

Fact or Fiction?

Suffolk County residents are being asked to approve the continuation of the one-quarter percent sales tax, initially levied to subsidize the Southwest Sewer District to acquire Pine Barrens and other lands allegedly needed so that we may have drinking water for ever more. The issue of water has become so charged with emotion and fear that just about anything that is put forth as a means of preserving our water becomes a major cause.

The "preservation of water" has become the rallying cry for many issues not always connected to water. Environmentalists have often voiced concerns about water to stop development for large tracts of land, and sometimes for individual projects. Commercial firms have utilized the focus on water problems to sell their products. And some firms have used the water issue to promote major public works projects—starting way back with the Southwest Sewer District—which have become financial disasters and, such as the sewer district, ultimately become an even greater source of pollution.

The public is being asked to react to this fear without firm documentation to prove that the solutions being offered are truly of value in preserving our water. A case in point: the Suffolk County Water Authority has authorized the expenditure of \$100,000 of ratepayers' money to support the passage of the Pine Barrens acquisition proposition which will appear on the November ballot. It has been reported that the Water Authority plans to run radio ads which feature the sounds of insects and drops of water. The sound of water—the flushing of a toilet—was also featured in the campaign to secure support for the passage of the

Southwest Sewer District. As it turned out, a lot of taxpayer money went down that same toilet as a result of the corruption involved in that project.

Are we being led down that same path? Is much of the fear being generated about the future of our water leading us to massive public works projects in the future? Projects which will line the pockets of those now involved in the "preserve our water" crusade?

Certainly, we need to protect and preserve our water. That goes without saying. But we need to do it in the best way to achieve that goal. In a way that the taxpayers can afford. We need to make decisions based on the best available information. We need to question that information to insure its accuracy. We need to consider the source to guarantee its validity. We need to insure that the profit motive is put behind actual public need.

We don't need the sound of insects or dripping water. We need answers to a lot of questions to make sure we are not being sold a pig in a poke, or another sewer district fiasco. Let's start with these:

1. Has all the money that we have approved through capitol budgets and bond issues to finance farmland preservation, parklands, open space and Pine Barrens been used, and what has it bought?

2. Is there a formula for the amount of land needed to be kept barren to insure pure drinking water in the future? What is the ratio of land to people?

3. What is an aquifer, where is it located, how many are there in Suffolk County, and what scientific data exists to insure the aquifer is the prime source of our fresh drinking water?

4. What do Pine Barrens have to do with pure drinking water?

5. Who drew the maps outlining the critical areas we must preserve? How were the boundaries drawn? How accurate are these maps? Where were test wells drilled to accurately locate the boundaries? What makes one side of a street a critical water preserve, while the other side can contain a commercial, industrial development?

6. What effect will this massive taking of lands have on the available lands for affordable housing now and in the future?

7. What will be the cost of policing and maintaining these lands once they are acquired?

8. If we develop a water shed of pure water in the East End, does that water belong to the towns it lies under or does it belong to all the people of Suffolk County?

9. If the East End water belongs to all the people of Suffolk, including the western areas where the commercial and industrial development has bolstered the tax base, what will

the western area do for the residents of the East End to compensate the loss of their tax base?

10. This is the billion dollar question: What will it cost to transport the pure water from the pristine, environmentally safe East End to the West End? What will be the impact on the taxpayers? The absolute top dollar impact, not estimates which will dramatically increase later as did the costs of the Southwest Sewer District?

The sound of insects has no value in helping the residents of Suffolk County make a knowledgeable decision on the value of the Pine Barrens proposal. The answers to the questions posed above are needed, and should be forthcoming, before the public is asked to waste any more tax dollars. We have from now until election day to clearly air this issue. With facts, not fear.

Let the politicians who want to reach into your pocketbook answer these questions in full before they ask you for your vote.

And why not?

Spending and Inflation

This is the period when towns and the county unveil their budgets for 1988. In many towns the tax rate is down but the spending has been increased. Mysteriously, this seems to happen every election year. During the off years, tax rates go up.

Comparing the budgets for 1988 against those for 1987, we note that the spending has increased at a much more rapid rate than inflation. The question that comes to mind is, "why?" Have we as taxpayers demanded new services? Have we as taxpayers demanded increases in services? If the answer is no, then why are we spending more than we did in the past?

Some increases are necessary be-

cause of inflation but are the budgets being increased more rapidly than inflation? The answer again should be no. If you are concerned about your taxes and how much money your government is spending, we encourage you to attend your next town board meeting and put those who are responsible for these increases on the hot seat.

Don't let them buffalo you by telling you that your tax rate is going down. That's a shell game. What goes down this year goes up twice as fast next year. Zero in on spending, demand the cuts that should be made to keep the budget in relation to last years'.

And why not?

Letters to the Editor

A clarification

Dear Editor:

Some of the time you are right and some of the time you are wrong. Here is one of those times when you are wrong. Unfortunately, it is a time when my position has been incorrectly reported on an important issue in the race for the Suffolk County Legislature's 13th District. (Suffolk Life, Sept. 30)

The issue of Little East Neck Road has been at the center of discussion for many of us in the West and North Babylon neighborhoods adjacent to this roadway. In 1981, we fought successfully with then County Legislator Patrick Halpin to scrap a road widening project for this county road. Since that time, the county

has failed to take up any project to improve traffic safety on the road. Conditions have deteriorated to such a degree that the road is without a yellow line dividing it down the center.

I have proposed that the county take the necessary action to resurface the road, reline the roadway, provide for additional curbs and sidewalks with improved drainage, conduct traffic studies at major intersections including 3rd St., Hazel Blvd., Baur St., and Hilltop Ave., and set up some off street parking for area merchants.

This proposal DOES NOT include any mention of widening the road. Since I

live in the neighborhood, I have fought any attempt to widen the road. Quite frankly, I take great offense to any politician who is suggesting that my community bear the burden of having its "Main Street" serve as a thruway for everyone's cesspool trucks.

I hope this will clarify my position for any future articles your paper may write on this issue. Sincerely,
Richard Schaffer
Democrat for County Legislator

Continued on page 4

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Know thyself first

Dear Sir:

I'm writing you this letter because my friends and I are concerned that something is very lacking in our education.

We have realized by playing games and discussing among ourselves that none of us know the location of each state within the United States. We each thought that we, as individuals, didn't know, but soon realized that none of us did.

I am now in my senior year and feel it is tragic to be on the threshold of adulthood without knowing the basics of our own country.

Both my sister and myself are on the honor roll, and neither of us knows anything of our own nation.

I have discussed this with friends from other school districts and they, too, have the same problem. We are reluctant to admit it, as it is an embarrassment to each of us.

However, once we began realizing the situation, we decided it was far too important to let go without some action being taken. Therefore, we felt that certain state government and school officials should be contacted.

Hopefully, this will bring about the possibility of future changes in school curriculum.

Sincerely,
Serena Coio

We lead this editorial with a letter from a student who depicts a problem we consider severe. We are glad to see that she, her sister and her friends have recognized the lack of education about America they receive in schools.

I remember that when I went through school, little was taught about America, particularly the 20th century. As my kids progressed through school and I assisted them with homework, I became aware that times had not changed. We still did not teach our students about the country that is theirs, that, in most cases, they would live and grow in as they matured into adulthood.

Knowing the background of man from the days of Adam and Eve, through the coming of Christ and into the 1900s is important. It is important to know about the different cultures of the world, as well as it is important to know about the rivers and mountains in Africa, Asia and Europe.

The American revolution and the Civil War are important and have meaning. But, in reality, we live in

today's world, a high tech, revolutionary lifestyle that has very little to do with what happened before 1900. Other methods of communication, transportation and government have changed more in the last 80 years than they changed in the first 8,000.

It always seems that when it comes time to teach modern history, the 20th century, the school year is down to the end and this 80-year span gets passed over in a two-week period of time.

We have asked the New York State Board of Regents to address this problem in the past, and we have been ignored. Maybe Ms. Coio's letter could be an impetus for students and parents alike to write to the New York State Board of Regents, not only requesting, but demanding, that proper and due attention be placed on American history, particularly the 20th century. It's far better to know the world that we live in and what makes it tick, than the world we never will live in.

And why not?

Act now or pay later

Since 1983, when the New York Legislature adopted legislation which bans the use of landfills after 1990, we're heard a lot about resource recovery facilities, ashfills, garbage barges and recycling. The public, however, has expressed little concern.

When the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) became involved in controversy with towns over efforts to expand landfills until resource recovery plants were on line, the majority of the public expressed little interest, as though they were saying, "That's for the town officials to worry about. That's

what we elected them for."

When the DEC began talking in terms of trucking garbage off Long Island, to some other state, the public still didn't seem concerned. Even when town officials warned that the costs of trucking garbage off the Island would be prohibitive, the public had little to say.

But the garbage problem got a lot more attention from the public in one Long Island town last week, when it became aware of what the ultimate bill will be. Town of Oyster Bay officials released a preliminary budget which made the problem hit home. Residents of the Town of Oys-

ter Bay will be hit with a 47 percent tax increase, with the costs of hauling its garbage off the island accounting for almost that entire amount. According to those budget figures, it will cost Oyster Bay residents \$241 per home per year to haul their garbage out of state.

Oyster Bay's problem started last year when the DEC ordered Oyster Bay's Old Bethpage landfill closed. The solution offered by the DEC: haul the garbage off the island. Town officials argued that the expense would be prohibitive, but DEC officials, as usual, cared little.

The trucking costs may go far beyond their current level. Last year, Oyster Bay was forced to double the costs to its hauling contractors because Pennsylvania landfills refused to accept garbage from New York. The contractors then had to travel further west, to Ohio, Wisconsin and Michigan.

Other towns on Long Island are not far away from suffering the same financial impact. The residents of these other towns may well face higher taxes to pay for hauling costs. The problem is going to hit home in all towns as it has in Oyster Bay.

The shame of the matter is, the DEC's "haul it off the island" is the only solution they have offered. The Legislature banned the use of land-

fills, but provided no dollars for solutions, and no expertise to solve the dilemma of what to do with the garbage. The DEC has been pushing the towns toward resource recovery, just another word for incineration, but the experience of Hempstead Town, where a resource recovery plant was built, closed and then demolished because it was filling the air with dioxins, has most towns, with a couple of exceptions, understandably wary of moving too far and too fast in this direction. There is no guarantee the ash residue from the burning process will not be too toxic to be buried in local landfills.

Unless Suffolk taxpayers want to shoulder the same financial burden that is being thrust upon Oyster Bay residents, the public had better become more aware and concerned. State officials who approved the landfill ban must be pressured into having the state provide assistance to the towns in searching for solutions to the garbage problem. They have ordered what not to do, but have done nothing towards what to do. And they sit back silently while a state agency, the DEC, issues its "truck it off the island" edicts.

The public has a choice. Express concern and be involved now, or pay later.

And why not?

Letters to the Editor

Reader comments on Price-Anderson Act

Dear Editor:

You are terrific.

Love your explanatory article on Price-Anderson Act and what could possibly result from LILCO/Shoreham.

I am vehemently opposed to Shoreham and I don't think much of LILCO right now.

I would love for you to tell all your readers even if it means printing a coupon who we can bombard with mail to stop this horrendous "Act."

With all at your disposal, isn't there a way the public can stop LILCO? Like many on L.I. my home is everything I have.

Years ago, I joined many Long Islanders in not paying the LILCO bill until LILCO heard our complaints about Shoreham. I was one of thousands.

Please continue to help Long Islanders.

Sincerely,
Barbara Swayze
Brentwood

Continued on page 4

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