

**By BRIAN ACKLEY**  
**WIN Columnist**

Leave it to an Albany politician to make Buffalo School union chief Phil Rumore look like a hero.

Last week's show – Rumore was one of 22 people arrested for blocking the doors to the Albany capital building in an effort not to keep someone out, but legislators in to do something, anything, that they were elected to do -- could easily be labeled symbolism over substance. Of course, who knew that throwing tea bags into the sea would be one of the key trigger events of the American Revolution? Indeed, substance is always better, but sometimes symbolism actually can lead to substance, and that's not a bad second place.

Less you lump this in with some kind of wacky ploy by only educational leaders desperate for more money, know too that two state senators Kevin Parker and Carl Andrews, both Democrats from Brooklyn, were themselves part of the effort. The protestors even shelved the ever popular "what-do-we-want-when-do-we-want-it-now" union picket line mantra for the comparatively inspired "You're so lazy, you're so tired, you should all just be fired." OK, Robert Frost it ain't. But we liked it.

So incredibly malevolent were the political masses swirling around the Rockefeller Plaza that accusations ranged from dillusionary to dangerous. Senate majority leader Joe Bruno implied, according to the *Albany Times Union*, that Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver would be to blame if there was another terrorist attack since there was no agreement on anti-terrorism legislation. Both sides claimed the inept inertia could be a move to divert feel goods from political conventions later this summer – the Dems in nearby Boston, Mass., and the Republicans in the Big Apple itself -- with future Albany sessions timed to somehow take attention away from those national events. And there's debate these people have puffed up impressions of themselves?

And, in an ultimate act of abdication, the state may need something of a control board itself if it doesn't work out educational aid formulas designed to pump billions of dollars into New York City schools. If no deal is in place by the end of this month, it's likely a panel of court-appointed "special masters" (do you think the control board here would prefer that title?) will settle the issue for legislators.

But, don't for a moment think that our grossly underperforming public workers did nothing but twiddle, or would that be suck?, their collective thumbs before heading for the vacation hills. Not at all. They did find time to approve a one percent sales tax hike for Onondaga and Oswego counties. Of course, it's only temporary, set to expire in November, 2005. For the good folks of those two areas, which includes the City of Syracuse, feel free to check with your brethren here to see how that worked out for us.

They managed to ratify a final bill green-lighting a gambling compact with the Mohawk Indian tribe and, we surely can't leave out their brilliant stroke of deja "whew!", passing a bill yet again requiring the Pataki administration to procure tax on Indian gas and cigarette sales. In other words, they can't agree on how to spend it, but the collection machine is still humming along beautifully.

Publicly, Rumore, or more precisely his union posturing, is hard to embrace. Cynics find it easy to dismiss his actions as some self-serving stunt – of course it was an obvious publicity ploy -- but, his willingness to stand on principle and be arrested for it is still easily admirable. Maybe next time, there will be more willing to join the effort.

True, it wasn't exactly Rosa Parks, or Sam Adams tossing tea into the salty waters of Boston Harbor. But, since voters long ago abandoned any pretense of showing enough collective interest to be good bosses at the ballot box, has anyone come up with anything better?

*(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers (WIN) of Western New York. WIN is a consortium of 19 community weekly newspapers in Erie and Niagara counties with a combined paid circulation of 75,000 homes, providing collaborative advertising and editorial support for member publications. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our website at [www.wnynewspapers.com](http://www.wnynewspapers.com). Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*