

1990: Year of budget fiascoes

The year 1990 will go down in history as the year of deficit spending, budget crises, political posturing and tax increases disguised as sin taxes and user fees. It should also be marked as a year of shame for the politicians who played a part in the fiscal insanity on virtually all levels of government.

Surely the budget shenanigans in Washington should be recorded as a prime example of politicians who know full well how to spend, but not how to bring that spending under control. The missed budget deadlines, the carry-over budget bills to keep government going, and the long debate over who to hit for extra dollars and how much are a prime example of government gone wrong. These are the same politicians who go on expensive junks,

paid for both by lobbyists who benefit through special legislation, and by the taxpayers. And the same politicians who condone through their inaction the \$150 screwdrivers and \$500 wrenches the government buys through idiotic spending.

The state level was no better this year. The lawmakers hemmed, hawed, hollered and screamed long beyond the budget deadline before agreement was reached. In the meantime, the taxpayers were footing the bill for expensive interest payments for the borrowing the local governments and school districts had to do in order to keep going until state dollars arrived. And just last week came word that the state deficit will hit some \$850,000, and quite possibly more, because of our Albany politicians spend, spend

and spend habits, without regard to balancing revenues with expenditures. And again, sin taxes and user fees were applied to come up with the extra dollars.

Here in Suffolk County, things are not much better. Sure, Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin and the county legislators are trying to outdo each other in freezing taxes. We're waiting for the other shoe to fall.

Legislators were still in the throes of trying to revise Halpin's budget proposal late Friday, thus the full impact of their actions are at this writing uncertain. The early indications are that the budget proposals being flaunted about included elimination of departments, some spending cuts, and "revenue enhancements." It is that last item, the revenue enhancements, that raises serious fiscal concern.

The legislators, and the county executive as well, have in the past played games with the revenue side of the budget to cover up the impact of their expenditures. The projections for sales taxes, fine receipts, and a host of other items, too often wind up being listed later as "shortfalls." That's a nice word to give the impression the revenues did not come in as anticipated. It is often used to hide the fact that the shortfalls are nothing more than over-estimations, too often on purpose to hide the unbalanced budget until long after it is approved.

We had hoped county officials would have put politics aside this year and worked cooperatively to prepare the leanest budget possible. We had called for a budget summit to bring the legislators and county executive together in a cooperative endeavor. For a brief time we thought that was going to be done, but then found out Halpin's call for a summit was through selective invitation, himself, two Democratic legislators and two Republican. That was hardly what we had in mind. The Halpin "summit" did not materialize when Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburgh, "smelling a setup," he said, refused to attend.

Taxpayers who are shelling out the dollars for taxes, the extra user fees and sin taxes should keep these shenanigans in mind. It is not yet known if the federal and state budget follies had any effect on yesterday's balloting. But there is a year before the county legislators must face the voters. If indeed they have played games with the revenues, and do not stop the political nonsense and start working together to produce a lean and efficient government, there should be a drastic "shortfall" in their voting totals. It's not too early to start planning an Everybody Out Party.

And why not?

Salute to our veterans

There was hope that Veteran's Day 1990 would be a time of salute to our veterans of past conflicts, without a dark shadow of possible new warfare hovering over our lives. The Berlin Wall, a reminder of a bitter war, came down, and anger between nations was subsiding. Then Saddam Hussein launched his aggression against Kuwait, and the world again hovers on the brink of battle.

Our troops and those of other lands now serve in the Persian Gulf area, poised to do battle against the invaders of Kuwait, should the call be sounded. Tragically, Americans have died in accidents in Saudi Arabia, in crashes of military aircraft and aboard a naval vessel. Flags that fly at half-

mast on Veteran's Day, November 11, will be in memory of those who served our country and gave their lives, not only in past conflicts, but in the threat that exists today.

While we must remember and pray for all those who made the supreme sacrifice for their country, we must also remember all those who serve in our armed forces for the sacrifices they make to defend our land and its freedoms. We should not involve them in the political viewpoints that take issue with the positions of our leaders, as we, unfortunately, did with our Vietnam veterans. They serve our country, and all of us, in the first line of defense against the Saddam Husseins of this world, who would bring their tyranny

to our own land except for the brave people who serve.

There is a growing spirit in our land in recent times, a spirit of concern for those who are involved in the Desert Shield operation. School children, and assorted groups, are striving to bring some comfort to those who endure the heat and sands of the Persian Gulf areas. We applaud those efforts, and would urge everyone to dedicate themselves this Veteran's Day to stand shoulder to shoulder in spirit with those who are poised on the brink of possible battle.

America is a great nation. The veterans who have served in the past and who serve today help keep it so, and deserve our love and gratitude.

And why not?

An action long overdue

Finally, some common sense!

A proposed new local law which would change the procedures for the scheduling of public hearings held by the Suffolk County Legislature has been proposed by Legislator Maxine Postal (D-Amityville). It is not a new proposal, but one which is desperately needed. The problem, however, is that the proposal is based on common sense, which may doom it to failure in the legislature.

The proposal would require that public hearings conducted by the legislature be scheduled separately from general meetings. The legislative intent "finds and determines that conducting public hearings on the same day as legislative meetings causes such sessions to become so lengthy as to discourage the public from testifying."

A recent example of what this proposal hopes to eliminate is a recent evening meeting that included a public hearing on the budget proposal by Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin,

about 10 other public hearings, and the normal resolutions. With all of the uproar over the Halpin budget proposal, it does not take a genius to realize the budget hearing alone would draw a huge crowd of angry folks, county employees who were being impacted, representatives of scores of agencies and organizations who were included in the list of cuts. They were there, enmasse. With picket signs inside and out, a packed house, with hundreds more in the hallways and outside, pleaded, hollered, screamed, and with every means available to them made it known to the legislators that they were an unhappy group.

The end result, with the huge number of people signed up to speak, is that the legislative meeting ended somewhere about 2:30 a.m. All those who may have been there with a complaint or concern apart from the budget issue would have had to be marathon enthusiasts to stick around to voice their views. This fact alone, many believe, is one

reason why the legislators have not held public hearings separate from the normal agenda. The huge crowds that turn out for controversial issues cause many to leave in disgust, if they bothered to come at all, because they have to work the next day. The legislators can control the situation by putting the most controversial hearings first, knowing full well the crowd will thin out by the time some other important happenings are scheduled to be taken up.

This newspaper has editorialized for a two-day process—public hearings on one day and the general agenda on another—for several years. A couple of years ago some of the legislators agreed the proposal was sound, and vowed to push to bring about this change. When push came to shove, however, nothing happened.

The Suffolk County Legislature has been the target of much criticism in the past, much for good reason. Marathon sessions do nothing to enhance its

image, nor are they conducive to good government. Minds dulled by numerous speeches and long hours are not sharp enough to deal with the complex problems in our county.

Legislators have confided in the past that a number of their legislative peers are not anxious for the change proposed by Postal to take place. They do not want to work that extra day is the reason given. Thus, the chances of this proposal becoming reality are not great.

Keep tuned to this one. Those legislators who vote against this proposal, if it doesn't get locked in committee, will be delivering a message to you, the voters, that they are more interested in business as usual rather than doing what is right.

Let's not wait until next November. Let's deliver the message to our legislators, "Do it right or we're gonna fight!"

And why not?

There, but for the grace of God, go I

Being a member of "The Group" is a lot of work. A friend who chose not to be a member once asked, "Why bother?" Although we rarely hear from the people we have helped, as most do not know how to contact us, we have over the years received some acknowledgements and comments about the results of our efforts. A couple will always be in our minds.

A young couple with four young children came north seeking work and a better life. The husband worked seasonal jobs, putting in as many hours as possible. In late October, he found what was promised to be full-time, year-round employment. He was laid off on Thanksgiving Day.

With the last of his savings he filled the tank with oil, and attempted to make minor repairs to his oil burner. The burner failed to work. The family had no heat, and they were out of money.

We heard of this family's plight through a neighbor. All that we had to go on were the first names of the children, their ages and sizes. Because they came from the south, the children had no warm clothing.

On Christmas Eve, "The Group" makes their deliveries. Our last stop

was to these recipients. We went back and forth searching for the house. Finally we found a very humble abode tucked way off the road. The knock on the door was answered by a very shy and timid woman. She was not expecting us, had no idea we existed. She was reluctant to speak to us. One of the women in our group conveyed to her that we knew of her children's needs and had a few things for their Christmas. With great trepidation, she finally allowed us into her home.

As we brought the gifts of winter coats, warm pants, shirts and sweaters, toys and games, all gaily wrapped, into her home, she was astonished. As we spread the gifts under her humble "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree, a small cedar cut from the field and decorated with ribbons and tin foil, we could not help but look around at the surroundings.

Chairs and tables were made from cauliflower crates. Coverings from washed, discarded burlap bags. Although it was plain to see there was no money, the house was sparkling clean, the floors, scrubbed. As we left, one member of our group noticed that the oven was on, the door was opened and the house was cold.

We got a mile down the road and the lead car stopped. After a brief dis-

cussion about the member's observation, we went back. By now the woman was in tears, saying that she had told her children that Santa Claus could not come. We inquired about the cold, assuming there was no oil and learned about the burner. It was about 15 above zero, and the sun still had not set. Our funds were exhausted. The hat was passed one more time. We called several burner companies; they were closed.

We finally found the town supervisor in the middle of a Christmas party at town hall. We explained the plight of the family. The town had a contract for emergency service. At 11:30 p.m. that night, heat was on where there had been no heat all during the month of December.

The next morning, while in church, a warm wonderful feeling came over me reflecting on what I imagined Christmas morning would be for this family.

Several months later, we received a letter from the women stating that she and her husband had been ready to give up. She went on to say how that morning had changed their lives.

"As the children came down the stairs for the first morning in a month to a heated room, their faces shone. Their eyes were bright. It was like the

heavens had opened up and God had spread star dust over them, as they saw the tree with the gaily wrapped packages underneath it where they expected to see none." She spoke of the children going back to school after the holidays with warm coats and clothing. The joy the children found from the toys and games, since they had few of their own, was such that words could not describe.

And Christmas dinner was a feast they could only have imagined. The family went to bed that night filled with wonder, love, and stomachs used to hunger were full.

The new-found confidence her husband felt led him to search out, and find, a job.

It's because of things like this we bother. And because there, but for the Grace of God, go I. Or you. "The Group" is a gathering of individuals who are thankful to God that they are in better circumstances than others. They pool their time, their resources, to help provide Christmas for those who normally have been able to provide for their own, but because of a tragedy, a lost job, an illness, they can't this year. The recipients do not know us personally, they need not say thank you, they are not beholden to us.

We gather the funds from ourselves and from the many contributors who want to share their riches with others. "The Group's" volunteers investigate the circumstances of the recipients, determine the needs. The shoppers scour the retail stores and outlets trying to make every dollar do two and three times the work. This is made possible by a few retailers and outlets who contribute to the effort by allowing the shoppers to fill the needs at very substantial discounts, often, offering merchandise below their cost. A sweater mill has donated some of their excess inventory. A large department store donates the boxes and wrappings.

Volunteers gather, wrap, code and distribute the gifts. The families are broken down by code, Family A, Family B, etc. There are no last names except on a closely guarded master file so that delivery can be made. Shoppers are given a child's name, Jimmy, age 8, and a list of sizes. It often becomes personal, and often a set of trains never received as a youth, a large toy truck, a very special doll, is added to the list of needs or wants with an extra donation to buy that special gift for "my child."

If you would like to become a member of "The Group," we need you. Things are tough this year. We know our funds are going to be stretched to the maximum limit. Any contribution is welcomed.

If you are a good shopper, we need you. If you are a retailer, especially a toy or clothing store, please help. Reach out to someone who normally provides for themselves but can't this year.

If you know of a family in such a circumstance, please let us know. We'll try to help as many in real need as we can.

You may contact "The Group" by writing to "The Group," P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York, 11901.

And why not?

Shame, shame on us

Many are asking, "what happened Tuesday?" The voters had pledged to remember in November. They had said, enough is enough. As we all are aware, most incumbents were re-elected, some by just a few percentage points. Shame on us.

We have allowed approximately 15 percent of the citizens to determine who will govern, and how, during the next two to four years. You may question that 15 percent figure, but let's take a look at the numbers.

Suffolk is indicative of the rest of the state. In Suffolk County, of all the people who are eligible to vote, only 60 percent are registered to do so. Four out of six people who could determine their choice have, by their

apathy, decided to disenfranchise themselves from the privilege of voting. Of those who were registered to vote in Tuesday's election, only half bothered to cast their ballot. This left three out of ten citizens to make the determination. Of those, roughly 16 percent chose the winning candidates. Their will will prevail.

This means 1.6 out of every ten people have decided on how much taxes you will pay. On whether abortion should be legal or illegal. What rules and regulations your life will be controlled by. That's sick!

1.6 out of ten people will spend every cent you make from January to May 24. During these first five months of the year, no matter where

you work, no matter how much money you make, 16 percent of the citizens of New York will determine where your salary and earnings shall go. Of course, the kicker is, those representatives chosen by this minute minority can decide, and probably will, that you are not working long enough for the state. You should work right into June, and maybe even July.

We as a society have no right to complain if 70 percent of us refused to be good citizens. We left it up to the few who realized the value and the power of their vote. They exercised that right, their voice has been heard. For the apathetic remainder, who will surely be loud in their complaints, shame on us.

And why not?

One Man, One Job

It has been said that Walter Hazlitt has a big head. It must be true because Walter wants to wear two hats at one time.

Hazlitt is the executive director of the political, problem plagued Suffolk County Water Authority. Walter Hazlitt is also the Republican leader of Brookhaven Town. He should be one, the other, or neither. His head is not big enough to wear both crowns.

Hazlitt has now claimed unto himself the authority to name the fifth member of the board to replace the former chairman, Leon Campo, who abruptly resigned while under fire and investigation. Hazlitt's past record gives

no assurance that he can name the best person who will serve the people instead of the political empire.

The Suffolk County Water Authority is a state institution. As an authority it is not answerable directly to the people. The members of the board of directors are appointed by the Suffolk County Legislature and, normally, cannot be removed until the end of their term.

Hazlitt claims the seat vacated by Campo is a Brookhaven seat and he has the right to fill it. We think the king's head has gotten a little swollen from wearing two hats.

The seat belongs to the people served by the Suffolk County Water Au-

thority. It should be filled by a conscientious legislature which can put aside politics, seek out and find the brightest, most honest person who is qualified to be seated.

Once the seat has been filled, then the members of the authority can set about finding the best qualified, honest, fairminded person to be the director.

If Walter is willing to give up his chairmanship of the Republican party, he should put in his resume, just like anyone else. If he is the best, he gets the job; if he isn't, he should enjoy his retirement. It's time to stop playing politics with water.

And why not?

Priorities, the name of the game

No one can be all things to all people. Yet, this is exactly what our governments, from the school boards through the United States Government, have tried to be. The result is chaos, attention paid to the squeakiest wheel until loud squeals come along.

Our elected officials, whether they be members of school boards or the Congress of the United States, must develop a stringent set of priorities for themselves and their constituents. A set of priorities based upon what is good for the majority. They must clearly define these priorities and establish goals to fulfill the aspirations of the priorities.

These priorities should be budgeted for in a proper manner. Then, and only then, if they have money left

over, should the government entities look to offer and fund secondary priorities, in their order of importance and service to the majority.

An example of a lack of priorities are our school districts. The basic purpose of our schools and the obligation of the school board is to provide adequate facilities which offer a curriculum that has the objective to teach all students to be competent readers and logical thinkers who can perform normal math functions; to teach and instruct the students, all students, about the world they live in, its history and how to function in society; an understanding of the sciences and the arts.

Unfortunately, because schools boards have allowed their directions

to be scattered, we offer our students a whole host of options and electives that may appeal to those interested, but graduate classes of children who are functionally illiterate.

The current menu of electives drives up the cost of education beyond what the majority of taxpayers can afford. We spend money we don't have, and we buy everything but what we should. It's the same in our towns, our state and federal government. All branches of government are in deep trouble.

There are no priorities. We are spending each way to Sunday and, as a result, the taxpayers, the voters and the citizens fail to see the accomplishments of government. The shotgun approach to spending has led to enormous tax increases which now

must be halted because the economy has slowed down, and the taxpayers' ability to pay has been exhausted.

Setting priorities takes political guts and courage. Those left out of the first round will squeal like stuck pigs, round up the troops and lobby like mad. Elected officials have to stand up to this kind of pressure. It's difficult, but it is a lot easier in this environment of a down-turned economy and an exhausted taxpayer.

Prioritize government and we have a chance of bailing ourselves out of the mess we have made of it. Failure to do so will require a meat axe and the good will end up going with the bad. There is still time to do the right, common sense thing. Let's get on with it now!

And why not?

Reaping tax dollars

The 21st Century Environmental Bond Act, which was rejected by voters at the polls recently, was heralded as the salvation of the environment, a needed tool to preserve land and water. Without it, we were told, the environment is virtually doomed.

Comments from the avid environmentalists of our times since that defeat have targeted on the lack of sensibleness of the voters for ignoring our environmental needs, and hurting their own pocketbooks because the bond issue included some funds for capping landfills and recycling programs. However, just as there was in the bond issue proposal, there are some hidden dollars that linger, even in defeat, which should be kept out of the hands of the free spending politicians.

The bond issue proposal included some new taxes which were designed to create a bond issue debt service fund to cover the debt service costs of the proposal. Those taxes included a two cent container tax on nonrefillable beverage containers, and a ten cents per gallon tax on beer. These taxes were designed to raise an estimated \$117 million each year to cover the debt service costs.

Well, since the bond issue went down to defeat, there will be no debt service costs. So what happens to the money raised by the new taxes? According to the proposal, all sums remaining in the 21st Century Environmental Quality Bond debt service fund "...which are not needed for payment of the annual debt service for the current fiscal year on bonds and notes..." will go into the general fund of the state.

Hold on now! The people of the State of New York are being hit with extra taxes to pay the debt service for a bond issue the people, through their votes, said they didn't want. Therefore, there are only two possible ways to deal with the taxes collected. The first, and most preferable, should be the return of these dollars to the public directly by rescinding the added taxes. If the money isn't needed, and it isn't for the bond issue debt service

fund, it shouldn't be collected.

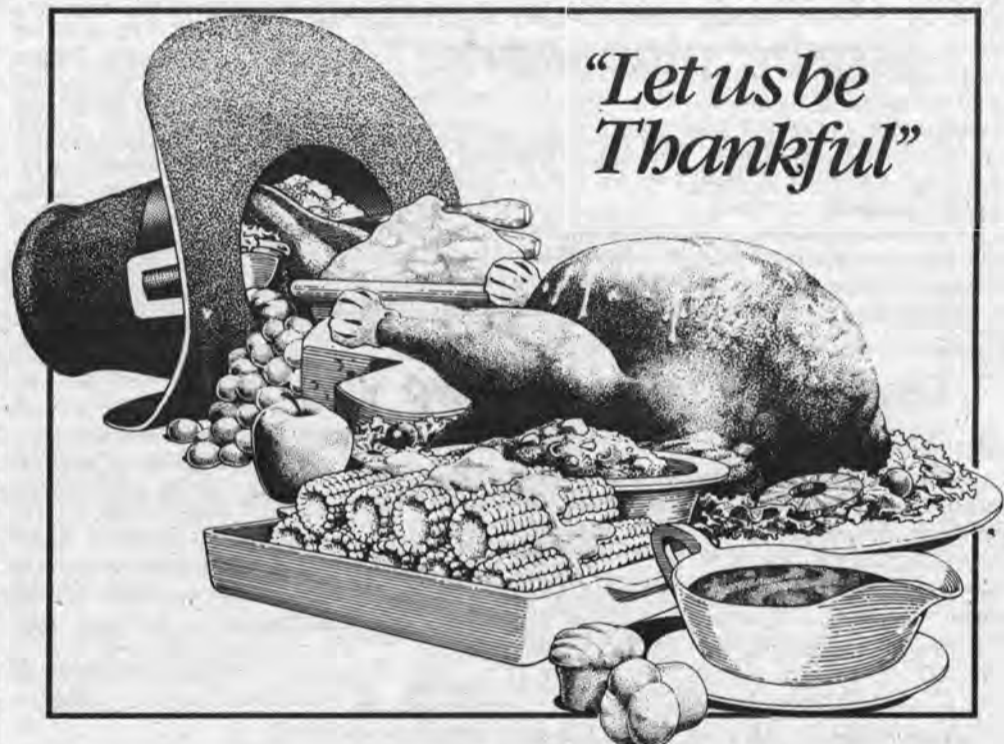
Or, and this is a proposal made by Assemblyman Thomas Barraga (R-West Islip), the \$117 million should go into a Dedicated Environmental Fund. Set up on a matching fund basis with municipalities, this amount could swell to \$234 million per year which could be earmarked for dealing with the solid waste management problems state-wide, including capping landfills, which are being closed under the guise of environmental benefit, composting and recycling programs. In this fashion, the people would get their dollars back indirectly in helping offset costs they would have to shoulder through property taxes.

There should be widespread support for the Dedicated Environmental Fund, from the governor down to the environmentalists who campaigned for the bond issue. The governor spent most of his campaign exhorting the virtues of the bond issue, claiming it was vitally needed to protect our environment. If the governor seeks to grab the \$117 million for the general fund, it will be very clear the only environment he is truly concerned about is his own political environment. One in which he can slip extra dollars to hide poor fiscal management.

Environmentalists who strongly supported the bond issue should rally around the Barraga proposal as well. They should strongly oppose the diversion of these dollars specifically specified for environmental benefit, into the general fund where they will be used to offset wanton and wasteful spending habits.

Barraga reports he will prepare legislation which would be filed at the forthcoming special session. We would advise our Suffolk legislative delegation on both sides of the political aisle to join Barraga in this effort. Their position on this issue will clearly identify them as representatives of the people, OR, as free-spending politicians who dip into the taxpayers' pockets under false pretenses.

And why not?



Don't kill the goose

There is a move afoot to increase tuition at community and state colleges operated under the SUNY system. Tuition currently is \$1,350 per semester, an incredible bargain in a day and age where some colleges are charging \$5,000 and \$10,000 per semester.

The SUNY system provides the opportunity for all state residents to offer their children a college education. Its fees are within reach of just about any family or student who seriously wants a college education. It particularly puts a college education within the reach of middle and upper middle class families which, because of their income, are not eligible for most of the grants and scholarships that are geared towards lower income families. This puts these families in the predicament of earning too much to receive assistance, but not enough to pay private college tuitions.

The SUNY systems attract some of the best students from around the

state and from around the world. The complaint has been made that because of the tuition structure and because of the quality of education offered on SUNY campuses, our state schools have become a magnet for foreign students. These foreign students should pay the total cost of their education and tuition rates should be adjusted to reflect these costs.

SUNY tuition rates for New York State residents should, and probably can, be raised. Most students and their families who help them can probably afford a 10 to 30 percent increase. SUNY tuitions have not been raised for almost a decade because Governor Cuomo has opposed any increases.

Catch-up time is here, as costs have accelerated. But increases in tuition for state residents should be flat and not based upon a formula that will eliminate the ability of middle class and upper middle class students to attend these schools.

And why not?

Now cut the mandates, too!

Governor Cuomo finally has found the courage to take on the bankrupting state spending. Reeling from a drastically reduced plurality against less than formidable opponents in the recent election, Cuomo has, finally, come face to face with the disastrous financial condition of New York State.

Although Cuomo and the legislature used every gimmick in the books, and raised various taxes, to balance this year's budget, New York State government will spend a billion dollars more than it will take in during 1990-'91.

New York State Comptroller Ned

Regan, as well as ex-Republican candidate Pierre Rinfret, predicted that state expenditures in 1991-'92 will be \$5 billion more than those for the 1990-'91 budget, about 10 percent of the budget total, if spending is not checked now.

Cuomo declared after the election that the voters won't take any more, they can't afford to take any more, state spending must be cut back. He recommended across-the-board cuts. He specifically zeroed in on local, municipal and school aid. These are hard times that call for tough decisions by elected officials with courage and conviction.

During Cuomo's administration, spending by the state has almost doubled. It now must be cut back, and everyone who has had their head in the trough must share the burden. Part of the state aid local municipalities and school districts have enjoyed has been accompanied by increases in state mandates, programs and services, rules and regulations. The funding for these programs, in part or whole, has been through municipal and state educational aid. Since the state intends to severely cut back on this aid, not even fulfilling the amounts the state pledged for this year, it is incumbent upon the state to

eliminate the mandates they've placed on local governments and school districts.

With the removal of the mandates, the districts then will be in a position to eliminate these mandates or continue with the programs as an elective, funded by the local taxpayers. Without the elimination of these mandates, the cutbacks in state aid will be nothing more than raw transfer of taxing obligations to the local municipalities, which will have to place the burden on property taxes.

For years, school districts have claimed that the vast majority of their expenditures are mandated by the state. They have pointed to programs in schools dealing with social services, health and the handicapped. County and town governments have taken up the cry and point out that as much as 25 percent of their budget is the result of costly mandates ordered upon them by the governor and the state legislature. They must now be eliminated and our local governments must be allowed to provide the services the communities want and can afford. Anything less is a sham and political deception.

It's obvious, with the economy the shape it is in, with the state going bankrupt, we cannot afford all that we have had in the past. As we, the citizens of New York State, have seen our economic fortunes change, we have been realistic enough to make alterations in our habits. We have changed our eating, our living and our spending habits. Our government must do the same, and state government, which has imposed these costly mandates, must eliminate these requirements to allow local government, which is closest to the people, to govern effectively and efficiently.

No one in Albany knows better what the local people want, need and can afford than the local officials. Let's give them the power to be effective and efficient.

And why not?

Warning to School Boards

Suffolk County school boards should be paying particular attention to the state government in these days of fiscal crisis. Governor Mario Cuomo has, with his recent recommendations for school aid cuts, made it known educational dollars will be hard to come by in the months ahead. State Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol said recently that the challenge in the days ahead is going to be to "hold on to the dollars we have rather than hope for more." Belt tightening must begin now!

School boards traditionally looked to the state to fund 35 to 50 percent of school spending. It is estimated that the state is facing an \$800 to \$900 million shortfall in revenues during the 1990-1991 budget. It is projected that the state will be short an estimated \$5 billion in 1992 if spending is kept at the current level.

Most one-shot revenue shifting measures have been used up. The economy is softening, tax revenues

from all sources are expected to fall from now through 1993-1994. School districts have had a habit of going to Albany crying for more, not to ease the tax burden but to offset additional, and far too often wasteful, spending.

But those days are over. The state must cut its spending, and education is not sacrosanct. The cuts recently proposed in education are just the beginning.

School boards must face this reality and prepare contingency plans for restricting the non-mandatory curriculum offered. Classes, where possible, should be consolidated. Programs non-essential to core education should be considered for elimination. Schools that can be consolidated, must be. Every school board should develop a priority list of educational offerings. They should look at the courses required to be provided so a student may graduate with a Regents Diploma and be eligible for college. They

should then prioritize the other elective curriculum offerings according to those subjects and courses most needed by the majority of the students to enhance and enrich the core educational requirements, and to vocationally prepare those not college bound.

School boards must take a very cold, hard and realistic look at the staff and administration of the school. In many instances pupil enrollment has decreased, but administrative staffing was gone up. Ten years ago, most districts had twice the student enrollment and less than 50 percent of the current administrators we have now. Why?

Every school board must realize we are going to be forced back to basics and prepare a plan to meet the expected shortfall in state aid and real estate taxes. The message has been sounded long and loud, and rang out again in last week's elections. No more taxes. We have to use what we have today more wisely, more efficiently.

And why not?

It's time for a new Republican party

As was clearly demonstrated in this past November's election, the New York State Republican party is ineffective and barely exists. By a slim margin of 30,000 votes, the Republican gubernatorial candidate retained Row B for the Republicans. If just 15,000 of those votes had switched and gone for London, the Republicans would have been relegated to Row C, something that has never happened in the State of New York.

The Republicans have lacked effective leadership for almost a decade and a half. Not one Republican leader has been able to put together a Republican organization that was meaningful or well financed since the days of Nelson Rockefeller. The party has been virtually bankrupt and, as a result, has not been able to either seek out qualified candidates or offer the financing and the organization to run campaigns for state-wide offices.

They have not even been able to provide funds to cover transportation

costs for the candidates so that they could campaign state-wide. Dollars have not been there for advertising, promotion or even the building of staff that was needed.

This year, the state organization hit a new low when they selected Pierre Rinfret as their candidate. He was nominated to run for governor, then it was discovered he wasn't even a registered Republican. He was promised a war chest and, because it was not there, he ended up fighting with Republicans more than he fought with Cuomo. If Rinfret didn't do anything else, he has made those who call themselves Republicans painfully aware of the disarray of the Republican party.

Locally, John Cochrane, who has served for the last two years as caretaker county chairman, announced to his organization that he was resigning. During the past two years, Cochrane was able to stop some of the disastrous infighting amongst local Republicans.

He has a number of victories to his credit, and he leaves a winner. However, he leaves the county Republican organization in debt and without an heir apparent.

The vacancy in the county leadership has the old political hacks chafing at the bit. They want to get their greedy little hands on the chairmanship. One of the front runners is Tom Neppel, who is in hot pursuit of the crown. Neppel, out of Brookhaven, is in the insurance business and has been enriched many times over through his political connections in obtaining municipal insurance contracts without bid. The most notorious example is his own Brookhaven Town. Town Supervisor Henrietta Acampora, while running for her first term in office, pledged that she was going to put Brookhaven's insurance out to bid. It never happened. Neppel's strangle hold over her was so strong that even this feisty woman feared giving the reaper his due.

Neppel, typical of the yuppie greed

that permeated the eighties, is not satisfied and now wants the county as his oyster. Neppel is symbolic of what is wrong with the Republican party. It's not what's in it for the party, it's what's in it for me.

The Republican party, if it is ever to be a viable party again, must rid itself of these leeches and go forth and find a new breed of people who put service above self. The Republican party desperately needs people of principle, courage and conviction. People who are willing to organize, sacrifice and rebuild the party from the ground up. New leaders of principle and vision must be found to head the town, the county and the state organizations.

This should be the era of the new Republican party. If the party fails to do it, they will abdicate their position of trust to the Democrats and the Conservatives. People who espouse the Republican philosophy will be left to wallow in the wasteland.

And why not?