

EDITORIAL

High time state legislators did some real legislating

The New York State Assembly returns to Albany today for what Speaker Mel Miller calls a "mini-session." Miller says he expects the Assembly to adjourn tomorrow evening or Thursday after dealing with some 100 bills.

How's that again, Mel?

Some of the unresolved issues include restricting smoking in public places, raising eligibility levels for Medicaid, protecting the privacy of people taking AIDS tests and establishing guidelines for inspections of bridges.

Are we really supposed to believe that the 150 members of the Assembly are going to make deliberative judgments on all those issues and scores of others in 48 hours?

To be sure, these matters came before the legislative session that adjourned last month, and many of them have been approved by the Senate. But concern about the state's budget shortfall pushed most legislative concerns to the background. (The budget gap still looms large, by the way, but don't expect serious efforts to deal with it in this election year.)

In truth, the Legislature is functioning

pretty much as it always does. Rank-and-file senators and Assembly members are mostly spectators as the important decisions are made by the Big Three — Miller, Senate Majority Leader Warren Anderson and Gov. Mario Cuomo — and their staffs.

The Assembly's "mini-session" is just an after-school version of the usual closing rush put on by both houses as they rush bill after undigested bill through in the session's closing hours.

It's probably unfair to pick on Miller. A 2½-day session is ridiculous, but what do we call a one-day session? That's what the Senate conducted on Aug. 1. Anderson then declared that all business was done.

With a base salary of \$43,000 (to be raised to \$57,500 next year), plus stipends for often-dubious "leadership" positions, New York's legislators are the best-paid in the nation. They also have access to the best staff and best support services of any statehouse.

Isn't it about time that they did some real legislating?

Sauquoit Creek work needed

One thing the Assembly should do during its "mini-session" is approve a project to deepen and widen the channel of the Sauquoit Creek, and to build levies and retention ponds for flood control.

The project would cost \$3.8 million, but most of that would be paid by the Army Corps of Engineers. The state's share would be \$723,000, already approved by the Senate.

The measure merits support because the Sauquoit is being squeezed tighter and tighter as commercial and residential development in the towns of Sauquoit and New Hartford reduces the amount of drainage area.

Many floods already have occurred, the

most serious in 1981 when ice jams forced hundreds of Whitesboro residents from their homes.

After that a new bridge was built and some rechanneling was done, all under the supervision of the Army Corps. But since then development has greatly increased.

Development, much of it residential, is an inevitable part of the growth that has taken place and will continue as the area attracts new service industries.

Development can't be allowed to threaten the Sauquoit basin, however. Certainly the affected communities should act to keep expansion in check. But the Sauquoit Creek work is needed to insure the area's future.