

# Don't look to Albany for answers

Last Thursday night, the combined chapters of Nassau/Suffolk Tax PAC held a meeting between the Long Island State Legislative delegation and the taxpayers of both these counties. It was deliberately structured to be non-partisan and non-confrontational.

The Tax PAC organizations wanted to know where legislation and legislative action stood on a half dozen issues, including the impact on the 1991-1992 budget on localities; mandate reform on schools and municipalities; the number of times a school budget can be put up for a revote once defeated, and if the tax rate can be frozen under austerity at the former year's level. State-wide Initiative and Referendum to address those issues the legislature or the governor refuse to address was also a matter of concern.

The legislators were invited to give their assessment of the progress being made on these and other key issues. The answers basically were disheartening,

coming back to the age-old problem that these legislators have failed to resolve. The power to run New York State is in the hands of three people: the governor, the assembly speaker, and the senate majority leader. These three people are owned lock, stock and barrel by the lobbyists and the organizations they represent.

Most legislators expressed almost absolute fear of any educational reforms. The New York State teachers' unions are the most powerful and well-financed in the state. They have the power to demand and get what they want. An example: Assemblyman Tom Barraga had the courage to stand up and speak out last year against a taxpayer rip-off. This year he was removed by the Republican leadership in the assembly from his position on the Education Committee. The teachers' union got its revenge.

Albany is where you go along to get

along. It's not where you fight for your constituents, or even for what is right. It's where you get along only if you go along with the leaders who are enriching their bank accounts by selling out to the lobbyist. It was frightening listening to the scenario that will come down on our backs this year.

The state is seven to eight billion dollars in the red for this coming year. To make up for the shortfall, the governor has proposed, and it appears the legislature will go along with, drastic cutbacks in school aid and aid to local governments. The majority of these cutbacks, particularly in school aid, will severely impact Long Island. We are destined to absorb 50 percent of the state-wide cutbacks here on Long Island.

Few of the legislators want to face the reality that it is not only the amount of money we have to spend, but how this money has been spent in the past that is at the root of our problem. It is

expected that when these huge reductions in state aid are presented to the local school boards, these boards, instead of cutting expenditures, will continue spending as they have in the past. This could result in school taxes increasing by as much as 50 percent in some districts.

The state, to balance its budget, is simply transferring the burden of financing government to localities. They do not intend to make any meaningful changes in the mandates they have imposed upon local governments or schools. Without mandate relief, we face not only huge increases in our school taxes, but county and town taxes as well.

How many residents here will be able to afford to keep their homes if the real estate taxes jump 40 to 50 percent next year? Where will people find that extra \$2,000 if the real estate taxes currently are \$4,000? Most Long Islanders, particularly those who have bought their homes in the last ten years, are struggling to pay the average \$400 to \$500 per month in taxes they currently are being assessed. How many of the residents have \$200 to \$300 per month extra in their budgets to cover these increases? How many people are just going to get up and walk away? How many people are going to sell out at drastic losses? New owners will file grievances against their assessments based upon the fair market value they paid for the house. And the tax base will be depleted further.

Our state legislators, in following the course they are on, are setting up a reverse pyramid scenario that will produce less and less tax as it comes into play. As the tax base goes down, the impact on those who remain will go up. And more and more people will leave, until only the very rich will be able to stay.

We came to this meeting hoping to see that our representatives understood the situation, had ideas and solutions and had the courage of their convictions to be leaders. Unfortunately, they told us, with their comments, they aren't, and it's easier to do the bidding of lobbyists than it is to represent the citizens.

Isn't it time for the plight of the people to take top priority?  
And why not?

## Thank You God

Over the last several months most of us have done something we seem to have forgotten how to do, we prayed to God for a quick, honorable end to the Middle East war. God answered our prayers.

The actual ground war lasted less than 100 hours, more miraculously with only 79 Americans losing their lives.

No one in their wildest imagination had the preconceived notion that this war would be so short and the allied casualties so light. Most of us had visions of facing the nightmare of thousands of young men and women being brought home in body bags, our hospitals filled to overflowing with the wounded and maimed. God answered our prayers.

The allied forces are to be given an enormous amount of credit. The war

was planned to the nth degree and, of equal if not more importance, the technology was there and was used. Because that technology was there and properly deployed, thousands of lives were saved. This is the same technology and advanced war machine that many in this country have been attempting to gut. Those liberals who have constantly voted against military appropriations, who have proclaimed loud and clear their opposition to the administration's plan for defense, who ballyhooed and mocked President Reagan's commitment to the Star Wars concept, must now look at themselves in the mirror and ask, "Were they right?"

Would we have had the Patriot missile system that, although not perfect, was the only deterrent against the Scud missiles? If the research and devel-

opment money had been cut as drastically as Congressmen Hochbrueckner, Downey and Mrazek had wanted, would our forces have had the equipment to pinpoint and destroy Iraq's military targets? Without this ability would thousands of allied forces been killed and wounded in the achievement of our objectives? If we had waited, as these three congressmen had advocated, would the war have been as swift and so free of allied casualties?

There are always two sides to every question and a middle ground that is often right. Hopefully, in the future, we will be able to find this middle ground and it will keep America ahead and prove to be as effective in keeping the world free in the future.

Thank God for being merciful.  
And why not?

## 'Easing the burden' with your dollars

The financial woes of government today has given birth to a host of creative financial schemes which are designed to "ease the tax burden," provide funding for special services, maintain the status quo in meeting the needs of the people. Unfortunately, these schemes all too often target new ways to raise revenues, rather than intelligent ways to cut spending.

And in the end, the taxpayer is the loser. To meet the escalating costs of government, user fees are applied or increased in a host of different ways.

Last week, the unions representing county employees put forth a recommendation that the sales tax be increased by half a cent, from 7.5 to 8 cents per dollar spent. This proposal, which would raise, they say, an estimated \$60 million, is reportedly designed to "help the county out of its fiscal bind." Beneath the surface, we

strongly suspect, it has another, more specific, reason. It is designed to prevent layoffs, to protect the jobs of union members, to soften the financial mess so they can continue to pressure politicians for salary increases and more benefits.

In the latest financial scheme, the county's public works commissioner, Joseph Hurley, has proposed the county impose its own gasoline tax which, he said, should go into a dedicated fund for highway use. Dedicated funds are better than dropping funds into the bottomless pit of the general fund, from which they very seldom emerge. But Hurley's proposal is little more than a ploy to hit the public for additional funds to ease spending cuts imposed because of the county's deficit.

It is interesting that the unions have still not agreed on the suggestion for a lag payroll put forth by County Executive Patrick Halpin. They still "have to think" about that. The lag payroll con-

cept is not the greatest idea in the world, it provides a one-time-only savings. Employee salaries are deferred for one week, and given back when they leave county employment. Nor were they enthusiastic partners in the county's one-week voluntary furlough plan in which county employees would take time off without pay. It would have saved dollars, and jobs.

The sudden desire of the unions to help ease the financial crunch is strong only when it is someone else's ox that is being gored. "Let's hit the taxpayers for a bigger sales tax bite, that'll help make more money available for us," seems to be their attitude.

The sales tax scheme, and Hurley's proposal, should be relegated to the junk heap. The way to fix the financial mess is to be partners with the people in sharing the burden, in feeling the pain. Realistic salary increase demands, sharing the load of escalating costs of benefits,

increased work productivity to eliminate jobs through attrition, and weeding out every scrap of waste they can find are the actions required. As are the elimination of needless patronage jobs, fewer "top level" positions, an honest effort to do an honest job.

Those who propose new user fees and new taxes are displaying their lack of management ability, and should be the first to be laid off, fired, or recycled to another occupation. Instead of facing the problem head on, they attempt to con the public into believing the newest bite on their dwindling finances is in their best interests, when it's really self-interest which is the motivating force.

Coming up with new ways to tax the public is not the answer. An honest effort to cut spending, using taxpayers' dollars as efficiently and wisely as possible is the only credible way to deal with the financial dilemma faced by the county and the taxpayers.

And why not?



# There is no choice but to cut

Government must be cut back. It's not a wish, a desire, but a necessity.

State government will be over \$7 billion in the red unless cuts are made. As we mentioned last week, aid for schools and local municipalities is one of the items that is targeted. This means that huge cuts must be found in school spending and in the cost of running our county and state governments.

During the last eight years, the cost of running New York State gov-

ernment has more than doubled. It went from \$25 billion to \$51 billion. Unless cuts are made this year, the budget would be at \$57 billion.

Governor Cuomo and the legislature have virtually exhausted every avenue to tax. They have used every one-shot revenue-producing gimmick going. They have issued a dangerous proportion of bonds to fund past debts. New bonds would cause our credit rating to fall substantially, which would push up our cost of borrowing.

## Cradle to grave

It's covered by both federal and state environmental law. You are responsible for waste products from cradle to grave. You can never totally divorce yourself of the responsibility for your waste materials.

This same law pertains to individuals, corporations and governments. But the ash for trash deal that the DEC is pushing between Brookhaven and Hempstead towns appears to ignore this simple law. The ash for trash deal would have Brookhaven ship garbage to Hempstead, and accept from Hempstead's incinerator all its residue ash for disposal in Brookhaven's double-lined landfill.

Strangely, negotiations for this ash for trash swap appear to have ignored the liability issue until just recently. The initial Memorandum of Understanding signed by both towns, with much fanfare and publicity, contained no mention of this responsibility. Just recently, a special board meeting as called to approve a final version of the agreement, but that action was cancelled only hours before the meeting was to be held. Town officials reported there were problems with the liability issue. Why? What does Hempstead know about its ash that we should know?

Common sense tells us this should have been one of the first issues addressed before any understanding was reached, and then only after Brookhaven Town had secured random samples of the ash and had them analyzed by an independent testing laboratory. Unfortunately, this was not done, nor was the landfilling of the ash the subject of an environmental review.

The matter is of serious concern to many residents of Brookhaven because of the financial implications that could develop. If, one day down the line, the DEC or the EPA discover this ash may have environmental consequences, or change their rules and regulations, which has occurred many times in the past, that causes this residue to need remedial attention, the taxpayers of Brookhaven Town may wake up and find themselves facing an enormous liability.

We have been perplexed to understand why some members of the Brookhaven Town Board have seemed so eager to rush into this con-

tract. It creates the appearance of suspicion, heightened by reports of close ties between some Brookhaven officials and people involved with the Hempstead facility and the company which operates it.

The ash for trash deal is a 10 to 18-year commitment that will cost millions of dollars a year. Why would the town lock itself into that time frame when it just recently put on line one of the most impressive, state-of-the-art resource recovery operations in the nation? This operation, and a dedicated emphasis on recycling, offers promise of reducing the waste stream significantly. Why negate the benefits this could bring?

On the surface, according to what Brookhaven officials say, the ash agreement would appear to be a good deal for the taxpayers, without impacting the environment. That's the way the South West Sewer District was sold to the public. On the surface it looked good. But history tells us that many people made megabucks on this deal and the whole county had to be taxed to bail out the corruption that was rampant.

The long-term liabilities of the ash deal, which are more than just a possibility, should have the more prudent people of Brookhaven saying, "Let's take a look under the covers and find out, firsthand, who is lying in the bed we are going to expect to be sleeping in for a lot of years to come!"

And why not?

## Recycling political trash

With Republican leaders finally reaching agreement, for the moment, at least, on a party designee to oppose County Executive Patrick Halpin in the November elections, and county legislators preparing for reelection campaigns, the stage is set for the usual flood of political propaganda which clutters our mail. Unfortunately, the cost of much of that propaganda is not borne by the candidates alone. It also comes from elected officials, using taxpayer dollars to spread their political message.

Get prepared for a flood of legislative reports. They will tell you what a great person the legislator is. How he or she has saved you a bundle of dollars, and, more than any other legislator, is leading the fight for tax relief. If all of these great actions were a matter of reality, rather than fiction, the county would not be in the throes of a fiscal crisis. But it is.

One legislator got a bit more specific, recently. Although his legislative district spans a couple of towns, he addressed a specific report to those in one. He compared the "great job" he did on the county level in cutting spending and jobs, to the tax hunger of Southampton Town. He noted the county portion of the property tax had gone down, while Southampton's had gone up.

During the Cuomo years, New York State staff increased by almost one-third. State population grew less than three percent. Did we need 30 percent more state workers to take care of us if there are only three percent more of us? Did you see an increase in service received from the state? During the same period, our government and local municipalities increased their staff dramatically as well. School districts which had declining enrollments, some by as much as 50 percent, increased the curriculum offering and did not cut back staff to reflect the smaller enrollment load. Are our children better educated? Can they read and do math better than students did 10 years ago? Today, we must pay the piper for our excesses.

There is no choice but to lay off people in government. The taxpayers can no longer afford the number of people they have working for them. No one likes to see anyone lose a job. In private industry when sales decline, people accept the loss of their jobs. It's not pleasant, it puts families into turmoil. But the organization must protect itself or go out of business, causing everyone to lose their employment. Governments are no different in the final analysis. When the sources of tax revenue dry up, governments must cut back in order to continue to operate to serve the priority needs.

Municipal and school workers today earn, on par, salaries that are

comparable, and often times higher, than their counterparts in the public sector. They enjoy superior benefits and time off. At one time, jobs in the public sector were low-paying but offered security. People traded lower salaries for better benefits and security. Today, they have the highest salaries and, because of the fiscal crisis, must face the risk of layoffs.

The state must make up the projected shortfall of \$7 billion. They can only do this by cutting back on personnel and reductions in programs. The impact of these reductions on school districts and local municipalities must be made up by reducing the services and programs these units of government offer. As curriculum is condensed, layoffs must take place from both the ranks of teachers and, particularly, the ranks of administration, which has undergone tremendous expansion over the last decade. The same must take place in the county and town governments. Only priority services should be maintained and provided. We must cut back on our expenses so that tax rates can be stabilized.

If Long Island is to survive, people must be able to afford to live here. They cannot absorb any additional tax burden.

These cuts won't be easy, they won't be pleasant. But they are necessary.

And why not?

## Prices down, taxes up

With a great sigh of relief, most of us have pulled into our local service stations and have seen the prices falling. They won't fall much further because of two taxes that were placed on gasoline during the Middle East crisis.

Uncle Mario is stealing an extra nickel a gallon from you that he didn't last year. Uncle George and his cronies in congress are gouging you for another dime. That's 15

cents a gallon extra for every gallon we put in our cars, along with everyone else, that is going to our government. What it is being wasted on, we don't know.

Cuomo now wants to add another 10 cent tax. Only you can stop him, by writing or calling his office and the legislators who will have to pass the legislation.

And why not?

Was it coincidence that a couple of days later this legislator announced he was a candidate for supervisor in Southampton?

Using taxpayers' dollars to spread political propaganda has been the target of criticism for years. Enough is enough, the taxpayers have said, time and time again. It doesn't help. But with the fiscal climate of today, this misuse of taxpayer dollars is not only a display of fiscal mismanagement, it is a display of arrogance. If the legislators can't bite the bullet, and dip into their own political treasuries instead of the taxpayers' pockets to tell their political tales of fiction, we, the taxpayers, have to use stronger methods.

Therefore, we suggest you save, for future recycling, all the political messages you get from our elected officials. Put it aside, let it pile up. Perhaps we can come up with a contest to reward those who send the most, a Recycle This Politician of the Year award.

If nothing else, these political pieces might be good evidence for a taxpayers' suit against misuse of public funds.

And why not?



# The fox in the hen house?

Governor Mario Cuomo has announced the formation of a task force to eliminate illegal construction and demolition (C&D) waste facilities on Long Island. Sounds good, right? Well, not everything is the way it first sounds. Read on:

"The improper disposal of construction and demolition waste has become a lucrative crime damaging the environment and endangering public health and safety," the governor declared in a recent press release. "This task force will investigate C&D sites and take whatever actions are needed to bring an end to illegal disposal activities."

"The task force—composed of investigators from the State Department of Environmental Conservation—will locate C&D landfills, storage facilities and transfer stations operating without permits and initiate legal action to either close the sites or bring them into compliance with the law," the release added.

According to Cuomo, the task force recently began monitoring some 50 suspected illegal C&D sites on Long Island and efforts are under way to identify and locate the owner or operators of the sites and the waste generators.

Then DEC Commissioner Thomas C. Jorling jumped into the act. "This initiative is a continuation of DEC's program to curtail the increase in illegal C&D disposal activities occurring not only on Long Island, but throughout the state..."

Cuomo's task force or Jorling's DEC won't have to look too far to find an illegal operation to deal with. All they need to do, according to published reports, is look to the rear of state property at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center where, according to a January 25 report in *Newsday*, a private carting company has been operating for the past two years using several acres of state-owned land without paying rent, without a permit, and ignoring state efforts to get them to leave.

According to that report, the DEC has been trying since the late 1980's to end the operation, without success. And, according to the report, officials of Pilgrim refuse to release records of the situation, and the DEC has not responded to Freedom of Information requests.

If that's not enough to give cause for wonder if the creation of the task force is more rhetoric than substance, read on:

A communication from Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey, chairman of the New York State Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation, raises another interesting issue.

"On February 6," Hinchey said, "I released a report, 'Illegal Dumping in New York State—Who's Enforcing the Law?' which raised serious questions regarding possible criminal acts at one dumpsite by a member of the Bureau of Environmental Conservation Investigations (BECI) of the DEC's law enforcement arm. The report also questioned the efficiency of the DEC's supervisor of that part of the agency and made appropriate recommendations for improvement in performance."

And then, Hinchey continued,

"With arrogant disregard for the Legislature's legitimate oversight function, Commissioner Jorling has demanded that I withdraw the report from the public domain which, of course, I will not do."

Hinchey summed up: "Everywhere communities are finding themselves under siege from hordes of illegal dumpers, polluting water supplies and endangering public health and safety. Combating this has put a strain on the resources of the DEC but this does not excuse its attempt to stifle the public's right to know where there are deficiencies in

the agency's performance and possible criminal behavior that could make the state liable for millions of dollars in remediation costs."

The upstate assemblyman vowed he would "continue to press for a full investigation despite the pressures the agency has already put on its own personnel and others to cut off the flow of information to the public."

Right on! We congratulate Assemblyman Hinchey for his courage to take on this arrogant, all powerful state agency. There should be a full investigation into Hinchey's allegations, and far beyond. We can no longer afford to have the fox calling

the shots in the hen house if we are to survive.

Rather than a task force made up of DEC investigators, why not a special prosecutor and a special investigation into all aspects of the DEC's operations, most particularly as they pertain to garbage disposal? Many of the DEC's edicts—most of which defy common sense—are costing the people millions of dollars. The need for a full investigation into the DEC's handling of the entire garbage matter is vital. And if Hinchey's allegations have any substance, the truth must be known. Why not, Governor Cuomo?

And why not?

## Why not volunteers?

President George Bush received much publicity with his Thousand Points of Lights theme in his political campaign to become the leader of our land. That theme focused on volunteerism, and how we as a people could reach out to help others, to make our world a better place for all. Those Thousand Points of Light, however, are not very bright these days.

A case in point: The commander of the Suffolk County Police Department's Sixth Precinct in Coram recently outlined a proposal that would incorporate volunteer activities into the precinct operation. The idea made a lot of sense in a couple of ways. There are many in the community who have the talent and the ability to perform clerical, maintenance or other tasks. The opportunity to volunteer, particularly for those retired with time on their hands, would bolster their

morale, their sense of worth. And the efforts they put forth would enable police officers, now burdened with clerical tasks, to do the things they are best at, the police work that protects the public.

The proposal was not designed to cost anyone their job, or slyly cut costs. It was designed to utilize talents in the best possible way, helping to ease the financial crunch on the taxpayer at the same time. But Charles Novo, president of the Association of Municipal Employees, doesn't see it that way. The proposal immediately became a threat, a threat to union jobs. Novo has protested the move. That's a shame.

These are trying times. The fiscal crisis of a county budget deficit, the economic climate of a recession, and the onerous budget of taxes upon the taxpayers is a time for imaginative ac-

tion, not business as usual. Many of the salary and benefit gains of the past have caused the economic doom of today. There have been many calls for reason in the past, warnings that the continued demands of excessive salary increases would only lead to layoffs in the future. Well, that future is here. The special interest pressures of the past have brought us to the brink of bankruptcy, and the continued pressures of "we want, we want" of today, which have caused many elected officials to cave in to the self-interest demands of many groups, will drive us over the edge.

We hope reason prevails in the call for volunteers, not only at the Fourth Precinct but in instituting the program wherever possible. This is a time to work together, to get over the obstacles we face.

And why not?

## Who should head the DEC?

Harold Berger, Long Island regional director of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), has announced that he will soon be leaving this post. And the process of picking his successor has begun.

A number of names have surfaced as possible replacements. Most are the usual political hacks who are attempting to ascend to a very important position of power.

The DEC is a function of the governor. The DEC has frightening power because it has the ability to establish rules and regulations, laws if you will, that have not been passed by the legislature or approved by the governor. The DEC has the power to act not only as the developer of rules, but also as the enforcer of rules. Then it becomes the accuser when it feels the rules have been violated, and also claims for itself the power to be the prosecutor, judge, jury, and to levy the sentence.

The countryside is littered with horror stories of how the DEC, utilizing its powers, has invaded the privacy of individuals and acted arrogantly and capriciously in leveling charges and enforcing penalties. The

victims have ranged from naive, well meaning citizens to municipalities and other forms of government. Every citizen in Suffolk County has been affected through having our tax dollars wasted on needless consultants, engineering studies and legal battles. The fees we pay today and will pay into the future for the handling of garbage are the result of sometimes stupid, more often insensitive and wasteful rulings by DEC officials, decisions that turn out to be wrong and counterproductive as far as the environment is concerned.

To give you a simple example, several years ago there was an oil spill in the Long Island Sound off East Marion. An East End contractor was engaged by the Army Corps of Engineers to clean it up. Stones that had been contaminated by oil had to be removed. A homeowner in the area who was building a long roadway on his property asked the contractor if he could purchase the stone. The stone was to be used as a roadbed and it was to be covered with tar or asphalt, which is made out of oil. The contractor discussed the proposition with the DEC representative. He was denied

permission and told by the DEC that the contaminated stones had to be taken to Islip and disposed of in their incinerator or trucked to New Jersey, which at that time was accepting construction debris. Unfortunately, this episode is typical of the actions of the DEC in the past.

Berger's replacement must be a sensible, realistic but hard-nosed leader. A person who can walk the fine line between the needs for a sensible approach to the environment and the common sense needs of the people of Long Island. The person must have the ability to take control of the department and bring some of the individuals within the department back into the mainstream.

The DEC cannot be allowed to continue to be an arrogant public enemy number one. Governor Mario Cuomo must make sure the person he places in charge of the DEC is not only sensitive to the environment, but sensitive to people and has the ability to manage and direct all those underneath him so that they realize they are not God. That their purpose is to serve people with common sense, sensitivity and dignity.

And why not?



# Ash deal, savings or arrogance?

While towns are now fighting over garbage, launching costly legal action to make sure they get their share to fund the large incinerators they were pressured into building by the DEC, another interesting development is taking place. The ash created by these incinerators is causing concern, anger, and the prospect of future financial woes.

Brookhaven Town spent at least \$5,000 from November of 1985 to May of 1986 in legal fees fighting the prospect of a regional ashfill in Yaphank. One of the members of the panel created by Governor Cuomo to site a regional ashfill was James Heil, who is now the commissioner of waste management for Brookhaven. He was,

at that time, employed by Hempstead Town in a waste management position, and was involved as a Hempstead official with American Ref-Fuel in the construction of its incinerator there.

Now, Heil is the key figure in the controversial ash for trash deal between Hempstead and Brookhaven. In that deal, Brookhaven will ship its garbage to the Hempstead Ref-Fuel incinerator, and Hempstead will send all its ash, which it now trucks out of the area, to be landfilled in Brookhaven. Because Hempstead accepts garbage from a number of municipalities, including, according to reports, some from New York City, opponents of the deal claim the Brookhaven landfill will become a

regional ashfill, the very thing the town spent so much money to prevent.

Town officials dispute that assertion, insisting it will not be a regional ashfill. Our view is that it will be, smaller perhaps than the original plan, but regional in nature since the garbage burned to create the ash is regional in scope.

Brookhaven claims the deal is the most economical way to go, and will save taxpayers millions of dollars. They claim the DEC is forcing them to accept the ash, or they will have to truck their garbage out of state. They produced a recent letter from DEC Commissioner Thomas Jorling which indicated that if Brookhaven does not go for the ash for trash deal, the DEC will force them into closing their landfill and trucking their garbage. But that letter was in response to one sent by the town asking the DEC to respond to scenarios that were specifically designed, in our view, to evoke a negative response.

Brookhaven Town signed a memorandum of understanding with Hempstead in the bright spotlight of publicity. They didn't bother to have independent tests done of the ash, relying instead on tests provided by the incinerator firm. All of those tests, it was later learned, were done on the same day. They ignored requests by concerned residents that random testing be done. Why? Are they afraid of finding something that might queer the deal?

Nor did they insist Hempstead accept full responsibility for any future pollution that may result from the ash burial in Brookhaven. Hempstead has refused to do so. Why? What are they afraid of?

Town officials claim the ash is perfectly safe, but others, including a large group of civic leaders, produced a report from a noted expert in the field who claims the ash is toxic and a threat to the environment. Are the town officials willing to gamble away future taxpayer dollars without guarantees? Why?

Although Brookhaven has recently put on line an impressive state-of-the-art

resource recovery facility, which could play a large part in reducing the waste stream, it appears hell bent on putting all its eggs into the Hempstead basket, for an 18-year period. It has caused many to wonder why. What is the motivating force? What agenda is at play?

Brookhaven is being pushed by the DEC, and pressured by Newsday, into accepting the deal. Why? Will they accept liability if the ash winds up polluting the water beneath the landfill? Why are they so anxious to save Hempstead dollars at the expense of Brookhaven residents?

Although there is a difference of opinion over the toxicity of the ash, the DEC claims it is perfectly fine to place the ash in the double-lined landfill recently constructed by Brookhaven to accept the ash. If the double-lined landfill is safe for ash, why isn't it safe for garbage? Why shouldn't the town accelerate its efforts to recycle, using that landfill for non-recyclables while the recycling effort takes hold?

And, why isn't the town willing to fight for that alternative? These town officials have spent countless taxpayer dollars on various suits, against the regional ashfill, about striped bass, and a host of other matters. Why isn't it willing to take a stand for common sense?

Aren't there any public officials in Brookhaven Town who are willing to stand up and say: "No! We're not going to commit ourselves to 18 years of accepting ash that could well be toxic and cause us problems in the future. We're going to fight to protect our residents from the questionable motives of the DEC in forcing us to accept truckloads of ash travelling our streets, threatening our environment with potential problems in our future."

There are rumors town officials are preparing to finalize the deal, even before the environmental impact review the town promised has been released. If they do, the concerns of residents will have been arrogantly ignored. But residents will have the opportunity to remember in November and bring those concerns to the voting booth!

And why not?

## We pay, we use

Once again stabilization of Dune Road, along the barrier beach in Westhampton, is on the agenda. The barrier beach properties are mostly owned by private individuals. In the seventies, these property owners persuaded the government to build groins to stop the erosion and protect their private homes. Public right-of-ways were developed to allow the government access to install the groins and to maintain them.

Suffolk Life discovered that although public funds were paying the cost for the construction of these groins, our government had entered into an agreement concerning the right-of-ways. Although these roads were public, the public was denied use of them.

We were incensed that the public was paying millions of dollars for the construction of these groins to protect private property, but the public was being denied the use of these right-of-ways as access to the beach. The landowners argued that if the public

had the right to use these roads, bus loads of people would come from the city and pollute their beaches. This was, of course, ludicrous.

The public became incensed and the politicians ceased building these groins. Where these groins stopped, erosion persisted. Homes were swept away and the road had to be closed. The affected homeowners sued and the matter has been in court ever since. Now, the town, county, state and federal governments have once again considered completing the Dune Road project. The question still has not been answered or addressed, "will the people who pay the taxes and who will be funding this project be guaranteed the right to cross over these right-of-ways and have access to the beach?"

Unless this very fundamental issue is addressed, a compromise found, not one cent of the taxpayers' money should be invested in this project.

And why not?

## People should have choice

# Luxury, necessity--can we afford it?

Controversy is raging over the proposal by the Suffolk County Health Department to mandate the fluoridation of all public water systems in Suffolk County.

Fluoride is a proven decay preventative in teeth. It is especially effective in children between the ages of five to 15. Most dentists routinely, during checkups and cleanings, give their patients fluoride treatments. Many toothpastes contain fluoride.

Suffolk County Health Department's proposal will cost over \$30 million to implement. It will cause water rates to increase by an estimated six percent.

It is estimated that there are only 25,000 children between five and 15 who are the targeted beneficiaries of this program. Most of these children visit dentists and receive personal fluoride treatments. Others brush with fluoride toothpaste. There are a limited few who do not receive fluoride in one form or another.

We question whether it makes sense to fluoridate all of Suffolk County's public water at a cost of \$30 million, resulting in an increase in rates, to solve the problem of reaching the few who may not have fluoride treatments. These are hard times, everyone is feeling the pinch. This program falls

into the category of another bureaucratic mandate that the taxpayers and ratepayers will be expected to fund out of an ever-dwindling amount of income.

Further, there are those people who, for religious or personal reasons, do not want to put any additional chemicals or medication into their systems. Why should they be forced to accept these chemical substances against their will?

The Suffolk County Health Department, which has built a huge bureaucracy over the years, is slated for cutbacks, as are most governmental agencies. We suspect this proposal to mandate fluoride in all public water

systems is a thinly-veiled attempt to keep the bureaucracy intact. The program, by its nature, will increase jobs and add to our tax burden.

Dr. David Harris, who heads the Suffolk County Department of Health, should have heard loud and clear what the taxpayers are saying: enough is enough. Cut back on government, don't enlarge it. We suggest that anyone who is opposed to what may be a waste of your dollars, or who may be opposed to being subjected to chemical treatment of their water, write to Dr. Harris and the Suffolk County Health Commissioners and voice their objections.

And why not?