

Editorials

A developing movement

Public issues often have an ebb and flow particularly in the early stages when facts are scarce, intentions are vague and plans undefined.

This has been true of the oil refinery issue which is now boiling along at great intensity in Durham and growing more heated each day further along the coast.

Ebb and flows ultimately do not count for anything, but it is interesting to note that the tide of the past two weeks seems to have been running in favor of the anti-refinery people.

The Durham Save Our Shores organization, virtually alone in the past few months, has now been joined by a similar organization that is springing up in Rye, full grown, armed to the teeth and promising to be far more truculent than the Durham group.

North Hampton, Stratham, Greenland—there is an awakening everywhere, at last, that a refinery in Durham, its pipelines and its offshore unloading facility truly will affect everyone throughout the area now known as the Seacoast Region.

This is an important, necessary development to place the issue in its proper forum. It's Durham's front yard that's being talked about, but it's the entire region's neighborhood.

Meanwhile we can't look with shock or disappointment at the governor's recent remarks that some steps may be taken to overcome Durham's personal views in favor of a larger and statewide interest.

The fact is, "home rule" makes sense only some of the time; and it is a flexible principle that can work against you as often as it works for you.

In a democracy, the individual gives way, more often than he would like, to the greater good of the community. And the town for the region, or for the state, as the

Governor implied.

But there is also a principle, and it is more than just a self-interested one (there are Constitutional precedents, unending) that, while majority rules, the majority must not oppress some of the basic rights of minorities. It is so for individuals, and we think it is so for communities, this right to basic rights working back down from larger units of government to smaller ones.

But all of the above is, in fact, negative thinking, and the first response of a community under attack to what looks to be a threat from another direction.

Did we hear the governor right? Did he say the oil refinery issue was bigger than Durham, and a concern of all the state?

Well, that is what we have been saying all along.

Look here, you rest of the state. It is your seacoast as well as ours. And while the governor goes about the state alerting its people to the potentials he sees in an oil refinery, he can only make it easier for others to follow and, in the wake of interest he creates, bring home the point that the seacoast is everyone's and it not only has a potential, but a present, proven worth.

The governor said it—we are one State with mutual resources and needs and we would like to believe that although a referendum might now go against the opponents of a refinery, in fact, the governor has opened a Pandora's box.

What else is going on? Well, Massachusetts is beginning to stir, out of fear, because the threat of an oil spill does not respect political boundaries.

To say, as the governor did, that an oil refinery is more than a local issue, but a state one, is to go half way along to acknowledging its regional nature. We don't expect the governor to go the rest of the way, anymore than we



"Talking to the governor about regional planning is like talking to a pregnant girl about family planning."

would expect a boy who blows bubble gum to become an oboist.

But other people are going the whole way and regionalism will be more and more on people's minds.

Next week, when Olympic holds its major public presentation, we expect that the impetus of the anti-refinery people will increase, as the theoretical takes

form in the enormity of the statistics that describe a 400,000 barrel-a-day refinery.

And finally, the recent promulgation of policy by the Environmental Protection Agency for this region.

We are reprinting that statement in full in the centerfold of this issue of *Public Occurrences*. Everyone should read it carefully.

Promises, promises

The Honorable Alden L. Winn, Chairman
Durham Board of Selectmen
Town of Durham
New Hampshire 03824

Dear Mr. Winn:

I refer to your letter of November 21 in which you ask if there is a connection between the land option activities of Mr. Booras and Mr. Pappademas and the prospect of an oil refinery coming to New Hampshire. By now, of course, you know the answer to your inquiry.

I am sorry that I was not at liberty to give you that answer before the public announcement. I had been asked by the Olympic group to treat their plans in confidence and I felt it to the best interest of the State to do exactly that.

I understand that Mr. Frederick Goode, my Administrative Assistant whom I have detached from that office in order to work full time on proposals for producing energy for New Hampshire including the refinery and the nuclear plant, has been in touch with you. Be assured that Mr. Goode will do everything he can to provide any and all information that your Board of Selectmen may desire.

Neither the Olympic group nor this office have any desire to impose an oil refinery on a town that would be reluctant to accept the benefits that could flow from

such an economic addition to a community. If in a proper, orderly and legal manner the Town of Durham should reject the proposed Olympic refinery it would certainly be your town's loss and a great loss to the State but this office has no intention of trying to force such a benefit on any community.

With assurance of our desire to help your Board in every way possible.

Sincerely
Meldrim Thomson, Jr.

On Jan. 16, Gov. Meldrim Thomson told a joint meeting of the Rotary, Kiwanis and Business and Professional Women's Club of Franklin "I believe so much in home rule that I would work against forcing a refinery on Durham or any other place that didn't want it." (*Manchester Union Leader* 1/17/74)

On Feb. 14, he told a Rochester Kiwanis Club audience that state interests must be put above local interests due to the energy crisis, and said he will try to amend a home-rule bill sponsored by a Durham legislator so it will "respond to the needs of the State of New Hampshire and not to one local community." (AP, 2/15/74)

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Published every Thursday by Durham Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 398, Newmarket, N.H. 03857. Offices in the Gallant Mill Building, Newmarket. Phone 659-5538 and 659-5583. Single copy price 15 cents. yearly subscription \$6.50

Second Class Postage Application pending at Newmarket, N.H. Post Office