

EDITORIALS

Tax reform yes, but fair and up-to-date

State legislators are again proposing changes in the way school districts collect the taxes necessary to fund their operation. This will be the third attempt in recent years to shift the tax base from property to income; both the prior plans failed.

While there are good arguments for greater reliance on income taxes and less on property levies, no tax scheme could ever be completely fair. Much is made of the crushing burden ever-increasing property taxes place on people on fixed incomes — usually identified as elderly persons with no children in school — but higher income taxes could put pressure on young families with good incomes but little savings.

One point rarely mentioned in attacks on property taxes is that owners of older homes pay taxes on long-outdated valuations, while buyers of new homes pay a premium rate. That's because no widespread revaluation of property in Luzerne County has taken place in more than 30 years. The result is a wide imbalance in tax bills among properties of equal value, depending on when they were built. So, some of the people screaming loudest about higher taxes are actually paying at a considerably lower rate than most property owners.

The bills pending now in Harrisburg contain a provision for districts to offer a "Homestead Exemption," by which residential property values could be lowered while commercial properties retain their higher valuation, and thus higher taxes. This is patently unfair; businesses already contribute more than their fair share to government funding, and they should not be expected to subsidize the cost of public schools.

We think income is a fairer basis for taxation than property. But any change in the tax laws should include a requirement that properties be reassessed every 10 years, so that property owners are treated equally and fairly. And distinctions between residential and business property should be eliminated.

Helping others, being paid in pride and humility

Many Back Mountain people go out of their way to help others, whether as members of a service organization or by acts of personal kindness. This willingness to share one's good fortune is a hallmark of American life, in which volunteers take on many of the tasks left to government in other nations.

Grace Dove profiles one example of this spirit this week in a piece on Dr. George Cimochowski, a heart surgeon who goes to Poland later this year, teaching, lecturing and bringing much needed equipment to the struggling democracy. He began these trips in 1993, and like so many others who have gone to less-developed countries, was drawn back by the remarkable vitality of people struggling to do good in difficult conditions.

Dr. Cimochowski says he gets as much as he gives from these trips, in doses of inspiration and appreciation for the comforts and medical advantages Americans enjoy. We would guess his Polish hosts and patients feel equally lucky to have the attention of an American mentor who gives so freely of his time and talent.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



One of the more idiotic ideas circulating this election year would offer payment vouchers to parents whose children attend private schools, including those run by religious organizations. Sounding more like a populist than a conservative, Bob Dole presented an enhanced version last week, offering to give \$2.5 billion per year of taxpayers' money to many people who don't need it. Here are a few reasonable questions I would ask of both those who would dole out the money and those who would receive it.

For the givers:

- Why should we give tax money to people who already send their kids to private school, and can easily afford to continue doing so?
- Will you demand that schools receiving aid meet certain standards, just as the public schools must?
- Don't you think some schools will simply raise their tuition rates an amount equal to the vouchers' value?

For the recipients:

- Do you really believe that public money will come without strings attached?
- Will you be willing to expand your facilities to accommodate new students, knowing full well there's no guarantee the money will keep flowing?
- Will you accept students with learning, physical or emotional disabilities? If you do, can you maintain your academic standards?

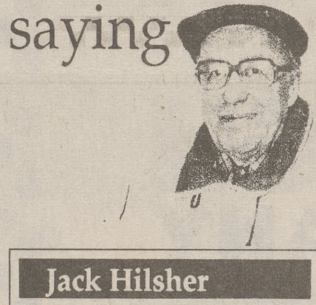
Since our kids go to Gate of Heaven School, we would rake in some of your money if a voucher plan is adopted. While I don't mind cashing checks, I would resent paying more for someone else's children to attend a school that won't accept everyone.

I'd rather see the government work harder to improve the public schools, and not just by throwing money at bricks and mortar. They could use more of the standards and discipline found in private and parochial schools, for which people are now willing to spend extra money.



Hayfield barn, but no hay. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

This column starts out heavy, but not to worry...it ends up much lighter. The subject is suicide, topical because of that high navy official whose tragic end over two combat ribbons is not easy to understand. Seems to me it would have been better for all concerned — especially the poor Admiral — if *Newsweek* had kept its big nose out of the whole thing.

Anyway, some figures on this subject are not current-up-to-dates would certainly be worse — but they are bad enough and they do show the problem's scope: Each day over 100 people in the U.S. kill themselves. Worldwide make that 1,000 each day. (And failed attempts number at least 10 times those which succeed.)

It is said that "suicide knows no boundaries" and that all societies are puzzled by this deliberate attempt by man to end his existence. No age, no race, no sex, nothing leads the pack, except

When you go, leave your heart and soul to the girls

that those most publicized are those most prominent. Some examples follow.

Jack London, 40, author. 1916. Record: 51 books in dozens of languages. Reason: Drink. Suffered severe pain from poor diet and booze. Method: Poison.

Ivar Kreuger, 52, Swedish Industrialist (the "Match King") 1932. Record: Supplied most of world's matches from factories in 34 countries. Obsessed with accumulating wealth, bought everything in sight but Wall Street's crash floored him in 1929 and he lost it all. Method: Gunshot.

James Forrestal, 57, 1st U.S. Defense Secretary, 1949. Record: Built U.S. Navy into world's largest. Worked 20 hours per day. One of most important and influential government officials ever. Methods: Admitted to Bethesda Naval Hospital for "occupational fatigue" but one month later jumped from 16th floor.

Marilyn Monroe, 36, actress. 1962. Record: Became American sex symbol, appeared in long string of successful pictures. Rumored to have had affairs with two Kennedys, one of them the President of these United States.

Method: Barbituate overdose.

Sometimes there are suicide notes...one in five suicides leaves a note. Suicidologists claim they are probably a "cry for help." Some notes may be scrawled on a mirror. Some may be neatly typed. Others with pencil, chalk or a stick — whatever is handy.

A comparison study of phony suicide notes against genuine notes concluded that most tend to be stereotyped and contain few adjectives or adverbs. Some examples that don't fit the usual pattern:

A banker left a list of instructions and concluded, "Sorry to be a nuisance this way. Call... (and he named his choice of undertakers.) One woman left three notes: "There is nothing mysterious about this, and "I am taking whiskey, it makes it easier," and the third, "It's harder than I thought."

Then there was a 45-year old man who left very precise instructions and this final comment: "My small estate I bequeath to my mother; my body to the nearest accredited medical school; my heart and soul to all the girls; and my brain to Harry Truman."

Auction revenues exceed everyone's expectations

celebration. A new item was the basket auction, which was received quite well. The antique and the new good chance items were given to the lucky winners and everyone seemed to enjoy the various kinds of food available on the grounds. A warm thank you is extended to Ernie Ashbridge and everyone who worked with him to make the 50th auction a huge success!

New books at the library: "Lily White" by Susan Isaacs is an ambitious novel that introduces Lee White, a criminal defense lawyer practicing on Long Island. Into her life drifts Norman Torkelson, a career con man charged with strangling to death his latest mark. The case seems to be routine.

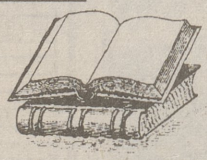
"How Stella Got Her Groove Back" by Terry McMillan is the story of Stella Payne, who is 42, divorced, a high powered invest-

ment analyst, mother of 11-year old Quincy—and she does it all. From Little League car-pool duty to analyzing portfolios. She confronts hopes and fears about love.

"The Winter's Hero" by Vassily Aksyonov is a remarkable saga in the years following the second world war. Russia in the 1950's is a world created in the image of an increasingly paranoid Joseph Stalin, a society where campaigns against artists, intellectuals and others destroy thousands of people.

"Sacrament" by Clive Barker is the story of Will Rabjohns, perhaps the most famous wildlife photographer in the world, who has made his reputation chronicling the fates of endangered species. Including his own. As he is rising in his career, he is witnessing his own world ravaged by AIDS.

LIBRARY NEWS



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The 50th annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction is now history. The tents have gone back, the tables have been returned, the vendors have taken their wares, and the grounds are gradually returning to normal. The Rotary Club of Dallas is working on the refreshment stand to clean and restore it and the auction block is ready to be closed up for another year. The initial reports have been that every booth and vendor, new goods items, odds and ends, books, nearly old items and antiques have exceeded their expectations in revenues.

The Ham 'n Yegg hams were an exciting venture for this 50th cel-

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - July 31, 1936 COURT NIXES DALLAS TAXPAYER GROUPS' CASE

For the first time since May, Dallas Borough School Board could function without fear of violating injunctions this week. Last of three cases pending against the district ended Friday when Judge John S. Fine, handed down a decision fixing the tax levy at 29 mills, a reduction of one mill under the budget which had been adopted by the school board. Fine's action concluded the suit started by H. Stanley Doll, secretary of Dallas Taxpayer's Association. The same group of taxpayers which brought the suit had supported two other actions against the local board. Both were decided in the board's favor by Judge William S. McLean.

50 Years Ago - Aug. 2, 1946 MRS. HICKS SLIGHTLY HURT IN CAR ACCIDENT

Several complaints against raw sewage running in the streets of Dallas were heard at the Dallas Borough Board of Health meeting Tuesday evening. The board resolved to take drastic action against the P.A. Ladies Slovak Union unless immediate steps are taken to remedy the condition in front of its property on Huntsville Road. The board also heard complaints against overflowing sumps and septic tanks on Lehman Avenue and at Main and Orchard Streets.

Considerably bruised and shaken up in an auto accident last Saturday at Stoney Creek, VA, Mrs. T.M.B. Hicks, Dallas Post columnist, is recovering at the home of her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Todd, Charleston, S.C. Mrs. Hicks, who was driving alone at the time of the accident, was hit by another machine making a left hand turn near Stoney Creek.

Shaver Theatre has completed installation of a penthouse and large exhaust fan on the roof of its building in Shavertown. Operation of the fan makes the theatre several degrees cooler and patrons have complimented Shaver on the increased comfort.

40 Years Ago - July 27, 1956 SCHOOL JOINTURE MAY FACE PROBLEMS

Lehman-Jackson-Ross jointure face a possible loss of \$21,000 State appropriation if it does not carry successfully to its consummation a further jointure with Lake and Noxen school districts, says Lester Squire, supervising principal. Jackson Township directors are unable to get a majority vote in favor. Jointure requires that all boards vote aye.

Dallas Lions Club will sponsor a performance at Dallas Outdoor Theatre Aug. 8, featuring a picture for the entire family. Between the shows, a number of prizes will be given away. Dallas Lions Night is for the benefit of sight-saving for school children.

30 Years Ago - July 28, 1966 NEW PHONE RATES FOR SWEET VALLEY

The telephone base rate area revisions to be filed Aug. 1, with Public Utility Commission will affect annual savings of \$1,538.40 for 71 Sweet Valley customers who are paying mileage charges, says R.E. Koebe, District Manager of Commonwealth Telephone Co. If approved by the PUC these tariff revisions will go into effect Oct. 1.

A well known Back Mountain couple, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Girvan, Lake St., Dallas, marked their 59th wedding anniversary July 20. The Girvans were parents of 10 children. A son was killed in Italy in WW II and two daughters are also deceased.

20 Years Ago - July 29, 1976 PROPOSED POST OFFICE CHANGE DOESN'T FLY

Abraham George, an official of the Wilkes-Barre post office accompanied by Robert Voelker, also of the Wilkes-Barre post office, appeared before Dallas Borough Council at their meeting to ask council's opinion on a recommendation to include the Dallas post office as a branch of the Wilkes-Barre post office for economy and personnel efficiency. Most members of the council did not seem in accord with the suggestion, pointing to the Shavertown post office, which is a branch of Wilkes-Barre.

The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
717-675-5211

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