



For once! For once I'm siding with Paul Williams, Superintendent of Centerville-Osterville Water Department.

He's in favor of the proposal study of our water resources -- so'm I. Town of Barnstable Selectmen are on record as being opposed.

In all honesty, I've concluded Paul's right and the Selectmen, this time, are wrong.

They've got good reasons for their position; they don't oppose the study itself, but are cautious about giving our County Commissioners \$500,000 to spend when all that's needed is somewhere around \$150,000. (The estimated figure varies, so I'm rounding it off.)

The question on the ballot next month will authorize the expenditure of up to \$500,000 and apparently that figure can't be changed at this late date.

The Selectmen, therefore, would postpone approval of the study-cost until another year so the appropriate figure can be used. They express a certain distrust of the County Commissioners.

And well they may. It's an understandable distrust inasmuch as the present Commissioners, a board of three, will have but one of its present members still serving when the time comes to make the disbursements.

We don't know who, of the several candidates for the two vacancies on the Commission, will be elected to replace the two incumbents leaving their posts.

The reluctance of the Selectmen, then, is understandable and laudatory. None of us wants to see money misspent, and none of us knows which three men will be sitting and controlling \$500,000 of our funds.

The question isn't so much, then, whether the Selectmen favor the water study. Their concern is, "what kind of people will control that money?"

They, like us, don't know who'll be elected; they, like us, hesitate to authorize putting that amount of money into unknown hands.

I don't blame them; I'm not too enthusiastic about it myself.

On the other hand, I believe the study is needed and needed now.

While visiting friends in Cotuit last weekend, I found their back garden graced with an old-fashioned pitcher pump. The water, they told me, the pump produces, is brackish.

Salt intrusion.

True, they live reasonably close to the shore. The marsh lies only 100 yards or so distant. But water from a well that far from salt marsh should not be brackish.

We're sucking more water from the lens of fresh water that underlies the Cape, and floats on the heavier layer of salt water below it, than is being returned to the ground through rains. We're beginning to exhaust our supply.

Our water comes from one and only one source -- the sky. There are no underground rivers from the mountains of New England feeding fresh water to Cape Cod.

The more people living on the Cape, the more water we use, and waste. Water, that ever-present necessity, isn't all that ever-present.

Can you imagine trying to get through a day without it? You can manage without bathrooms, sinks, showers. But without water? Think about it. Try it. See how many minutes you can go without using any.

Not only for drinking purposes, but for washing your face, brushing

your teeth, making your coffee, boiling vegetables, cleaning anything from dishes to the kitchen floor.

Other New England areas are working to protect their water. Many of us look with jaundiced eye on Federal funds, but Lebanon, N.H., has received a grant totaling \$2,137,106 for a wastewater treatment plant. This supplements previous grants of over \$6,400,000 for sewers, stormwater holding tanks and chlorination facilities.

These will contribute to the overall water pollution abatement program for the Connecticut River Basin.

Rockport, Mass., is receiving in excess of \$2,500,000 for similar water treatment plants and system.

Southwest Harbor, Maine, is getting \$1,670,000 from the same source for the same purpose. Wolfeboro, Farmington, and Rockingham County, N.H., are in line for grants of over \$1,000,000 each.

In Douglas, Mass., a \$500,000 federal grant will be used for water pollution control.

We don't even know yet what our water resources are, what our needs are and may grow to be, or what we should be doing to protect what we've got left. It's important to find out.

Can we trust not-yet-elected County Commissioners to use the funds wisely and not to waste our money?

That's something I can't answer. We're electing them; it's up to each of us to make sure he votes for the man we can all trust with that kind of money -- trust them to spend what's needed to get the answers we must have -- and trust them not to spend more than is necessary to get those answers.

Surely, out of the several contenders, there's one who can make with the present incumbent who will continue, a majority to protect us all.

Our Selectmen feel we're taking a chance -- that it's possible two crooks will get elected. They are correct; it's possible.

But if you, and you, and you, as voters, inform yourselves about the candidates and get to know them, you can see to it that doesn't happen.

There are some honest men running for County Commissioner. I'd like to see at least one get elected.

It can happen only if you do your duty as a citizen. It can happen only if you make it your business to find out about these fellows and make certain the ones you vote for are people you can trust with your dollars.

I agree with Paul Williams. The water study is necessary and vitally important to our future.

It's difficult not to agree with the Selectmen that if we approve that water study, we'll put in jeopardy a lot of tax dollars. We will -- unless we make certain those elected County Commissioners are the best two men of the bunch.

It's up to us. We can have the water study, can elect good men to serve, and can depend on them to spend only what's necessary, not every cent they can put their hands on.

But we can have these things only if we inform ourselves, know each candidate personally, vote for the right men, and vote for the water study.

It's not only your individual privilege and right, it's your individual duty and responsibility.

See you at the polls!