

This year, more than ever

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, then Christmas. Starting in August, we began to receive letters from people who knew of families that would not be able to give their children a good Christmas this year. Other letters came from parents whose families were facing hard times, voicing hope that somehow, someday, their children might be spared a bleak Christmas morning.

Most of these people had been able to provide for their families in the past, but because of the recession, they had lost jobs or suffered a severe cutback in hours. We also received a number of other letters from people who had suffered severe illnesses, or accidents, and had lost their income.

"The Group" was formed over a decade ago to specifically help those who suffer these hardships. Families that until recently had been able to provide for themselves, but have encountered obstacles they could not overcome and, as a result, cannot provide for themselves now.

Don Meyers, journalist, friend

'Sing no sad songs . . .'

A veteran, award-winning newsman who has been an important part of the Suffolk Life news room died last Friday. Don Meyers, whose byline and skillfully written articles appeared often in this newspaper, the Long Island Press and a number of weekly publications, presided over our copy desk for a number of years, helping young reporters develop and mature.

Above everything else, Don was a fighter, and an inspiration. He fought a daily battle against a severe diabetic condition. That problem began having an impact on his eyes, and then his kidneys. He was forced to undergo dialysis sessions three times a week. Dialysis often sapped his strength, but never his will to continue a normal life, his determination to be an active participant of our news staff.

Don became a candidate for a kidney transplant, and lived with the fervent hope that he would live to see the day a new kidney would be available for him. He endured many false alarms while waiting. A beeper he wore to instantly notify him when a kidney became available beeped occasionally. But they were false alarms. Once the beeper sounded and it was for real. A kidney was available, and he and his beloved wife, Karen, made a midnight rush to a New York City hospital. There were two candidates. The other was a better match. And Don returned home with a dream unrealized. But the fight was still in him, the determination still alive.

Then one day the call came. A kidney was available and Don was at the top of the list. He took the call, closed his briefcase, and announced to his fellow workers, "I'll see you in a couple of months."

Don got his kidney, and the operation was successful. But complications developed. Don returned to the hospital to battle a leg infection. Don never got back to the news room. In the end it was his heart, one that was as big as all outdoors, that brought the long battle to an end.

Nothing can be more heart-wrenching than to have to tell your little child Santa will not come this year. Mothers and fathers try to convince their children that Santa has limited resources, and that there are others more worthy, because of greater need, than their own family.

"The Group" is comprised of individuals who come together each year to help those in need. Prior to the first Christmas our group was formed, we had been away on a holiday with friends. After one of the evening meals we were discussing how fortunate we were. One of the founding members of "The Group," the late Jess Marchese, told the story of having won a turkey and bringing it to the home of his in-laws in Maine for Christmas. His in-laws had already purchased the food, and, rather than see the bird go to waste, Jess called the local church and asked if there was someone who could use it.

The local priest gave Jess the name of a woman whose husband had been re-

cently killed in a logging accident. Jess and his brother-in-law delivered the bird. The woman insisted they come into her sparsely furnished home. She told them that their Christmas dinner was going to be a pound of hamburger and a turkey was beyond her wildest dreams. A little tyke insisted that Jess see the present that Santa had delivered early. The boy excitedly and proudly displayed a pair of socks, his only present. He told them how pleased he was, as he had no socks to wear.

Jess and his brother-in-law left, and found a store just about to close. Soon, they returned to the home, where the child was already in bed. They carried in armloads of clothes and toys from "Santa." The woman never knew who the two men were or where they came from. But, on Christmas morning, her child found brightly-wrapped gifts under the tree, and the smell of turkey roasting in the oven.

Building upon this one act of kind-

ness, "The Group" was founded. We pooled our resources and were able to take care of two families. Eleven children enjoyed a Christmas that would have been denied them because their parents, who normally had been able to provide, couldn't. They were too proud to ask for any kind of assistance, too embarrassed to reach out and ask others for help. The parents did not know we were coming, and we have remained anonymous. The toys and clothing were from Santa or from the parents.

Over the years word has spread about "The Group." We do as much as we can with the resources we have on hand. Our group has been joined by several hundred others who have contributed monetarily and, in some cases, physically. This year we expect The Group's treasury will be somewhat bare because the needs have obviously grown. And everyone has felt the pinch.

If you are fortunate enough to have survived these hard economic times and would like to share your good fortune with others, we encourage you to do so. Contributions in the past have ranged from children who have sent in coins to one major benefactor last year who made a lot of folks' Christmas brighter with a contribution of \$2,500. Every penny raised, and then some, is used to purchase clothing and toys. Volunteer shoppers who have already contributed to the cause usually dig a bit deeper, just to get that extra gift for a youngster they know by name only.

The Group's cause is aided immeasurably by a major retailer who donates the wrapping paper and boxes, another gives us major discounts. This allows The Group to utilize all funds collected for the gifts and not the wrappings. It helps make the money stretch further, to another family, to make just one more child's Christmas brighter.

Volunteers shop, wrap and assemble. We do not individually acknowledge the contributions, since "The Group" feels this would be a waste of precious dollars that can be used for another family or two. The hardest thing for Group members to endure is to have the funds run out before the names of those in need.

Please, if you can help this year, we need you more than ever. Your only reward will be on Christmas morning, thinking of the child discovering your generosity when he or she was sure no one cared. Any one of us could be in the circumstances of the parents who face a Christmas morning devoid of joy for their beloved children because of conditions beyond their control. As my old grandmother used to say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

If you can help, please send your contributions to "The Group" c/o P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, NY 11901. Let's join together to make Christmas 1991 a holiday of joy for those who would otherwise face gloom and despair.

And why not?

There were tears in the news room last Friday, in fact throughout our entire staff. Those who had been blessed by having known him could not believe he would not return. Don had given to many of our young reporters the qualities that had made him great. His assumption of nothing, his demand for facts, his passion for balance in a story. He took raw ability and turned it into professional quality. He could be demanding, he could be tough. But he was fair, and harbored a sensitivity that was unique. Someone else's tragedy could bring a tear to his eye. Tell him of someone's need, and he would be first on line to help.

Suffolk Life and its readers, and in fact those of the other publications he was involved in throughout Long Island, have been well served by this gallant gentleman. He was a newsman through and through, a true professional, truly

The good guy won

Senator Al D'Amato (R-NY) has announced that County Court Judge Denis Hurley of Wading River has been confirmed to serve as a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York. D'Amato had recommended Hurley's name, which was officially put forth by President George Bush on June 27. We couldn't be more pleased, and offer our congratulations to this outstanding individual.

Denis Hurley will make an outstanding U.S. District Court judge, perhaps, someday, even a United States Supreme Court justice.

Denis is truly one of the unique people we have had the pleasure to meet in our 30 years of involvement with government. He is not only extremely brilliant, but has a remarkable ability to be compassionate, humorous and down-to-earth.

one of a very rare breed. A former police reporter for the Long Island Press, Don felt a kinship for members of the police force, and they returned it with a large measure of respect for his journalistic integrity and accuracy.

In a message written July 5, 1991, Don left some instructions for when it was his time to journey to that "big copy desk in the sky." He set some deadlines for his final paragraph. And he said, "When I go, sing no sad songs for me..."

Don, the tears are for us, for our loss. A friend, a mentor, a beautiful human being. We'll sing no sad songs, in fact, we'll chuckle with fond memories about the fun times, the good times, and the good things you brought into our lives.

Godspeed, Don.
And why not?

Denis is known in the legal community as one of the brightest minds Suffolk has ever produced. He served on the Suffolk County Legislature and became known as one of the few who seemed to care, someone who thought out his decisions and votes carefully.

Senator D'Amato let it be known that he was seeking the most qualified candidates as nominee for the United States District Court. Denis' name was submitted, and his credentials and record stood out among all others. His appointment was confirmed by the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, and by a vote of the full Senate last week.

We are proud of Denis as he is a shining example that truly nice people can and do succeed.

Be a good judge!
And why not?

Congratulations, Mr. Gaffney

When your candidacy for county executive was first discussed, the question on the minds of many of us was, "Can a nice guy finish first?" Congratulations, Bob, you did it. Not only did you win, but you won with style and grace. You showed the political pros that a good candidate does not have to get down in the sewer. He does not have to sling mud and develop accusations by innuendos in order to win. Maybe the way you ran the race will be a refreshing example for others to follow in the future. Politics can also become the art of gentlemen.

As vigorous and hard as the campaign has been, the next 90 days will be even worse, and more crucial for your future. The team that you put together to aid and guide you and to carry out your directives and orders must be of your own making. Your top lieutenants must understand your directives and be loyal to you to a fault.

The people you place in important positions will be an extension of yourself, your goals, your views. Choose wisely. Look for experience, for accomplishment. Your administration could have a tremendous jump-start with someone of the caliber and qualifications of former acting County Executive Michael LoGrande as your key deputy. We urge you to strongly consider drafting him, if need be, to serve in your administration.

As we discussed early on in the campaign, taking the reins of Suffolk County government at this point will

be more than a normal challenge. The county's fiscal priorities will have to be put in order, and there isn't enough money to go around. The often-reported shortfall of \$110 million for 1990, an issue that seemed to have disappeared during the campaign, will have to be made up. The current county executive's proposed budget is now estimated to be \$80 million out of whack for 1992. Combined, you could be looking at up to a 20 percent difference between revenues and expenditures. Obviously, some very hard decisions will have to be made. We believe the voters spoke quite forcefully in selecting you as their new leader. They said 'enough is enough. We cannot afford any more taxes. The size of county government must be pared down.'

We recommended to you six months ago that you familiarize yourself with what was specifically required of a county government under the state constitution. What mandates from the state and federal government must be complied with, without exception? What mandates are self-imposed by those in government? Starting with the basics which are required by the constitution and are firm mandates from the state and federal government is the base from which you build your government. Everything else should be examined as to its cost and its value to the majority of the citizens. Every department, every service should be prioritized in relation to the value to the majority of the people in Suffolk

County. After the cost of the constitutional requirements are covered, the hard mandates are financed, then the available money within the taxpayers' ability to fund should be applied according to the priority list.

Do not dilly dally around trying to be all things to all people. Hard decisions must be made. Have the courage to do so. Be considerate and compassionate in making your decisions. When you are finished, have a level playing field that is equitable to all.

Most of all, learn whom you can trust and whom you can't. Bring into your administration professionals without political credentials, seek out volunteers without agendas, who have pride in Suffolk County and want to help you make it a place where we all can again profit from our work and enjoy the benefits that are here.

We wish you well. We are confident you have the ability and will have the perseverance to be an excellent county executive.

And why not?

Run, Mario, run!

The spotlight of attention is focused these days on Governor Mario Cuomo. Will he or won't he run for president is the question on many minds. Cuomo is playing the game, building up the suspense. He says something that sounds like he's in the race, then declares he isn't. We'd like to help. Our advice is: Run, Mario, run.

There's good reason for this sentiment. The state's finances are bad and getting worse. The latest update on the state deficit, released in recent weeks, puts the state \$689 million in the hole. The budget fiasco of early 1991 is certain to be repeated in early 1992, and the results will be even worse than this year when aid to education was slashed, user fees went up, and a scheduled tax break was postponed. With the deficit growing by leaps and bounds, schools, towns, and taxpayers are in for even darker days ahead. There's no reason why we in New York State should be selfish and keep Cuomo's fiscal management capabilities all to ourselves. We should be willing to share him with the entire nation, where deficit problems are a common occurrence, and he will fit right in, and the bite on the taxpayers is spread over a larger base so he can take more.

Run, Mario, run.

We here on Long Island now enjoy the highest electricity rates in the nation. Cuomo's talents in dealing with our utility company, LILCO, helped bring this about. There's no reason why the utilities across this nation should not be able to share in his 'bail 'em out at any cost' philosophy which turned LILCO from near-bankruptcy into riches. If Cuomo was available on the federal level to work his magic, our rates might no longer be the highest in the nation. Of course, they wouldn't be any lower, but the others could increase their rates and ours would not look as bad in comparison.

Run, Mario, run.

Cuomo could do a great job on education just as he has done here in New York. He has taken the lead, he has cut costs. Costs to the state by cutting state aid for our schools. Cuomo has said that it's time for our schools to look within themselves and start weeding out waste and extravagant spending. While we can't disagree with that view, we would

suggest he lead by example in this matter. He could start by eliminating some wasteful state habits of rewarding the privileged few. An example: State Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol lives in a state-owned and state-operated 11-room mansion with five baths, five fireplaces, hardwood floors throughout, with a putting green and fountain gracing the exterior. No, Sobol does not get this mansion for free. According to a report on June 5 in The Times Union, Albany newspaper, he pays \$123 a month, \$1,472.90 a year, to live there.

The state pays for the utilities, \$1,842 last year. And for a cleaning woman, salary \$20,750, excluding benefits. And he has the use of a state-owned limousine and a \$24,000-a-year chauffeur. Sobol's salary is in the neighborhood of \$131,500.

These are tough times. We all have to tighten our belts. Some a heck of a lot more than others. How many more housing giveaways of this kind currently exist in Albany? And how much could be pared from the state budget, to pare the deficit, if such abuses were eliminated?

Run, Mario, run.

Mario Cuomo is the power behind the landfill ban, which is bankrupting Long Island residents with soaring garbage costs that will one day, in the not-too-distant future, double the tax load. It could have, and should have, been done differently. The state should have come up with a common plan for composting and recycling facilities to eliminate the endless costs for engineering and consultants. The state could have provided leadership, not simply an edict, to help the towns ease into the solution. The state could have been at the forefront of a much-needed effort to down-size packaging, to establish regional markets for recyclables. The state didn't. Mario didn't. His DEC hasn't.

Run, Mario, run.

Cuomo has said he doesn't think it would be fair to leave his job as governor to run for president. If he doesn't, he'll stay here to continue the leadership we have all come to know.

Run, Mario, run.
And why not?

'Daddy's out of work'

To the editor:

I read everyday how the economy is affecting businesses and homeowners on Long Island, but I have yet to read how it is affecting the innocence of our children.

People don't seem to realize that this economic disaster is affecting the innocence of the youngest members of our society.

Children don't understand that "Daddy's out of work," translates to less food on the table, less snacks and, most of all, less gifts and toys under the Christmas tree.

Children are innocent enough to believe that their parents will always be able to make everything right. They are innocent enough to believe that Santa Claus will leave them toys under the tree, even though "times are tough" and "Daddy's out of work."

Well, "times are tough" and "Daddy is out of work" and Christmas isn't very far away!

Please print this poem that I've written in hopes that it will bring attention to the fact that the economy does affect all people, including the youngest members of our society.

Christmas '91

There's still the smell of pine hanging in the air.
There's still the wide-eyed children seeing "Santa" everywhere.
There's still the hopes and wishes of adults and children too.
That all their precious day-dreams on Christmas morn come true.
But like a painted picture that the artist does conceive,
The sights and sounds of Christmas be-lie what we perceive.
There's still majestic pine trees but the buyer must beware
There's still those little children for whom Santa won't be there.
There's still our hopes and dreams but they're dying one by one for life is one big struggle on this "Christmas '91..."

Linda Callagy, Miller Place



This is our government

This is our government, a republic that operates as a democracy. Butcher or baker or candlestick maker can be elected to run our government. Over the last several decades, the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker have come to be excluded from the process by career politicians who, once in office, use the power of the incumbency to stay in office.

Using your tax dollars, they do what they call constituent service. They answer your letters, they respond to your telephone calls. Using their franking privileges, which is free postage, they blanket your homes with

mailings several times a year. These Washington elitists are our congressmen and senators.

These people are out of sight most of the year, hidden in Washington, away from our scrutiny. They pass bills that favor their special interests, and almost all raise our taxes. Our congressmen and senators are probably the worst of the lot and we believe Americans have become disgusted with their antics.

What governmental officials raise taxes during a recession? The Congress of the United States did that last year and, as a result, has prolonged

the recession and thrown a lot of good, hard-working people out of work. During the same period, they raised their own salaries by almost a third, and now are making three times the family income of some of their constituents whose family incomes are the combined income of husband and wife with their first and second jobs and what the kids can contribute.

Not only have they shown their greed with salaries, but they have abused all the perks that they set up for themselves. All three of Suffolk's congressmen, Downey, Mrazek and Hochbrueckner, bounced checks in their private congressional bank,

which had to be closed down because of these abuses. Congressmen fail to pay their executive dining room tabs where they eat as only royalty can, and are charged poverty prices. Even with these giveaway prices they often don't pay their charges and as a result, the vendor who runs the dining room is on the verge of bankruptcy.

Who elected these people to be above and beyond their constituents? As congressmen, they have been quick to pass rules and regulations covering the workplace, but they have exempted themselves and held themselves above the law. But due to the value of the incumbency, less than 10 percent of those in office are thrown out in any given year. For congressmen to be voted out of office, they would have had to, in most cases, been caught red-handed in a dastardly deed.

How do we put an end to this club? Placing a limit on their term is the only answer. We limit our President to two four-year terms. Why can't we limit the senate to two four-year terms and congress to three two-year terms? With the limitation on terms, new faces and new ideas could be installed in our government. Congressmen would think twice before building the Taj Mahal for themselves, one they no longer will be able to enjoy.

Congressmen should impose these restrictions upon themselves, but they won't. We, therefore, suggest that you write and ask your congressman to voluntarily end his career after three terms. If he refuses, you can use your ultimate weapon and retire him yourself.

And why not?

Flo Albin

Our first family member

Flo Albin was Suffolk Life's first employee. In the early days of this publication's life, she was the foundation, in fact the only member, of our production crew. Her skills and outstanding dedication, embodied in a warm, lovely individual, helped in many ways to nurture the growth of this publication for the 25 years that she remained a valued member of our staff, before her retirement. Her death last week has deeply saddened us.

Flo not only applied her talents to the production and advertising composition of Suffolk Life, but became a teacher who helped many young graphic artists develop the skills they needed to succeed. Many have now gone on to success at ad agencies and publications across the county. They achieved that success through the patient, caring, but firm, guidance of Flo Albin.

Sheryl Heather, advertising director of Suffolk Life Newspapers, recalls well her first introduction to life beyond the college classroom when she joined our art department in 1976. "Fresh out of college with a graphics degree, I was ready to set the advertising world on fire with my

creativity and artistic style. What school hadn't prepared me for was advertising design in the real world—keeping a creative flair, but more importantly satisfying the client's needs. Fortunately I met someone here who gave me a blunt introduction to the real world. That was Flo Albin.

"I remember my first ad layout well," Sheryl reminisced last week, after learning of Flo's death. "It was for a sale on skateboards at Skidmore's in Hampton Bays. I put in all kinds of pictures, I added special effects, I thought it was great. Flo said, 'No one's gonna be able to read this darn thing.'"

Flo was direct, her approach was no-nonsense. But her sincerity and caring were always there. And she made a mark on many lives.

She will be sorely missed, and always fondly remembered.

And why not?

Cuomo's 'swap':

Medicaid offer has a price tag

Not everything that comes free is without a price tag. The truth of those words is found in the recent offer by the State of New York to take over the local costs of Medicaid as part of a plan to help New York City and every county in every corner of New York State.

Actually, the offer came from Governor Mario Cuomo. In a release, Governor Cuomo states: "The reasons for my proposal are simple and clear: the cost of Medicaid services is the fastest growing segment of state and local budgets. Exploding Medicaid costs have created instability in budget forecasting, and strained the capacity of local governments to raise the revenues necessary to finance these services." And, the governor states: "And unless we do something, it is bound to get worse."

The state is better equipped to assume full cost of Medicaid for two reasons, Cuomo notes. First, the state has a broader revenue base, and, secondly: "As the authority over the design and function of Medicaid programs, it can more easily implement cost containment measures that can slow the rate of growth in Medicaid expenses."

Translation: since we make the rules on how the money is spent, and since it's going to be our money we're spending, we'll change the rules. One wonders why the state could not have changed the rules to lower costs long ago, or work with the counties to realize efficiencies.

Remember our "not everything that comes free is without a price tag" comment? Read on: "It should be clear to anyone who followed this past year's budget negotiations, however, that the state cannot simply absorb the \$2.8 billion annual Medicaid cost now being borne by local governments," Cuomo declares. "Nor can we raise sufficient taxes or cut other services to accommodate a takeover without doing damage to our economy."

Here comes the price tag: "Accordingly, my proposal includes a 'swap' for a percentage of existing local revenues during the latter part of the takeover."

What swap? The governor's proposal, notes another press release, "calls for the state to retain up to .85 of a percentage point of county sales taxes in state fiscal year 1996-97, and up to a full

percentage point beginning in 1998-99. The sales tax would be taken exclusively from revenues now retained by the counties, and should not affect the level of sales tax revenues counties distribute to cities, towns and villages." Note: Suffolk does not share its sales tax revenues with any other municipality.

The price tag in New York City, incidentally, is: The state would retain 75 percent of the city's income tax revenues in 1996-97, 90 percent in 1998-99, and 100 percent beginning in the year 2000.

We don't wish to be unfair to the governor. It may well be that the "swap" will cost the state more than it will the county. But we shudder to think of the state being given a green light to dip its sticky fingers into the pocket of county government to grab funds it didn't have the power to take before. And we can't help but wonder if the percentage figures now proposed simply won't be increased in the future. Or if the county, and the city, have to boost property taxes to offset a loss of revenue.

It is, we guess, a matter of trust. And

we will concede we lack trust in dealing with state government. The ever-constant mandates, the laws applied in Albany that ravage people's finances here on the local level—the landfill ban is a prime example—are just a few reasons why.

If we are really going to be serious about helping the counties save money, Governor Cuomo, how about doing something realistic about state mandates? If what it takes to accomplish the long overdue overhaul of the mandated requirements for state-imposed programs is for the state to take the programs back, take them all back!

Medicaid costs are a big problem. So are costs for welfare and education, and these are also impacted by state mandates.

Tell you what, Gov. We'll swap you your mandates and state aid for the state taxes we pay. We'll run the programs. We'll take care of our own folks. Let the state look elsewhere for the dollars it wastes.

And why not?

Happy Thanksgiving! Time to share

As we sit down at our tables this Thanksgiving, let us all bow our heads and thank God for having a table filled with food to sit down to.

1991 has been a year of deflation that has caught some of our fellow citizens by surprise. Some things that we took for granted are gone, like overtime, second jobs and, in some cases, ourselves. It is estimated that about 90 percent of the population has not been affected severely, but the other ten percent has. Our hearts go out to those people who would normally have been able to provide for themselves but now find themselves working less hours than are needed to provide the necessities and the luxuries, or have found their job totally eliminated. Our economy, unfortunately, goes in cycles. What goes down will come up.

During these trying times, those who have been affected are turning in record numbers to churches with outreach operations, food pantries and other temporary measures to help bridge them over the troubled economic waters.

One of the organizations that has traditionally been able to help is "The Group." This is an unincorporated gathering of residents from across Long Island who pool their time, their money and their resources to provide Christmas for children whose parents normally are able to do so but, because of economic hardships beyond their control, can't this year.

"The Group" has brightened Christmas for over 100 children each year for the last ten years. These kids

receive gifts of what is most needed—the basics, like underwear, socks, pants, shirts, and outerwear, if needed, as well as a few toys and fun gifts. All is done anonymously. The gifts come from Santa Claus and are distributed before Christmas. The gaily wrapped packages are given to the children by their mothers and fathers, who follow whatever traditions they have used in the past.

In most cases, the parents never have direct contact with us. They don't know who we are, where we come from. They never have to feel beholden to anyone, or even say thank you. We hear about their plight from others who know of our program. Their needs and qualifications are verified carefully and discreetly. A day or two before Christmas, 'Santa' arrives at the house and is gone in a wink.

This effort, in its tenth year, requires a tremendous number of hours spent in planning, direction and execution. Its success depends upon the generosity of other people who may have enjoyed some good fortune this year which they wish to share with others.

Donations in the past have ranged from the nickels and dimes saved by little children to donations of a thousand dollars or more from anonymous benefactors. We do not have to tell you that this year is going to be one of the toughest we have ever experienced. We have expanded our goal from 100 to 200 children. We know we are going to be besieged with many more requests than we will be able to



fund or accommodate without your help.

The motto of "The Group" is very simple: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Any one of us can fall upon hard times. One of the hardest and the saddest things young parents have to tell their children is that Santa Claus can't come to their house this year. Little ones believe in miracles and if we can help some 'miracles' happen, then our mission is fulfilled.

If you would like to take part in "The Group," we encourage your donations. The task this year is so much bigger than ever before. Won't you make your Thanksgiving more meaningful by sharing with others?

Every cent raised is spent on securing necessities and toys for the children. Not one cent in ten years has been spent for any administrative or operating costs or salaries. We do not even waste the money required to acknowledge contributions personally. Everything is done on faith. This year, it's going to take a lot of faith to meet the needs of 1991. If you can help, please send your contribution to "The Group," c/o P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

Please help us bring Christmas joy into the lives of those who are desperately in need this year.

And why not?

Politicians, their lies and taxes

The majority of the members of the Suffolk County Legislature last week proved that they were hypocrites and liars who should not be given respect or credibility. By voting in a major property tax increase, they went back on their word, repeatedly given to the voters. They violated a pledge made less than 30 days before. Their cop-out was, "we had no choice." That's pure hogwash.

This is twice in less than a year the cowards have lied to us and used the lame excuse that they did not have a choice. Last summer they raised the sales tax by half a cent, a 12 percent increase in the county portion, as part of a deficit reduction scheme which included a pledge it would avoid a property tax increase. They said that Suffolk was in a fiscal crisis. We did not have money to meet our needs. We have a shortfall of over \$100 million. We cannot meet our payrolls and bills. They passed the sales tax increase, which is estimated to bring in \$15 million in 1991. That's a far cry from the \$100 million they said they were short.

During the campaign we asked each member, individually, "Where

did the other \$85 million go, aren't we still short?" They assured us Suffolk's finances were A-okay. The majority of those who voted for this new real estate tax increase had pledged during their campaigns, and in answering the Suffolk Life questionnaire, that they would not raise real estate taxes. During our interviews, they again said that raising real estate taxes was the last thing they would consider. They all offered ways to cut back government.

The shortfall in revenues is the fault of our elected officials, plain and simple. They can blame it on the recession, they can blame it on the increase in the welfare rolls, but the blame must squarely be put on their shoulders, as they are the ones we placed our faith in. They promised us they had heard our message, they would stop playing politics and get down to the business of running government affordably and economically.

The \$50 million borrowed will now have to be paid back by an increase in next year's real estate taxes which will range, for the average home, from \$52 in Brookhaven to \$157 in Southampton, for the coun-

ty's portion of the real estate tax increase. When combined with increases and other taxing entities that affect the real estate taxes, such as towns, schools and special districts, many homeowners are going to be faced with tremendous increases in their taxes, some close to \$1,000 a year. And when the banks adjust for these increases and escrow accounts, mortgage payments will be upped \$100 per month in many instances.

It is our guess taxpayers would have accepted a slight increase if the legislators had tried alternative measures. The county is due state and federal reimbursement for welfare expenditures made in 1991. These reimbursements are due in early 1992, and, we believe, could have been used as a means of helping the county pay off the budget bond required to keep the county solvent through this year. Those funds, coupled with some budget cuts, and a slight increase if necessary, would have been a far more compassionate solution than the "Sock the whole thing to the taxpayers" attitude which brought the tax increase. But the majority of the legislators didn't try. They quite obviously didn't care.

Incoming County Executive Robert Gaffney will have almost no alternative other than to declare a fiscal emergency in the County of Suffolk, and restructure government along constitutional requirements and absolutely unavoidable state and federal mandates. This gives him an opportunity to start at the bottom and rebuild the county into a fiscally sound operation.

Even with this \$50 million tax increase approved by the legislature, we expect that additional shortfalls will ooze out of the political rock during the coming year that will account for another \$100 million to \$150 million that will either have to be made up by additional taxes or realignment in the county government based on priorities that can be afforded.

The county legislators who reversed themselves on their pledge, which is shown on a chart elsewhere in this publication, should be afforded no further respect. These legislators no longer have any credibility. They have proven, without question, that they are damnable liars who should be treated with total disdain.

And why not?