

In school districts

Low turn out--first voting round

The first round of school budgets and selection of school board candidates was met with low voter turnout. It has been estimated that less than ten percent of those eligible to vote cast their ballots.

School unions were very active in getting out their membership, as were others who had a vested interest in the passage of the budgets. These unions also supported school board candidates and were successful in electing those who they felt could be counted on to be favorable to the school union's interest in upcoming contract negotiations.

Taxpayers who will pay for these contracts, and, in fact, already are

paying between 60 and 70 percent of their real estate taxes for school costs, were noticeably absent. Many taxpayers have been beaten down over the years by repeated school votes and have felt their vote and voice does not count. But each vote does count, particularly for school board candidates who are willing to stand up to the educational establishment and say, "enough is enough."

Long Island school teachers currently average over \$48,000 in annual compensation. They work, by contract, 180 days a year. The average classroom time, by contract, is under five hours per day. Administrators receive salaries that top \$100,000. In

addition, both teachers and the administrative staff receive benefits that can range anywhere from 33 to 60 percent of the base salary.

We do not want to see our educators poorly paid. We do, however, realize that we have a limit to what we can contribute through our taxes, and a balance must be reached. Teachers' demands have far exceeded inflation with salary increases ranging from 15 to 25 percent over two and three year contracts. The school board is empowered to negotiate these contracts. The members of the school board are chosen by you, the taxpayers. Some candidates are being openly backed by the teachers and other groups who

have a vested interest in the educational establishment. Other candidates, mostly independents, are out there alone. They are the candidates who will ask the hard questions, and can be counted on to express the viewpoint of the taxpayer. It is these candidates we have an obligation to support.

As your school district proposes its budget and asks you to express your vote for the school board candidates, do yourself a favor, do your community a favor, vote. In large part, you will be determining how much your tax increase will be in the future.

If you want tax relief, if you want fiscal sanity, take part in the voting process.

And why not?

Let's get answers!

Suffolk County Legislators have been laboring to give the impression they are cost conscious and savings minded. There's been a lot of talk about freezes and such. But when an opportunity presented itself recently to explore some meaningful cost cutting opportunities, most turned tail and fled.

That opportunity came with a proposal that would have put the county's bus transportation system out for competitive bidding. Currently, the county utilizes a negotiated contract system with bus companies. The county provides the buses, pays the expenses, and also provides a margin of profit for the company owners. Audits in the past have raised some serious questions about the authenticity of claimed expenses, and have recorded a number of instances of overpayment for the bus service.

Transportation experts have related how many municipalities have saved thousands upon thousands of dollars through the competitive bidding process. But for some strange reason, Suffolk County officials have been extremely reluctant to even consider the possibility. They have raised doom and gloom possibilities about anticipated problems from companies that may submit low bids for routes, although the mere inclusion of a performance bond in the bidding contract could protect against those fears. Bus companies, prior to the legislative meeting during which the competitive bid proposal was rejected, worried riders with scare messages about cancellation of service if bidding was approved, and bused people to the legislative meeting to protest the action.

Now, we have learned, county officials have taken insurance measures to offset any possibility the competitive bidding proposal might come back to life. In January, the county renegotiated what has always been a one-year

contract with the various bus companies, and has approved three-year contracts with five of the six companies involved.

Why are county officials so protective about the current system? Why have they gone to a three-year contract just three months after the competitive bidding proposal was first introduced? Why, after all these years, was it necessary to lock the current system in place? Was it to prevent any possibility of competitive bidding for that length of time? Why? The answers to those questions should be the focus of a special investigation into the county's transportation system. We challenge the legislators to approve such an investigation, approve subpoena powers to look into the records of both the county and the bus companies. Let's find out what is really going on.

If we are going to be serious about saving the taxpayers' dollars, we had better look into all areas of government for possible savings. There should be no sacred cows. If on the one hand we consider placing the county infirmary, which has always been under county operation, into private hands, shouldn't we also seriously look at possible cost savings competitive bidding could bring for transportation?

These questions will remain, and county officials will continue to be under a cloud of suspicion until a complete investigation is made into the reasons why they have rejected competitive bidding and have now extended contracts to protect the current system. There's something about this entire matter that smells to high heaven, and it's time the matter is investigated to find out what is going on.

And why not?

CHANGING SIGNS OF THE TIMES



Bald Hill alternative

Residents of Sayville are up in arms about the possibility of a NEXRAD weather station being installed in the midst of their suburban community.

It has been alleged that the radar beams are potentially dangerous. It has been suggested they can cause cancer and other metabolic malfunctions, particularly in children.

The West Sayville location should be scrapped and an alternative site away from congestion and homes found. The federal government, which is responsible for the siting, already owns such a site. The federal government owns the top of Bald Hill. It already has a radar installation at this location.

The Bald Hill we are referring to is located in the Town of Southampton

in the Village of Pine Valley. It is directly northeast of the Eastern Suffolk Campus of the Suffolk County Community College. The site is surrounded by several thousand acres of land that is destined never to be developed since it is zoned as parkland by the county and the state. It is one of the highest points on Long Island. Its altitude gives the site a distinct advantage over the West Sayville site, and the fact that there are no homes there, nor will any be built in close proximity, makes this site the perfect alternative.

Let's hope our federal officials use common sense in place of the arrogance they have displayed in trying to site this facility in the midst of a residential community.

And why not?

# LILCO's Congressional Candidate

Although the Shoreham issue has been quiet, it is far from over. The federal government, with George Bush as President, still wants Shoreham opened. And top Energy Department officials, taking their lead from the President, have sworn to do everything in their power to keep Shoreham alive.

George Hochbrueckner, the current congressman from the First Congressional District, has been and continues as a strong opponent of Shoreham. He has worked extremely hard as a congressman to stop Shoreham from ever opening, enduring pressure from the highest levels of government.

This past week, Southampton Town Councilman James Needham threw his hat into the ring as a prospective Republican candidate to oppose Hochbrueckner in November. Needham charges Hochbrueckner has been a lackluster congressman. He claims his own background, which ranges from former chairman of the New York Stock Exchange to involvement with the federal government as chairman of agencies, would make him a better congressman.

The only thing that Needham left out, which is of critical importance to the residents of the First Congressional District, is that he failed to mention he was a member of the Board of Directors of LILCO during the Shoreham fiasco. Was this a lapse of memory, or was it a deliberate attempt to mislead the public?

You can be your own judge, but we were once fooled and will be damned if we will be again. When Needham ran for councilman, he also failed to mention this one important bit of information. It probably would not have made a big difference in the council race, but it sure as heck does on the congressional scene.

Too many of us have fought too long and too hard to stop Shoreham from operating because of the inherent health risk to ourselves and our families and friends. The First Congressional District does not need a past or present member of the Board of Directors of LILCO as our congressman.

Needham was there as a member of the board of directors, making decisions to fight to keep the plant open, regardless of the health consequences to the citizens. He was there adding to the costs we are paying now. We feel that Needham's lack of candor about his involvement in the Shoreham fiasco diminishes his credibility and the Republicans are suicidal in even entertaining the suggestion that he would be a worthy candidate from this district.

Needham was not the only potential candidate for this position. Assemblyman John Behan had earlier announced his interest in seeking the position. However, Behan later charged, the Republican National Congressional Committee (RNCC) offered little support. Behan claimed his long-time opposition to the Shoreham plant was a major reason for the lack of RNCC support. That claim

certainly gains substance with Needham's entrance into the race after serving only three months as a town councilman, and the vow by a top RNCC official that the national committee would "throw the kitchen sink into this race."

According to syndicated columnist Karl Grossman in a recent Suffolk Closeup column, Needham is tight-lipped on the matter of Shoreham, except to say he would prefer to have the plant run on natural gas. But, Grossman continues, when asked "...whether, if elected, he would support the Bush administration's attempt to block the state-LILCO settlement (through which conversion of Shoreham to gas-fire is being pursued), he says: 'I'd have to talk to the administration on that.'

"Of what his position would be if the gas option cannot be pursued and it is a matter of abandoning Shoreham or opening it as a nuclear facility, he declared again: 'I'd have to talk to the administration on that,' " Grossman

wrote, adding: "With Mr. Needham aiming to work closely with the administration of Shoreham if he gets to Congress, the DOE will be able to be much more than a bully pulpit. It will likely be able to be a successful bully."

George Hochbrueckner is not invincible. He may be an incumbent, but he is from a Republican district. A worthy candidate, one who is honest and has the proper abilities, can give Hochbrueckner a decent run. Needham may have the Bush administration behind him. Needham may have the Republican National Committee's money behind him. He also, though, has his record of being a member of the Board of Directors of LILCO, which tried to shove down our throats a nuclear power plant that had the potential of endangering all our lives. He was a member of the board of directors that ran up the estimated cost of Shoreham from \$250 million to over \$5 billion. The arrogance of LILCO is Needham's track record. The fiscal insanity of Shore-

ham, which we are paying for today, is testimony to his financial abilities.

Needham should bow out of this race gracefully before it begins. We do not, however, expect this to happen. That leaves it up to the members of the Republican party who are not blinded by fancy resumes and promises of big dollars to ask the hard questions about Needham's stand on nuclear power, and his LILCO votes on the Shoreham plant. Needham's loyalty to the people who elected him as a Southampton Town councilman is clear. Just months after taking office, he is off and running, seeking higher ambitions. Will his loyalty to the people of Suffolk County be the same? Or will he "talk to the administration" and then do their bidding?

Hopefully, those in the Republican party who are on this suicidal mission will re-think their actions and their priorities. Do they represent the people? Or are they hacks for the administration? Let's find out before it's too late.

And why not?

## Republicans deserve credit

The New York State budget is almost six weeks past due. Albany is paralyzed because the governor wants to increase the size of the state government, and tax you more for it.

For a budget to be passed, the governor, the assembly and the senate must be in agreement. The senate, which is Republican-controlled, has balked at this year's budget, which is about a six percent increase over last year. In order to balance it, a whole host of new taxes will have to be added.

The costs here in New York are almost 50 percent more for our state government than the average state in the nation. According to a recent New York Times article, New York leads the nation in the number of state workers in relation to the state's population. New York State has 158 employees for every 10,000 residents, while California has 107 employees for the same number, and Pennsylvania has 104 for each 10,000. That puts New York 50 percent higher than other states. This is the reason our taxes are so high. This is the reason why over 900,000 private jobs have fled the state in the last ten years.

We would not mind paying more than the rest of the nation in taxes if we, as citizens, received superior services in relation to other states. Sadly, it's just the opposite here in New York. Our infrastructure is falling apart even though we have passed supplemental bond issues and indebted ourselves for the next 30 years. Although we specifically tax fuel and charge tolls for roads, we don't have a dedicated transportation fund. All monies raised via transportation taxes go into the general fund and are squandered who knows where.

In addition to transportation funds, we have passed two multi-bil-

lion dollar environmental bond funds and are being asked to pass the third this coming year. The only thing different about the environment in New York State is the DEC, which administers these funds, is a noose around the local municipalities' throats whenever they try to logically cope with the environmental problems.

The DEC, which is directly under the governor's control, doesn't offer the expertise and the funding to assist with garbage, landfill and sewage problems. Instead, it acts like a bully, threatens and fines the municipalities.

This year the senate Republicans decided to play hardball. Instead of going along with the governor, they said "stop." They have asked, "Why can't we operate more economically? Why can't we stop taxing our citizens beyond their ability to pay?" They warned Cuomo last year that they would not roll over and play dead.

They wanted a budget that showed no increase. Cuomo ignored the Republicans. He and his advisors believed that if they gave the Republicans a take it or leave it budget, they would be forced to capitulate when April 1 came. They would receive pressure from the localities which are not receiving their state aid on time and are forced to borrow.

The failure of Albany to pass a budget has caused hardship for our local municipalities and school districts. They have had to borrow to keep operating. At the same time, the state, we hope, has had these funds invested and earning interest, and when all is said and done, the additional cost versus the additional interest earned by the state should be a wash.

We give the Republican Senate credit for finally having the guts to say "no" to taxes.

And why not?



"LOOK, HARRY, THEY GOT A TELESCOPE ABOVE THE ATMOSPHERE... GET THE SWATTER..."

# They're denying you your rights

The politicians of Suffolk County do not want the status quo changed. They want to keep a political county executive. They want to keep a political county legislature. They absolutely do not want you to make a choice on either of these methods of being governed.

For almost a decade, we have championed the concept that you be given the right to select either a continuation of a county legislature, or a return to Suffolk County being governed by the ten town supervisors, as it had been in the past, with the supervisors voting according to the population within their town.

We have explored other changes in government, including the replacement of an elected county executive with the hiring of a professional government manager, someone who would be of top quality and free of the political bonds that have paralyzed the executives in the past.

Two separate propositions have been filed in the legislature. One has been approved by a majority of legislators, the other is bottled up in committee. Both merit extensive debate, both merit the decision of the voters. In past years, when the issue about a vote on the county legislature came up, legislators refused to put it on the

ballot. They claimed that since the county has an Initiative and Referendum law in place, that is the way the proposal should be placed on the ballot. They said this knowing full well that I & R is a cumbersome mechanism that was designed not to work because of the deadlines built into the present law.

In our interviews with the county legislators last year, we discussed this situation and asked each to declare their intended position on allowing the citizens to vote. The majority of the legislative candidates pledged to put this on the ballot this coming year.

The legislator from the First District, Michael Caracciolo, (R-Wading River) has introduced this legislation, as he promised he would during his campaign for office. But his legislation is tied up in committee, and that is wrong.

Legislator Herb Davis (R-Yaphank) introduced a resolution, which has passed the legislature but is expected to be vetoed by the county executive, that not only calls for the voters to decide on the form of the legislative governing body, but also on the replacement of the county executive with a professional manager.

We believe the voters should be given the opportunity to decide on

both issues. We fear, however, that the supporters of the Davis bill had it introduced to muddy the waters. They believed the Democrats would oppose it, which they did to a man with the exception of Steve Levy. That the county executive would veto it, which he is expected to do. And that the legislature would not have sufficient votes to over-ride and, therefore, the matter would be dead and they would be free to continue on in their wanton ways.

This may be the case, but Caracciolo's bill is still alive and well. It should be released from committee,

and be voted on by the entire legislature. Let's see whether our legislators are men of their word, or lack the courage of their proclaimed convictions.

Caracciolo's bill does not take a position on abolishing the legislature. It is simply a mechanism that gives you the right to make your decision and to vote according to what you believe is best for you. It is democracy in its purest sense.

Shouldn't you be allowed to choose the form of government you want?

And why not?

## Message to politicians

# Read our lips: Cut spending!

The federal government does it. The state government has done it and is now doing it again. And town officials have jumped on the bandwagon and are playing the same sad game. It's a shell game. Hide the spending and raise the funds to continue wasteful ways through add-on taxes, user fees, and the elimination of income tax deductions.

In order to be a player in this game it helps if you are a devious politician, one who thinks the public is stupid and won't catch on to the scam. Or, a gutless wonder who does not have the gumption to stand up and take a stand or lead the battle against hiding spending by upping fees and taxes.

President George Bush traveled this nation from big cities to small towns, declaring there would be no tax increase. "Read my lips," he challenged, "There will be no tax increase." Then, in order to raise funds to offset reckless spending which is driving this nation into bankruptcy, the IRS started cutting and eliminating deductions. Deductions for medical expenditures, once allowed for all medical costs over 3 percent of gross income, are now restricted to medical costs above 7.5 percent. That's just one example. There are scores more.

The state has played the same game, and has also benefited by the deduction changes made by the federal government. While the rate of taxation may not go up, the dollars you pay because of these changes certainly do.

When the tax revolt of 1989 came along, towns joined the shell game. In Riverhead, spending increases were hidden by increases in dumping fees to commercial carters, and hikes in user fees for residents at the town landfills. When the dumping fees to carters go up, guess who pays? Look at your garbage collection bills for the answer.

And now the state, in the budget fiasco of recent days, is attempting to meet its fiscal crisis by a host of devious measures designed to take the money out of the taxpayers' hides in

other ways. One is to stretch out the final phases of the Tax Reform and Reduction Act of 1987 from 1993 to 1994. Then there are additions to the sales and use taxes, to include janitorial services, protective and detective services, which includes alarm systems, armored car services, guard and patrol and watchman services; parking, interior decorating, and special 800 and 900 phone numbers.

A five percent hotel and motel tax, increases in highway use taxes, a six cent hike in the cigarette tax, hikes in taxes on liquor and beer, increases in corporate taxes, and in many other ways that will take additional dollars from the taxpayers.

According to Albany Republicans, Governor Cuomo has proposed "ten budget gimmicks" for 1990, each one a new chapter in the old shell game. One that is going to require a sharp look in the future is a proposal to use a portion (\$135 million) of the proposed 21st century Environmental Quality Bond Act, which will be on the November ballot, to fund state operations normally allocated from the general fund. That's cute. Here we have a bond act which isn't yet passed by voters, being dipped into for other than environmental uses. Is it an Environmental Quality Bond Act, or a New York State Welfare Fund designed to offset wasteful spending? If it fails in November, as it should because it is becoming very obvious it is little more than a ploy to finance government waste through a false label, where will the \$135 million come from? If it passes, where will the \$135 million from the general fund go?

It's time politicians on all levels got the message. People want spending cuts, efficiencies in government, an end to the patronage game which has become little more than a political welfare system. It's time the public delivers this firm message to the politicians: "Read our lips! Cut spending!" Stop slipping taxes through the back and side doors. Do your job, hear our message, or say goodbye.

And why not?

# The Dean is gone

Frank J. Mooney was the Dean of Suffolk journalists. He was my mentor, my friend. I first met Frank before Suffolk Life was even a gleam in my eye. I had made application to the Village of Patchogue to place trash receptacles along the Main Street of Patchogue Village with ads on the side of them from local merchants.

Frank, at the time, was a reporter for the Daily News and the publisher of the Main Street Press. This new medium, although in direct competition with Frank for the local advertisers' dollars, was supported by him. He gave me favorable press and encouragement. Frank and I developed a relationship which led to our becoming partners in a venture called Brookhaven Town Boast. It was a journal about the wonderful life in Brookhaven. Where the opportunities were and why businesses and industry should consider developing here. Many a day we rode together, and I learned about this wonderful man, his dedication to people, their causes. We never did publish, but I completed my education under his tutelage.

When I decided to publish Suffolk Life, Frank was my mentor. I knew nothing about journalism, he knew everything. Frank gave me a hand with the editorial side of the first edition. He helped me write my first editorial. He instilled in me the

view that I had a right to my opinion, and should use that opinion for the good of the people I was writing about.

Frank loved causes. He loved his readers and with a skill for reducing the complex to the simple and his way with words, he got his message across succinctly and powerfully.

Over the years, Frank was my treasure chest of information and advice. I loved the guy for he had the capability to love all people. Recently I and some of his old friends, who are on my staff, were able to reciprocate by keeping his paper going during the dark days and helping his grandson, to learn the finer points of being a publisher. His grandson, Ron Yates, reminded me a lot of myself 30 years ago. Young, ambitious and filled with ideas.

Frank will always be missed, but never forgotten. He has left an indelible mark not only on Patchogue, but on Long Island. He made all of us in the trade better journalists. Frank was the guy who championed the cause of fresh water. The public's awareness of the value of this precious asset is his legacy, which should never be forgotten.

Some day when I, too, leave this earth, I bet I'll find Frank the publisher of the Gates of Heaven Press. He's earned that right.

And why not?

For better education

## A time for reason, to work together

We have had the opportunity during the past couple of weeks to engage in conversations with teachers who indicated to us they are as concerned as we are about the quality and the cost of education. We all registered our concern about the rancorous debate that, in some cases, has needlessly divided and split communities. Over-zealous people from both sides have used a shotgun approach rather than zeroing in on the real cause and effect.

In our discussions, we started by agreeing on two very basic facts that can't be disputed. The cost of education on Long Island is higher than many citizens can afford. It is almost three times as high as the rest of the nation. The quality of education our children are receiving, in the basics alone, leaves much to be desired. Teachers' salaries, although high, are not out of proportion with the earning power of the rest of the community. As the discussion continued, we tried to identify why the cost of education here on Long Island is so much more than in other areas.

We pretty much agreed on the scenario that when enrollment started to decline in the late seventies and early eighties, the school boards took the easy way out. Instead of reducing staff, they created additional curriculum and, more importantly, they transferred teachers out of the classroom into administrative posts, positions not needed and which, in some cases, have become a hinderance to the education of the students.

Taxpayers did not complain. Nor did they participate in the selection of members for the school board, or attend meetings throughout the year. School boards, left in a void free of citizen participation and with what seemed like an endless source of income from taxes, had no reason to be prudent or to spend wisely.

Our legislators in Albany gave in without a fight to the teachers' lobbies and those who had special interests. Teachers who were members of the educational unions were reluctant to speak out about the abuses they saw or the need for reform. The leadership of the unions was there to get what it could for the membership. This was their job. But they were not getting the input from the teachers, and were not being held back by weak-kneed legislators.

The day of the free lunch is over. We can no longer afford to spend as we have in the past on education. We must make every dollar we invest produce the maximum return for the kids.

The state has hobbled education with mandates and regulations that restrict good teachers from using their abilities to bring out the excellence in the students. Work rules are counterproductive. In some cases, it's classic featherbedding, while in others incompetent teachers are kept on staff, denying an opportunity for

bright, young people to become part of the system.

Communities are being split apart as citizens have sought information but have been met with arrogance and, in some cases, just plain dishonesty from school boards and superintendents.

It is time for an educational summit where all sides can speak out both from within the educational system and from the viewpoint of the taxpayers who are funding these institutions.

Most of the people we have met who are involved in Tax PAC are

good, level-headed citizens. Most of the teachers we have talked with individually care about their charges and want to provide the best education they can instill. Those within the educational system know where the fat is and the changes that have to be made so that we can continue to pay the good teachers well yet keep the cost of education within the ability of the taxpayers to finance.

On both sides of the educational and tax issue are sincere people who are willing to work to make the system productive. One thing we all agree upon is that the system cannot con-

tinue as it is now structured. The anger and frustration of the taxpayers must be legitimately addressed. Those in the educational establishment who are productive and reasonable must feel secure, and not have to fear for their jobs if they open up and reveal the costly waste in education. Waste that could be put to better use educating our children. None of us need or want to see communities split apart. We are all taxpayers and we all want our children to be educated to the best of our abilities. It is time to work, together, to make that happen.

And why not?

## Taxes are being wasted

There were several happenings in Suffolk County government this past week that should disgust even liberal spenders.

County Executive Patrick Halpin, literally at the eleventh hour, presented to the legislature a proposal to extend the financing of the police computers from five years to ten years. This measure was presented at the end of over 11 hours of debate at the County Legislature meeting. Most legislators, at this point, were bleary eyed and exhausted.

The accompanying data sheet indicated there were no fiscal implications. Few, if any, legislators bothered to read the supporting documents or the other data that did indicate that the fiscal implications of this move was \$1,750,000 in additional interest costs.

The next day, Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburg discovered the error. Someone had deliberately checked off the cover sheet indicating that there was no financial impact, when, indeed, there was. At a special meeting called by Blydenburg to address this issue, a rancorous debate broke out, and it became a party line issue.

We were surprised no one called

for the dismissal of the person who was responsible for erroneously checking the information sheet. What this measure does is reduce the expenditure now, but extends it for an additional five years, costing you \$1,750,000 in future taxes you will have to pay.

If the police computer system is typical of most computer systems, it will be out-moded and out-dated before we have finished paying for it. This is not prudent business; this is not prudent government; this is not even prudent politics.

At the same time, it was revealed that the county attorney's office has spent over \$200,000 on outside legal fees on the Robins Island purchase. The county has a contract to buy Robins Island. The landowner does not want to sell. A good portion of the Suffolk County residents, in these tough times, do not want the county to buy it.

One would think with a multi-million dollar county attorney's office, there would be a person on staff who would have the ability to handle a real estate transaction, even one that has become complicated. Obviously, our county attorneys are not very competent, because the county attorney has

gone to outside counsel and spent over \$200,000. We do not believe he should have done so, and we think the legislature should put a halt to it, if the county executive refuses to do so.

In a conversation we had with Legislator Michael Caracciolo, he told us that after the Hampton Hills purchase, he went to the legislature counsel to have a bill drafted that would require financial impact statements on all county takings of property. To his amazement, he was told such a law already exists but was not being utilized.

The law requires that before any purchase is made, all facts pertaining to the financial implications be revealed prior to the signing of any contracts. We wonder, if this law was being applied properly, how the residents would feel upon learning they were losing hundreds of thousands of dollars and, in some cases, millions in tax revenues because of these county takings. Would a homeowner who is hard pressed to meet his current tax bill have an opinion if he found out ahead of time that his taxes were going to jump, in some cases double, to make up for this lost revenue?

Isn't anybody running Suffolk County? Isn't anybody looking out for the taxpayer and the residents?

And why not?

## Don't people count anymore?

Until late Friday, this space was to be occupied by an editorial condemning the refusal of the DEC to approve the dredging of East Creek in Jamesport until August 1. That refusal threatened the realization of a lifelong dream of Richard Smith, operator of the town-owned marina, and the boating season of 60 boats which are berthed there. The clogging of the channel leading to the bay virtually landlocked the marina and a state boat launching ramp located there as well. The future of the marina was in doubt.

The DEC's stance was predicated on the location, nearby, of a nesting area of piping plovers and least terns. One plover, which was reportedly on a nest, and about eight terns were observed in the area, and the DEC refused to allow dredging until August to prevent the birds from "being disturbed."

Late Friday, however, we received word that Harold Berger, regional director of the DEC, had agreed to soften the DEC position, utilizing an alternate spoil area for the sand to be dredged from the channel. The original spoil area

was to be a section of town beach adjacent to the nesting area. The town had offered to truck spoil away, and was willing to work closely with the DEC to accomplish the dredging in any way possible while preserving the sanctuary of the birds.

A number of officials were involved in arriving at the compromise, including State Senator Owen Johnson, chairman of the senate's Environmental Committee. Town and county officials were also instrumental in achieving a workable solution that resolved the problem.

"Don't people count anymore?" we asked in our original editorial. The resolution of the standoff with a workable compromise gives us hope that, indeed, people do count, and we can achieve a balance between what is good for the people, and what is good for the environment.

To those who helped achieve a compromise in this matter, you did good! We applaud your efforts.

And why not?