

If we're stuck with it, let's at least improve it

As part of the new income tax package, veterans' \$50 property-tax exemptions will be paid for by the state of New Jersey at a cost of some \$22.7 million a year.

That's an improvement. Under the present system, each municipality finances exemptions within its borders simply by raising the tax rate for property owners (including those who claim the exemption).

But now that the state is going to pick up the tab, it should take the next logical step and make the exemption a credit against the income tax instead of the local property tax. Short of abolishing the whole veterans' tax exemption, this would be the biggest single improvement that could be made in the thing.

Why? Because the way it is set up now is discriminatory. The benefit does not flow to all veterans who served during the designated wartime periods — only to those who own property.

Take two hypothetical cases. One is a man whose sole military service consisted of paper-shuffling in a Fort Dix orderly room during World War II. Today he lives in a Princeton mansion. His grateful state allows him to take \$50 off his property tax bill every year for the rest of his life. The other is a kid who was wounded in Vietnam and now lives in a furnished room. He gets nothing from the state. Where's the equity? Where's any intellectually-honest attempt at justification?

A (gasp, choke) compromise on air quality controls

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has adopted a new policy of air pollution controls that permits new industrial emissions if an equivalent reduction of pollutants has been achieved in the same area.

Through the smog, it looks like a federal OK for breathing the same dirty air we're inhaling now.

In sections of the country where the air is reasonably clean, the new policy may be defensible. But it isn't healthy for industrialized, urbanized New Jersey, where the struggle to clean up the atmosphere is tough enough without creating a potentially giant loophole in the nation's clean air law.

Clean air isn't just some fancy of "back to nature" zealots. It's vital. Air pollution means people with emphysema, with other respiratory ailments, with cancer and other fatal or disabling diseases. Last summer the air in Burlington City was "satisfactory" or "good" only 28 per cent of the time. Air pollution does more than \$1 million worth of damage to New Jersey crops every year.

Not all of New Jersey's air pollution is home grown. Some of it blows across the state line. Federal controls, at the least on a regional basis, are essential, because New Jersey can't solve the problem alone.

Words alone won't save the Shore

Senator Harrison A. Williams Jr.'s ads in the recent campaign said: "He led the fight to end offshore dumping of sewage sludge that threatened the economy and ecology of 127 miles of New Jersey shore."

The implication was that the fight had been won, and that of course was inaccurate. Senator Williams acknowledged as much this week when he called on the Environmental Protection Agency to move the sludge dumping sites farther out to sea as an "interim course" until dumping can be eliminated. The

Making the exemption an income tax credit (or a cash payment, if income is too low to require the filing of a return) would at least extend the benefit to all whose military service fell within one of the designated periods.

The most sensible step, of course, would be to wipe out the exemption. The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations said a dozen years ago that "property tax exemption is the wrong way to finance veterans' continuing bonus and disability payments." In 1972 the New Jersey Tax Policy Committee recommended repeal. But former Governor Cahill rejected the recommendation, saying he'd stick with the vets' exemption until it could be replaced with something better.

Taking him at his word, we pointed out that proposals were pending in the Legislature to create a state GI Bill of Rights for Vietnam vets to supplement the totally inadequate federal GI Bill. We suggested that such a program would be far superior to a property-tax exemption as a means of helping returning veterans readjust (which, after all, is the most compelling argument for bonuses and other vets' financial benefits). But nobody took us up on it.

The professional veterans' lobby is perceived by politicians as a powerful force and it is dead set against abolition of the vets' exemption. But at least our lawmakers ought to feel an obligation to squeeze the discrimination out of it.

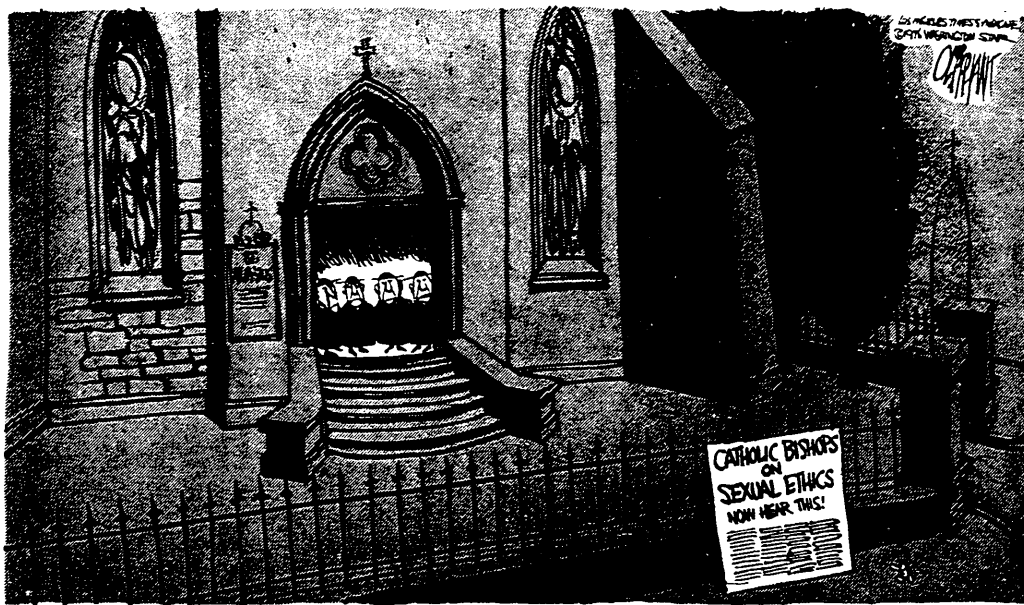
Deputy EPA Administrator John Quarles explained the new policy as a "compromise" between no-growth and excessive air pollution, a "tradeoff" between industrial expansion and environmental protection. The conflict between the economy and the environment is probably nowhere more acute than in New Jersey, with its combination of dirty air and declining industry.

But letting down the bars to new polluters isn't the best answer. If the pollution level isn't going to be reduced, there is less incentive for forcing old polluters to clean up.

A better approach would be to stiffen regional enforcement of established clean-air standards, with perhaps some financial incentives in places where the cleanup effort is especially costly. That should be accompanied by "non-degradation" protection of areas that now enjoy clean air, what Rep. Andrew Maguire, D-N.J., calls "polluter havens." Non-degradation controls died from congressional inaction on clean air amendments last fall, but the presence of an environmentally-conscious President and a new coalition of seven Northeastern states, put together by Governor Byrne and six fellow governors last weekend, offer a better chance for success on the next try.

fishkills and "dead sea tides" have made it "painfully clear that ocean dumping cannot continue to be the most acceptable method of solid waste disposal," the senator said.

Senator Williams has been in the Senate 18 years. He is the powerful chairman of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. His campaign ads this year also carried the slogan: "He says it...He means it...He does it!" We'll watch with great interest and high hopes his progress in forcing EPA to do its job of saving the priceless Jersey shore from ruin.



"Well, we've solved the birth control problem, the abortion problem and the sex problem. What do you suggest we do about the attendance problem?"

Letters to the editor

State ignores parking needs: Butko

There is a tremendous parking problem for state employees in Trenton. It is a lesson which I learned well in the recent prosecution of various illegal parkers. I became the subject of their wrath when in the course of bureaucratic delays I was the only individual left who would put his John Hancock on the complaints.

I hope my individual loss of public support through this so-called "heinous deed" can act as a catalyst for action on the part

of the state in correcting this parking problem.

Parking for state employees is NOT a problem of the City Fathers, but an internal problem which has historically been pushed aside by the state. The city has bent over backwards to help alleviate this parking situation through the construction of both multi-level and surface lots.

Employees coming into the city cannot assume that every parcel of vacant land is a

parking lot for public use. The city cannot allow parking for free on any vacant land when we have millions of dollars of current facilities to pay off. The number of legitimate shoppers coming to Trenton during the week is far outweighed by the number of employees desiring to park from 8:30 to 5:30 and the city has met that demand over the years.

The demand, however, has increased to such an extent that downtown employees are violating basic property rights. It is now time for the state to demonstrate its responsibility to its employees in the construction of capital facilities for parking purposes.

We all welcome the return of state offices from the scattered sites in the suburbs with the unveiling of plans for new office construction; however I do not recall in those plans any provision for parking the workers who are going to occupy those structures. As a professional planner myself, I feel there is something lacking in those plans if no consideration for parking is a stated fact.

Instead of tearing down more of our valuable environment for surface lots the state should be planning for multi-level parking of its own.

Other options are of course available. Mass transportation has had a low priority. The park-and-ride concept developed by Dr. Dominick Iorio years ago has fallen on deaf ears. Finally, I feel that the entire problem of parking is a legitimate point of collective bargaining for union leaders — bargaining not with the city, but with the state.

Although I am sympathetic with the needs of the employees, the city cannot and will not tolerate illegal parking on any land it owns. We simply cannot afford it. Illegal parking creates deficits in our facilities, deficits which the overburdened Trenton taxpayers will foot if the problem isn't corrected.

Kenneth J. Butko
Councilman at large
Trenton

Capital punishment — does it deter?

The Times' coverage of the capital punishment issue does not seem to me very useful. One doesn't need drawings of a firing squad at work to grasp the abhorrence, any more than we want sketches of the convicted murderer in action to balance the reporting.

Go beyond the emotional side. Cover the real issue — deterrence. There would be substantial support for capital punishment if it does deter homicide, and little if it does not. Press coverage in depth would be helpful since opinion seems to be divided.

John P. Schmidt
Trenton

Likes treatment of page one

What a pleasure! To be able to read most (all except one) of the articles on the first page of today's Trenton Times without having to turn a page!

I look forward to your doing more of this. And the INSIDE section at the bottom of the first page is also an asset, which I have appreciated over the past few weeks.

N. Prynoski
Trenton

Subject hits 'murderers' headline

On November 9 an occasion took place that could have a profound effect on the system of criminal justice in New Jersey: Robert Mulcahy 3rd was sworn in as commissioner of the newly created Department of Corrections. The ceremony was attended by some of the most influential and prestigious citizens of the state, which is indicative of the high esteem Commissioner Mulcahy is held in by all who know him.

An invitation was extended to me as director of the Forum Project by Commissioner Mulcahy's office. This invitation came, doubtlessly, as a sincere indication that his new administration values the contribution that an inmate-run organization

backed by solid community support can make to the criminal justice system in which he will play a major role.

How did the Trenton Times respond to this momentous occasion that has historical significance? They did so with the screaming headline: "Murderers cheer Mulcahy on". This headline is sensationalistic journalism of the lowest order, not worthy of the Trenton Times, and I do hope that it is not indicative of the editorial policy set by the new owners of the Trenton Times.

Horace (Bap) Laws
Director, Forum Project
Trenton

Criticizes Hopewell 'provincialism'

Hooray for your editorial "Yankees, stay home" Nov. 11.

Historic areas are designed to attract history buffs, picnickers, hickers and campers. It's the reason for their being. It is a very rare day indeed when out-of-town visitors inundate New Jersey's Washington Crossing State Park area and cause traffic or other problems.

Provincialism is at its worst when Hopewell Township officials rant and rave against an event sponsored by the State of New Jersey commemorating the most important Christmas in American history

— a commemoration, which at its best, is held once every 100 years. Hopewell Township officials should remember that Washington Crossing State Park was established and is maintained for its historical significance to be enjoyed by all the people.

The New Jersey Washington Crossing Association welcomes all who wish to come and observe the distinctive reenactment of this national historic event.

Paul F. Raywood
Chairman, Historical Committee
New Jersey Washington Crossing
Association

Doesn't lament Mayfair's passing

It's downright silly to sing sad songs over the death of the Mayfair Theater. To refer to that institution as a "cultural center" is a grievous insult to Trenton culture (no matter how lamentable you may believe that culture to be).

The Mayfair Theater was, in fact, a house of hate. A million kids used to sit there and watch body dismemberment. In short, the

booking for the place was based on the cynical premise that the graphic depiction of the taking of a human life is suitable entertainment (after all, what's a few thousand corpses among entertainment lovers?)

The place poisoned itself to death — so maybe that's not so bad.

Bert Katz
Peasbury Theater
Morrisville

Objects to TV ads for violent films

This is a letter I have sent to the station manager, KYW-TV, Philadelphia:

"Recently your station has been broadcasting violent film advertisements during commercial breaks. As a concerned parent, I carefully examine newspaper TV listings in order to avoid exposing my family, and particularly my children, to violent programs and movies. Homes are supposed to be sanctuaries of love and honorable living. Regardless of how hard parents work to maintain a respectable home environment, we are still blitzed with violent film ads

during family-hour programs and news-casts.

"How do you explain to a six-year-old child the attempted bathtub drowning murder in the movie 'Marathon Man'? I consider this commercial tactic an outrage. You are violating the rights of the innocent majority, to garner a profit from ads that serve a small deranged minority. The public deserves better, and it is a disgrace that we are exposed to such irresponsible programming."

Richard Martinetti
Trenton

'Get tough with reckless drivers'

The Sunday Times Advertiser carried an article which implied that the sole reason for skyrocketing auto insurance rates is the rising cost of auto parts. What a joke! Although economic fluctuations cause cost variances, the real reason for the problem is the large number of unsafe drivers. Many of the crowded roads in New Jersey are breeding fiercely-competitive drivers who speed, tailgate and just drive recklessly. In fact, as the number of cars on the road increases, so does the recklessness of the drivers.

nate these criminals from our highways. They should receive permanent revocations of their licenses on their first offense. To help the police enforce these laws, perhaps a citizens' band "watchdog" organization can be formed. These remaining safe drivers would then broadcast the offenders' location, dispatching the lawmen to seek out their prey.

The suggested penalty sounds harsh, but lower insurance rates will more than compensate for the squabbles that are bound to arise.

Gene Louis Baldassari
Trenton

A major crackdown is needed to elimi-

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