

THE GAZETTE-TIMES

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MORROW COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER

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The Quandary of Teacher Salaries

Negotiations on teacher salaries in Morrow county are now going into their third month without being settled, and in light of recent developments, there must be some public confusion on what is taking place.

When teachers first proposed a salary schedule that would increase the base pay to \$6400 from the present \$6000 (for a new teacher with a bachelor degree and no experience) and asked for an increase in increments to 5% of base pay from the present 4%, it came as a shock to many people here. Increments are the increases allowed for attaining another step on the salary schedule, which may be either another year of experience or additional training that advances the teacher on the scale to a higher level. As long as the teacher remains in the district, he gets at least the experience increment each year.

On the present schedule, with the \$6000 base, the 4% increment figures \$240 per year (4% x \$6000).

Without any advance preparation and with the proposal coming after poor economic years in Morrow county, the teachers' request seemed out of reason.

But unknown to many school patrons here was what was taking place around the rest of the state where perhaps the economy had been more prosperous. Of early settlements made, none was as low as \$6000. Of 23 settlements reached by January 28 in school districts elsewhere, the lowest base was \$6,150 in one district. Eight districts came in with bases of \$6400; four established bases of \$6500; six set the base of \$6600; and one, Culver, was set at \$6700.

Were it not for this fact, teachers here may not have originally proposed the higher figure. Their request was not merely for selfish reasons, but the certainty that it would be very difficult to employ new teachers here with a \$6000 base when they would almost surely have opportunities elsewhere at higher starting salaries.

(Incidentally, the negotiating committee is not the invention of the local teachers but is a requirement of state law. In setting up the committee here, the Morrow teachers and the district are only complying with the law).

The teachers' first proposal, offered in December, 1968, for the ensuing school year, was rejected by the school board, since its members know only too well the situation with the poor crops in the years of drought.

Since that time, counter proposals and "counter counter proposals" have been made and rejected, back and forth.

But in the meantime, the school board has realized what is happening around the state, and ironically, the original positions of the teachers and the school board have tended to reverse themselves.

After the series of rejections, the teachers in their latest offer, taking note of the economy, agreed to remain on the present salary schedule—the same base (\$6000) and the same increment (4%). Their only requested increase would be that the district pay each teacher the full \$13 per month that the health insurance plan costs.

Now, realizing the difficult bargaining position that the district would be in when it comes to hiring new teachers with the base at \$6000, the board has sought to work out a schedule that will, indeed, provide a higher base but seeks to achieve this without sharply increasing costs of instruction.

With this in mind, the board had made one proposal of a \$6400 base and cutting increments to \$200, which would mean a \$40 per year cut on the increases below the current schedule. In effect, this would make more attractive salaries for the new teachers but would reduce the incentive for many of the more experienced teachers with higher training.

It was after this district proposal that teachers agreed to stay with the present schedule, provided the insurance payments were borne by the district. This is counter to the OEA recommendation that teachers go to impasse (deadlock) rather than accept a base figure below \$6300.

The board surprised many by rejecting this proposal, but there were three reasons apparent for the action: 1. Directors now realize that the higher base is needed to secure replacements for some of the teaching staff who will be leaving. (In most instances, salary is not the reason for leaving). 2. They feel that if the state sales tax is passed and, under terms of the bill, a district base is established with a 5% limitation, the district cannot afford to be caught with the prospect of increasing school salaries in a later year under the umbrella of the base. 3. The majority of directors feel that the district should not pay the full amount of the insurance premiums—that the teachers should at least share in these payments which are designed for their personal benefits.

Consequently, the board has now come back with the offer of a \$6300 base, increments of \$220, and district payments of \$6.50 per month (half) on the insurance plan.

This is where the matter stands at present. The problem is a more knotty one than a person might realize from the casual reading of the headlines. There is every evidence that the teachers are not being motivated principally by selfish interests but that they are genuinely working towards offering the best possible educational opportunities here.

Sometime ago they realized what was happening around the state, when probably most of the rest of the public didn't see this point. Unpalatable as it may be to the taxpayer, there is a monetary competition for school teachers. If we are to provide adequate teachers for our students, we have to keep pace and face this fact.

The teachers certainly seemed to be keeping the community in mind when they offered to retrench their position to the current salary schedule, and they are to be commended for it. It indicates that they are earnest in their desire to serve.

We agree with the board that the full insurance benefit should not be paid because we think it right and logical that the teacher should share in this benefit that is designed for his own welfare. The plan adopted here is a more costly—and presumably better—plan than that in some other districts where the district pays the full sum. We can see danger in going the full route on benefits for they may increase costs to the district without providing a basically better salary structure.

At the same time, we feel it reasonable for the district to pay a large percentage of this benefit to help the economic position of the teachers without a major hike in district expenditures.

Under the circumstances that prevail, it seems to us that

the board should concur on the \$6000 base, 4% increment schedule. It is not very logical to expect the teachers to ask less than they receive at present. We think they are on solid ground in holding to the position that increments should not be reduced. If the writer were hired to a position with the understanding that he would receive an established figure each year as an increase, he would expect that additional pay and lay his plans accordingly. If it were reduced, after the promise had been made, he would certainly seek employment elsewhere if it were available to him.

It is true that the \$6000 base will leave the district in a bad spot in bargaining for new teachers, but for the current year, when the budget again is faced with a beginning deficit and other costs are going up, it would seem better to face this prospect and battle it through.

As to the limitation of the sales tax passes, it is doubtful that this will come to pass because the indication is that the sales tax will not pass. However, if the board only increases the base pay and cuts the increments so that no major additional expenditure is required, it is not building a much higher tax base anyway. (Under the terms of the proposed bill, the district would be limited to a 5% budget increase over the previous year).

This is a very troublesome problem, and both the members of the negotiating committee and school directors have done their best to solve it satisfactorily, with all involved seeking to consider the best interests of everyone.

The teachers could well take the position that the economy is no concern of theirs, since they are professional people with a service to render and can quite readily find positions elsewhere. That they have not taken such an adamant position is a credit to their professional integrity.

The directors, charged with the responsibility of providing the best education for children but knowing the plight of the taxpayer, are in an extremely difficult position. They know that they must keep costs to a minimum or they face the very acute reality of the budget failing of passage.

We would propose that the salary schedule remain the same this year with the thought that groundwork be laid for a good increase for next year, probably commensurate with the state average. The district could make substantial payment towards the insurance. There is every prospect that this will be a better year for the economy here, and there is some hope that the state will offer more property tax relief.

For the future, the public could be informed and kept abreast of developments in order to understand the problem and to evaluate it, rather than getting it "cold turkey" as the original \$6400 request came this year.

This doesn't answer all the problems but if we were appointed as an arbiter on a committee to settle the matter, we believe that this is how we'd look at it.

Certainly it behooves all to reach a settlement very soon or the vote on the budget will have to be delayed. If this should occur, it could bring additional problems to the district.

FFA—Opportunity to Learn and Serve

FFA provides an opportunity for youth in agriculture to learn, to do, to earn, and to serve. The FFA organization does not make these young people great. But rather it provides them the opportunity to excel, to grow, and become outstanding youth-leaders for agriculture in America.

Experiences in leadership, citizenship and cooperation, and the pursuit of vocational and educational objectives provide these young people with opportunities for personal growth. Participation by members at local, state and national levels within the organization is the basic plan.

An FFA member begins his career as a student of vocational agriculture. He has thus elected to begin his career in agriculture. He and the others like him find common goals and objectives in FFA.

His opportunities in FFA are many; much more than the awards or contests which are important in providing competition, experience, incentive and encouragement. The member can apply what he learns in the classroom to his personal agricultural situation. Through active participation, the member can demonstrate his ability in public speaking, parliamentary procedure or livestock judging. He also takes part in establishing chapter goals, and just as important—helps accomplish them. Many typical chapter activities include earning their own resources and providing community service.

Future Farmers of America are celebrating FFA WEEK, February 15-22. Their theme—"FFA... an opportunity for youth."

Through the FFA, a member can develop skills and prepare himself for his vital role as an adult leader in American agriculture. Millions of young people have grasped these opportunities in FFA to learn, to do, to earn, to serve.

Chaff and Chatter

Wes Sherman

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT now. Anyone for a mudball fight?

AS OF EARLY this week it looked as if Al Bunch brought his topsoil in and added to the snow in the center of Main street instead of taking the snow out and putting it on his field.

GILES FRENCH says, in his "These Things We Note" in the Sherman County Journal, "Many people in southeast Asia live in houseboats along the river banks and it might be a good way to keep from paying property taxes." Well, if the snow and rain keeps on, Giles, this might be a very good possibility, even in the drylands of Morrow and Sherman counties.

THOSE FOLKS who tried to phone the G-T Tuesday morning must have thought someone was trying to set a new record for a lengthy telephone conversation. All they could get was a busy signal until 11 a.m. But no one here was talking. In fact, it was unnaturally quiet for a Tuesday morning.

Somehow the receiver on one of the extensions was dislodged from its cradle the previous night. Apparently after so long a time, this causes something to happen in the exchange so that all that emits is a busy signal.

It wasn't until someone from the county tried to get us—and then came down—that we realized we were out of service.

We called the repair service and they got things straightened out as soon as they could. If you were among those provoked at us because you couldn't reach the G-T, we apologize.

Dale Slusher, PNB manager, says this matter of the receiver being off the cradle apparently caused a fuse to blow. It about caused the editor to blow a fuse, too. But the peace and quiet was nice, we'll admit, while it lasted. The jingle jangle returned to normal after 11 a.m.

DR. McMURDO, we know, was among those trying to call, He

eventually got through, and it was good to hear his voice again. Our good neighbor has had quite a siege after that fall on the icy street on January 8. Oddly enough, we saw that happen while we were talking on a long distance call. The doctor was edging his way across the very slippery street when suddenly he lost his footing and did a cartwheel. He hit hard, and remained still on the ice for a few seconds after going down. Arnold Raymond rushed out to give aid, but by that time the hardy doctor was up and walking away. He was hurt rather seriously, though, and it is good to know he is improving.

WE WISH THE BEST to Ralph Richards who plans to retire from the Soil Conservation office as of February 28. When we asked him how long he had been in conservation work, he replied without hesitation, "Thirty-three years, 10 months and 24 days." He didn't know how many minutes!

When a fellow works that long for one employer, one can well understand that he has a good right to count the days.

Certainly the Heppner SWCD has made an enviable record while he has been here, and we're sorry to see him go.

We don't exactly know what Ralph will do to enjoy retirement, but maybe a person will find him stripcropping the golf course with his irons, or stubble mulching his flowering beds, or studying the diversion terraces at Acapulco, or tossing a hook and worm to the trout in a small watershed project somewhere.

WISH that more folks could have seen how happy Sgt. and Mrs. Jerry Blanchard of Condon were to win the prizes in the First Baby Contest, Young Jerry, who was five days old when we took his picture, was the only one who was indifferent about it all. He was their first child, and this is always something extra-special, but they are also

YOUR SENATOR REPORTS...



BY KEN JERNSTEDT, STATE SENATOR

18th District, Including Morrow county

Controversy was the key word of the session this week... controversy stemming from four potentially explosive bills: fluoridation, sex education, abortion and gun control.

By the printing time of this column, fluoridation, the brain child of the Dental Association and the scourge of thousands throughout Oregon, will probably have received a violent going-over from its first hearing Friday, February 7.

According to the Chairman of Health and Welfare, the committee is expected to pass out the measure to the floor of the Senate, where it will receive stiff opposition.

This measure is the first one of its kind introduced in the Senate. In earlier sessions, the House has tried five various times... one to prohibit fluoridation... but failed on each attempt.

Proponents for statewide mandatory sex education in public schools received two severe blows this week. The first of the two set-backs came Monday during the Senate Education Committee's hearing when nearly 75 persons emerged to lend vocal support to opponents of the proposal. The second came later in the week when House Speaker Robert Smith announced his firm opposition to the bill on the grounds that he does not favor placing the legislature in the business of influencing or dictating curriculum in school districts.

As a result of the opposition, the bill has been modified by the Senate Education Committee leaving the question of teaching sex education to local school board control.

The abortion issue came alive again this session with the introduction of two measures, Senate Bills 193 and 182. The bills, similar to those introduced last session, would liberalize the existing statutes that already permit abortions under certain circumstances.

Senate Bill 193, the more conservative of the two measures, would allow termination of pregnancy under three specific situations... if the pregnancy endangered physically or mentally the mother or child, if the child would be deformed, and if pregnancy was caused by criminal assault.

Senate Bill 182 goes a little further by allowing the decision for termination of pregnancy to be made by the woman alone.

The outcome of these bills is unknown; however, the feeling of acceptance for Senate Bill 193 is more favorable than it has been in the past.

Gun control, the issue that plagued many lawmakers in the nation's capitol last year, has worked its way into the legislative scene in Salem with the introduction of Senate Bill 178, which requires all owners of concealable firearms to obtain permits from the state police. The bill would also prohibit the transfer of a gun to anyone without a permit. I am against

a pleasant and appreciative young couple, away from their real home in Colorado, and so happy to win the prizes. The merchants who give the prizes would have felt even better than usual about it if they could have seen the little family together in the hospital room.

BY GEORGE, don't forget the Washington Birthday sale here next week.

all gun control legislation at this time. The move to lower the voting age was boosted this week by a compromise measure that would change the voting age to 19 rather than 18, as suggested by Governor Tom McCall. According to key legislative members this change has enhanced the chances of passage considerably. My mail is picking up! Please feel free to express your opinion to me on any issue.

TO THE EDITOR

Out of Touch

To the Editor: In your action of reprinting the editorial "Four-Letter Words" from the Madras Pioneer, you gave that unfortunate selection your endorsement. By so doing you have indicated the degree to which your editorial policy is out of touch with the realities of our national situation and the extent to which you believe others in this area suffer from similar myopia.

As one who disagrees with much that is taken for granted in our society, I find myself classed among the "youthful dissenters." I do not, however, appreciate the implication that my dissent thereby necessitates my being in need of a good bath, nor do I believe that I am thereby insensitive to qualities such as giving, hard work, praying, and loving.

If there is to be any healing of the wounds of our world, there must be an end to illogical condemnation of those who differ from the prevailing perspective.

Many of the claims of dissenting youth are proper and legitimate. It would be well for the rest of the people to cease focusing their attention upon a radical and ineffective minority of those who dissent and to open their ears and hear what the young people are saying before passing an uninformed and inaccurate judgment.

Sincerely,
Rev. F. W. Luedde, Jr.

Philosophy of Hunter

To the Editor: To the sportsman of heart and soul, the beauty of the true hunt is never over. Sam Walter Foss has said the true hunter hunts for the thoughts that throng the woods, the dreams that haunt the sky.

The hunter's philosophy is never a stepping stone to a higher, more beautiful or more abundant life. It never leads to peace or reverence for life. Neither does it lead to "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

If we will be true to the higher principles of life, then we will admit that the philosophy of the hunt blinds the eye to beauty, dulls the spirit of mercy, the heart to the ways of peace, the soul to love towards God's creatures, and the mind to compassion and clemency. It destroys the spiritual values of heart and soul, placing the brute in man beneath the life he seeks to take.

The hunt is a negative sport filling the countryside with trespassers, vandals and killers of children's pets.

Howard H. Caudle
Grand Junction, Colo.
Reprinted from Hartford, Conn., Courant, as submitted by Lois Winchester, Heppner.

The Rhyming Philosopher

CONSIDERATION

WE GO ABOUT OUR DAILY OCCUPATIONS ENROUSED IN PRESENT TASKS, AND YELP ABOUT THE PRICE OF BEANS OR LATEST STOCK QUOTATIONS, IGNORING ALL THOSE FOLKS WHO HELPED US OUT.

IF SOMEONE PLEASES YOU WITH CARE OR KINDNESS, OR HELPS YOUR DAY BECOME LESS WEARISOME, DO YOU THROUGH IGNORANCE OR BASHFUL BLINDNESS JUST TAKE IT ALL FOR GRANTED AND STAY DUMB?

THE PAYMENT PEOPLE GET IN TERMS OF MONEY IS NOT THE SUM OF ALL THAT SEEMS WORTHWHILE; BUT WORDS OF PRAISE MAKE DARK DAYS TURN TO SUNNY, AND MAYBE CHANGE A TEAR INTO A SMILE.

THE POSTMAN AT YOUR DOOR DESERVES A GREETING, THE DRIVER OF YOUR BUS A WORD OF THANKS, AND ALL THE BUSINESS PEOPLE YOU'LL BE MEETING, WITHOUT FORGETTING BOTH THE COPS AND CRANKS.

AND WHEN YOUR LOCAL PAPER GIVES YOU PLEASURE JUST MAIL A CARD AND VOICE THE WAY YOU FEEL WHILE PRAISING OTHERS METES A PRICELESS TREASURE.

YOU ALSO GIVE YOURSELF A BETTER DEAL.

HARRY W. FLETCHER

MEETING CALENDAR

Monday, February 17—
Chamber of Commerce, 12 noon.
Wagon Wheel dining room
Ruth Assembly No. 50, Order of Rainbow for Girls, Masonic Hall, 7 p.m.
School Board, Regular Meeting, Riverside High school, 7:30 p.m.
Civic League, Kindergarten room, 8 p.m.
Heppner Neighborhood Center Advisory Board, 7:30 p.m.
Morrow County Fair Board, Fair Dormitory, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, February 18—
School Board, Final Budget Meeting, Heppner Elementary school, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 19—
Willow Lodge, IOOF Hall, 8 p.m.
Jaycees, 8 p.m.
Carnation Club, Ida Farra home, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 20—
Jaycee Wives, Heppner Neighborhood Center, 8 p.m.
Soroptimist Club, Program Meeting, 12 noon, Wagon Wheel dining room
W.A.C. of Rhea Creek Grange, All Day Potluck, 10:30 a.m., home of Mrs. Leonard Rill
Technical Action Panel, Heppner Neighborhood Center, 1 p.m.

Friday, February 21—
Sans Souci Rebekah Lodge, IOOF Hall, 8 p.m.

PROPERTY TAX FAX

QUESTION:
Our parsonage is used practically every day in the week for various church activities. Why should it be taxed?

ANSWER:
Exemptions are granted to religious organizations when the primary use of the buildings and land is for religious purposes. In this case, the primary use of this property is as a residence for the minister; therefore, it is subject to taxation. If specific parsonage rooms are used only for church purposes, not for ministerial residence, an adjustment can be made.

Stepped-on Toad

To the Editor: Well, here it is, poking up its little head again. Charles Hodde, chairman of the Federal committee, Pacific Northwest Rivers Basin development, speaking at the Heppner Soil Conservation meeting at the Lexington Grange hall last week, said, among other things, that to utilize and save our river, irrigation must be developed here and that most of the land for that use was here in Eastern Oregon. Irvin Mann, a little late, but nevertheless, is advocating the same thing down at state legislature.

Yes, the pressure is going to increase around those 240 sections that we gave away until Boeing's eyes pop out like a stepped-on toad frog. That land is the heart, the meat, and the gizzard of any irrigation project, but it will cost millions to get it back.

O. W. Cutsforth

COMMUNITY BILLBOARD

Coming Events

HEPPNER BASKETBALL
Friday, Feb. 14, Sherman, there
Sat., Feb. 15, Wahtonka, here
Friday, Feb. 21, Pilot Rock, there
League games
Support the Mustangs!
GRADE SCHOOL—
Sat., Feb. 15, Condon, there, 1:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 21, Ione there, 2 p.m.

VALENTINE CARD PARTY
By Triple Links Club
Saturday, Feb. 15, 8 p.m., IOOF Hall
Bridge, Pinochle, Refreshments
Public invited

PANCAKE LUNCHEON
Shrove Tuesday, Feb. 18, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
All Saint's Episcopal Parish Hall
Public welcome, sponsored by E.C.W.

TEEN DANCE
Sat., Feb. 15, Fair Pavilion
Music by Burnt Sleep combo
Sponsored by Morrow County Jaycees
Admission, \$1.50 each

LEXINGTON BLOW CONTROL DISTRICT
Important Meeting, Monday, Feb. 17, 8 p.m.
Norman Nelson residence

ELKS 72nd ANNUAL
Sat., Feb. 22
Registration at Ford Garage, 11:00 a.m.
SPONSORED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BY

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