

EDITORIALS

There's no harm in looking at ideas for tax reform

The Lake-Lehman school board missed a golden opportunity to meet some critics halfway last week. Members of the taxpayers' association attended the school board meeting, hoping to convince the board to form a committee to study tax reform under the "Homestead Act," passed last year. The Act contains the germ of an idea that would shift some of the burden of taxation from property taxes to income taxes. This is a principle dear to the heart of many families who are owners of valuable property, but have a fixed or low income.

Some people think the Homestead Act in its present form is unworkable. It contains a cumbersome and complicated set of requirements that must be met before a municipality or school district can enact reforms. Cynics might think the Act was passed simply to give politicians cover from criticism that they aren't addressing a pressing problem. They may be right, but that isn't necessarily an excuse to ignore the possibilities that may lurk in the bloated regulations.

"It's too complicated. Most people don't really know what it's about," said Moderno "Butch" Rossi, the school board president. Precisely, and that's why having a committee of outsiders take a look at it makes great sense. If the school board allows a volunteer committee the leeway to review this and other potential tax reform ideas, a couple of good things could happen. First, they may actually come up with something useful, or at least provide the board and the public with information that may be helpful in the future. Or, the committee may find the whole process is indeed much too convoluted, and go back to the board with a newfound respect for how difficult the job of managing a school district really is.

Of course, there's always the chance they'll latch on to the biggest problem with local taxation — that property hasn't been reassessed for 35 years and the enormous inequity between the tax on new and older homes is almost criminal. Then their next action may depend on which class of home they live in.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



I write occasionally about the "wonders" of modern technology, usually with an ironic (oh, all right, sarcastic) tone. In truth, though, I marvel at the advances in communications and computerization that allow us to work more efficiently, particularly in this business. Even the years of my brief career have seen hunkering linotype machines supplanted by desktop computers that are faster, more capable and — not least important — cleaner and quieter. It took me a couple of years' experience with our Macs to realize that corrections and changes in type take only a couple of minutes. The same now holds true for photos, since we scan everything into the computer system and then go merrily on our way, reducing, enlarging and cropping.

There's one modern convenience, though, that I'm still not sold on, especially with the advent of electronic mail. The fax machine is very handy for receiving and sending copy, if all you want to do is read it. Unfortunately, the quality is such that it doesn't scan well, so it has to be retyped anyway. And photos — forget it, unless you use the finest setting, which turns a 30 second transfer into a ten minute production.

But that's not the biggest problem; it's the reams of paper the machine eats each week. In our case, it's not just ordinary paper, since we haven't graduated to the plain-paper machines. No, it's that old menace, thermal paper, the kind you used to need for calculators, and still may if you're using a Texas Instruments brand. It comes in 98-foot rolls — apparently a muted protest to the metric system — which are inserted under the machine's cover, so you can't tell when they're about to run out. Sometimes, I guess when the paper manufacturer is feeling charitable, the rolls show a reddish edge when they're nearly depleted. Being a cheapskate, though, I have never yet thrown out anything but a bare core, so the warning doesn't do me much good.

Actually, the paper isn't the biggest problem, it's just the most obvious mechanical failing. The biggest annoyance and money waster is the people who send faxes they should know we would use only if all life in the Back Mountain ground to a halt. The sources range from well-meaning charitable organizations that think we might like to cover their car wash 50 miles away to hair salons trying to drum up a little extra business. But the worst offenders are politicians, eager to impress us with their energy and diligence by sending a fax to announce every bill they co-sponsored or event they will attend.

I've made it a practice to send "No Fax" letters whenever someone gets out of hand, and that usually works, at least for a while. Then there are the ones who never seem to get it, like the press people in U.S. Senator "Rick" Santorum's office, who think we're interested in every brief visit the Senator makes to any part of northeastern Pennsylvania. Message to Sen. Santorum's press office: We don't care when you visit Wilkes-Barre, Scranton or Hazleton for a five-minute photo op. And if you want to tell us something, use e-mail, not that nearly outdated fax machine, which is probably out of paper, anyway.

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A muscovy duck, native to South America, enjoyed a recent snowfall. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

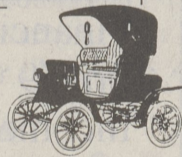
Library news



Nancy Kozemchak

The Back Mountain Memorial Library held its annual meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 2 in the community room at the library. The officers elected for the year 1999 include President, John Gager; vice president, Randall Glidden; secretary, Pauline Kutz; and treasurer, Joseph Mazzoni. A new member of the board was pre-

ONLY YESTERDAY



70 Years Ago - Feb. 16, 1929

COMMISSIONER KICKS OUT REPUBLICANS

Forty six county employees most of them Republican and appointees or friends of D.M. Rosser, were dismissed by resolutions adopted by Patrick J. Conway and Leslie J. Harrison at a meeting of the county commissioners Thursday and 27 others, mostly Democrats and friends of Conway were appointed in their places. This bore out reported rumors that County Commissioners Harrison and Conway had further cemented their agreement to work together and control the patronage of the office to the exclusion of Commissioner D.M. Rosser.

60 Years Ago - Feb. 17, 1939

POLICE PAYROLLS TO BE INVESTIGATED BY D.A.

Charges that payrolls of the State Highway Department in Luzerne County last October and November were "padded" are being investigated by the District Attorney's office and it is probable that the evidence uncovered will be laid before the Grand Jury soon after it convenes Feb. 27. D.A. Leon Schwartz was reluctant to discuss the anticipated

Committee gears up for 53rd auction

sented at the meeting. Debbie Kinney will begin a three year term as a member of the board. The library board of directors meets on the first Tuesday of the month in the community room at the library at 7:30.

The committee for the 53rd library auction will meet on Thursday, Feb. 25 in the community room. John and Susan Oswald will be joint chairs with Karen Boback in charge of the antiques; Ruth Tetschner will chair the book booth; Peggy Harvey, new goods and Martha Butler, vendors. Donations will be accepted at the library whenever the library is open. New goods and antiques will be accepted as well as books

and odds and ends. The Dallas Rotary Club will once again be in charge of the refreshment stand. The dates of the auction are July 10 -13, Thursday through Sunday.

The library will be participating in the American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days again this year. Order forms will be available at the front desk in the library. Orders for daffodils must be received before March 4 at the library. An individual bunch of 10 daffodils will cost \$5.00. The daffodils should be available for pick up at the library during the week of March 15.

The Slightly Used Bookshop in the lower level of the library will

be celebrating "Murder Mystery Mania" beginning March 17. There will be more than 300 titles with favorite authors. You will be able to save 75 percent off Book Club prices. The book shop is open Monday and Wednesday from 1-8 p.m. and on Saturday from 10-5 p.m. Volunteers are always welcome.

New book: "Houdini" by Milbourne Christopher is a pictorial biography, including more than 250 illustrations. The book was presented by Mary Ann and Donald Hopkins in memory of Louis Plotkin. The most popular vaudeville performer of his era died in 1926 on Halloween, during the stunt-crazed twenties.

problems yesterday, but a hint of the seriousness of the charges came from Harrisburg where Governor Arthur H. James announced that he had ordered State Police and Highway Department auditors to cooperate with the district attorney.

Now playing at the Himmler Theatre - "Sweethearts" with Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.

50 Years Ago - Feb. 18, 1949

DALLAS BUSINESS ASSOC. PUSHING FOR MEMBERS

The Dallas Business Association under leadership of Lawrence Updyke, vice president and chairman of the membership committee has started an intensive drive to enroll all Back Mountain businessmen in the organization. Several members have already enrolled from Idetown, Shavertown, Trucksville, Fernbrook and Lehman. Membership is open to any Back Mountain businessman upon payment of \$3 dues.

During the year just closed, Dr. Henry M. Laing Fire Co. responded to 25 fire calls protecting property valued at \$381,500 with an actual fire loss of \$12,160. Greatest fire losses occurred in those areas furthest removed from Dallas and where lack of available water was a distinct handicap to the firefighters.

40 Years Ago - Feb. 12, 1959

BACK MOUNTAIN HOMES-MORE BY THE MINUTE

Seventy five homes were built in three townships and one Back

Mountain borough between Feb. 1, 1958 and Feb. 1, 1959. These figures were obtained from a preliminary survey made by James Martin, supervising principal of Dallas School and reveal one of the reasons why school directors are confronted with continuing problems. Martin does not think that his survey of new construction is by any means complete. Survey was conducted in Dallas, Franklin and Kingston Townships and Dallas Borough.

Back Mountain Little League campaign to raise \$8,000 for a new playing field near Dallas Junior High School will open officially tomorrow and continue to Feb. 28. Bonds in denominations of \$1 and \$5 will be offered to the public. Dividends will be paid in personal satisfaction to the investor through the knowledge that he has helped to build boys into better cleaner men.

30 Years Ago - Feb. 20, 1969

L-L SCHOOL BOARD

DISCUSSES WATER BREAKS

Lake-Lehman School Board considered two breakdowns in water supply at the Lehman-Jackson Elementary building at the Feb. 11 meeting of directors. Both situations were on an emergency basis requiring immediate action with referral to the board after the event. The first occurrence was Jan. 23 at lunch when the pump which supplies the building from a deep-drilled well stopped functioning. Reason was found to be a short circuit. The second emergency was when a hot water tank started to leak extensively Jan.

31, one week after the water supply had been restored after shorting out the pump. The tank was replaced.

Pennsylvania Liquor Store which has had its business in the Dallas Borough Building in Dallas for a number of years, is expected to move to the Dallas Shopping Center when a new building is constructed. Although no notification has yet been received by council members, a permit was issued last week for the purpose stated above.

20 Years Ago - Feb. 15, 1979

DALLAS MAY HAVE TO RELOCATE STUDENTS

Dallas School District is faced with a possibility of relocating 523 students in the 16 classrooms of Dallas Township Elementary building if the school board's appeal for an abatement is denied by the Dept. of Labor and Industry. An inspector from the department recently cited the 46-year old wood frame structure as unsuitable for use as a school building and ordered the second floor vacated by March 28, was announced by Dr. Richard A. Shipe, school superintendent at a meeting Monday evening. The citation also limited the use of the basement where the cafeteria and faculty conference room are located.

You could get - Center cut pork roast, \$1.89 lb.; country style spareribs \$1.49 lb.; sauerkraut, 2 lb. bag 49¢; Kounty Kist corn, 4-12 oz. cans \$1; Ragu Traditional spaghetti sauce, \$1.89, 48-oz. jar; green peppers, 49¢ lb.; 10 Florida oranges, 79¢.