

Pro-Mahackeno

Mr. Arthur Cohen has written a big ad insulting our Y. If he was familiar with the history of our town and our Y he might understand that the Y is our essential community recreation center, especially for children and many elderly for whom water is a preferred exercise medium.

Physical fitness for children is a public health issue in this age of rising rates of childhood obesity and diabetes.

Children need to MOVE, they need to learn how to swim, they need a place to develop physical skills, and since we have a long, cold winter in Westport, we need a building for this. (102,000 square foot for over 6,000 members is not excessive, especially when one family in town is building a 35,000 square foot home).

Mahackeno is the perfect place, with such large acreage, most of which will remain undeveloped, for this special permit. The architect has given us a beautiful building nestled into the site. Westport offers special permits for institutions which serve BODY (fields, courts), MIND (schools, the library), and SPIRIT (religious sites). These are essential components of a community.

Our downtown has become a regional luxury mall and while it might be "idealistic" to call for centrally located facilities, when there is no space, there is no space.

The Y is accessible for all children, all families. We cannot all have private pools, country clubs, enormous playrooms, home gyms.

If this special permit application is denied and we lose our Y and outsource our fitness needs to neighboring towns, Route 33 will still have lots of new traffic. Present congestion comes from the two Merritt exits which bring out of towners to and from our retail outlets. Westporters cannot lose their opportunity for recreation because of the development of offices in Wilton or housing in Weston and Easton. The state has to manage regional traffic and upgrade intersections and roads where needed, especially when regional commuters and shoppers cause congestion.

This is a voice in favor of preserving the Family Y for Westporters and building at Mahackeno. I believe we all lose if we don't offer indoor recreation for our chil-

continued from page A24

dren in town and I think it may be reflected in our housing valuations. I know I don't want to live in Westport without a Y.

**SHARON SEYMOUR
WESTPORT**