

# THE DALLAS POST

## EDITORIALS

### Students are left out of teacher pay wrangle

Any serious discussion of educational matters has been notably absent from all the wrangling over a new wage schedule for Dallas teachers. But whether or not the teachers get the raises their union wants, we all will pay a high price for lack of achievement by individuals within our society.

According to data in a package used to attract businesses by the Greater Wilkes-Barre Partnership, students in the Dallas School District scored well below national levels on SAT verbal and math tests taken in the 1989-90 school year. Here are the figures:

	U.S.	Dallas	Crestwood	Wilkes-Barre
Average SAT verbal score	431	407	486	442
Average SAT math score	475	445	498	486

In the same brochure, average teacher salaries in Dallas were listed as being about 10 percent higher than the statewide average (and higher than Crestwood or Wilkes-Barre), and 20 percent over the national average. Educators caution that SAT scores aren't an especially fair way to compare school districts, because there are so many variables. For example, some districts including Dallas encourage all students to take the test, even those who are unlikely to go on to college, while other districts might restrict SAT's to students in academic programs. And some years are better than others.

Even so, the schools themselves use SAT scores for broad comparisons of their achievement, and these stark statistics should be enough to eliminate any linkage of pay to performance in education, at least in Luzerne County.

So, on the one side we have the leadership of the teachers' union, with 28 bargaining points, few of which are arguably related to education, nearly all concerning higher salaries and benefits.

Facing this is the Taxpayers' Forum and their sympathizers, bent on the institution of a wage freeze and merit pay system that sounds more like punishment than reward.

To some extent, the current battle is a snapshot of an increasing myopia among people all across the nation. Teachers' unions care mostly about increasing their influence and power; people who don't have school-age children don't want to pay school taxes, and politicians work ceaselessly for reelection, unwilling to take a stand based on what they think is right even if unpopular.

Meanwhile, those who depend on others — and no one does so more than children — are left out.

It has taken many years to get to this point, years in which teaching salaries grew to reach and finally exceed many comparable careers. There is nothing amiss in that — most people would agree that teachers once were underpaid relative to their importance. But dedication and skill aren't functions of salary, they are character traits, achievements, even social contracts of a sort. That's where we may have all let each other down by becoming complacent and self-centered.

The teachers, students and taxpayers in the Dallas School District deserve a fair and speedy resolution to the current contract dispute. That means the teachers must abandon demands for a long contract with nearly 10 percent annual increases, and the taxpayers should accept something less austere than a two-year freeze. Then we had better get on with the real business of our schools, or this year's clash will be nothing more than a sparring match for future bouts.

### You're not in the top 1%? Too bad

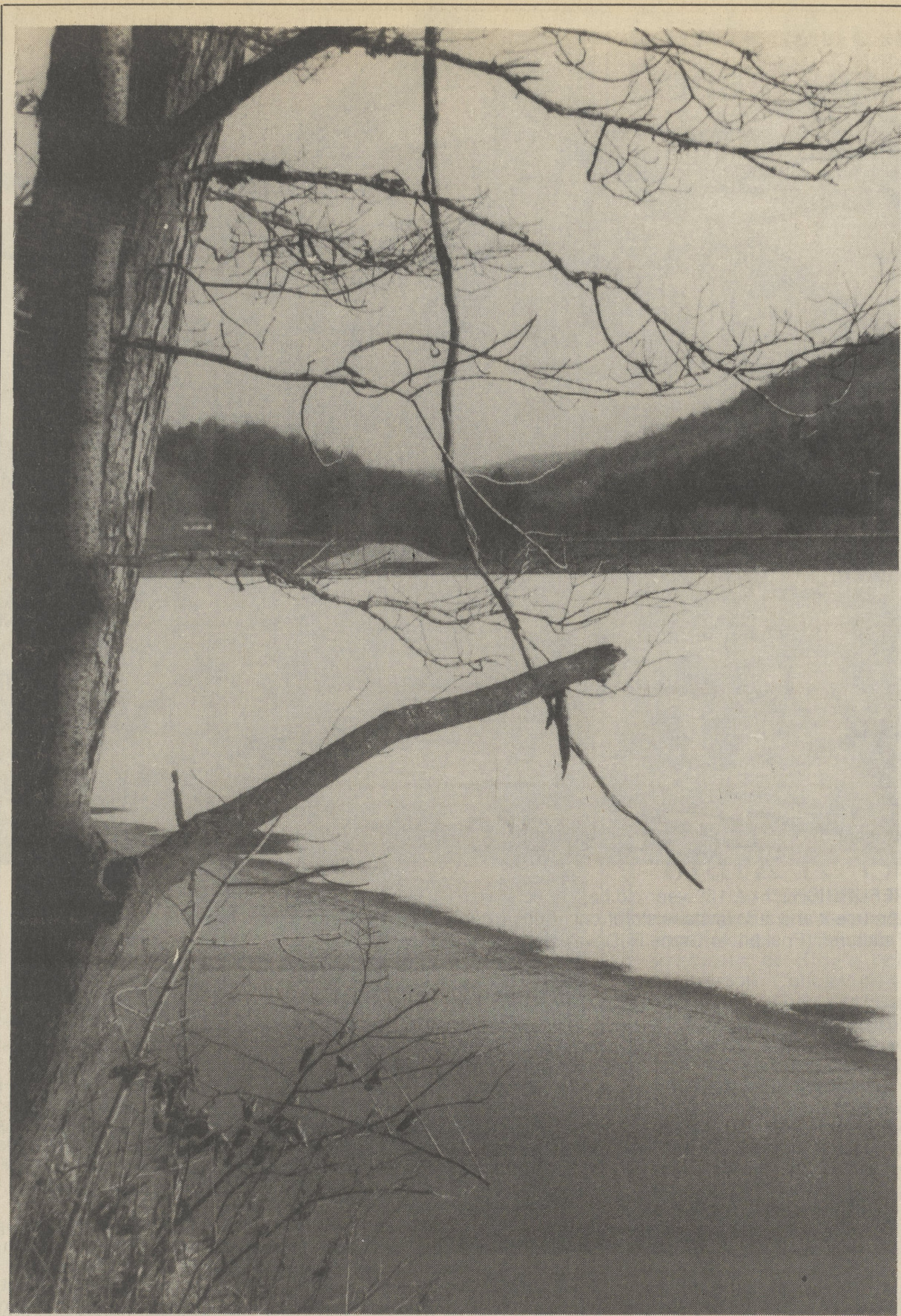
If you suspected that the economic "boom" of the last decade or so passed you by, a new analysis of income statistics has confirmed your fears. Performed by Paul Krugman, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the data show that the big winners between 1977 and 1989 were — guess who? — the wealthiest among us.

According to Professor Krugman's analysis, the top 1%, about 660,000 families nationwide with an annual income of at least \$310,000, saw their pre-tax income leap by 77% during the period. That made them by far the most fortunate income group, greatly outpacing all others.

The middle fifth of households, where most people are, enjoyed a gain of 4% during the same period of time.

But what happened to the trickle-down theory? Remember, that was the one that said if we let the rich get richer they would be kind enough to share their good fortune with us? Maybe we had it all wrong; it really works this way — a gusher for the wealthiest and a trickle for everyone else.

Cheer up, though. The lowest income families saw their incomes actually decline in the dozen years tracked in the study.



The last winter scene?

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

## Letters

### Dallas can afford to pay teachers more

Editor:

Society decides what teachers are worth; communities decide teachers' level of financial compensation; in Pennsylvania, local school boards administer resulting salary schedules. Communities get the kinds of schools they want, and that they are willing to support academically, professionally, culturally and financially.

Teachers historically, have been a dedicated lot of professionals willing to accept starting salaries as low as \$4,000. I took a salary cut of \$1000 to return from my teaching position in New York to my home town of Dallas in 1970 and accepted a starting salary of \$6300. I knew that, if I persevered in this profession, stuck with it for 20+ years, studied through graduate school (at my own expense in the 1970's), I would be paid a decent salary. In the meantime, many of my colleagues and I worked at second and third jobs to balance our personal and family budgets.

During that same era, many of my high school classmates who did not choose to go to college or seek other advanced schooling were being paid considerably more than my salary. It was not uncommon to find high school graduates being paid more than my \$6300 in 1970. Many of us were held as an example by those who chose NOT

to go to college of why a college education "doesn't pay". Valuing education in its own right, we found such a conclusion difficult to accept, though the financial realities were obvious.

So, here we are in the 1990's; salaries have improved; most of the people who started at salaries below \$4,000 have passed from the educational scene, either into retirement, or to the ultimate retirement, after long years of public service. Many of us are anticipating retirement after long years of service to your children.

We know that society decided what we are "worth," and that our contemporary society has decided that twenty minutes with a medical specialist who cares for your child is "worth" more than a day's pay for a substitute teacher. We know that a lawyer is "worth" more to you than a teacher when you are in legal difficulties. We know that a plumber or a carpenter is "worth" more to you than you pay your children's teachers per day. We all live with our choices, and I chose to be a teacher, not a doctor, a lawyer, a plumber, a carpenter, even though these were choices open to me when I was ripe for career choice. I chose a profession of low pay, long hours, no paid holidays, no paid vacations and

great responsibility. My pay has gradually improved, but I still care for your children for long hours, and on a schedule giving me no personal flexibility regarding vacations. I proudly accept the responsibility of caring for your children and nurturing their academic and personal well-being, and helping them to become responsible citizens of our great culture.

Statistics from the United States Census of 1990 indicate that the Dallas School District is wealthy, and is able to support its teachers and its excellent public schools without straining its taxpayers. I believe these objective statistics; the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania believes these statistics and uses them to determine the Dallas School District's subsidies. An objective Fact Finder recommended a fair and just salary increase based on these statistics. The Dallas community, apparently does not choose to share its wealth with its teachers, none of whom can be considered wealthy.

Communities get the kinds of schools they ask for; I'm listening.

Eleanor T. Buda  
Teacher of American Literature/English  
Dallas High School

### Responds to a Dallas teacher's letter

Editor:

A response to teachers' rally to improve the education system.

Mrs. Fyke is sidetracking the main issue, money! I will do a line item critique on Mrs. Fyke's letter as follows:

- The union cannot assume to receive public support when school taxes continue to climb at an alarming rate.
- No one is bashing anybody; your "friends and neighbors" on the petition want to keep their homes.
- The profession has been trashed because the union has been acting financially irresponsible.
- Teachers are "outcasts" when they divorce themselves from the local economy.
- "Wings to Fly." In the learning process the students' responsibility to learn takes greater credence.
- On expertise: The union could use some "new blood." Some of the

teachers that are getting top dollar are dead weight.

- As leaders of children: Protect them from what?
- Not to dignify inuendoes and biased statements by silence???
- Leave the messiahship on education to educators and the public will be the messiah on public finance.
- The Harrisburg educators will defend the educational philosophy and programs; not the union.
- Defending teacher salaries: The union has no defense when it divorces itself from the local economy.
- You're sidetracking the main issue (money) by challenging the taxpayer on the importance of education. That tactic will not work with the public.
- The school board meeting began with the discussion of the budget.
- Parents should take a hard line on education; but again you

are sidetracking.

- The public will support the workforce if it operates within reasonable budget restraints.
- Merit ratings for parents? Please no sidetracking.
- The line has been drawn only between taxes and 0% increase.
- The "silent among you" are the ones who are against higher taxes.
- The community dark cloud will lift only when the union cooperates with the public.
- We must work together for a healthy society?
- The public will help the union touch the future by the teachers behaving in a financially responsible manner.
- The public will join the union in moving forward when the union comes down from cloud nine and joins the rest of humanity.

Thomas Geffert  
Dallas

## Only yesterday

### 60 Years Ago - Mar. 11, 1932 SHAVERTOWN RESIDENTS PETITION TO FORM A BOROUGH

The blizzard of last Sunday and Monday did severe damage to local telephone communication. With scores of telephone poles still down it will be several days before Commonwealth Telephone Company again establishes telephone communication with Noxen and the outside world.

Residents of Kingston Township living in Shavertown filed a petition with Luzerne County Court for the formation of a borough to be known as Shavertown Borough, due to an outgrowth of the recent contention over school matters in Kingston Township.

"Five Star Final" starring Edward G. Robinson now playing at the Himmler Theatre.

### 50 Years Ago - Mar. 13, 1942 SUGAR RATIONING HITS THE BACK MOUNTAIN

The extension of Dallas R.F. 1 to cover all of Goss Manor and the length of Claude Street was announced this week by Postmaster Joseph Polacky. Increasing Fred Youngblood's route from 42.40 to 45.25 miles will bring many new families within the scope of a free mail delivery.

Sugar rationing for families of the Dallas Area will be held Tuesday-Friday, March 17-20 at the nearest grade school in their district. Registration, supervised by the principals and conducted by grade and high school teachers will be held every afternoon from 4-6 and 7-9 evenings.

Dr. Henry M. Laing Fire Co. Minstrels played to large audiences that packed Dallas High School auditorium. Gross proceeds will exceed \$750 with a net profit estimated at well over \$500 by Arthur Dungey, chairman of the ticket committee.

### 40 Years Ago - Mar. 14, 1952 "I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS" PLAYING AT THE HIMMLER THEATRE

Lehman-Jackson Schools are raising cafeteria prices effective Monday at noon following action taken by the joint school board at Tuesday night's meeting. Children grades 1-3 will pay 18¢; grades 4-12 will pay 20¢; and for teachers it will be 30¢. Snack lunch for younger children will be 5¢.

Teen Canteen of the Back Mountain YMCA announced that its big Spring Sway Dance will be held at Shavertown Headquarters Building on Friday.

Church-Community League playoffs start tomorrow at Westmoreland gym. In the first tilt, second place St. Therese's meets fourth place St. Paul. The second contest will find first place Huntsville Christian match against third placed Shavertown Methodist.

Jane Coolbaugh will be come the bride of Donald Britt Saturday at 2 p.m. in the Trucksville United Methodist Church.

### 30 Years Ago - Mar. 15, 1962 JANET CLEASBY WINS NATIONAL SAFETY POSTER CONTEST

Janet Cleasby, 13, won an award for an outstanding poster in the National Safety Poster Contest sponsored by the Wilkes-Barre Kiwanis and American Auto Association at a luncheon in Hotel Sterling. One of the judges states that Janet's entry was the finest piece of graphic art he had seen in this area.

Thomas M.B. Hicks, husband of Mrs. T.M.B. Hicks of Dallas Post staff and author of Pillar to Post is seriously ill with meningitis at Nesbitt Memorial Hospital where he was taken early Sunday morning in the Dallas Community Ambulance.

The Girls Chorus of Dallas Junior High School will participate in the 73rd annual "Cynon-fardd" Eisteddfod at Dr. Edwards Memorial Congregational Church, Edwardsville, Saturday afternoon.

Wed - Karen Lee Samuels to Ronald William Trevern; Charlotte M. Shonk to Lawrence Jones.

### 20 Years Ago - Mar. 16, 1972 CUB SCOUT HELPS SAVE MOTHER'S LIFE

A young Dallas Cub Scout may have been instrumental in saving his mother's life. Mar. 8, after her clothing caught on fire. Mrs. Phyllis Burket was lying on the ground in front of the family trailer when 10 year old Kelly Burket procured a blanket to place around his mother and smother the fire.

Lake-Lehman High School Marching Band has accepted an invitation to participate in the 1972 annual Maryland State Grand Festival Parade of Champions.

Jon Jay LaBerge, son of Mr. and Mrs. LaBerge, Country Club Road, Dallas, has been awarded a four year scholarship to Webb Institute of Naval Architecture

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