

Our Opinion

Merit Pay For Teachers Is An Unexploded Bomb

We understand that some guidelines set by the North Carolina Board of Education recently could scuttle a new law designed to give local school systems more flexibility. At least the North Carolina Association of Educators, through its president, Julia Kron, is upset over the actions of the board.

The bill was sponsored in the legislature by Senator Richard Conder, and he says what the State Board of Education has laid out for local school officials to follow is contrary to the intent of the law.

At issue is the provision which gives school principals the leading role in deciding which teachers and staff members are to receive merit salary bonuses. If we understand correctly, principals and school superintendents would make recommendations to local school boards and these boards would make the final decisions.

Now suppose that in a given school, half the teachers are given merit salary bonuses and half are left out in the cold. Does anyone think the 50 percent failing to get merit pay consideration will be happy? We are building an educational bomb which will certainly explode along the way.

We are told that in giving the merit pay bonuses, the expectations are that the school programs will improve. But then the same ones handing out the bonuses will be the ones deciding on the matter of program improvements.

Such a system places principals, superintendents, and school board members in an untenable position. If this plan goes through as laid out now, we shall see morale among half the teachers dip down to a new low.

Admittedly, we have excellent teachers, average teachers, and weak teachers. We need to try to weed out the weak teachers if we are dedicated in the effort to improve educational opportunity and attainment among students.

Rather than leave it to human opinion as to which ones deserve salary bonuses and which ones do not, we ought to be making a sincere effort to rid the school systems of the weak teachers and give the others across the board bonuses or raises of whatever designation we wish to employ.

Now we have a good parallel. We have just recently had a World Series in baseball. Oakland won that series. There were 24 players on the Oakland roster. Some of those 24 players were much better than the others. Some were outstanding, some were average, and some were weak. But all were given the same bonus for winning the series.

In public education today, if we want to destroy morale and if we want to face a continuing battle among school personnel, let us grab off a program in which some get merit bonuses and some do not.

Regardless of where it is, we sincerely believe that this thing politicians and others call "merit bonus" is an unexploded bomb about to go off. Teachers apparently do not want it. School officials apparently do not want it as outlined by the State Board of Education. The senator sponsoring the bill does not like the guidelines.

But a few politicians apparently do like it, and unless it is changed, we have it for better or for worse.

Reasonable Request

U.S. House Democrats have asked that a special prosecutor be appointed to investigate the activities of former Housing Secretary Samuel Pierce.

A letter from 19 members of the 20-member Democratic majority on the House Judiciary Committee went to Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. It was said that Mr. Pierce might be implicated in conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government and also of perjury.

The law requires that in such cases a majority of the party in control of the committee must make the request.

Mr. Pierce has refused to date to answer questions about his activities as Housing Secretary. He had hid behind the fifth amendment on advice of his attorney. His very refusal to talk begets suspicion, and a special prosecutor to find the truth appears to us to be a reasonable request.

Obituary

William Webster Butler, 78, died Sunday in Pitt County Memorial Hospital. He resided in Vanceboro.

The funeral service was conducted at 2 p.m. Tuesday in the Wilkerson Funeral Chapel in Vanceboro by the Rev. Dan Hall. Burial was in the Vanceboro Cemetery with Masonic rites.

He is survived by his wife, Ethelene Farrell Butler; one daughter, Linda Butler Harrington of Kinston; two sisters, Hollie Butler Everette of Robersonville and Helen Butler of Vanceboro; seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Butler, a native and lifelong resident of the Vanceboro area of Craven County, was retired from the United States Post Office with 20 years of service. He was a member of the Vanceboro Christian Church

where he served as an elder, trustee, member of the choir and served as president of the Christian Men's Fellowship's Pamlico District Convention. He also served as Sunday school superintendent for 19 years.

He was a member of the Vanceboro Rotary Club, served as secretary-treasurer of the Vanceboro Volunteer Fire Department. He was a charter member of the Vanceboro Medical Center board of directors and served as a committee member of Boy Scout Troop 58.

He was a 32nd Degree Mason, a member of the Vanceboro Masonic Lodge No. 433, AF & AM, the Scottish Rite Bodies of New Bern and the Order of the Eastern Star.

Memorials may be made to the Vanceboro Christian Church, Vanceboro, N.C. 28586.

Other Defections Probable Unless Some Changes Made

When such staunch conservation Democrats as Lauch Faircloth and Harold Hardison announce this early that they are supporting the candidacy of Senator Jesse Helms for re-election, then we cannot merely pass such a move off by saying, "Oh well, only two are involved."

It is time Democrats learned a lesson. While we do not expect the national Democratic party to listen to the voice of the conservatives, it might be expected that in North Carolina some common sense would prevail. North Carolina is just not going to support a liberal candidate, and on the national scene, we can again in 1992 face a liberal Democratic candidate for president, this state will not support that candidacy. It seems to us that this is written in the sands, and it is there for all to see.

Here in our state we do not know the list of Democrats who will be running for the party nomination to run against Mr. Helms next year. A lot of names have been mentioned, several trial balloons have been floated, but as of now no leading contender has come forward.

It is true that Bo Thomas is out there in the field campaigning, but his candidacy is hardly worth mentioning. He is the anti-Beaufort County candidate who lost his state Senate seat in the 1988 election.

Mr. Faircloth and Mr. Hardison are both good men. The fact that they are both conservative places them in a special dog house with the national party. It is time North Carolina quit playing up to such far out liberals as those now in control of the party. We just cannot stomach much more of Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill who led the way for the nomination of Michael Dukakis in the last election. They got their liberal all right, but the American people spoke decisively at the election booths.

If Messrs. Faircloth and Hardison are set to go out and campaign actively for Mr. Helms, if they are set to try to convince other Democrats to follow their lead, then surely they will be met with some measure of success. We cannot say how much, but it will be some. While we regret that they have found it necessary to bypass the Democratic party in this matter of electing a senator before they even know the name of the Democratic opponent, they had the right to do so, but we must question the wisdom of doing this so early.

Their lead might cause some others to defect. We expect such, and if we are completely honest, we see no available Democrat now who can beat Mr. Helms. Mr. Faircloth and Mr. Hardison could have kept quiet and Mr. Helms would still be the favorite to win.

What seems so impossible even in our state is to convince liberal Democrats to move a step to the right and conservative Democrats to move a step toward center. If the party does not realize together, then the senatorial election of 1990 will be a Helms celebration and the election of 1992 will bring on another gala event for the national Republican ticket.

He Is Struggling

We have just read a story about an outstanding high school basketball player. He is now in his senior year in school, and he expects to graduate next June.

This boy is being recruited by several colleges over the country. And it seems strange that he is not being recruited by several colleges within North Carolina. But there is a reason.

That reason is that this boy has not yet been able to score 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). And so many institutions are bypassing him. But it is strange to read the list of outstanding institutions which are camping at his door. Wake Forest, Georgetown and Temple universities are seeking the service of this young man.

Now if this boy had an SAT score of 800 or better, he would be in a real active position with regard to which college to attend.

Suddenly, it is dawning upon a lot of people that colleges are paying more attention than ever to academics.

Are you a Smoke Detector Neglector?

Test your smoke detector regularly and change the battery once a year.

A fire prevention message from your local fire department.

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Gail Winds

Okay. So you're having a bad day. If it wasn't for bad luck you'd have no luck at all. Well, let me ease your load for a moment with a few cases of others whose luck is far worse than yours:

A dragline operator in Florida was so proud of his new Honda that he invited a neighbor over to show it off. As he and the neighbor were admiring the machine, the owner pressed the electric starter button to prove how quiet the engine ran. The motorcycle was in gear. It plunged through a glass door into the living room, dragging the owner along with it. At the hospital, he received treatment for numerous cuts on his arms and face. Meanwhile, back at home, his wife sopped up gasoline seeping from the motorcycle which was lying on its side in the living room. She flushed the gasoline-soaked paper towels down the toilet. The man returned home and went to the bathroom. He lit a cigarette as he sat there on the john, and dropped the match into the toilet bowl. The paper towels had clogged the pipes, and the match detonated the gasoline. The explosion blew the commode to pieces and propelled the man into the air, inflicting third-degree burns on his exposed behind. The ambulance attendants had to carry the man spread-eagle, face down on the stretcher because of his new wounds. As he was being carried into the hospital, one of the attendants tripped, and the stretcher crashed to the ground, leaving the owner of the new Honda with a broken leg, as well.

Feel all better now? NO! Well, then lets push ahead...
Virginia owned a 1966 Volkswagen valued at \$200. It was stolen from her place of employment in New York and driven three-quarters of a mile onto a frozen bay and burned. By the time Virginia could locate her car, it had drifted off on a large ice floe and eventually sunk to the bottom of the bay. The Army Corps of Engineers informed Virginia that the Volkswagen was a navigational hazard and that she was obligated to retrieve it at her own expense of over \$1,000. Her insurance did not cover a loss of this type, and if she failed to remove her vehicle, the Coast Guard would place a buoy over it and bill her \$230 a month...forever.

Now do you feel better? WHAT! Okay dokey...
A twenty-two year old steel worker was hospitalized with a fractured skull, broken pelvis, broken leg, and other injuries after being struck by four vehicles within two minutes. It seemed that Bob was crossing the street when a taxi struck him and flung him over its roof. The taxi drove away, and, as he lay stunned in the road, a car ran over him, bowling him into the gutter. That car drove on, too. While pedestrians gathered at the scene, a small van plowed through the crowd, leaving behind three injured bystanders and an even more battered Bob. When a fourth vehicle came along, the crowd scattered, and only one man was hit. Guess who that was?

And then there was Steve, of Virginia, who was forced to declare bankruptcy after losing a \$35,000 lawsuit. A few days later, he crashed into a truck, severely injuring himself and destroying his car. While he was recovering in the hospital, thieves looted \$2,000 in camera equipment and \$450 in bank money from his wrecked car, burglars stole \$10,000 worth of furniture from his home, and his wife divorced him. Steve attempted to bounce back by placing the following ad in a local newspaper: "I'm 39, just lost my family, my home, my business, and my car, but not my sense of adventure. Seeking partner for mutual beneficial ventures." Steve had no response, however, because the paper misprinted his phone number.
NOW, have a nice day.

<h2>GRAVEN COUNTY BUSINESS & SERVICES</h2>	
<p>PAY CASH and save 20% and more. 90 days same as cash. Come on down. Pat's Furniture Co. Inc. 244-1828</p>	 <p>Timmy Ray Hawks Painting Co. Interior-Exterior-Painting Roof Coating 244-2626 After 6 P.M.</p>
<p>Toler & Son Garage Owner & Operator Louis Toler Custom Exhaust & Mufflers Tune-up - Transmission & Motor Service Hwy 17, 3 miles North of Vanceboro 24 Hour Wrecker Service 244-1253</p>	<p>Hearne's Jewelers 298 MIDDLE ST. NEW BERN, N.C. 28580 TELEPHONE 637-4990 Your Diamond Store</p>
<p>Farm Life Florist OFFICE 244-2519 After Hours Call: Elva244-1036 Jean244-0847 Eve Ann637-4437</p>	<p>"Stop & Look" HWY. 17 POTTERY OVER 100 ITEMS 244-9060</p>
<p>NEW RINSE-N-VAC steam cleans carpets cleaner and keeps them cleaner longer. Rent At Pat's Furniture Co. 244-1828</p>	<p>Edward's Small Engine & Pet Shop NEW & USED LAWN MOWERS SALES & REPAIR EXOTIC BIRDS & TROPICAL FISH PET SUPPLIES See our toy selection 244-2208 VANCEBORO</p>
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ATTENTION! ADVERTISERS

The West Craven Highlights will publish on Wednesday, Nov. 22 instead of Thursday, Nov. 23 (Thanksgiving Day), to allow our employees to be with their families.

To observe this holiday, we are adjusting our deadlines as follows:

Deadline for Wed., Nov. 22 will be: Friday, Nov. 17 - Noon.

Thank you for your cooperation