

# THE DALLAS POST

## EDITORIALS

### Phyllis Mundy merits re-election

By a stroke of good fortune, Phyllis Mundy was handed the State Representative seat from the 120th Legislative District in 1990, when Republican incumbent Scott Dieterick withdrew from the race in mid-October. But Mundy hasn't taken her victory lightly and for the past two years has served the people of the district industriously and fairly. For that reason, she deserves re-election on November 3.

After the 1990 election, Mundy had to prove to her constituents in this predominantly Republican district that she could measure up to the standards set by her predecessor. Despite his problems in 1990, Dieterick was respected as a representative who responded to his constituents and was an effective voice on their behalf in Harrisburg. Because of both her hard work and her demeanor, Mundy has done that, sometimes overcoming the reluctance of local government officials to accept her help when it was offered.

Mundy brought an impressive background to her initial run for office two years ago. She had committed her time and skills to many volunteer organizations such as Volunteers for Literacy and the League of Women Voters. She had risen from a clerical position to manager of a manufacturing plant. And she had studied the issues and taken a clear stance on many of them. She continues to do so today.

The Back Mountain has gotten its share of Mundy's attention. If she deserves credit for nothing else, her efforts in helping to form a local Traffic Management Association and then freeing up federal funds with which to add traffic lights to routes 309 and 415 merits a cheer.

Mundy is deeply interested in education and social issues. She believes that educated and skilled people attract higher pay and create more prosperity for everyone. She also supports taking care of young children, and has co-sponsored a package of bills that would provide more money for Head Start and give low-income families incentives to keep their kids in school. But she's not a mindless big spender, as her vote against last year's state budget demonstrates.

The challenger, Keith Coslett, has campaigned mostly on generalities rather than specifics, pledging to "represent the interests of the citizens of the 120th District."

That is what Phyllis Mundy has done well for two years, and on that record she deserves at least two more.

### Study and make your choice for President

Many newspapers large and small endorse candidates for public office. Some endorse at all levels every year. Others are more selective, or offer endorsements only when they are especially enamored of — or repulsed by — a particular candidate. Some have a policy of never endorsing candidates, either out of fear of reprisal or because their publisher thinks endorsements are mostly exercises in self-importance.

It's their prerogative, and there's no right or wrong position for a newspaper to take. This year, we've chosen to endorse in a state representative race but not for President. That's because the local race hasn't received much meaningful coverage in the media, and our two cents worth might inform people.

In contrast, by all reports interest in the Presidential race is higher this year than it has been for some time. Registrations are up all around the country, and the debates draw large audiences. That's good, and anyone who cared to follow this marathon and who has cable television has had ample opportunity to do so.

C-SPAN, the cable network that focuses on the federal government, has offered the most comprehensive and least intrusive view. It's start-to-finish coverage of campaign appearances has allowed viewers to see and hear the substance of the candidates' ideas and not just sound bites. And their panels and call-in shows presented in-depth analysis of the candidates and issues along with intelligent questions and comments from viewers. The response of callers to a C-SPAN show after Ross Perot first announced his intention to run gave the journalists on the panel and viewers an early taste of how strong his support was at the time. And anyone who tuned in during the Democratic primaries might have sensed that if Bill Clinton could overcome his early difficulties he would be the nominee of his party.

We can't add much to that. Not that we don't have strong opinions about who is best equipped to lead the nation for the next four years, but we hope you do, too. Besides, endorsements have never been shown to sway enough voters to make a difference, and we would be disappointed to hear that anyone made a choice based on our opinion instead of their own.

Thomas Jefferson said that he was content to leave the nation's fate in the hands of an informed electorate. We would agree, and we hope everyone who reads this has taken the time to learn about the candidates, and will get out and vote. It's important, and it makes a difference.

### Do you agree? Disagree?

Editorials are the opinion of the management of The Dallas Post. We welcome your opinion on contemporary issues in the form of letters to the editor. If you don't write, the community may never hear a contrasting point of view. Send letters to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612. Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number so that we may verify authenticity. We do not publish anonymous letters, but will consider withholding the name in exceptional circumstances. We reserve the right to edit for length and grammar.



Survivors, so far

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

### J.W.J.

## Poor image of craftwork, labor adds to poverty

By JOHN W. JOHNSON

Just look through the help wanted ads in this newspaper...or any other newspaper. There it becomes clear that this nation is firmly entrenched in a service economy rather than a manufacturing economy.

Still, the jobs go begging, and we hear the hue and cry about the homeless, poor, underfed, ill clothed and uneducated.

In fact, I saw a help wanted ad in another newspaper this summer which offered more than \$7 an hour to a teenager for slinging hamburgers.

In concert with this shift to a service economy, (admittedly, and by definition of free enterprise, not planned that way,) has been a move in education which, ironically, has deemphasized vocational training, replaced by emphasis on the so-called professions.

We have now, in fact, institutionalized the notion of our daughters and sons growing up to become or marry doctors, lawyers and accountants, while deriding the notion of craftsmen and manual laborers in general.

With educational imperatives which now tell our children they must (as opposed to can) aspire to these professions and others, it is not inaccurate to say that we have become educated beyond our intelligence. Put another way: how many brain surgeons do you know?

We have, in effect, said that non-intellectual work is unworthy; therefore, the people who do it are unworthy. Works out great for one's self-esteem, doesn't it? What does all of this have to do with welfare fraud, or other abuse of the system? Read on...

Hardly a day goes by that we don't read or hear about some sort of welfare fraud. The issue has

come up repeatedly by primarily Republican candidates trying to portray Democrats as blind dogooders. The public's perception of the government's paternalistic efforts is, therefore, that fraud is a major problem.

"Let's get the cheats off the welfare roles and things will be fine," is often heard.

Or it is heard: "just drive by the place where people get free food and see all the Cadillacs pulling up."

Or: "it really makes me mad when I see those people in the checkout line with their food stamps. They can buy food which I can't afford to buy."

The language has been cleaned up, but most of you have heard the rhetoric.

Beyond the rhetoric, however, is that while fraud and abuse do occur, these are the least of welfare's problems. The major problem is the system itself, not its manipulations.

Welfare benefits often equal or exceed the pay of many jobs. This creates a disincentive to work. As a result of misplaced humanitarian concerns, many states now give welfare recipients a package of benefits which far exceed the value of the recipients potential earnings. Conversely, there's no small connection between an individual being pushed into (and unable to grasp) an intellectual educational track, and that same individual ending up on welfare in the first place.

Likewise, it is ridiculous to believe that welfare recipients would be willing to give up these benefits for a lower net income since working itself may be inconvenient, uncertain in duration and expensive in itself.

On one hand we have an educational system which largely

laughs at manual labor (vocational education), and on the other a welfare system which funnels many of the other so-called educated in a system which provides more compensation than a person could earn by using his or her own, even refined, abilities. Does it then take a college degree to figure out this system will be replete with fraud? Will be abused?

Put another way: How many of you would, given the opportunity, pass up a free lunch? How many of you do?

At the same time, the welfare system has all but eliminated the 'push of poverty.' In the absence of deficit spending by the federal government, there remains a stagnant economy and repeated cycles of recession and recovery. Likewise, people whose poverty may only be temporary if left alone, (or if manual labor were once again elevated to a position of honor), are treated as if they have a permanent and debilitating disease. By putting these people on welfare, we give them more money (in actual cash and benefits) than they could earn at the bottom of the economic ladder.

And what's wrong with that you might ask?

It's wrong because it effectively removes those persons from any opportunity to climb up the economic ladder because incentive has been removed. Without incentive, access to the economic ladder is effectively denied.

A basic concept behind this country's meteoric rise, and the single most important reason for it becoming powerful and proud, is because people had access to the economic ladder. Certainly many, if not most, of these persons started out poor. But with incentive to rise, rise they did.

Now citizens (and illegal aliens) below an arbitrarily established

poverty line are labeled "disadvantaged." Incentive has been stolen from them by a welfare system which cannot wait to smother incentive with mounds of humanitarian concern. Incentive has also been sidetracked by an educational system which now refuses to value manual labor, replaced by a glorification of the professions, and by the otherwise educated fawning of those whose paychecks almost insist upon an obsession to seek out and rectify the so-called terribleness of being poor.

Being poor is nothing to be ashamed about.

In a free enterprise system, doing nothing about being poor is the cause for shame.

When a government, in order to keep itself employed, artificially raises a citizen's standard of living beyond that citizen's ability to do the same, it's time for reevaluation. When an educational system devalues vocational education in favor of the professions—and when the latter is the idealistic exception rather than the realistic rule—then it's time for reevaluation.

While this country may now be reacting smugly to events in Eastern Europe and the worldwide demise of Communism; while we may now think we are poised on the pedestal of greatness as a shining example of what our life world believes it wants, our present course of manual labor derision and its welfare by-product, actually is threatening to topple us into an abyss fraught with the very real danger of a future Civil War between ever more clearly defined haves' and have not's.

In the meantime, and with manual labor derision, there may soon not be enough people left to construct the Ivory towers in which those who've created this mess have hidden themselves.

### A. Case for Conservation

## Foreign ecological disaster a lesson for the U.S.

Note from A. Case: As we continue to observe National Clean Water Month, please welcome a guest writer to this column. June Eyet is a teacher of biology and ecology at the Dallas High School. She is taking a sabbatical this year to pursue graduate studies at Wilkes University where she obtained her B.A. in biology education. She lives in Jackson Township.

By JUNE EYET

Regardless of whether it is a checking account, a savings account, a business, or a household budget, in order to be able to pay all the bills, cash inflow cannot be less than cash outflow. If such an imbalance should occur, creditors and bill collectors will certainly come calling at the door. Similarly, any natural resource which is used by man must be used in a sensible and economic fashion; otherwise, the outflow of that resource will cause it to become depleted much more quickly than projected. For some resources there can be no appreciable inflow - as in the formation of fossil fuels-but other resources can be managed effectively. The Aral Sea is an example of one resource - water - being overextended with disastrous results.

The Aral Sea is a desert-bound

sea which was once many times larger than it is today. Two rivers - the Amu Darya and Syr Darya - once brought water to the sea from tributaries in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The sea is drying up due to the aggressive development of irrigated agriculture in the basin. The past 25-30 years have brought an alarming reduction in its size by the rapid and excessive removal of water from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya for irrigation purposes. The outflow obviously exceeded the inflow.

This Aral Sea disaster is a typical example of man trying to exploit the natural resources to suit his own purposes rather than trying to work within the constraints of the resources. According to Mukhtar Shakhonov, Secretary of the Board of Writers of Kazakhstan and chairman of a public committee investigating the problems affecting the Aral Sea, the destruction was planned. He obtained copies of a map produced in the 1970's by the Institute of Agrochemistry and Soil Science of the USSR Academy of Sciences which show that scientists were planning to grow rice on the dried-up seabed. These "visionaries" totally overlooked the long-term effects on the environment, biological diversity, climate, and

the health of the people living there.

In the past, in areas of the world where water resources were plentiful, sensible water management decisions were not considered necessary. Inflow remained fairly constant because factors such as climate, rate of evaporation, length of dry seasons, and average temperature did not change drastically. Thus, there has been a lack of leadership with knowledge of water supply and demand.

Recently, on a local level, a political deal has been made to draw water from the abundant water resources of the Lehigh River and sell that water to customers in New Jersey. This project will involve the flooding of natural areas around portions of the Lehigh accompanied by the loss of habitat. Studies have supposedly been done on the long-term effects of the endeavor, but the true effects will not be known for years.

In areas where water has always been scarce, or at least uncertain, water management decisions have been the basis for political debate for years. One of the most exploited rivers in the United States is the Colorado which originates in the mountains of Colorado and, on most maps, is still shown emptying into the Gulf of California. However,

it is dammed no less than seven times in Arizona alone, and its water is used over and over again for irrigation and for consumptive purposes. The river actually ends up a muddy trickle. Although not on the scale of the Aral Sea disaster, pesticides, fertilizers, and salts are concentrating in the waters of the Colorado and the water quality is degraded as it travels its course.

To summarize and conclude, the amount of draw on a water system - be it for agricultural, industrial, recreational, or consumptive uses - must be carefully calculated based on the ability of the water supply to replenish itself. Plans must also be formulated to monitor the future development of the water supply and any increased use so that the resource does not become depleted. The causes of the Aral Sea debacle includes erroneous choices of strategies for developing the region's productive forces; a low standard of planning, construction, and operation of the irrigation systems; and, the lack of consideration for the long-term environmental impact. A lesson can be learned here. Planning and effective water management go hand-in-hand and it can only be hoped that other regions can avoid a similar environmental and human tragedy.

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P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612  
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Ronald A. Bartizek  
Editor and Publisher

Charlotte E. Bartizek  
Associate Publisher

Peggy Young  
Advertising Acct. Exec.

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Reporter

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