

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Even with pay cut, tax collectors are compensated enough

The folks who take in taxes for the Dallas School District in Dallas Borough, Dallas Township and Franklin Township are hopping mad at the school board for cutting their collection fees. At least that's the conclusion to be drawn from a brief letter to the district from an attorney who says he represents the tax collectors.

What's their complaint? That the board decided to use good sense and compensate the tax collectors at a more reasonable rate than has been paid in the past. Instead of the percentage of collections that was formerly used, Dallas will now pay a flat \$4 per bill collected. That will cut the total commission payments by between 30 and 60 percent (tax collectors make from 0.8% to 1.7% now), saving the district about \$25,000 yearly. That's good for the district.

So, do the tax collectors have a legitimate beef? A comparison with other school districts is instructive. The Lake-Lehman School District pays its tax collectors \$2.50 per bill collected, and requires them to make frequent deposits. Abington Heights School District pays \$3.60 per bill, and requires that all collections be placed directly in the district's interest-bearing bank account. In the Dallas district, tax collectors maintain their own bank accounts in which they deposit the collected money, then transfer it to the district at intervals as wide as a month apart. By these measures, tax collectors in the Dallas School District have been overpaid for many years, and the recent scaling back in their compensation simply brings them close to the level other districts have paid for some time.

Even under the new plan, tax collectors will be paid handsomely — as much as \$17,000 per year. Add in what they make from the collection of county and municipal taxes, and you come up with a pretty nice part-time job. (The county, by the way, pays \$3 per bill).

Kingston Township manager Jeff Box knows how good a deal this is. There, a part-time employee who receives an hourly wage takes care of collecting taxes. The township's reimbursement from the school district more than pays the salary and other costs, so the township makes a profit. That's a system other municipalities—and the school district—might want to look into.

Chances are the folks who collect taxes in the district are on the conservative side of the political spectrum; you, know, the ones who complain about the high cost of government. That being the case, you might think they would jump at the chance to save their town's residents a little money. But it appears not to be so.

In his missive to the Dallas School District, the tax collectors' attorney warns that "Appropriate proceedings will follow." It's a mystery just what those might be, and equally unlikely that they will have any effect. They certainly shouldn't.

Special Olympians earned their medals

It was my pleasure last week to meet Lake-Lehman High School's first representatives to the Pennsylvania Special Olympics, four delightful young men who skied home from their first competition with an impressive collection of 10 medals.

Too often I have seen well-meaning people label Special Olympics athletes as youngsters with something "wrong" with them, making comments along the line of: "Isn't it so wonderful what the handicapped can do!"

These young people in the Special Olympics are athletes, first and foremost. They have worked as hard as Bruce Jenner, Jean-Claude Killy, Christy Yamaguchi or anyone else to earn the right to call themselves that.

The people who make these comments, not the Special Olympics athletes, are the handicapped, for they can't see beyond the challenges that these young people meet every day.

As a "hugger" for the winter ice skating competition several years ago, I learned many lessons about friendship, competition and true sportsmanship from the young athletes who competed that day.

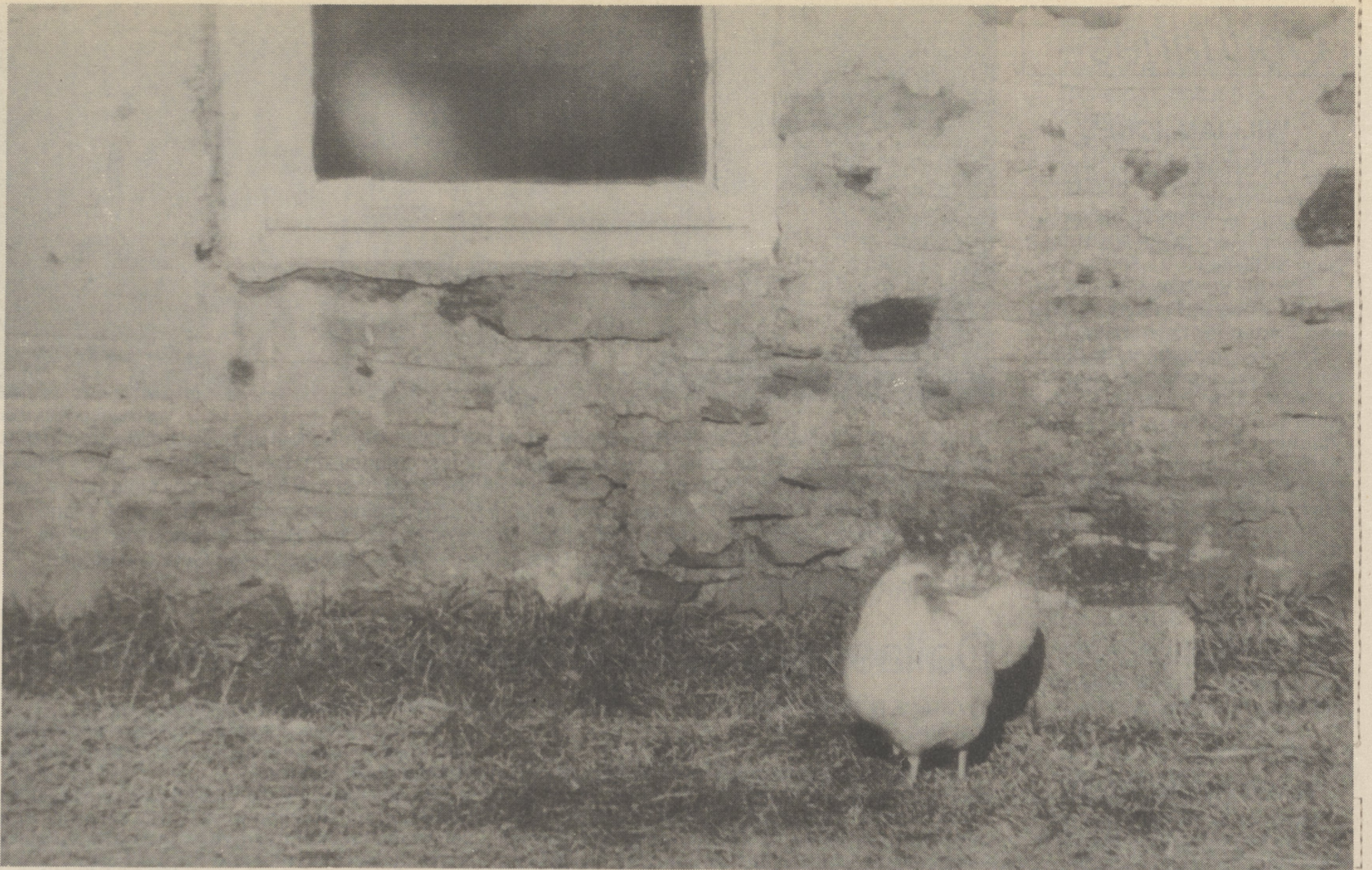
I marveled at the graceful movements of the young woman who captured the gold in figure skating, and was humbled to see one young man in the speed-skating race purposely holding back so that his best friend could win the gold medal.

I only wish that the college crew team that I coached that year could have been at the Special Olympics with me to learn some much-needed lessons about dignity, honor and true sportsmanship. These qualities are what the Special Olympics is all about — what every athletic competition should be about.

During every Special Olympics opening ceremony, the athletes recite the Special Olympics pledge: "Please let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

If this isn't true sportsmanship, I don't know what is. And congratulations to Lake-Lehman Special Olympics athletes Mike Milbrodt, Ray Werner, Rich Long and Mark Gray. I'm proud of you.

Grace R. Dove



Daring to come out in the sun

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

Letters

Says *The Post* shouldn't have published critical letter

Editor:

We are surprised that *The Dallas Post* would publish a letter to the editor personally attacking a private citizen of our valley. The letter discussed the Women's Network Pathfinder Award. The author of the letter wrote that the award was "tainted" when one of the recipients received it, and that only the other recipients, excluding the one under comment, may be worthy of honor.

The 1992 Women's Network Pathfinder Award recipient in question happens to be a mother of four children who takes her role as parent very seriously, she is the co-chair of the religious education committee of her church, and also works in the health care field as a compassionate physical therapist.

The recipient of the award is

certain exemplary as a mother, in all its facets, and a role model to both children and adults. But is it usual for *The Dallas Post* to allow such bitter comments about recipients of private organization awards? Are we going to get letters discussing the merits of Eagle Scout recipients, or the election of the local Kiwanis Club president? You would be publishing these with disregard of the personal ax-

grinding which may be involved.

We believe someone deserves to render an apology. And we hold *The Dallas Post* responsible for the selecting and editing the letters it chooses to print.

David and Jean Fields
Shavertown

Editor's Note: The original letter did not name an individual.

Guest column

Shared sacrifice is fine, as long as it's for real

By ROBERT L. FLEMING

I want to pass on to you the substance of a letter just received from an old friend, Horace Greenley, of Sudbury, Massachusetts. My friend is quite critical of Mr. Clinton's tax proposals, so his comments will undoubtedly offend many. I shall, however, summarize what he has to say as best I can.

Horace notes that whenever Mr. Clinton mentions his income tax proposals, he is inordinately careful to stress that only couples with taxable incomes in excess of \$140,000, or single individuals with incomes in excess of \$115,000, will be subjected to any increase in their income tax rates, and that inasmuch as such taxpayers make up only 1.2% of the population, 98.8% of us will get off scot free.

No wonder the polls favor the president's proposal. Shared sacrifice is wonderful if virtually none of us are to be called upon to cough up more than our share of a relatively painless energy tax plus our share of the increase in corporate taxes which may be passed on to us as consumers.

Look carefully, however, says Horace, for all is not what it seems to be. Retirees and those pouring money into their IRAs in contemplation of retirement should note that, buried in the small print is what Mr. Clinton characterizes as a "spending cut", but which is in reality an enormous tax increase to be absorbed by virtually every present and future retiree who has managed to save something for his or her own retirement.

\$20,000 in income from all other sources, including pensions, will be hit with a 52.91% increase in their federal income tax, in the amount of \$637, and all married couples filing jointly who have \$20,000 in combined Social Security benefits and \$35,000 in income from all other sources will be hit with a 47.96% increase in their federal income tax, in the amount of \$2,124.

Additional examples can readily be made up for any income level, but these two will serve as examples of what is about to take place.

My friend Horace admits that he and his wife happen to be among those who have managed to save a few dollars, and that they would therefore be among those to be hit with a tax increase if Congress were to enact the president's proposal. He says, however, that he and his wife are perfectly willing to pay the additional tax if they could be made to feel confident that this administration, and this Congress, would make real and immediate strides

The law imposing this new tax has not yet been passed, so we cannot know its exact wording. It would seem reasonable, however, to anticipate that the tax now to be imposed on 85% of the Greenley's Social Security benefits will be calculated by using the same methodology as that used in calculating the present tax on 50% of their benefits, if that is to be the case, the tax consequences speak for themselves.

Under the proposed new law all married retirees filing joint returns who have \$20,000 in combined Social Security benefits and

toward reducing the deficit so that our government in the years ahead will not be burdened with interest payments on the national debt so enormous that there would be nothing left for anything else.

Horace feels that what this country needs to do is to bite the bullet and set out to totally eliminate the deficit within four years. He says that the Clinton plan is in reality a "chicken" plan which will leave us over five trillion in debt after four years as against four trillion today even if it works exactly as planned, which is highly unlikely.

I don't always agree with Horace. Sometimes he seems to me to be a little too far to the left, and at other times he seems to be a little too far to the right, but in this case I think he is on target.

It is certainly fair to ask "affluent" retirees to do their bit to rescue this nation from its fiscal stupidity, but how can any plan be called either "fair" or "bold" if the plan hits retirees with total incomes of \$40,000 to \$50,000 with tax increases of from 48% to 53% and at the same time asks for no additional income tax whatsoever from working couples who have adjusted gross incomes of \$75,000, or \$110,000, or \$125,000, or even \$150,000? Such a tax spares not only virtually every two earner "yuppie" couple in the land, but every Congressman and Senator as well, insofar as his or her salary is concerned.

Each and every retiree with any life's savings whatsoever has already taken a tremendous hit in loss of income on his or her CDs, money market funds, or bond funds over the past two years, all

of which has helped mightily to reduce the current deficit, and much of which has directly benefited working couples by thousands of dollars per year as a result of the opportunity thus afforded them to refinance their home mortgages at sharply reduced mortgage interest rates. One big hit is enough for the moment. There must be some sharing in "shared sacrifice".

Horace feels, and I agree, that it is time for the "affluent" working couples to line up with their retiree counterparts and chip their fair share into the pot so that we can REALLY cut the deficit down to size for the benefit of our children and grandchildren. I also agree with Horace that if Mr. Clinton wants to take as much money from the "affluent" retirees as the traffic will bear, why doesn't he simply come out front and cut their benefits directly thus leaving more money in the "Social Security Trust Fund" to pay benefits to future generations of retirees instead of taxing back money paid out of the "Trust Fund" and pouring it into the general budget where it can be squandered on boondoggles like supercolliders and space stations, which are urgent budget items only for the purpose of protecting the Senate seats of another senator or two who are pledged to support one or more of the more controversial social or spending proposals put forth by this administration? Bleeding money out of the Social Security Trust Fund into the general budget harms not only present retirees, but future retirees as well.

Robert L. Fleming lives in Dallas

Library news

Library thanks Elizabeth Lloyd for eight years service

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library staff and Board of Directors extends a very warm thank you to Mrs. Elizabeth Lloyd of Dallas for her dedication to this library. She has served on the Board of Directors for eight years, having been vice president in 1988 and president for 1989 and 1990. She is also a charter member of the Friends of the Library and is still actively involved in the Friends although she has resigned from the Board of Directors.

We welcome a new board member, Dr. Carol Jobe, president of College Misericordia, as a board member, filling the vacancy. Officers for 1993 include President: Dr. Durrelle Scott; Vice presi-

dent, Joseph Stager; Secretary, Pauline Kutz; and Treasurer, Samuel Perry. The board meets at the library on the first Tuesday of the month.

National Library Week is the annual observance celebrating the contributions of libraries and librarians. The 1993 celebration will take place from April 18 through 24. The national theme is "Libraries Change Lives" with a sub-theme of "Look Listen Learn".

The special week is marked to show how libraries make a difference where it counts—in the lives of millions of people; to increase public awareness of how libraries and librarians can help and to demonstrate the need for support at a time when many libraries are having to reduce services due to

budget cuts.

The Luzerne County Library System is conducting an essay contest with the theme "Speak Out For America's Libraries". Each of the libraries in the system will judge their own entries and the winners will then be judged on the county level. All entries will be forwarded to the American Library Association and they will select three people nationwide who submit outstanding stories to receive a trip for two to the 1993 ALA Conference where they will be honored at the opening general session. It must be a true story, typed or printed in black, submit all requested information and returned to the library by March 31, 1993. Who knows? It could change someone's life!

Newbook at the library: "Sacred Country" by Rose Tremain is a novel of extraordinary feeling, humor, and vision that should win for her the larger American readership she so richly deserves.

"On February 15, 1952, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the nation fell silent for two minutes in honor of the dead King. It was the day of his burial." So we begin, in a snowy Suffolk field where the Ward family stands close together, offering their prayers for King George VI's passage to heaven.

It is at this moment that Mary Ward, age six, realizes with perfect clarity and conviction that she is a boy, not a girl, and that it is her destiny to be a man. Over the next three decades, we watch as she pursues this identity.

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