. The county must change the way it has been operating, privatize where possible, go out to bid for specialized services, find the most economical way to serve the people.

The surprising public support being given to Ross Perot, running an independent effort to become a presidential candidate, has proven one important thing: the public has had its fill of politicians and their shenanigans. And they are angry enough to act.

Gaffney has taken a tough stance, the legislators would be well advised to follow. Do what has to be done. Do what is right for the taxpayers.

And why not?

Without conscience

We recently received a call from a county employee criticizing a practice allowed by the Suffolk County Police that he considered to be a rip-off of the tax paying public.

According to his allegations, police who are about to retire, work extensive and unusual amounts of overtime during the last year on the job. He gave an example of one officer who will retire this year who has already accumulated over \$22,000 in overtime alone. He went on to state that a police officer's retirement benefit is based upon the salary earned in the last year of work, including overtime.

Police can retire after 20 years at 50 percent of their salary. For each year they stay on the force over 20 years, the percentage is increased. The retirement amounts are not based upon the average salary over the lifetime of employment, but are now only based on the last year's salary. Retiring officers can increase their pension by as much as 50 percent according to our source. This pension is then paid each year until the officer dies. If an officer retires in his early 40s, actuarial tables indicate he will live well into his early 70s.

This is a giveaway that must be brought under control. We understand it is not only the police that have negotiated this lucrative benefit, but it was brought to our attention that superintendents of schools have been known to receive large salary increases in their final year, very obviously to boost their retirement benefit. One superintendent was successful in giving up perks in exchange for having their value added to his salary, which then became about \$150,000. Quite obviously that action had a very beneficial impact on his future retirement benefit. Many of those who retire with

these huge benefits are still young enough to re-establish new careers or accept other forms of work.

It is this kind of nonsense that has gotten us into the fiscal crisis we are in. It must be stopped. No one wants to deny anyone a reasonable pension, but the kind of settlements that are brought about by padding the deck during the last year of employment is not fair to the taxpayer, nor is it affordable.

As we report elsewhere in today's issue, over 1,300 county employees face the prospect of being laid off. School districts are cutting programs and laying off staff. Should this be the case when there are those in the system who are abusing it?

There is something very pervasive and lacking of fairness in this whole system. We must clean it up now and put an end to these abuses.

And why not?

Returning to our roots

Eastern Long Island in many ways is still rural. It is still, for the most part, agriculture based. For generations this tie was celebrated with an annual country fair, a real fair that was based upon displaying the best of agricultural products grown in the region.

A longtime Riverhead resident, who has been connected with the agricultural business all of his life, recently proposed to the Riverhead Town Board that a real country fair be held in this community. Bud Papish owns a 90-acre track north of Route 58 in the heart of the farmland. He wishes to use this site

for a two-week fair in the fall. We think it is a great idea, one that the town should support as it would help extend our tourist season and attract thousands of visitors.

A really old-fashioned country fair could give us a good opportunity to display the varied produce and fruits grown in this region. Papish also proposed the return of horse racing to this area, a tradition of the country fair which was held in Riverhead right up to the outbreak of World War II. There would not only be displays of vegetables and fruits, but emphasis could be

placed on local seafoods, wines and other produce harvested or grown in this region.

If the fair is operated as Papish has proposed, it would be a glorious return to our roots rather than just another glorified flea market. Riverhead desperately needs a helping hand economically. Exhibitions of this type, done well, could recreate a positive image for a community that has suffered more than its share of adverse publicity over the years.

And why not?

They're playing games again!

The seriousness of the current fiscal crisis in Suffolk County, not just in county government but in the lives of those who must pay higher bills for education, garbage collection, energy, and taxes on all levels, has been amply reported. With these problems so prevalent, and with state mandates cited as a major source of our financial burden, it boggles our mind that anyone in state government would be trying to jam another mandate down the throats of local taxpayers. But, Suffolk Life learned last week, that's exactly what's being done.

The Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association issued a "Legislative Alert" giving notice of legislation filed by state Senator Caesar Trunzo of Brentwood which would mandate insurance benefits, health and others, for retirees and their dependents. The alert, sent to all board presidents and superintendents, stated: "This bill would have a significant economic impact to your annual budget. Please contact your senator immediately ex-

pressing your concern for another mandate from the state which would force you to either raise local property taxes or reduce programs to children and potentially impact the local and state economy by increasing the unemployment rolls."

This is not the first effort to have local taxpayers pick up the tab for the insurance costs of retired school district employees. Because other efforts have failed, NYSUT (New York State United Teachers), the large, influential, and dollar-contributing teachers' union, has made the passage of such legislation a top legislative priority this year.

What boggles our mind is that a local legislator would carry the water for this effort at a time when the constituents in his own school district are facing a tremendous school financing problem without this added cost. Brentwood voters went to the polls recently and soundly rejected a proposed budget and propositions which would have authorized transportation,

athletics and classroom supplies and equipment. The combined impact of those propositions, had they all passed, would have been an additional \$411 in taxes for the owner of a home with an average assessment of \$40,000. The increased tax burden for the budget alone, stripped of transportation, athletics and supplies, would have been \$276. With the loss of some \$2 million in state aid over the last two years, the last thing Brentwood taxpayers need, or taxpayers in any other area, for that matter, is another mandate that adds to the tax burden.

A memorandum on this bill notes: "Fiscal implications: None to the State of New York." And therein lies the problem. Anyone can give away the store if someone else is footing the bill. State officials have spent the state into a deficit situation and have tried to cover their financial ineptness by transferring financial burdens to other levels, governments and school districts. Even with the combined reduction of state aid and revised fee

structures, the state's financial dilemma is growing. The "buckle under to lobbying pressure and don't worry about the cost" attitude reflected in Trunzo's bill is a primary reason why the state is in its current deficit condition.

"After a lifetime of dedicated public service, retirees deserve the peace of mind that comes with knowing they shall be eligible for health insurance on the same terms and conditions offered to their active public employee counterparts," says the memorandum accompanying Trunzo's legislation. If Trunzo really believes that, why doesn't he include the provision that the state will pick up the tab? And if NYSUT is so dedicated to the protection of its retired members, why doesn't that organization provide group insurance, and pick up the tab, for these folks? Why? Because it's much easier for them to force the issue and let someone else foot the bill. After a lifetime of paying the bills, shouldn't the dedicated taxpayers deserve the peace of mind of being able to afford to continue to live here? Many of these same taxpayers can't afford health insurance of their own. Will Trunzo, or NYSUT, pick up their tab?

Although the memorandum initially states: "This bill would allow retirees of school districts, BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), VEEB's and Special Act School Districts to voluntarily subscribe to health insurance plans provided by their former public employers at the same cost as is afforded to active employees." A quick read would make one think: "Gee, that's not so bad, if the retired employees 'voluntarily subscribe' and pick up their own cost." But down in the last paragraph comes the news that the employers, the school districts alias the taxpayers, will ultimately pick up the costs for the retirees and their dependents.

Trunzo's legislation is a prime example of how the state's legislators make themselves heroes to the lobbying groups at the expense of the taxpayers. Extended benefits of this type should be part of the negotiation process. If the union wants this benefit for their retirees, they must give something else up. Or better yet, as stated before, let the union pick up the tab as a reward for the dues paid through the years. Unless the state provides the dollars, their mandate should be ash-canned!

A message to state legislators: This is an election year. Taxpayers are angry, faced with mounting taxes and loss of income in a very bad economic time. They are giving up on politicians and turning to others, Ross Perot is a prime example. While the lure of NYSUT support, financial and otherwise, might be an inducement to support this legislation, legislators are going to have to make a choice: Will they do what's right for the taxpayers? Or succumb to special interest pressure?

Their answer, which will be reflected in how they vote on his measure, could well decide their political future.

And why not?

Control board a must

Reportedly, one of the accompanying requirements that comes with the declaration of a fiscal emergency, which County Executive Robert Gafney proclaimed recently, is the creation of a Financial Control Board to oversee the financial affairs of the county. The frustrations of the continuing county fiscal crisis, and the attitude of county officials in dealing with this problem, point out the dramatic need for such controls.

The county's deficit did not grow to \$90 million overnight. While many factors have brought it about, some admittedly out of the control of county officials, the major contributing factor is the mind-set that caused administration and legislators to spend, spend, spend without concern for the future. Future fiscal impact has always taken a back seat in the approval of court complexes, employee contracts, and a host of other actions which just heaped cost upon cost on the taxpayers' backs.

Even in their efforts to resolve a growing deficit their tendency is to worry about easing the pain of today with one-shot solutions, ignoring the increased interest costs which will add to the financial problems in the future. The refinancing schemes and the sell and then lease-back proposals for the Dennison Building serve little purpose other than cause an immediate influx of revenues to ease today's financial pain.

There is a reluctance on the part of county officials to place the county's finances under a Financial Control Board. The latest scheme is to establish a Financial Advisory Board. The name tells the tale. Advise, but no more. We'll listen, and then do what we please. But we can't afford that anymore.

The taxpayers would be better served to take the financial authority out of the hands of the current crop of politicians. A Financial Control

Board, with the sharpest financial minds available, no politics please, should be established. They should be the overseers of the county budget. Any spending proposal should be passed through this board before funds are allocated. If funds aren't there, dump the proposal. Someone has to have a handle on what's happening.

All through the political campaigns of last year, legislators gave varying answers when it came to pinpointing the deficit we would face in 1992. Estimates ranged from "we're in great shape" to "we'll have a deficit of about \$30 million." Still others didn't know, and apparently didn't care. "If there is one, we'll handle it then," was their view. Well, there is, and you aren't!

Words of doom

A new flap has developed over Robins Island. A county team was scheduled to visit the island last week to determine if limited cluster development might be feasible. Environmentalists, who are determined to settle for nothing but total preservation, immediately raised their voices in protest.

The environmentalists insist total preservation is necessary for the environmental preservation of the Peconic Bay Estuary. But they offer no concrete evidence that limited development would damage the waters of the bay. They talk about preservation of the groundwater, but offer no evidence that limited development would impact on the water in any way. There are no concrete plans for the number of homes that would be involved in limited development, so how can there be any predictions of environmental doom unless it is known what

There comes a time--and that time has come in Suffolk County--when the realization has to hit home that those in charge of the finances are incapable of doing the job. The administration and legislators are stalled in reaching a consensus on how to deal with the problem. They met, met again, and met still one more time last week and got nowhere. Now they're scheduled to meet again today, and we expect more of the same.

It's time to throw in the towel, folks. Time to insist that a Financial Control Board be put into place to oversee the future financial fate of this county.

That must be done now, before the hole being dug gets too deep to get out of.

And why not?

impact is involved? And what steps will be taken to preserve its "pristine" nature if purchased by the county? And at what cost?

These are very bad times. With the county facing a deficit of \$90 million, and perhaps more, the dollars have to be spent wisely. If spent for what someone wants, there may be no dollars for what is really essential. The rhetoric must end, the facts must be presented. The claims of "environmental jewel," environmental necessity, or beneficial economic impact must be accompanied by facts, scientific support, if they are to be believed. Bogus claims to enhance selfish motives simply don't fly when people are losing jobs, services are being cut, and health clinics are being closed. People are important too!

And why not?

Change won't come unless you do it

Congress has never been so low in esteem as they are today. They had an opportunity to put a brake on themselves and redeem their images in the public's eye by enacting a balanced budget Constitutional amendment. But they didn't.

The amendment, if passed by the House, would have had to win Senate approval, approval by the President and be ratified by all 50 states. The amendment simply would have required the President to submit a balanced budget to Congress. The budget would have to remain balanced unless 60 percent of the members of the House and the Senate voted to exceed this limit. It also forbid the government to borrow more money to finance deficits without the approval of the required 60 percent of the Senate and the House. It would stop the government from overspending even if the elected officials do not have the ability or courage to do it themselves.

Congress turned down this opportunity to restore financial integrity to the United States. Suffolk's congressmen, George Hochbrueckner, Thomas Downey and Robert Mrazek, all refused to approve this brake on government spending. They want government to continue as is, growing, wasting, festering and breeding rebellion.

Don't these men have any common sense at all? Don't they understand the anger of their constituents over their check kiting and bounced checks and the other shenanigans, including raising their salaries in the dark of the night? Their constituents are angry not only about these personal abuses, but their votes on the many fiscal issues that have caused their taxes to skyrocket and forced them into subservient existences.

The public has had it with the relentless spending of more than we have. We can't stand any more federal debt. It's eating us alive. We're dying and these three just fiddle away.

How dare they have the audacity to turn down this sound fiscal measure. They wouldn't even let it get off the dime. The House's passage was just the first step of a tenuous process

During the past couple of weeks we have been traveling extensively. Wherever we have gone the subject has been the same, Perot. It is amazing the support H. Ross Perot has generated across the land. We believe his support typifies the disgust the average citizen has with government in general.

We have watched our taxes skyrocket, our lives become over-regulated and our governments become insensitive to our voices, to our pleas or our outright demands for basic needs. We have watched our government become a self-serving waffling octopus. Public service was traded for career opportunities by our elected officials. They seem to operate on the premise that we have an insatiable ability to fund every program that they can devise to buy votes. They feel that we have been beaten down to a point where we will accept anything and grovel at their feet. We won our freedom through a bloody revolution. Few of us have a stomach for another one.

We do have an alternative and one that the politicians have often told us

that would go on through 1998. The process would have had to endure incredible debate and have overwhelming support for passage.

Our Congress, true to their own belief of self-fulfillment, have refused to allow you, the voter, to make a rational decision on forcing the government to balance its budget, the same way you must do every day to survive.

Congressmen Downey, Hoch-

bruecker and Mrazek, playing Gods, will take away our freedoms as American citizens. Mrazek, thankfully, will be leaving Congress. Are the other two the type of congressmen you want? Come November, think before you vote. It's time to rid Congress of the "self-gratifiers" and put into office public servants who will act on your behalf.

And why not?

The amazing Perot support

to use, the ballot box. They have said, "If you don't like what I am doing, throw me out of office." The American public is about ready to give a vivid demonstration of their anger and frustration. The polls are indicating that if the election was held today, they would send George Bush to the unemployment line and Bill Clinton back under the sheets. They would elect H. Ross Perot because he can be a decisive leader who has proven he is a decisive administrator and a guy who understands the system and can make it work like a business for the American people.

The voters are looking with a totally jaundiced eye at Congress and state leaders. They are ready to throw the bums out in hopes of re-establishing a responsible government that does more than allow them to survive. We are fed up with our congressional leaders who have raised their salaries by one-third in a midnight raid on our pocketbooks. And defaulted on their lunch bills in the now-defunct, plush House dining room; written tons of bad checks and then insulted our intelligence by declaring it was their bank and their money, and their right

and privilege to kite checks that bounce like rubber.

The liberal press is doing everything in their power to discredit Perot, yet the public is having no part of it. It's true we do not know his stand on many major issues, but we admire the fact that he will not allow himself to be bullied into making a snap judgment or statement that can come back to haunt him at a later date. We are sure that the voters will know where he stands, firmly, between now and November.

The Perot candidacy is an ideal opportunity for America to show that democracy still does work here in the United States. We can change our leadership, our government and the course of history. We do hope that Perot is on the ballot in all 50 states so that the people will have an opportunity to pass judgment, instead of the political structure or liberal press.

We have the opportunity to learn who the man is, what he stands for and be able to compare it against the offerings of the Republican and Democratic parties. Then it will be time for decisions.

And why not?

Packaging Waste Reduction Act

Cuomo proposal is too little, too late

Governor Mario Cuomo recently announced he has proposed legislation to reduce New York State's solid waste stream by eliminating excess packaging. The idea is good, the timing isn't.

The reduction in packaging should have been initiated before the state's landfill ban went into effect, before residents were hit with millions of dollars in additional taxes to support the construction of incinerators and recycling facilities. The lunacy of the timing is that not only did state legislation force towns into facilities they did not have the finances to build, but long after legislation which details quotas on how much municipalities must recycle by what year.

The legislation requires commu-

nities to recycle at least 15 percent of their waste by September of this year, 25 percent by 1994 and 40 percent by September 1, 1997.

Cuomo's proposed "Packaging Waste Reduction Act" would require that packaging waste be reduced from 1988 levels by 15 percent by January 1, 1996, and by 35 percent by January 1, 2000. The reductions would be in the weight of the packaging.

But then what? When recycling quotas are imposed and met, what happens to the recycled materials? Are there any regional markets established to handle the recycled material? No! Towns are, at this point in time, having problems finding a market for the recycled materials they now have. When more and more municipalities

labor to meet the state quotas, the market will be flooded, the demand will decrease further, and we could wind up landfilling or trucking this material. What then, Mr. Governor?

Oh! We know! Then the governor will come out with a proposal to create regional markets. After the problem is here. Not before, to prevent the problem from happening. Make sense? No! But that is the way of government here in New York State.

All during the controversy leading up to the actual closing of landfills, state officials, including Cuomo, criticized town officials for waiting so long before they began taking action to meet the requirements of the ban. All the while they were criticizing, however, they were sitting there and

doing nothing constructive. If they had, the 1996 deadline could have already been in place, and the 2000 goal for 35 percent reduction could have been a lot closer to reality.

It would be easy to say "better late than never," and be thankful that, at long last, something has been proposed. Except for the fact that taxpayers are "paying through the nose" for increased garbage disposal fees which continue to skyrocket each year. How much better could towns have planned, and what savings could have been realized if they were planning facilities for a reduced waste stream?

Too little, too late. And in the matter of recycled materials and regional markets, we're going down that road again. Don't they ever learn?

And why not?

We are going bankrupt

A half-cent won't solve deficit

County Executive Halpin requested a sales tax increase last year and the Suffolk County Legislature increased Suffolk's sales tax by a half-cent. This year, County Executive Robert Gaffney is seeking approval to do the same. Both men have claimed that without it, Suffolk will go bankrupt. The sad truth is, even with it, we are going bankrupt.

Suffolk is almost \$100 million in debt. We are budgeted to spend \$100 million more this year than we will

take in. That's only one-half the bad news. Next year, it is projected we will be an additional \$118 million in debt. A half-cent sales tax cannot make up this deficit. It will only raise a fraction of what is actually needed.

We have spent more money than we have had in the past. We are spending more money than we have today. We grew a government we couldn't afford. The county executives have not been able to control it and the legislature has not had the will. By

October of this year, Suffolk will be out of money. It will not be able to pay its bills, its salaries, its contracts or its obligations to people. Those who are politically posturing and pointing fingers are adding to the chaos.

It is very apparent that Suffolk's elected leaders are incapable of managing their own fiscal house. An outside, independent board must be established to control Suffolk's finances. We must have a fiscal control board with teeth that is managed by

people who do not come from the government but, rather, from business, banking and industries not associated with government.

The people of Suffolk County cannot afford to continue living here, the burden of taxation has outstripped their ability to earn. Each day, more "For Sale" signs go up, good, loyal residents attempting to sell their homes not because they want to, but because they have to. For years, we have felt that we were "tilting at windmills" as we warned in editorial after editorial that the actions of all forms of government, from school boards through the county, cumulatively were breaking the backs of the taxpayers. Instead of heeding these warnings and prudently preparing its budgets, all government entities have put on the dog and pony show, trotted out every special interest group to justify spending, or allowed themselves to be used, thereby increasing the burden on the residents.

Last fall, when the county stood on the brink of bankruptcy and its bond rating was in serious jeopardy, the legislators approved the sales tax increase declaring they had no other choice, they really didn't want to do it, but it was the only way to save the county. And, many added, they would never go that route again. But they are.

A sales tax increase is counter-productive. It is ridiculous for consumers, who are desperately trying to survive, to have to pay an additional 8.5 percent more for their necessities, as well as the luxuries, than the retailers are charging. To avoid this burden many consumers have turned to mail order where they can buy everything from clothing to furniture, out of state, free of New York and Suffolk's oppressive sales tax. When these purchases are made, they strip the vitality of Suffolk's economy. Lost are the jobs associated with these purchases. Lost are the profits by local businesses that reinvest in the community. And, tax revenues are lost.

Sales taxes must not be raised. Real estate taxes can't be raised. What is left of our economy will be decimated as more citizens and businesses leave Long Island, fleeing to tax-affordable locations and leaving behind a further weakened economy that can't support the size and the scope of government. This must be brought to an end.

Suffolk only has two choices: an independent fiscal control board that has the power to control all expenditures, or a court-appointed control board that will be the result of a bankruptcy in October. Elected officials are out of choices. The day of reckoning is now!

And why not?

For L.I. to survive

Energy costs must drop

The ultimate end to the Shoreham saga came last week when the decommissioning process, recently approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), was launched. A special ceremony was held marking that long sought moment of time, and a sense of satisfaction undoubtedly filled those who had fought long and hard to end the facility's threat to the health and safety of Long Islanders.

The start of decommissioning is, to us, an end result to a seemingly never-ending fight against bureaucracy and the strength of a powerful lobby, the nuclear industry. But although Shoreham will no longer threaten our area with the potential of a nuclear disaster, it did not leave us without a mark. The financial impact it has left on this area—the highest electrical rates in the nation—is staggering. These rates not only impact on our household budgets, they have escalated the costs of governments, and of operating our schools and businesses. We feel the brunt of this in increased taxes and prices.

Businesses are leaving Long Island because of the high cost of doing business here. A major ingredient in that cost is the high price of energy. And, although there are efforts by a consortium put together by the Long Island Association (LIA) to "sell" Long Island as a lure to get businesses to come or expand here, and programs initiated by legislators to help foster economic growth, one of the causes of the economic hurt remains. The cost of energy has soared, and will go higher in years to come as a result of the deal reached between Governor Mario Cuomo and the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) to end the Shoreham threat.

Interestingly, the New York Power Authority (LIPA), just days before the Shoreham finale, announced an agreement that would ease this problem for two firms. "Economical electricity from the New York Power Authority could mean that 287 jobs

will stay or be added on Long Island, rather than moving to other states," the NYPA announcement said. These allocations of low-cost power, NYPA Chairman Richard M. Flynn said, would commit Southside Laundry to maintain 215 jobs in Hempstead, and Burton Industries to keep its 31 jobs in North Babylon. And, he added, Southside would proceed with a \$1.6 million expansion that will require 41 new jobs.

The 1,300 kilowatts of power for the two firms, estimated to save them \$50,000 annually in electricity costs, will be delivered by LILCO.

Interestingly, although not announced by NYPA, Newsday has also become the recipient of an allocation of the cheaper power, 2,000 kilowatts worth. That news comes via a trade publication, "Editor and Publisher," rather than NYPA. We can only wonder why. It's ironic that Newsday, whose fervent support for LILCO and Shoreham which helped drive the rates skyward, now escapes the end result of their damaging efforts. Their low-cost power gift was in return for assurances it will "preserve jobs," although a recent report indicated they had cut 300.

More than 20,000 jobs state-wide are linked to such allocations, NYPA reports, adding: "Overall, power authority electricity supplied under this and other programs has helped to create or protect more than 26,000 jobs on Long Island."

If those figures are correct, how many more jobs could have been saved from leaving Long Island had more power been made available to more firms? Had the state's Public Service Commission (PSC) served the people rather than placate every request for higher rates and Shoreham costs put forth by LILCO, our rates would not top all others in the nation. And, the spiraling impact would not have so disastrously injured our area.

There's a lot to sell about Long Island. We have great beaches, mu-

seums, and a sizable, talented work force. In short, with all these attributes, we have a great place to live, if you can afford it. We also have the energy cost problem, the skyrocketing tax crisis, and an increase in crime while governments cut back on police protection.

Years back, Suffolk County created a "paper agency" designed to be the provider of low-cost power secured from upstate sources. But that agency, and any effort by the county to provide low-cost power fell through the cracks. Since the county has shown a lack of interest in helping ease the power costs, the Long Island Power Authority, which now has ownership of Shoreham and is in charge of decommissioning efforts, should be the agency through which this low-cost power should flow. Rather than abolish LIPA, as Newsday urges, it should be strengthened. Public elections should be held to take LIPA out of the hands of the governor and into the control of the people. We need a strong voice to control our future energy needs, we need protection against the PSC and the utilities it favors. LIPA could, and should, be that protection, if given a chance to operate as it was created to perform. Instead it has become a tool of the governor, who stacked the deck with his own people, and has, by controlling its leadership, manipulated its efforts. For the benefit of Long Island, that must change.

In reporting the power allocations last week, Flynn noted, "...these companies recognize our power can provide the competitive edge that will enable them to stay...and grow...on Long Island."

Utilizing that "competitive edge" as a means of luring and keeping business here by bringing in more low-cost power will do far more good than "selling" the virtues of our area. We need to cure our problems, not gloss over them with rhetoric.

And why not?