

Bob L

No Pate

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Who?

The art of collective bargaining, initiated and perfected in this country's industry, is now being applied more and more in our schools and is quickly laying to rest the fears of a negative competition between the economic and social status of teachers and the educational advancement of our students. Those who seek to delay or prevent the practice of collective bargaining are quick to charge that allowing teachers to be represented by a strong and militant organization will ~~bring~~ teacher gains only at the expense of the children. While these persons search labor history avidly in order to find examples of corruption and power mis-use to fortify their reactionary spirit, they now have to contend in their arguments with a growing experience in teacher collective bargaining, experience which is proving their fears and claims groundless.

Who?

The forces of the status quo have a smug hypocrisy, highlighted by statements that teachers should be paid more, uttered just moments before they advise teachers to do nothing about the problem except to wait for the public and the school board to undergo a veritable revelation.

Their simple ignorance of the subject is displayed in fallacious statements about the bargaining process, contract ratification, ^{and} bargaining agent selection. To add their insult

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to teachers' injury, irrelevant comments are made about such matters as the union show and the Teamsters Union.

Five years ago when collective bargaining for teachers became a dominant news issue, and the attention ^{that it} created attracted these reactionaries I am talking about, we in the Teachers Union had a terrific job of argumentation ahead of us. We sincerely believed Collective Bargaining to be a way of solving many of the outstanding teacher and education problems in our society. We ~~saw~~ saw CB as an orderly means of settling disputes. We saw CB as a means of rectifying the lack of balance between teachers and our large, bureaucratic school systems.

We envisioned Collective Bargaining as a way of actively utilizing the ideas and genius of teachers for the good of education and destroying the administrative monopoly on innovation. We predicted that Collective Bargaining would usher in a new era of education by seriously challenging the educational establishment which has become stale by reverent but absurd cherishment of the status quo.

Yes, when the American Federation of Teachers was founded fifty years ago, our pioneering teacher leaders had a most difficult job to do because all these visions and predictions

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had to be voiced in the manner of campaign promises during an election.

Meanwhile, the forces of the status quo, the school boards, the administrators, the National Education Association, their job was easy because they had no job to do. All they had to do was keep the establishment chugging along at a moderate pace, keep the teachers in line by coercion and company unionism, and keep saying 'It Can't Be Done' to any suggestion of change in the format of our schools.

That is why our fight has been such a long one, but that is also why our fight has been a successful one.

The forces of inaction are being exposed. And where these same forces are trying to save themselves by ^{imitating} mimicking our militancy and creativity, they are exposing themselves even more quickly because, one, they have no experience and heritage, and two, it is evident their heart is not in it. I shall provide evidence of this later.

Let us examine now this problem of combining unionism and professionalism, two elements I have said again and again are completely compatible.

One of the constant and most perplexing mysteries plaguing our system of education in the United States today is

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the evident American ambivalence towards identifying the status of our schools and our educators. I am confident that any poll would show that the great majority of citizens consider teaching to be a respectable profession...though many mothers ~~w~~ will still aim for medicine or law as a more "Professional" profession for their children. Most persons will agree that education is vital to the growth and freedom of our country. Yet the experiences of communities in every state clearly demonstrate that these same persons will vote for a sewer assessment but not for a higher tax to support the public schools-

Many will admit that the classroom teacher is the most essential person in the schools, and that without competent classroom teachers there cannot be quality education. It is not far-fetched at all to consider the classroom teacher the front-line soldier in ~~n~~ our war against illiteracy and poverty. Yet we are confronted with self-appointed experts who write books and articles at the drop of a hat which, in a holier-than-thou attitude, tell teachers how to teach. And while very few laymen feel competent to advise a lawyer or a ~~n~~ doctor, virtually any layman feels perfectly comfortable in acting as the boss of a child's teacher.

I think you will agree with me that such sorry attitudes do indeed exist. It is here submitted that collective bargaining can provide remedies by ~~improving~~ improving the social

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and economic status of teachers and, further, by bringing teachers to true professional status, focus the process of education more directly on the students in the classroom.

How will Collective Bargaining bring about such changes? First let us examine the so-called bread-and-butter aspects of CB. Teachers are criticized for being concerned with these items (and by the same persons who admit the validity of the claims and say that something should be done about it, something that is, that does not include teacher action).

In my opinion, no teacher who is forced to moonlight can do his best in the classroom.

No teacher who is unable to pursue continued study in a manner intellectually suitable is able to teach on the highest effective level.

No teacher should be asked to teach under poor physical conditions, or conditions which place teacher and student in physical jeopardy.

No teacher, indeed no student, should be subjected to education in a too-crowded classroom.

No teacher should have to put aside his concern for the student for attention to bureaucratic detail. ~~But~~ Yet

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the teachers in this room can probably testify that at times counting the children seems more important to the administration than teaching the children.

No teacher should be subjected to administrative harrassment. The tensions of the classroom are enough for any person.

These are just some of the ills that collective bargaining can correct. For example, take the problem of moon-lighting, a problem which arises, of course, because of sub-minimal pay scales.

School boards everywhere are faced with the universal problem of school finance. Some school boards are ~~depend~~ dependent on a political city administration. All school boards must look to the state for portions of the school budget. The majority of school boards must go ^{to} the tax-payer for voluntary voting of school levy increases. In all of these cases, well-organized forces exist to keep school finance at a low level.

Real estate organizations interested in low property taxes bring pressure on school boards to bring in a reduced budget. Groups of tax-payers are organized to fight increases in school spending. For example, in St. Louis there exists a group called the "Union of Taxpayers" which, before every vote on a

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school levy, purchases advertisements in the daily newspapers asking voters to turn down the ~~xxxxxx~~ proposed school levy on the ~~xxxxxx~~ grounds that teachers only work ten months a year for their salary. Perhaps if the ads were larger, room could be found to mention the biological fact that teachers must live twelve months a year, but up to now that fact has escaped attention of this group.

Because of the intangible nature of the education product, local and state politicians are too often willing to sacrifice the education budget improvement for some^o other item. Remember, if the voter votes down the sewer assessment, the tangibility of the deficiency is soon evident. But to the voters ~~oza~~^a a school building looks the same from the ~~xxx~~ outside no matter what ~~ks~~ is going on inside. Suffice it to mention briefly at this time that militant action by teachers can provide the tangibility that some persons need^s to move into action.

Where have the teachers been~~x~~ during all this? Why have we accepted the x-principle that we must subsidize the school system because of the pressures being exerted by other ~~gozupz~~ groups? It is because the entire educational establishment^{ent} has been aroused to keep us teachers in line. Boards of education

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while proclaiming their independence, have too often been beholden to political machines. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Teachers have been coerced, as I have mentioned, into joining the giant company union which, because of its inherent administrator=domination, has been dedicated to perpetuation of the status quo.

And part of this status quo is the subsidy being paid by each and every teacher as a fee for being allowed to teach.

Unity of teachers within the framework of the Collective Bargaining process does ~~much~~ much to match the fierce pressure of the budget-cutters. It is no accident that the Board of Education in New York City just this September was able to announce both the regaining of the salary leadership of the big cities and an increasing supply of qualified teachers. In four years of Collective Bargaining, the teaching staff of New York City has increased twenty per cent while the student enrollment has increased only 10%. A trend toward larger classes was reversed. Now the kids get more teacher time and more attention.

We remember a few years back when Board of Education officials sat across the table from union negotiators and pled poverty of the budget and said this and that couldn't be

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X
done-. (Remember, these clichés are repeated over and over again by all agents of the status quo.)

Good
But now teachers in New York are pioneering in new educational concepts because they said it could be done and waged enough of a campaign to be given the chance to try. In addition, the teachers there have a contractual limitation on class size, a decent salary, and a full partnership in the evolution of a dynamic school system.

Yonkers, New York is another example. For years the education association had majority ~~members~~ membership in the school system. And also for years conditions deteriorated in that city. And while the teachers in Yonkers had collective dues-paying (to the association), they had no effective collective action program.

This was due to a lack of leadership on behalf of the association. I say this because the association had the resources ^{available} available to do a job for the teachers and for the community but was unwilling to take on the responsibility. This inactivity led teachers to seek other ^{and} more effective means and the growth of the Union. The Yonkers Federation of Teachers attracted teachers who were critically concerned with the school conditions and were willing to do something about it.

In 1963, the Union commissioned a noted civic

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economist, Mr. Louis Yavner, to make a report on school financing. Mr. Yavner provided crucial evidence of both the school decay and the lack of city financial support of the schools.

Now, reports of this type have been prepared before in various school systems. We are all aware of the studies made of certain school systems ^{by} NEA commissions. The important difference in the Union way of doing things is that action did not stop with the issuance of the report. The Yonkers Federation of Teachers campaigned relentlessly, against ~~a~~ terrific membership odds, for the right to have collective bargaining. And finally, as a result of a secret ballot election ~~held~~ on May 17 of this ~~year~~, the Board of Education entered ~~into~~ into CB negotiations with the Union.

What have been the results? A salary increase? Yes. A limitation on class size? Yes. A grievance procedure which eliminates the possibility of dictatorial behavior ~~on~~ on the part of administrators? Yes again. But most important is the environment generated by existence of the CB ~~process~~ process, as evidenced in the preamble to the recently negotiated contract between the teachers and the board:

"The Board of Education of the City of Yonkers and the Yonkers Federation of Teachers recognize that they have a common goal, that of working together toward providing the finest educational opportunities for the boys and girls of the Yonkers Public School ~~System~~. System.. This goal can best be achieved by the joint efforts of the Board of Education and the Yonkers Federation of Teachers.

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"Both groups recognize their responsibilities in our increasingly complex society for working legally and constructively toward improving community structure, resources, and law to provide maximum educational opportunities.

"The Board of Education and the Yonkers Federation of Teachers, through their respective representatives, have an obligation to engage in joint study and deliberation and endeavor in good faith to negotiate on policies relative to salaries and conditions of ~~empzæ~~ employment."

This means that the teachers covered by this contract will be heard and their views considered as a potent force. These teachers have emerged, by their own efforts, from the position of a lowly cog in a giant educational bureaucracy. In its first contract, the Yonkers Federation of Teachers has done much to improve the economic status of the teachers in the system. Contract clauses have been written to alleviate certain grievances of long-standing duration.

For example, various personal leave policies have been outlined in detail in the contract, a three-stage grievance procedure with arbitration is provided, teacher aides are being ~~increased~~ increased substantially, teacher programs are no longer a September surprise, but are distributed by June 20, preparation periods are increased, and teaching load limited to certain specified maximums.

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Far from being mercenary, each and every item in the contract is carefully designed to restore the professional status of the teacher in reality, to make the schools a better place to teach.

And because the teacher has a rejuvenated attitude and becomes a more independent professional, the focus can return to its proper place, the student. The student in need of special help now has a fighting chance in the ~~me~~ crowd because his teacher, instead of crying for help for himself, can now use his own abilities to ~~help~~ help the student.

I think, in short, that the recent teacher collective bargaining experiences prove conclusively that collective bargaining, unionism and professionalism are not only compatible but a requisite for educational progress today.

But now a word of warning. It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. But I warn now that imitation of the Collective Bargaining process may be flattery but it is not sincere. The ~~experiences~~ experiences of NEA professional negotiations prove this point. Typically, the NEA stands aloof from any thought of collective bargaining, but once the Union is successful in having a CB law passed, or convincing a board of education to schedule the election, the NEA decides to run. I am convinced that the NEA ~~enters~~ enters these elections with only one aim, to keep the Union out, and not to represent the teachers at all.

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This dastardly form of action may be concealed during an election or petition campaign but quickly comes to the surface. Just this month I was shocked to learn of a real company union sell-out of the teachers by the association in Lincoln Park, ~~MM~~ Michigan.

I visited Detroit to confer with federation officers and was handed a copy of this infamous three sheets of paper they dare to call an "agreement reached in good faith negotiations between the Lincoln Park Board of Education and the Lincoln Park Education Association." This so-called contract gives everything ^{almost} and gains ^{by teachers} nothing for the teachers. ~~The section on Working~~
Conditions

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Please allow me to summarize for you, with comments, the entire working conditions section. I assure you it is short. And the teachers should be thankful that it is not longer.

Section 1 says "that all teachers will report to their building at least fifteen minutes before classes begin and be in the vicinity of their classrooms unless otherwise assigned by the building principal." Further, teachers agree to stay not less than 15 minutes after closing time,.." Imagine treating the true professional in such a mechanical manner.

Section 2 says that all teachers should have emergency lesson plans for use by substitute teachers. Here the NEA writes into its contract reliance on the lesson-plan ritual, the ritual which provides the bulk of administrative duties in some schools.

Section 3 says "that the management of students before, during and immediately after the school day is an integral part of every teacher's duty and further agrees to take effective action to promote conditions inside and outside of school which are conducive to good discipline." Lincoln Park, and many other districts, suffers from discipline problems. Here, by contract, the NEA has completely absolved the school administration from any responsibility and ~~through~~ thrown the entire burden on the teachers.

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Section 4 says "that teachers in the elementary schools agree that recess is a necessary part of the educational program for this age group and will readily be on hand to protect the safety of all children at all recess duties that are assigned in a reasonable and non-discriminatory manner." Not only does this insult teachers by implying that they should act as policemen, but nowhere in the agreement is any procedure for deciding differences of opinion on what is "reasonable and non-discriminatory."

Section 5 requires teachers "to spend a reasonable amount of time beyond the normal school program without extra compensation over and above the contract figure." This goes back to the position I took earlier. Here the NEA writes a contract with a low teaching salary, adds on added work without compensation and then expects the teacher to support a family and be an excellent teacher, too. Modern day living negates such an approach.

Section 6 is what I call the one for one, all for none approach. It says "teachers will refuse to condone or defend any action by a teacher who refuses to perform legitimate duties and responsibility assigned to his/her contract and this agreement." And who decides a teacher's irresponsibility? You guessed it...the administration does.

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Section 7 agrees that "teachers have an obligation toward participation in community wide activities. Further, the association agrees to encourage teachers to participate in community activities in which they have an interest." Now there is nothing really wrong with such ~~an~~ a provision IF there had been other provisions in the contract which would have helped restore the teacher to an important person in the community and not someone to be sneered at.

Section 8 is a real ^{ripper} honey. "To encourage teachers to refrain from discussing matters of a personal nature that are not germane to the subject under study with their students." Remember I said that one aim of collective bargaining was to restore a teacher's independence? The NEA seems to think that the teaching machine is the model teachers should imitate.

Section 9 calls for principal-faculty meetings. No doubt this meeting will be used to air incidents brought out by Section 6, the stool-pigeon clause.

That is the entire working conditions section. Not one word about class size, or teaching load, or limiting the school day (except to making it longer), or a grievance procedure, or a plan for effective schools, or anything but putting on paper what already existed via administrator harrassment.

This is collective bargaining in name only, and I warn all teachers to take it into careful consideration before naming a CB agent.

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Teachers who ~~wor~~ teach under no contract, or under a contract as meaningless as most NEA contracts, have cause to worry about their professional status. But teachers who have emerged as equals in negotiations with school authorities have ~~not~~ attained professional status because they are helping to direct~~the~~ the course of their profession.

We are living in an age where dogma is becoming more and more arguable. Arbitrary behavior is not being condoned. Inequality no longer finds an easy home anywhere, least of all in the schools. Teachers are beginning ~~to~~ to draw upon their vast stores of imagination and creativity and are clearly assuming the positions of educational leadership.

As President Johnson said on September 30 when he accepted our Charles B. Stillman Award:

"When the AFT was organized in 1916, I was an eight-year old school boy back in the hills of Texas. Since then, both you and I have ~~not~~ moved along some. I think, though, we have really been traveling the same road - the road toward a chance for all Americans to enjoy better education, better housing, better health, better conservation. And all of it just adds up to one thing - a better future for our children who will come after us. I don't know of any higher road that man could desire to travel."

The AFT now has over 115,000 teachers traveling on that road to a better tomorrow. It is now our job to make that march a quicker one, and a bigger one.