

A need for budget accuracy

The record number of school budget defeats this past year has spotlighted the troubled world of educational financing and its impact on the taxpayers. Recent happenings which brought unexpected and unpleasant news to residents of a number of school districts will keep this controversy alive.

A law passed in 1987 and scheduled to be phased in at the start of 1989 initiated a phase out of the previous assessment practices concerning telecommunication equipment. Passage of the law was in response to legal action taken by the telephone company charging equipment should not be assessed and taxes charged on the same basis as land. In some cases, the reduction in assessments was substantial. As a result, the tax rates estimated at the time the budgets were presented to the voters are much higher. In Lindenhurst, for example, the district predicted a 13-cent decrease in the tax rate. The impact of assessment loss, raises given to administrators and a reduction in the amount of state aid received, brought a final tax rate which is \$1.99 higher than last year's rate.

The Patchogue-Medford School District had the worst news for its residents. A predicted rate of \$3.89 for the budget approved by voters soared to \$14.65, \$10.76 higher than the original estimate, when the final rate was set.

"Why didn't someone tell us this was going to happen?" was the question that school district officials and board members raised when the problem became known. The immediate reaction was finger pointing at the town assessors, charging they should have warned the school districts. But those charges are, in our view, unfair. Where were the school board associations, who are quick to lobby for or against legislation, when it came to notifying their members that this impact would start this year? School officials knew about the law when it was passed in 1987, in fact, some lobbied against its passage. Why didn't they check with the towns to find out what the impact would be? Why didn't they alert school districts? Conduct a survey to determine the impact?

Instead of pointing fingers and trying to place blame in other directions, school districts had better start working with the towns to come up with more accurate figures on which to base budgets. Telephones work both ways. Instead of complaining "the towns didn't tell us," the school boards should start asking why school officials and board organizations didn't do their homework on this issue.

In this year of a tax revolt, this increase of tax rates after budgets are approved has given rise to questions about how much the school districts knew and when they knew it. The problem has only magnified what has been a serious lack of communication, and mutual trust, between the districts and their taxpayers.

Solutions have been proposed that would make the figures used in the

preparation of budgets more accurate, and it is high time that districts begin moving in that direction. But these proposals have also been mired in controversy. One such solution, advanced several years ago by Lindenhurst Superintendent of Schools Anthony Pecorale, recommends that school districts use the figure for the total assessment of the previous year in preparing their budgets. Currently, districts utilize guesstimates based on increases of previous years when they start their budget preparations. The actual figures are not usually forthcoming until the fall, many months later.

As we understand it, those opposed to this recommendation do not want to lose the assessment increase they may gain during the current year. But there is another way to look at that. If the budget estimates were based on the previous year's assessment total, and the assessment went up, the final rate would be reduced in normal years, not increased as it was recently. This would allow for more accurate predictions rather than the inflated guess gamble which is not utilized.

Pecorale also proposed a change in the way school aid is given to the dis-

tricts. He maintains the state should finalize its state aid amounts a year ahead so that the districts can, again, work with actual figures rather than estimates. While this, too, sounds like a good idea, we would not suggest anyone hold their breath until it is implemented. Getting the folks in Albany to do something constructive about the educational financing mess is just about as possible as controlling the weather.

Another Pecorale suggestion would change the manner in which tax bills are sent out. He proposes that bills for school taxes be sent out early enough for the first half of the taxes to be received by school districts on October 10, and the second half on March 10. This would enable the districts, he said, to invest the money and earn higher interest income, while borrowing less and saving interest costs. Some tax receivers have opposed this proposal, claiming it would cost more to send out the bills. While that may be true, the primary consideration should be the financial impact for the taxpayer. Would the implementation of such a system, already being used in Nassau County, according to Pecorale, save the taxpayers' dollars? If so, why not give se-

rious consideration to the proposal? Or is the real concern that the towns would not be able to collect interest earnings on the money received before it is sent to the school districts? School officials have long criticized delays in the receipt of tax dollars, charging it has resulted in higher costs for the school taxpayer. It's time to seriously study this matter. If we have to change the system to save taxpayers' dollars, it's about time we did it.

Pecorale's proposals appear to have merit. It's time to take a good hard look at how we can change the way we are doing things to bring about some relief for the taxpayers. While we look for ways to change the manner in which we finance education, a popular cry today, and find ways to reduce spending in our schools, we should also be exploring ways to make budgeting more accurate.

And as tired as we all are of the political campaigns we have just endured, taxpayers had better start preparing now for campaigns that will start early in the new year, the campaigns for election to boards of education. That's where the biggest bite comes for the taxpayer's pocketbook, and that's where the attention should now be focused.

And why not?

But for the Grace of God

Once again this year "The Group," an informal, unorganized gathering of people, will attempt to provide Christmas for some Suffolk families who, because of circumstances beyond their control, will not be able to have Santa Claus visit their children.

It is almost 12 years now since "The Group" first came together. A few of us were taking a break after the hectic pace of the campaign. We were at Roseland Ranch in Stanfordsville. During the evening repast, we were reflecting upon our blessings and how fortunate we were.

The late Jess Marchese, a prominent Brookhaven attorney and Brookhaven Town Republican leader, spoke of once reaching out and helping a family living in Maine.

Jess had won a turkey and brought it to his wife's family gathering. The holiday food had already been purchased and the extra turkey was not needed. Jess called the local parish and asked if there was a family in the area which would not be having a meaningful Christmas dinner. He was given the name of a woman whose husband had been killed in a lumbering accident, leaving the family rather destitute.

Jess and his brother-in-law took the turkey and some of the trimmings and went to the woman's home. Although suspicious at first, she welcomed them into her humble abode and, with grateful appreciation, accepted the Christmas meal, which would take the place of a pound of

hamburger the four in the family were to share the next day. As Jess was about to leave, a young boy of five or six came running out of a room excitedly, and with great glee he exclaimed, "Look what Santa Claus brought for me." In his hands was a simple pair of socks. That was to be the youngster's Christmas gift. No decorative packages under the tree. No fulfillment of the dreams all youngsters, rich or poor, harbor as they anxiously await this special holiday.

Jess and his brother-in-law immediately went to the last store that was open in town and bought clothes and a few toys for the family. Later that night, when the kids were asleep, they returned to leave the clothing and toys. The family, as a result, had at least one Christmas when Santa did come.

Upon hearing the story, those of us who had gathered decided that we would try to repeat the circumstances, knowing that there are many parents out there who have worked hard, have supported their families, but because of accidents, sickness or death, are not able to provide a happy Christmas for their loved ones.

During the past several years, we have pooled our resources, sought and accepted contributions from friends, and people we don't even know, who want the tradition to continue. We locate families who, because of circumstances beyond their control, cannot provide Christmas for their kids. Usually, we hear of these people through readers of Suffolk Life, friends, associ-

ates, schools and churches. The recipients often do not know that they have been chosen. We individually purchase the clothing needed and the gifts. They are wrapped and delivered just prior to Christmas.

The recipients do not know who we are, for we have no identity. We are just "The Group," a gathering of Suffolk County residents who are thankful for what we have and wish to share anonymously with those who are in need.

Last year, more than 100 kids had a Christmas they will never forget. Through The Group's efforts, the children's bodies were clothed, their stomachs filled and they had some toys and gifts that only Santa could have brought. More than gifts or food, this activity offers the recipients the realization that they are not alone, that people do care. The efforts of all who participate touch lives. In a number of instances, those who were recipients one year, having been able to put their lives back in order, have become contributors and participants.

We are again doing our thing. If you would like to join us, we welcome your support. You may send a contribution to "The Group," c/o P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, NY 11901. Every dime that is raised is spent on the gifts. Your contributions are not tax deductible, as we are not an organized charity. We're just people with a concern for those in need. People who realize the true meaning of "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

And why not?

A waste of taxpayers' dollars

The recent court decision that declared "illegal" and "null and void" the appointment of William Holst, handed by the Suffolk Democrats to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Juliette Kinsella, raises some interesting questions. Interestingly, the voters of Suffolk County had the final say last week when they elected Legislator Edward Romaine to the post.

The question, however, is why is the administration of Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin fighting so hard to have the governor, rather than the local county executive and legislature, make the ultimate decision?

Could it be politics? Could it be that the Democrats knew full well they would never get their choice through a legislature split evenly with Republican and Democratic representation? Would they have taken the same position if the governor was a Republican? Administration officials insist politics is not involved. Somehow we find that hard to swallow.

We also find it hard to swallow that taxpayers' dollars were used to have the county attorney represent Holst to protect his job. What is more important, having a Democrat fill the seat or having local people make the determination for filling a local seat? Whatever happened to home rule? The reason we were given is that the filling of the clerk's vacancy is a matter of "state-wide concern" because the county clerk's involvement with Supreme and county courts, and because the clerk acts as an agent of the state in issuing permits and licenses. That's stretching, in our view, the facts of the matter. While that contention may have a bit more bearing when it comes to the offices of district attorney and sheriff, the same does not, in our view and that of the court, hold true for the county clerk. Court decision has ruled that state-wide concern is

applicable in the case of a district attorney who has the responsibility to locally enforce the state penal law, and who brings an action in the name of "The People of the State of New York." And the same holds true for the sheriff, who also enforces the state penal law, the state civil law and the operation of local correctional facilities. But Judge William Underwood, in the Holst decision, ruled, and we believe with merit, that the clerk has no direct responsibility to the state.

It was the opinion of County Attorney Thomas Boyle, and others, that state-wide concern applied in this instance. The Supreme Court decision rejects that view. Boyle's representation was also based on the fact that Holst was a Suffolk County official and thus it was his responsibility to represent him. Since the court has ruled that status came illegally, why is Boyle now planning an appeal? If Holst was appointed illegally, he no longer has status as a public official. Why shouldn't Holst, or the Democratic party, pick up the tab for additional legal fees instead of the taxpayers?

Boyle declares it would not be proper to "drop" representation of Holst until the appeal process is completed. He also maintains it is in the best interest of the county for the appeal to be continued, to settle the matter once and for all.

It is, by the way, interesting to note that when former County Executive Michael LoGrande was elevated to that position based on the provisions of the County Charter, Boyle, then in private practice, represented County Democratic Chairman Dominic Baranello after Baranello took legal action to prevent that from happening. The County Charter stipulates that in the event of a vacancy in the county executive's position, the chief deputy moves up. Baranello argued that a special election be held, which the county legislature had already rejected. A Supreme Court judge, in a controversial decision, upheld Baranello's contention.

When the county legislature appealed that decision, Boyle represented Baranello in the appeal process. The Appellate Division reversed the Supreme Court decision, declaring it "completely unfounded."

Surely there are other matters that the county attorney's office could concentrate on to more truly represent the people who support the function of that office. On a number of occasions in the past, we have heard the county attorney's office does not have sufficient staff to deal with matters which are then given to outside attorneys, at additional cost to the taxpayers. The appeal will undoubtedly be launched by the governor to "protect" his ability to make the appointment. Let him do so and pick up the tab. Suffolk County tax dollars should not be used to assist the governor in this effort.

Legislator Michael O'Donohoe is

planning to submit a resolution demanding Boyle end his participation in an appeal process. We think O'Donohoe is absolutely correct in that action, although we question its impact. The initial suit was brought by nine legislators who took a stand on behalf of home rule. Their efforts should continue.

It's time that the Halpin administration stops using taxpayers' dollars for political games. If Halpin wants to protect the governor's ability to appoint hand-picked political choices, he should go back to the state level. Halpin is on the county level now, and home rule, the ability of the local representatives of the people's government to make important decisions should prevail.

In the final analysis, the people of Suffolk County have made the choice by electing Romaine, not Holst, and there is no appeal process to stop the will of the people from prevailing. It's time the Halpin administration gave their attention to more important matters. Such as an end to the waste in governmental spending. A good place to start would be in the county attorney's office, particularly with regard to this matter.

And why not?

The right to choose

If the Suffolk County Legislators who were victorious last Tuesday keep their word, you will have an opportunity to choose whether you wish to continue with a legislative form of government or establish a weighted board of supervisors.

Eleven out of the eighteen legislators who were victorious said unequivocally in interviews and the

Suffolk Life candidate questionnaire that if the legislature is petitioned, as it has been in the past years, they will vote for putting this important question on the ballot. Hopefully, this question can be put before the legislature soon after they are sworn into office.

Some of the legislators who are now pledged to put this measure on the ballot for a public vote stated they are in favor of the legislative form of government, but believe the public should be given the opportunity to decide the question once and for all. Placing this measure on the ballot early will give ample time for those on both sides of the question to debate the merits of a legislative body versus a weighted board of supervisors.

Once the citizens and taxpayers understand the ramifications of both forms of government, they can make an intelligent decision. Those legislators who have stated they are in favor of putting this measure on the ballot are:

Michael Caracciolo, Herbert Davis, Rose Caracappa, Donald Blydenburgh, Michael D'Andre, Joseph Rizzo, Thomas Finlay, Rick Lazio, Allan Binder, Fred Thiele, Jr., and Michael O'Donohoe.

We congratulate them for this position, for what they are saying is that they believe in democracy, they believe in the voters' right to choose. The people are the best judge of what form of government they want. They should have the right to make that decision.

And why not?

1989 Election reflections

The polls were closed, the votes were counted and twenty-five percent of the people who could, voted. Seventy-five percent of the people were either not registered, or chose not to exercise their right and obligation to cast ballots in our system of democracy. They decided to let someone else determine how much they will pay in taxes and what rules and regulations they will live under. As a result of their apathy, their reluctance to take part in our democratic system of selecting our governmental leaders, they are the majority who will be ruled by the choices of the minority.

I would like to publicly thank the staff here at Suffolk Life for working endless, tireless hours to bring out the issues each candidate had to offer. Although we have an extremely small staff by comparison to other publications, I believe the election coverage

here in Suffolk Life was not only outstanding, but the best that was available to the voters.

This being the year of the tax revolt, we were extremely disappointed in how many of the candidates, both incumbents and challengers, had a vast lack of understanding about budgets and the budget procedure. We had hoped and anticipated that more would have been better prepared. Because they did not understand beforehand, we have little reason to believe they will take the time to educate themselves now that the pressure seems to be off. It became very apparent, in fact, all too obvious, that the creation of the budget is left up to aides and staff without real input from the elected officials.

This is the compelling reason why organizations such as Tax PAC will have to maintain their vigilance. It will

only be through citizen involvement that the elected officials and their staffs will be forced to keep their eye on the ball.

No politicians should be lulled into thinking that this year's election ended the tax revolt. This past year has been one of organization, building a foundation for the organized taxpayers to work from. In the year to come, we expect to see Tax PAC and other organized taxpayers' groups become much more sophisticated and be able to do a more professional job of identifying needless costs and the politicians who are responsible for the high taxes.

To all who took part in this year's campaign, whether as a voter, campaign worker or candidate, we shall have a better government because you cared. Thank you.

And why not?

Happy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a day of rest, family gatherings, food and festivities. A pleasant day to be with friends and family. To thank God for his blessings and to enjoy the rewards of our hard work and productivity.

The original Thanksgiving was celebrated by our colonists. It was a mixture of native Americans and emigrants. The native Americans, our Indians, welcomed the pale faced foreigners to their shores. They shared with them father earth and mother sky. In turn, the emigrants brought tools and technology and showed the Indians how to better use their time and their energies. By sharing in those early days, both benefited until greed took over.

The Thanksgiving celebration was in commemoration of cooperation and peace. This year's celebration has worldwide significance, for it is the first Thanksgiving we can recall when the east and the west have broken down barriers and we may possibly be on the verge of sharing our respective strengths, rather than wasting our respective assets in building weapons beyond imagination to destroy one another.

As we pause over our traditional Thanksgiving dinner, let us pray to God, giving thanks for what appears now to be the road to world peace.

And why not?



Certified U.S. Turkeys

"Gobble, Gobble, Gobble," went Democratic Congressmen Thomas Downey and Bob Mrazek as they voted "yes" to raise their salaries over one-third last week. "Gobble, Gobble, Gobble," Downey and Mrazek squeaked as they bit the hand that feeds them.

"Gobble, Gobble, Gobble," Downey and Mrazek went as they raised their salaries by \$35,000 over the next two years. Meanwhile, senior citizens known as the notch

babies, born between 1917 and 1922, struggle to survive with lower Social Security payments, unable to get congress to straighten out what is a totally unfair situation. "You'll just have to do with less. We've got our big guts to worry about; they are more important than yours are," is the message congress is giving to these seniors.

The greed of Downey and Mrazek, and their fellow cohorts, is contemptuous. As Ralph Nader said, "These congressmen rolled the American people in return for promising not to do some of the unethical things." The only ethical congressman in Suffolk County, it turns out, is George Hochbrueckner, who respected his constituents' wishes and voted against the pay raises.

The bill to increase congressional salaries by one-third was tied to an ethics bill. Congress had not only been raping the taxpayers, they had also been raping everyone else they could get their hands on through so-called honorariums, which are pay-offs in the form of speeches, for promises kept and for promises in the future. This \$35,000 pay raise that our Long Island turkeys granted themselves is more than many of their constituents make by working two and three jobs. It's almost triple what the average senior citizen in their districts receives from Social Security. On top of their bloated salaries, congress receives perks that even Bill Catacosinos, LILCO's high flying golden parachuter, has not even dreamed about.

their actions by pointing out the ethics rules included in the pay hike bill will ban honoraria payments which, some now concede, could represent a conflict of interest. This new found integrity is staggering. Remember these same turkeys accept all kinds of political contributions from political action groups and lobbys which come with strings galore. What will it take to end this kind of conflict, another pay raise?

We suggest that every constituent of these two legalized robber barons be sent the carcasses of the Thanksgiving turkeys. Hopefully, the packages will move at the normal United States government speed and by the time they arrive at the congressional offices, they will give off enough of an odor to convey to these turkeys what we think of them. Include a letter demanding they explain their outrageous one-third increase.

These turkeys heard loud and clear last January what the public thought of their pay raise actions at that time. They killed the idea then because of the storm of protest that was raised. Now, with little advanced notice or chance for further public comment, they rammed these unconscionable raises through with record breaking speed in hopes that you would not be as angry as you were when their greedy actions were first announced earlier this year.

Besides sending the carcasses, we hope you will remember Gobble, Gobble Mrazek and Downey next November when they run for re-election. We don't need turkeys who act like vultures in congress.

And why not?

Using Kids as Pawns

Ever since the outpouring of outrage over the soaring county tax rate for 1989, we have been sometimes amused, other times sickened at the actions of politicians as they hastened to respond to that anger. Recent actions by County Executive Patrick Halpin have given birth to pure disgust.

The legislature, in a pre-election action designed to get them off the hook with the taxpayers, unanimously passed the tax cap resolution that Halpin had vetoed. Halpin responded with his own brand of outrage. And threats. To meet the budget cuts approved by the legislature, he warned, the county would have to eliminate the positions of 350 part-time school crossing guards, lay off 90 police officers, and halt moves to initiate civilianization efforts proposed as a cost-cutting move.

According to Halpin's chief deputy, Tom McAteer, the proposal stems from police budget cuts, approximately \$8 million, which were contained in the legislature's spending reduction package. McAteer said Halpin asked Police Commissioner Daniel Guido what cuts he

would have to make to accommodate the budget reductions, and Guido cited the civilianization, crossing guards and layoffs as areas where cuts could be achieved. Halpin, with Guido, held a press conference to warn of these drastic measures.

And the political games continue! As we noted, we have been sickened by the political ploys being used by county officials in the ongoing battle over budget figures. One side says cut, and the other points to people-sensitive issues which are virtually guaranteed to create a storm of protest. When the protest develops, the "tax cutters" back down, and the figures go back in. But this latest skirmish, in which the safety of children has become a political tool, is disgusting. It is totally unacceptable.

The politicians are fond of saying that if the county budget is to be cut, we're all going to have to feel some pain. We'll accept that. But not until an honest effort is made to eliminate the wanton waste that exists in county government and spending. And we will never accept cuts where the lives and health of our children or our people are concerned.

How anyone could suggest the elimination of crossing guards when the county payroll is full of political patronage positions is beyond us. Halpin's own office, and the legislature, contain a mind-boggling number of aides and various other positions that represent little more than political welfare. Don't talk to us about cutting police and crossing guards until these positions are pared to the absolute minimum.

The time for playing political games is over. The people of Suffolk County have delivered a firm message: cut the taxes. Cut the governmental waste. Cut the fat. End the appointment of high salaried people to repay political and campaign debts. Slash the administrative staffs and the bureaucracy.

Any discussion of eliminating crossing guards who protect the safety of children at dangerous intersections before other cuts are made constitutes a display of arrogant indifference that the public cannot tolerate.

Let's stop the nonsense and get on with the business of sensible government!

And why not?

One-sided environmental concerns?

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society has filed suit to bring development in the pine barrens area to a halt "until a cumulative assessment is made concerning the effects of such development on drinking water and the habitat of rare and endangered species."

However virtuous the environmental goals of this action may be, the financial impact may be devastating to the economy and the taxpayers. While environmentalists have a habit of viewing development only in the form of profits made by the developer, should the Society be successful in halting all new construction in the pine barrens until the merits of their argument are decided in court, a lot of people other than developers are going to suffer. Everyone involved in the construction

trades will feel the impact, and that will trickle down to anyone the trades do business with, both personally and professionally.

And the taxpayers will be part of the picture as well, footing legal and special consultant fees that could well be staggering. If indeed this does occur, we would hope the courts take steps to ensure the Pine Barrens Society is sufficiently bonded to guarantee funding of damages that may result if they are unsuccessful in their efforts.

At the same time, the Society has issued a call to expedite acquisition of sensitive pine barrens land under the county's Clean Drinking Water Protection bill. Unfortunately, however, while demanding a cumulative assessment of the impact of development, the

Society makes no mention of equal concern about establishing a priority for the land acquisition in order that the most sensitive lands are purchased first.

If, indeed, the preservation of our water supply is the primary concern, the available dollars for the purchase of these lands should be spent in the wisest possible way. They should be earmarked only for those lands which would play the most important part in protecting the ground water supply. The priority should be established through hydrological data and monitoring wells, not guesswork or theory.

Suffolk Life has been asking for months about the availability of a priority list of lands to be purchased by sales tax funds. Which lands are the most valuable for the primary goal of the Clean Drinking Water Protection bill? What supporting data is there to insure the value of the lands? With a limited amount of funds available, shouldn't the county purchase the most valuable lands first rather than waste these financial resources on lands that will not meet the primary goal? Those questions remain unanswered because there has been no effort on the part of county officials to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent as efficiently as possible.

The Budget Review Office of the legislature has also cited the need for a determination on the value of the lands to be purchased. Budget Review, in a recent review of the 1990 budget, noted the Water Protection program "should allow the county to purchase approximately 22,500 acres of pine barrens and water protection preserves with funding of \$157,000,000, based on the assumption of a cost of \$7,000 per acre. The report indicates, however, "that the average cost of acquisition for the \$31 million of property acquired to date has been in excess of \$26,000 per acre. If these first purchases are indicative of the costs and types of property to be acquired under the program, only 6,000 acres will be acquired."

Budget Review also noted that 41.7 percent of the lands purchased are from one to five acres in size. Budget Review "believes the most cost effective approach to take in acquiring pine barren property is to focus on the acquisition of large tracts. Smaller parcels tend to be more expensive and the very small parcels should be a low priority for

acquisition since they may not be zoned for development. . . We question why the county would purchase property less than one acre in size when the very size of the parcel may preclude its development and would not be a factor in ground water recharge."

The Budget Review Office also notes: "...the county is under a moral obligation to acquire only those properties that maximize the protection and preservation of Suffolk's underground aquifer and water supply. The mandate from the voters clearly requires the inclusion of properties that will protect and preserve the quality of the water supply."

Not everyone agrees with that view. Richard Amper, executive director of the Pine Barrens Society, told Suffolk Life last week that the Drinking Water Protection bill also stipulates protection of the "eco system" as a criteria in determining the value of lands to be purchased. He noted this factor in defending inclusion of lands in the vicinity of the Brookhaven National Laboratory and Peconic River amongst those the society wants the county to acquire. When we pointed out the United States Department of Energy, in a draft report, concedes that water in the lab vicinity is already tainted with radioactive and chemical contamination, and questioned the value of these lands for water preservation, Amper noted the existence of valuable plant life and endangered species in these areas.

It may well be time for another endangered species, Suffolk's taxpayers, to have a say in this matter. However important the protection of valuable plant life and endangered species may be, should the county spend limited acquisition funds for any other reason than water preservation?

Perhaps we should take a lesson from the Pine Barrens Society. Perhaps the people should launch a suit forbidding the expenditure of anymore sales tax dollars for land preservation until a "cumulative assessment" of the water preservation value of all pine barrens land is completed. And establishing water protection as the sole criteria for the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars.

If we can't get our public officials to do what's right, it may be time to take matters into our own hands.

And why not?

Can We Help?

"The Group," we are happy to report, is off to a good start. We have identified a number of families in need of help this year. These families meet the criteria and the purpose of The Group, which is to provide Christmas for the children of families who, because of circumstances beyond their control, would not be able to provide a happy holiday this year.

Normally, the parents are working and have been able to get by. Due to events over which they have no control, an accident, an illness or the loss of a job, finances are short and Santa would not have visited their home this year.

We learn of these individuals through schools, churches and from individuals who are aware of the problems endured by these families. Most of the families we choose do not receive public assistance. Their circumstances generally are temporary and, in most cases, pride is a factor which prevents them from reaching out for help. We try to investigate each circumstance to make sure Santa is not taken for a ride. And while we would like to help all those families in need, realistically, financially, we concentrate on those most needy, with young children. The recipients' identities are never revealed. Only those who get the initial information, and who deliver the presents, know who the family is or where they live. Every-

one else involved knows of them only as Family A or B or C, etc. The families, themselves, are not quite sure where Christmas came from other than a greeting from "The Group."

Our funding comes from our own contributions and contributions from people who have heard of our actions and are desirous of directly helping someone who is less fortunate than themselves.

The members of "The Group" individually shop for the children. We try to make sure that each child has the basics of adequate, warm clothing and at least a few toys or games. Each package is individually wrapped and delivered just before Christmas.

If you would like to join us, we welcome your support. If you know of someone who normally is able to take care of themselves but, because of circumstances can't, please send us a note giving as many details as possible and a telephone number so we can contact you. If we have sufficient funds, we will make every attempt to add them to our list.

Please send your contributions or your inquiries to "The Group," c/o P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

And why not?

Fight back! Join Up! End pollution!

Enough is enough is enough! We are already resigned to the fact that our eyes and ears will be assaulted by political rhetoric, dirty campaigns, outright abuses of truth, and political littering for months preceding Election Day. But once the votes are in and counted, not all of the political abuse upon our senses goes away. In far too many cases it stays for years, and years, and years.

Political campaign signs and posters are the culprits that linger far too long. One need not travel too many local roads to find signs that remain, not only from this most recent election campaign, but from previous years as well. This whole problem could be resolved if

the political parties agreed that the destruction of neighborhood esthetics with political signs would cease, once and for all. But the politicians don't want to do that. They're still motivated by the idiotic belief that name recognition is the way to get people elected; that signs--no matter how ugly--placed throughout their areas which say "Joe Smith for town council" will help that candidate get votes.

According to this philosophy, people don't really care about the issues, they'll vote for someone because they recognize the name. We think the public is a lot smarter than that. Issues are indeed

important, especially the pocketbook issues of today. In fact, we believe political signs that say nothing, but blight the countryside, are an insult to the people.

How do we get rid of them? We're going to raise us an army. We are enlisting members of the public to join our Political Pollution Patrol. Patrol members will be our eyes as they travel Suffolk's roadways. Just drop us a line, (P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, N.Y. 11901) or give us a call, (369-0800) when you see a political sign still standing, listing exact location and name of candidate. If the sign is one that has been around for a long time, before current campaigns, tell us that, too.

We will start a Directory of Political Pollution, listing the offending candidate and the location of the sign. We're still working on all the details, but we may assign points for each instance of political pollution, run standings on which candidate is the worst offender, and perhaps even come up with a Political Polluter of the Year award.

As we said at the outset, enough is enough is enough! If we can't get public officials to ban all political signs to preserve the esthetic beauty of our communities, we may be able, at least, to shame the politicians into taking their garbage away!

And why not?