

Washington is on the move

Maybe it is a shock that politicians told us what they were going to do before they were elected and, once elected, are delivering on the promises.

Washington is on the move. Congress, every week, passes part of the Contract with America. For years, this publisher has advocated a balanced budget amendment, line-item veto, a reorganization of Congress and, most important, that politicians return to the era where their word was their bond.

The media elite didn't take the

Republicans' Contract with America very seriously before November 8. They looked at it as a campaign gimmick. They didn't believe the Americans would elect enough Republicans to Congress to ever make any of the points meaningful. The Republicans took control of both houses and, under Newt Gingrich, have been bringing to a vote these important measures.

The balanced budget amendment is important, but without a mandatory two-thirds vote to override, it is weakened. However, at least it is

there. Of greater importance is giving the President the ability to veto individual items within the budget.

Americans have been driven crazy by non-related amendments being tagged onto bills of impact. The bill has to be passed in its entirety and it then becomes part of the budget. Republican and Democratic presidents must accept or reject the entire budget, and cannot weed out the waste. This is how the sex life of the tsetse fly gets studied, and also the amount of gas in a cow's burp gets measured. A pure waste of taxpayers' dollars, pure pork for a congressman's district.

We well remember former President Ronald Reagan pleading for the line-item veto. That year's budget was several feet thick. He pointed out the waste in the budget that he had to approve, or reject the entire budget or paralyze the government.

It doesn't make any difference whether the President is a Republican or Democrat, has a liberal or a conservative bent. The President is the boss. He is the head of the country, the chief fiscal officer. The buck stops here. If he has to take the heat, he should have the power to control

the flame.

We cannot see how any rational thinking citizen who is concerned for this country, its people and its future can oppose these common sense measures.

We are amused, but also frightened, by the antics of the mass media who have stories every day on how individual people and agencies will be adversely affected by the reduction in government resulting from the belt-tightening that is going on in Washington. Sure, you can make a case, a very dramatic one, by highlighting an individual and ignoring the good that is coming out of the restructuring of our government.

America has been on a 40-year march of socialism. The parade is over. There is going to be some hurt and having to be responsible for your own actions does take effort. My Dad used to say, "Play, pay." It was sound advice. It has guided me through a good part of my life.

The House has been moving at a fantastic pace. It will be interesting to watch how the Senate plays its part or how much we're going to have to pay if they fail to hold the line.

And why not?

Why did we go in?

When it was announced that the United States was going into Somalia to bring food and medicine to the people of that country, we questioned why we were doing it and predicted what the outcome would be.

Of course, the reason we got involved was children and adults were starving to death and suffering from the ravages of nature and man's greed. It was the nightly television images of those starving children that worked us up into a frenzy.

What was going on in Somalia was not much different than what goes on in many Third World countries. The big difference was that Somalia had gotten the focus of press, the attention and the hearts of the American people.

There is an old adage, "Give a man a loaf of bread and you will feed him for a day. Give a man a fish hook, some line and some bait and he will feed himself for an eternity." We have given the Somalis a loaf of bread and earned their disgust and hatred.

We are now pulling out our troops. Hopefully, without bloodshed. Somalia is no better off today than it was when we went in. The warlords are still in control. Their greed has not been curtailed. The poverty is still there. They won't produce any more food than they did in the past.

When we went into Somalia, there was talk that our efforts were being supported by countries from around the globe. Everybody was to pay their fair share. We doubt that they have. It would be nice if the President released an accounting of this venture, showing what we spent, what we were reimbursed for and how much the rest of the world cared.

Hopefully, the politicians who run Washington have learned a lesson. It's impossible for America to be its brother's keeper throughout the world. We have numerous problems right here at home that need addressing. Let's spend America's resources on Americans first.

And why not?

In lieu of death

An acquaintance of ours has often proposed an alternative to the death penalty when the subject came up from time to time.

His proposal is startling and controversial. Instead of killing somebody when they have been sentenced to death, why not give that person the opportunity of allowing themselves to be used for medical research?

The first thought that came to our

mind is how very barbaric. Isn't that what the Nazis did—experiment on people? In retrospect, however, the proposal has a lot of logic going for it.

A person who has been found guilty of a capital crime and faces termination of his or her life in retribution for the crimes committed could be given the opportunity to voluntarily take part in a medical research project that could save others' lives. The project could be advanced testing on potential life-saving medicine awaiting governmental approval. Earlier approval could result in the saving of many lives now taken by cancer, AIDS or other terminal diseases. Testing could be done in first class medical facilities, with comfortable housing facilities and sufficient amenities. We're not talking cruel, inhumane treatment here. We're talking comfort and choice.

The convicted person would be giving back to society what he or she has taken from it. Because human research can be conducted quicker, new drugs and procedures could be developed more quickly. Answers could be found that might take years through traditional research. If the project was voluntary, who could object?

As the New York State Legislature debates the finality of a death penalty, this is an option to be considered. Those who believe that only God should determine the death of an individual could possibly find solace in this. Those that demand death could be getting the potential of life in exchange.

It's an idea that is worth exploring. And why not?

Reform is needed

Just another frivolous suit

We received a disturbing letter from readers Mary and John Bender from Holbrook. They are being sued for \$1 million. Their life has been turned into a hell.

The Benders' son was a member of the Sachem School District wrestling team. In a scheduled practice, his opponent hurt his shoulder during a practice take-down. The parents of the injured boy are suing the Benders and the school district for \$1 million each.

According to the Benders, the boy was not left with any serious, permanent injuries. According to the Benders, when the track season opened, the injured boy was throwing shot put.

Suits like these are a dime a dozen, filed every day by contingency lawyers in hopes of finding someone with deep pockets who will be willing to make a settlement.

Contingency lawyers generally work on a commission; they receive

from one-third to 50% of the final settlement. Too many of these suits don't go anywhere. Few find their way to trial where a judge or jury decides the outcome.

Along the way, however, those being sued must engage attorneys. Defense attorneys do not work on contingency. They charge cold, hard bucks, upfront, to defend those who are being sued. Insurance companies weigh the risk and too often settle just to get rid of the suit. In the meantime, those who are being sued, whether there is any negligence on their part or not, have their lives turned upside down.

In the Benders' case, their insurance was canceled, forcing them into assigned risk pools and being denied some forms of insurance coverage they previously had. Although there is almost no chance that they can be found responsible, they are under constant threat from the lawsuit.

Suits like this are considered frivolous by many. They are a legalized

scam to extort money by using the system. The courts are jammed with this type of suit.

Congress is seriously looking at tort reform because of abuses such as this. The reform is part of the Republicans Contract with America. The English use a different system that we should emulate. Anyone is free to sue in England. If you lose, you must pay for the cost of the defense. This cuts down substantially on suits.

We would like to see America go two steps further. The losing attorneys should be personally required to pay the legal fees of the winning attorneys. The losing party suing on frivolous grounds should be required to pay those whom they have sued the amount that they sued them for. If these two practices were put into place, you can bet frivolous suits would come to a screeching halt and people would only sue if they had ironclad proof of being injured through negligence.

And why not?

Less talk, more action needed

Of all the problems we face on Long Island, the greatest is the fact we too often talk our problems to death without putting solutions in place. We have had summits and studies galore, yet the problems continue and, in fact, mount. We need to talk less and act more.

A prime example of that "talk a lot but act little" attitude can be found in the matter of energy rates. We have the highest rates in the nation. We all know that. Those rates have driven businesses, and homeowners scurrying for more economical areas to do business and live. We have long suffered these problems. They haven't been solved, not even eased. They continue and they grow.

Our high rates are the result of a monopolistic utility which sought to build a nuclear plant in the wrong place. They are the result of a Public Service Commission (PSC) which cares little about the ratepayers; their main concern is the utilities they are supposed to be regulating.

Let's start with those two factors. First, the Shoreham agreement put together by former Governor Mario Cuomo and LILCO (Long Island Lighting Company) Chairman William Catocinos, must be revisited. The Cuomo agreement contained no flexibility to protect the ratepayers. When conditions upon which the agreement was based changed, LILCO reaped the benefits; the ratepayers were ignored. When interest

rates dropped and LILCO refinanced its debt at lower rates, and oil prices decreased, LILCO reaped the benefit, pocketed the savings; the ratepayers received no benefit. LILCO received payment for the costs of their ill-advised plant, a profit margin to boot, and there never has been a full accounting of the terms of that deal. There should be, and we urged Governor George Pataki to order such an audit without delay. Long Island's ratepayers should not be forever burdened with the agreement, called by Wall Street experts "the sweetheart deal of the century," which has restored LILCO and its stockholders to financial health at the expense of the ratepayers.

The PSC was a major participant in the creation of that deal. The PSC did nothing to prevent LILCO from benefiting from the changing economic times, nor have they done anything to require LILCO to pay down its Shoreham debt. Instead, LILCO has enhanced the condition of its stockholders, paying higher returns than the norm while the ratepayers pay the highest rates in the nation.

We have cried out for a reform of the PSC for years; it has never come. Pataki claims he will institute reform, but his selection of a longtime PSC commissioner as PSC chairman breeds doubt of his words. Long Island officials should demand that Pataki convene a meeting here on Long Island to clearly spell out his reform plan, and the deadline by which it will be accomplished. We need a plan of action, not promises.

Competitive power is being advanced as the answer to our energy rate problem. Thus far, there has been a lot of talk, but few concrete facts to bolster our hopes. If we can buy power cheaper, how will we get it to the ratepayers' homes? Can we condemn just the transmission lines? What happened to the franchises local municipalities once had with the utility for the use of public-owned land for their poles and lines? That's public land, not LILCO land. It's time we stopped allowing LILCO to use our land to bankrupt us.

There's an effort underway to obtain PSC permission to wheel low-cost power to our school buildings. That should be done without delay. Ratepayers not only pay the highest rates for their homes, they also pay those same exorbitant rates for their schools and their municipal buildings, to say nothing about the higher prices we pay because of the higher cost of energy. The New York Power Authority (NYPA) doles out low-cost power to schools and municipalities in upstate New York, why not here? NYPA has a plant in Holtsville that produces energy LILCO insists it does not need, and complains it pays more for that electricity than it can produce it for in its own plants. Use the 150 megawatts that plant can produce and earmark it for our schools and municipalities. While that will not help the homeowners and businesses with their own energy costs, it would have an impact on their tax bills. NYPA handles approximately 8,000 megawatts of power annually;

Long Island gets about 800 megawatts. We have long been short changed. It's time to correct this imbalance.

While we're at it, however, we need to eliminate the guaranteed rate of return given to utilities. That utility benefit is outdated; it served to protect the public from a utility's bankruptcy and disruption of electricity to the users. With the rate of return in place, if LILCO sells less, the customers pay more. Competitive power will not work unless the rate of return is eliminated, nor would there be any advantage for supplying low-cost power to schools. The governor must give these matters a top priority if his words of bringing about change are to be believed.

The public must also talk less and act more as well. We all complain about the high cost of education and taxes, then take no action when it comes to voting in school board, local or county elections. Unfortunately, school board members and politicians have long felt the complaints by the public, in most instances, is little more than talk, and that a large percentage of the complaining public won't turn out to vote. They count on that apathy to keep them in office.

All our problems can't be solved in a short period of time. But unless we take that first step, the journey toward solutions will never start. Think about it!

And why not?

Making a 20 year mistake

The Brookhaven Town Board, by a 6 to 1 vote last week, with Councilman Edward Hennessey in opposition, moved forward with a proposal to lock the town into a recycling contract for the next 20 years. If the town board formally approved that action at its town board meeting yesterday, as some officials predicted, the Brookhaven taxpayers will have been poorly served.

The Star deal would have the town foot the costs of the recycling facility, a cost currently estimated at \$11 million, with the facility designed, constructed and operated by Star. State aid said to be about \$5 million will lower the town's liability, if that projection of aid is not wiped out in the current wave of state cost-cutting. According to a one-page breakdown of the costs of the Star proposal, secured from the town, the total annual operating costs of the Star deal, which would include an additional \$355,000 per year in the town's debt service to cover the construction costs for the facility, would be \$18.6 million, a savings of \$3.9 million over the current disposal costs of the town's Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) currently in effect with the Town of Hempstead.

That savings might be worth cheering about except for one additional factor: the Town of Babylon has put forth a competing IMA that, according to Babylon officials, would reap an even greater savings.

A cost analysis attached to the Babylon IMA plan indicates the cost of the current IMA with Hempstead to be \$21.9 million, while the cost of the Babylon proposal would be approximately

\$14 million, for a savings of approximately \$8 million. That, based on the Babylon analysis, would offer Brookhaven a \$4 million savings higher than the Star proposal. Another important factor in the Babylon proposal is that the contract term could be anywhere from "one month to 20 years," with Brookhaven setting the desired terms. While construction of a transfer station would be involved, the construction costs of that facility would be far less than those involved in the Star deal. Babylon would utilize an already built recycling facility to handle Brookhaven's garbage.

According to sources, some Brookhaven officials fear the fact that the former operator of the Babylon recycling facility declared bankruptcy clouds Babylon's ability to deliver on the terms of its agreement. They fear, too, that a need to gain approval of the Babylon-Brookhaven IMA from the bankruptcy court would delay the implementation date of such an agreement. While we can understand those fears, they raise some additional concerns. What happens if the Star operation meets the same fate as the former Babylon operator? If Star should declare bankruptcy in the future, will the town have a building and no one to operate it? Will the town then have to scramble to put together a municipal operation? At what cost? Does the town know?

While the financial ramifications of the two proposals certainly give cause for serious scrutiny, the term of the Star proposal, which includes a required minimum amount of garbage from the town to avoid a financial penalty, is of

even greater concern. We have long stated that towns should avoid long term contractual agreements for a host of reasons. A 20-year contract eliminates the benefits of changing technology and revised regulations. The minimum requirements place a burden on the town to deliver or else pay, and act as a deterrent to increased efforts to increase recycling efforts.

Conditions change, and Brookhaven officials are well aware of this fact. Brookhaven has made efforts to lure away the ash disposal contracts that Islip Town had with Babylon, and more recently offered a lower tipping fee for the ash being generated by the Huntington-Smithtown jointly operated incinerator facility. Babylon countered by lowering its tipping fee in both instances, and the towns with the ash, which has now become a revenue generating stream in the garbage business, wound up saving money.

In both instances, Islip and Huntington-Smithtown had shorter contractual terms and escape clauses which would have permitted a change. Is there an escape clause in the 20-year Star deal? We asked Brookhaven officials that question last week. We requested, and were promised, contractual information concerning an escape clause. That information never came.

Opponents of the proposed Star deal have raised concerns about the fact that former Nassau County Republican Chairman Joseph Margiotta, who is rumored to have close ties with some Brookhaven officials, is a consultant for

Star, a fact they claim puts a political taint on the town's action to approve the Star proposal. And the fact that Babylon Town has a Democratic majority, while Brookhaven is solid Republican, is seen by some as a stumbling block for a Brookhaven-Babylon IMA agreement.

The tragedy of the aftermath of the landfill closing edict by the state is the failure of towns to get together in a regional plan to deal with the garbage crisis. Instead, towns have been striking out on their own, some building costly incinerators and others exploring composting operations. The lack of a regional solution to the garbage crisis has cost the taxpayers of this county millions upon millions of dollars in extra costs. The state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) offers rhetoric about the need for a regional solution, then pushes towns via consent orders and deadlines to rush forward toward costly individual solutions. The proposed Babylon IMA offers a form of regional solution, utilizing the already built facility of one town to meet the needs of another.

We hope Brookhaven Town officials decided to delay action yesterday on the Star proposal to further analyze all aspects of the proposals before them, to insure the one they select is in the best interests of the public. All aspects of these proposals will be fully explored in the weeks ahead and in the election campaigns soon to start. If that future analysis raises even more questions about the town's selection process, the voters will have an opportunity for the last word. And that's as it should be.

And why not?

A special day for taxpayers

When is the last time you heard of a government of any level having a Tax Refund Day during which a refund of surplus budget funds are distributed to the taxpayers? Not very often, if ever, but that is what happened last Saturday in Greenport Village.

Village officials were prepared to hand out property tax refund checks to all taxpayers of the village, checks averaging \$215 to the typical homeowner, a refund of 23% of their current year's tax. And, according to village officials, village property taxes will be cut a full 50% when the new tax bills come out in June.

Sure, as some have been quick to point out, that surplus was not achieved entirely through the financially efficient efforts of the officials. The cost savings were achieved, at least in part, through the abolition of the village's police department. Not all of the savings of this abolition will wind up in the pockets of the taxpayers to stay, however. With the Town of Southold now providing the police protection for the village area, there will be an added cost to taxpayers for this service, although not as much as for their own department.

Naysayers also question the method of distributing the refunds—handed out to the taxpayers in person

instead of putting them in the mail—and insist the special Tax Refund Day is little more than a public relations ploy shortly before scheduled village elections. Village officials claim the hand distribution was done to minimize postal costs.

Despite all this rhetoric, the real winners, in our view, are the taxpayers. It was the taxpayers who, in a special referendum, voted to abolish the police department and they are now benefiting, financially at least, from

Politics should end

Selecting a new regent

This week the New York State Assembly and Senate are expected to choose from a number of candidates to fill a seat on the Board of Regents, which has been held by Long Islander Floyd Linton, who chose not to seek a new term.

There are a number of people who have placed their names in contention. Among those seeking the position are

that action. All too often these days, governments cut services to the taxpayers, who see no refund or cut in taxes returned through those service reductions. Most times those reductions are forced by governmental overspending in other areas. Most budget surpluses are eaten up by sleight of hand budget maneuvers or spending increases.

It is refreshing to see the taxpayers being made the primary beneficiary of a budget surplus by a governmental entity. If there is a bit of political hay-

making done in the refund process, so what else is new? What government official ever returned surplus tax dollars to the taxpayers without seeking a little credit for the action?

From where we sit, Greenport officials deserve whatever credit they will reap from their Tax Refund Day celebration. We hope they bask in the spotlight of achievement. It might inspire them, and other government officials, to work towards more Tax Refund Day festivities.

And why not?

Richardson runs a private reading school, assisting children to read who have been failed by the current methods being taught in the public schools. Richardson maintains that the whole language method of teaching reading came into favor because of financial reasons rather than giving the children a better way of learning to read, write and speak.

Bruce Brodsky, president of the Long Island School Board Association; and Robert Johnson, former publisher of Newsday; Charles Richardson, one of the country's foremost proponents of the phonics system of reading and an outspoken educational advocate and critic.

Richardson would be a good first start in reforming our educational facilities throughout the state. We would hope both the Assembly and the Senate would want their selection of a Regent to be in the best interest of the children. If that is their primary concern, they have to choose Richardson.

Richardson has the kids' best interest at heart, and he can fight from a scientific and informed basis.

The New York State Board of Regents has for too long been made up of political types who have acted more as rubber stamps than as advocates for a good, solid education. If we are to bring much needed reform to the Board of Regents, and improvement in our educational system, we must select quality candidates rather than political favorites.

Richardson is neither complacent, an engineer and educator. He became involved in education when he personally witnessed the problems children were having. He is extremely well-read, published and respected.

Richardson is neither complacent,

And why not?

Back door pork

It has been rare for a congressman or senator to say "no" to pork, particularly pork at his back door.

Last November, voters from the First Congressional District sent Michael Forbes to Washington. He represents the new breed of politician—bright, conservative and courageous.

Forbes, surprisingly for a first-term congressman, was appointed to the House Appropriations Committee. One of the first pieces of pork out of the barrel was the rebuilding of Penn Station in New York City, a make-

work project costing \$315 million.

Forbes had the courage to vote "no." Many were taken by surprise, as congressmen generally never say no to a project in their home state. Forbes said, "If I am going to stand up and say no to waste in government spending, then I better have the courage to do it in my home area."

What a breath of fresh air. Maybe there is hope for America after all.

And why not?

Pussycats but angry

Thoughts from the supermarket line

Most Americans, deep down, are pussycats. We are mushmeats at heart. Most of us support our churches through the religions that we practice. We collectively reach out to help others. We belong to community groups and service organizations. Collectively, we help our neighbors.

We crumble at every image of a hungry child or a picture of a forlorn animal that is in need of help. We give, and we give generously.

When we can picture our hard earned tax dollars going to feed the hungry and help the legitimately disadvantaged, few of us complain. Why then is there such an uproar and clamoring for welfare reform?

Although we may be generous, we are not suckers. We don't mind giving until it hurts, but we cry out in anger when it is shoved back into our faces.

The federal food stamp program is probably the one most notable program that many support but have total disdain for. Yes, we support providing necessary, proper nutrition for children. We don't want children going to bed without an adequate meal and pains of hunger. We do not want to see pictures of children abroad with distended stomachs from hunger and malnutrition. We won't tolerate it in American children.

On the other hand, we are incensed, frustrated and angry at what

we see in the supermarket line. People buying all the luxuries of life, cookies, cakes, prepared foods and sugar-filled fruit punches, the best of the name brands and the quality cuts of meat. Rarely is there a newspaper coupon in sight as the bill gets paid with food stamps. Rarely are there visible signs of poverty. Clothes are as good as those that we wear, bought with our hard earned money. We watch as food stamp recipients get into cars newer and better than we can afford. Our conscience fights with itself. We want to help the truly needy. We don't want to supplement those who economically appear to be on our par.

We have no way of knowing what

is legitimate need or fraud on the system. We cry out in anguish when we see the food stamps being used for luxury foods and on stuff that we know is no good for our own children, and cannot afford if it was.

The food stamp program is an ever-increasing and rapidly-expanding welfare program that must be curtailed. It should not be allowed to become a way of life, an expectation, a right, a due. It's one of those systems developed by the bureaucrats that was good intentioned, but is rapidly becoming a cost that is no longer affordable. More stringent requirements are needed. The rampant fraud must be halted; a better way must be found.

And why not?

Why are we in garbage business?

For decades, municipalities maintained dumps as facilities to dispose of garbage collected within the town. This was a convenience to the residents.

To the best of our knowledge, there are no constitutional requirements mandating that the towns operate these facilities. If they did operate dumps, however, by regulation they were to operate them in a prescribed manner as determined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Over the years, the DEC issued various rules and regulations that forced the residents of the towns to pay millions of dollars to bring the dumps into compliance. During this period of ultra-regulation, we often had questioned: Why is the town in the garbage business to start with?

Over the last five years, the DEC required all municipalities to close their dumps. Towns, instead of saying, "Okay state, we will close the dumps, we are out of the garbage business," have become involved in multiple schemes to rid themselves of garbage. These schemes pushed by the state include multi-million dollar incinerators that indebted some towns for up to 30 years in the future. Multi-million dollar transfer and recycling facilities that take the garbage from individual carters, pre-sort out the valuables and truck the remaining waste stream to municipal incinerators or out-of-state landfills were built by DEC edict. Each step along the way, the local governments got themselves deeper into debt.

The Star deal

Brookhaven Town blindly tried to comply with the rules and regulations

and has recently been considering entering into a 20-year arrangement with Star Recycling. The Suffolk Life editorial board met with the officials from Star this past week. Our concern for the residents of Brookhaven Town was expressed by declaring inadvisability of the town locking themselves into a 20-year contract. Technology is changing rapidly. There is gold in garbage, and there will probably be more in the future as marketing conditions change and our ability to refocus on using discards as raw materials for new production increases.

A vivid example is newsprint, an asset that was once buried as the recycling market was too low to pay for carting. Today, this asset, worth nothing or just a few dollars two years ago, is fetching \$180 per ton. Plastics and glass, as well as metal, have all had tremendous upsurges in their value as re-claimed resources.

Yard waste is being composted, turned into humus that home gardeners and farmers are paying premiums for. The residue waste is at a premium also, as it is the feed stock for the huge incinerators that have been built for generating electricity and heat.

Bidding wars

Municipalities that were paying outlandish trucking fees now find themselves in bidding wars to acquire this garbage as fuel for these plants. In the middle of the garbage mess—or opportunity, if you are awake enough to look at it as this—are multi-million dollar organizations who are the middle men and want their franchises protected.

To protect their franchises, they offer municipalities what appears on the surface to be a quick, today solution to a problem that may not exist tomorrow.

They require the municipality to enter into long-term contracts. They require the municipality to bond its children's future to provide funds to build these facilities. They then enter the picture as operators. They salvage the reclaimables and basically keep all revenue for themselves.

The contract often requires the municipality to guarantee a minimum flow of garbage from the town. If tonnage requirements are not met, the municipalities are further forced to pay subsidies, making up for the shortfall.

Municipalities have no legal way, according to the Supreme Court, to mandate that the garbage stays within their borders. The haulers are free to take the waste to the local town facility or, if they can make more money by taking it to a competitive facility, they are free to do so.

Budget games

When the garbage crisis first started to develop because of state regulations, there appeared no way out. Politicians, being what they are, saw the garbage crisis as a way to manipulate budgets. They transferred sanitation costs out of the general budget. When they took these items out of the general budget, it reduced the general budget and created the illusion that taxes for the town had been decreased under their astute administration. What they reduced on one hand they added on another, charging higher than needed tipping fees, which they blamed on the carters. They then set up municipal garbage districts, taking away choice and individual competition between garbage companies.

When general town taxes and garbage associated fees were added together, the taxpayers saw huge increases

in the combination taken by municipal taxing authorities.

Brookhaven Town officials appear to be wearing blinders. They were ready to sign a 20-year contract with Star last week. This contract was the result of over two years of pussyfooting around. Star had hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in legal fees, engineering studies and lobbying efforts. At the 11th hour, American Refuel, the current company the town is in contract with in an "ash for cash" garbage removal deal, saw their business evaporating and came up with more lucrative terms for the town.

Babylon Town officials entered the picture, offering the use of their recycling facility, already built, offering disposal fees less than the current charges and less than the Star offer.

Town backs off

After an editorial in Suffolk Life questioning the entire arrangement and the validity of signing a 20-year contract, the Brookhaven Town Board backed off their position with Star. They are looking at the other alternatives. One alternative they are not considering is getting out of the garbage business, or modifying their involvement. The town could throw up their hands, allow open competition whereby businesses and homeowners negotiate the best deal with individual carters. It would then be up to the carters to negotiate with the middle men for the disposal of the refuse.

If the town wanted to maintain some control, they could continue with garbage districts that the carters bid for. This would still give them some leverage and presumably, a better price for homeowners and businesses. Either way, there is no need for the municipality to invest the taxpayers' money in building facilities, paying maintenance fees for the organizations who are in the middle of recycling and transferring garbage.

Why subsidize?

Why should the residents of the town be expected to subsidize the organizations who are in the private, profit-making business of recycling and garbage disposal? It just does not make any sense to do business the way it used to be.

We don't build manufacturing plants for entrepreneurs who want to make yoyos. We don't build shopping centers for profit-making retailers to sell their goods. We don't even tax ourselves to build hospitals to serve the communities. Why then, should we be building garbage facilities for the organizations that make their profits from garbage?

In Brookhaven, we are talking about investing about \$25 million, including interest, in this transfer-recycling facility. We are talking about guaranteeing Star a flow for 20 years even though we have no control over the flow, nor do we have a twit's idea of what new technology will bring, nor what the free capitalistic markets will pay for the assets found in garbage.

If Star, American Refuel or any of the other trash for cash organized garbage companies can make a buck out of refuse, let them put up their own money, venture the risk and enjoy the profits. They don't need the taxpayers' investment to solve a problem that is no longer the municipalities' responsibility.

Our dumps are closed; we should be out of the business and free of the debt.

And why not?

Fact or fiction?

Oh! So many crises

Every day, the daily newspapers are carrying stories of crises on the national and the state level. It is the Republicans' fault, they proclaim.

In their attempt to carry out their pre-election contract and pledges of downsizing government, reducing our debt and tax burden, they have been met with stories of how children are going to go hungry, senior citizens abandoned and the middle class crushed. The rich, fat cats are the only ones who will benefit, according to the authors of these articles.

For those of us who follow government carefully, we could laugh at the dishonesty being portrayed if we did not realize that people who do not follow news closely could be taken in by these unabashed lies.

Yes, some programs are being cut back, but what do we mean by being cut back? Eliminated, cut out or just being brought under control? The cost of government has accelerated far beyond the rate of inflation. Most of the cuts coming down on both the federal and the state level are designed to bring these increases in line with the rate of inflation. Some programs have been growing at double digit rates while inflation has been at the 2% to 3% level for the last

several years. Many of the proposed cuts are cuts in increases to programs, not to programs.

An analysis of these programs into the future indicates that if left unchecked, these increases will lead to huge increases in taxes paid for mostly by the middle class.

It is not very difficult to show a picture of a hungry child and attach copy to the graphic, alleging that all children in America will go hungry. You just leave out the copy that the program will still be in existence, but will be stopped from growing at an alarming rate. Kids will still be fed. Those eligible and needy will have their needs met.

Every vested interest, particularly those that have become the honeycomb for contract agencies, are crying out in anguish. Their troughs from which they draw huge salaries are threatened to be cut back. Truth be damned. Create the image. Lies, whether covert or direct, are part of today's communication skills. It is the individual that is more important than the truth. Confuse them if you can; if not, create the question, the illusion, that each will be personally affected by the downsizing of our government.

When somebody tells you that your hospital is going to be closed, children are not going to be fed, older people are

going to be warehoused, ask them what is their source of information. Question the source and don't accept any undocumented studies that were created to come to a predetermined conclusion.

America's government has grown too big. We are attempting to do too much for too few, draining the resources of too many. One thing we must all keep in mind is the salaries that we are paying the multi-layers of administrators of the various programs. It is not uncommon today to have those in the bureaucracy within the government, and in many contract agencies, making \$50,000, \$100,000 and \$200,000 in the guise of helping people. They may be nonprofit, corporate structures, but that does not limit those who head these agencies from pulling down huge salaries and perks that taxpayers only dream about. There are few altruistic people in or surrounding government. Their intentions may be good, but their primary instinct is to get theirs first, and they do.

Look with a jaundiced eye at those who are crying the loudest, using the extremes to make their case. Find out what they are making, the perks they are enjoying. Demand the facts, and the picture they are trying to sell might well have a totally different color.

And why not?

Putting it into perspective

As residents of New York State, you have been deluged daily by the liberal media, newspapers and television ads decrying the effects of the Pataki budget.

You have heard the outcry of cut-backs in schools, education, medicine and social services. Let's look at the facts, "Just the Facts." A recently released report by the Public Policy Institute on key economic and social indicators for New York State reveals some very startling statistics:

Public school costs per pupil in all of New York ranks number two in the nation. We are at \$9,993 (1992-93). The average of the other nine top spending states is \$6,918. New York State is 32.9% higher than the big 10.

State and local welfare spending per

capita (1992-93) in New York is number one with \$1,150 per capita, 99.6% higher than the other big 10 spenders.

Growth in employment (1939-93) in New York, 87%, ranks 43rd out of 50 states. The U.S. average is plus 324%. New York State is worse than average at minus 73%.

Changes in manufacturing employment (1970-93)—New York is dead last, losing 44.2%. New York State is worse than average by minus 640.6%.

Per capita personal income growth (1993)—New York ranks number 43 with a puny 2.6% increase. The United States average was 3.2%. New York State percentage is worse than average by 18.8%.

What does it cost New York to be

the leader in these negative indicators? State and local taxes per capita show that of the 10 most taxed states, New York State is the leader at \$3,532 per capita. This is 64.1% more than the other 10 heaviest taxed states, which average \$2,152.

New York is second only to Alaska in state and local taxes per \$1,000 of person income (1992). New Yorkers pay \$157.71 per \$1,000 per capita. This is 36.9% over the nation's average.

By now, you are probably saying the rich must be the beneficiaries. New York's corporate taxes are second highest in the nation, 75% over the nation's norm.

Property taxes state-wide rank us fourth highest in the nation at \$1,177

per capita—68.8% over the nation's norm. And as those of us who have to pay them know, real estate taxes on Long Island are substantially higher than throughout the state.

New York is number one at \$1,151 on state and local spending per capita on welfare. This is 91% above the nation's average. Guess what? The cost to administer the average Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) case, a federal program, in New York State is \$1,156. This is the money that goes to the bureaucrats that does not go to the welfare recipients. It is 104.2% higher than the nation's average.

New York State ranks 45 out of 50 with students who graduate from high school. We are 9.6% below the nation's average. We are 45th in SAT and ACT scores (1982-89), and are 163.6% below the nation's average. In the 1982-89 period of high investment, we went down .07% in achievement.

Some good news is that we did not top the list in crime. We are only 14th, which is 3.5% above the nation's average.

New York is about midway in the population covered by health insurance at 86.5%, which is 1.4% above the nation's average.

Maybe we have the kind and cost of government we deserve. New York State was 44th, which is 7.3% below the nation's average in the 1992 presidential vote. Just over half the eligible population voted.

These statistics indicate that New York State is spending far in excess on education, welfare and government. We are receiving little in return for the money invested. Yet we hear the constant wail about only small proposed cut-backs.

Governor Pataki and his budget people realize this. They have just begun to cut the surface. They have got a long way to go to rein in the cost of New York State. As we have witnessed by those crying the loudest, fat is a painful thing to cut, but somebody has to do it.

And why not?

Give those raises back

The Catacosinos' twins

*Off-track betting is a non-partisan, political boondoggle. Off-track betting is a quasi-public organization sanctioned by the state, run as a nonprofit corporation, controlled by politicians, crunched in patronage and political opportunism.

OTB, once a substantial money maker for the county, is on the verge of not making any profit at all. Horse betting off the track traditionally was one of the more lucrative enterprises of organized crime. Some years ago, the state, in its collective wisdom, decided the way to neutralize the mob was to take away betting on the horses by setting up OTB organizations throughout the state. This would diminish the mob's effects, cut into their profits and provide new, huge revenue sources for the state, cities and counties, state politicians said. Both the Democrats and the Republicans saw it as a new opportunity for patronage and a source of political fund-raising through dollars that could be extracted from those who were employed by OTB, and through vendors who provided service.

In a rare display of unity and non-partisanship, the Democrats and Republicans agreed to split all jobs down the middle. Whether it be the presidency or a labor position, each political party got the opportunity of equally putting their hands in the till.

Recently, Frank Jones, OTB president, resigned to make way for Howard DeMartini. DeMartini, the former Suffolk County Republican Committee chairman, not only got the gold ring but was immediately rewarded with a \$6,000 increase, bringing his salary to \$116,109.

DeMartini's Democratic counterpart, Frank Locorriere, likewise picked up another \$6,000 in their game of musical chairs. The presidency is determined by the political party that is in power at the time of the appointment.

DeMartini is a good, political operative. He was an effective leader of the County Republican organization. To his credit, he was successful in gaining several seats for the Republicans. With this said about his political expertise, one has to question if he is worth \$110,000 a

year. Why does he need the salary increased to \$116,109? Why is there a need for two "presidents," one with the title of vice-president, but, making over \$100,000 each?

In the real world, most of us are paid on the basis of productivity. Why should politicians be shielded from these realities? Wouldn't it be more prudent to have offered DeMartini a \$6,000 bonus provided he returned OTB to its former profitability?

It's time that the county legislature and the county executive take a cold, hard look at OTB. County Executive Robert Gaffney had suggested early in his administration privatizing this organization. This was one of his better ideas but, like many of his ideas, it never came to fulfillment.

Is there no limit?

Harvesting the fetus?

Being a cynical journalist, seldom am I shocked by an idea or a concept.

This past week, however, a phrase was used that literally jacked me off my seat. We were watching "Chicago Hope," a so-so CBS series that is based around radical medical procedures and a cast of personalities.

One of the sequences involved the chainsaw amputation of a car accident victim's leg. Radical, but believable.

The second scene of the evening dealt with fetal tissue transplants.

Like most Americans, I have become desensitized to abortions. Though not my belief, I normally do not react. The doctor portrayed in this show used the term "harvesting the fetus." This totally blew my mind and yanked me out of my apathy.

The segment dealt with a father, mother and three children. The father had Parkinson's disease. The disease

Why not put the operation of OTB out to bid? Let it be run by private entrepreneurs, free of politics. The bidder who guaranteed the people of Suffolk the highest rate of return would be the one who received the franchise.

OTB is one area the county does not have to be in. Outside of being part of the political patronage team, it has little social redeeming value. It could be run more effectively, profitably and customer friendly by outside interests.

LILCO's chairman, Bill Catacosinos, was recently forced to rescind his raise because of public reaction. DeMartini and Locorriere should be forced to rescind theirs. We are receiving no more value for more money.

And why not?

could possibly be reversed if he was to receive an injection of fetal brain fluid tissue into his brain. Because of other medical complications, he could not receive donor fetal tissue.

He and his wife made the conscious decision to conceive a child and received the court's permission to use the fetus she was carrying for the sole purpose of providing the tissue that he sought. Harvesting the fetus; what a grotesque thought. Medical cannibalism.

Done for shock value? Mission accomplished. Planting an idea of things to come? More than a possibility. Television shows often are used subliminally to plant the concept of acceptable behavior. Whether it be sex, violence or degradation of the soul, body or mind, ideas promoted by television have a way of becoming accepted human behavior.

There is something to be said about a woman's right to control her own destiny and her own body. There is some

thing to be said about life beginning at conception and the need to protect this innocent life. There are arguments for abortions through the first three months of pregnancy, but that's about where middle America leaves off. Few people condone abortions in the eighth or ninth month that are legal in New York State. Few people know they are legal and are performed.

We can think of almost no one who would condone the concept of a woman immediately becoming pregnant to a man through abortion. One in children? There has and free-is it? Is there not coming too have no rever of. Is there no based upon rights ex inter

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Quantities. Consult Your Phone Directory For Phone Numbers.

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