

Bee Editorial

LaFalce's late action better than none at all

The Department of Energy has finally heard the people of the Town of Tonawanda, much like Dr. Seuss' Horton the Elephant finally heard all the Whos and prevented their equally unattractive demise. The DOE will be reinvestigating the options for storage and, hopefully, removal of more than 350,000 cubic yards of radioactive material in the town.

The sudden action that surrounded this decision came in an announcement from Congressman John J. LaFalce, who had been mysteriously silent on this issue for a long time. In announcing his close workings with the DOE leaders, LaFalce said he had been working behind the scenes to restart the evaluation process since the DOE first released its plan for building a storage cell on the town's waterfront in November.

It seemed too quiet in the congressman's camp. When the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in the Tonawandas sought public support for their complaints surrounding the DOE plan, LaFalce was not to be seen nor heard. Just a few weeks ago, some CANIT members criticized the federal support for its fight against the DOE's plan to store waste on the waterfront. The prime target in this campaign was LaFalce. If indeed he was moving behind the scenes in Washington, the folks back home knew nothing about it.

Just days after the blast from the CANIT camp came the big news out of LaFalce's Washington office: the DOE is starting over. Coincidence or just well-timed? It really doesn't matter. What is important is the DOE's change of heart.

If anything, this decision shows that the

government can hear when we speak up and when the people we elect to do our talking do just that. With LaFalce's backing, senators Moynihan and D'Amato can also get into the fray. We can expect the DOE to re-examine its options and deal with the radioactive material in a more sensible way.

Putting that much waste near the gateway to the town's future, the waterfront, is a bad plan. Nothing short of getting the waste out of town will be acceptable. You can bet that will be the common goal of area elected officials in this new round of hearings on the Manhattan Project leftovers still lurking in Tonawanda.

It should go without saying that a truly cooperative effort is needed to get the waste out of town. That means bipartisan dealings to help the people of the Tonawandas. Personal agendas have no place here. The methods of one politician are no better than any other's as long as the benefit is for the people they serve.