

*Capital punishment/*

# Cuomo out to shore up environmental record

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ALBANY — Fans in the chamber said it had panache. One critic said it dragged across its 34 minutes. Another said it was short on compassion. Another, that it was a tax cut speech stolen from Republicans.

Whether you liked it, disliked it, or spied a quick video clip indifferently before nodding off, you probably agreed it was not his best performance.

But then, everyone who braved the subfreezing gusts to flock here knew the San Francisco summer when Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, 54, of Queens rose to Democratic Party stardom was long since over.

Also, in what must have seemed a nasty little irony to the more sensitive in Cuomo circles, the husband of the Queens half of the defeated Mondale-Ferraro ticket was pleading guilty to a crime in the city just as the final touches were being put on the State of the State speech.

In Washington D.C., the victors of that campaign were rearranging the spoils with a strange job switch affecting who will sign dollar bills.

Thus it went from pretty obvious to extremely obvious that all that was left for Cuomo was what he well might have known all along — to wrestle with the state of his fate within these

borders. At least for two more years.

And in settling in for the second half of his term, Cuomo seemed, superficially at least, to affirm that he must face what has been publicly identified as a sore point in his performance: the environment.

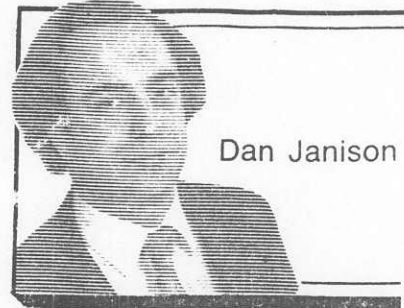
Tax cuts, housing and social services put aside for a moment, it is the dramatic issue of the state's physical resources that could haunt or help this administration.

In year-end interviews with downstate reporters, he fought to resist broadly drawn aspersions about his environmental record.

Yet when pressed on where the weaknesses were, he mentioned the environment and conservation.

So when the traditional, calculated leaks came from the governor's press office in a comic effort to milk as much publicity as possible from the State of the State proposals, the first topic leaked and discussed, on Monday, was environment.

Fill to \$850 million the Superfund to clean up toxic waste sites, he would urge lawmakers. (A handful of inactive waste sites exist on the Island). Beef up the enforcement staff of the Department of Environmental Conservation. Reactivate the Bureau of Resource Recovery.



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Work on nuclear waste disposal, stay after the acid rain issue.

For a moment, it seemed he had scored a big hit with the people who rank among his loudest and most specific public critics.

Judith Enck, the tenacious 25-year-old leader of the Environmental Planning Lobby, said Monday those proposals could well mark "a turnaround" for the governor.

On Wednesday, after predictably comical delays by press office, the 82-page message was released.

"The sad reality," he wrote in the detailed message accompanying the 34-minute speech, "is that we have abused our environment."

"Whatever the reason — ignorance, greed, insensitivity — we have carelessly, and sometimes callously, polluted, poisoned and contaminated our environment."

"But we have learned that abuse and disregard of our environment are costly, both in hu-