

# Tax hikes garner protest; lowered tax met with silence

Taxpayers are a difficult breed to understand. A disgruntled one can be found just about anywhere. And when finding out you work for a newspaper, they become even more disgruntled.

A lot of taxpayers think newspapers and government are in cahoots when it comes to levying taxes.

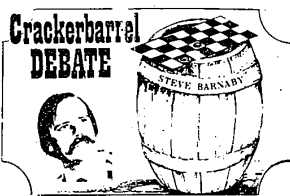
A week or so back, I went to a party. This was going to be a real pleasure, I thought. No one knew who I was, except the hostess. I would keep a low profile, avoid controversy and simply dabble in small talk, for once.

But the hostess, in her ardor to please, introduced me around the room as Steve Barnaby, editor of the Farmington Observer.

My cover was blown. I knew that somewhere in that crowd was a disgruntled taxpayer.

"You're the guy who wrote the article about the tax proposals weren't you?"

Sometimes you can hate your own byline. I fessed up to being the culprit. We talked taxes



until the Scotch ran dry — which took an awfully long time.

This is only one example of a newspaper editor's travail when it comes to tax talk. It also happens on the street, over the phone and in the restaurant.

The final interrogatory always gets down to the same question, "Why don't you guys get on the politicians for wasting our money?"

Having taken a bundle of the flak for the high taxes, I figure it's about time to enjoy some of the benefits derived when a politically elected body lowers taxes.

Yes, that's right folks, the millage rate in the Farmington School District was lowered at the beginning of the month. Naively, I waited for the phone calls to come pouring in, regaling the school board with praise.

After all, it's not every day that the millage is reduced by three.

For days I waited by my phone. I jumped in anticipation every time it rang — but nary a call.

Finally, I decided to take a walk every day in anticipation that someone, somewhere would stop me on the street and say, "Barnaby, you did it. They lowered the millage rate."

No luck.

Never did I meet anybody in the restaurants about town who even knew that the millage rate, had been lowered. I went into a caffeine reaction, from overdosing on countless cups of coffee.

In reality, of course, newspapers or their editors deserve neither credit or criticism for the tax system anywhere.

But in these days of tax revolt, an elected body which does tackle the tax situation and does lower the millage rate, does deserve credit.

And the Farmington School Board hasn't got it just so. I think as taxpayers, we owe a round of thanks. If we can hand it out to them when they continue to raise the millage rate, we certainly can laud them when the rate is lowered.

Some governmental bodies around here spend a lot of time giving millage reduction a lot of lip service, but have never come through.

So spend a minute and give your friendly school board trustee a call.

## Decoration Day: Small town's big time

From out of the far distant past comes the sound of muffled drums and the echo of the bugle being sounded from the veterans cemetery plot high atop the hill back home in Pennsylvania.

It is what was then popularly known as Decoration Day — a day when the graves of those who had given their lives in the Civil War were decorated. In later years, the holiday became more formally known as Memorial Day.

But for those of us who lived back home in that little town of Catasauqua, it was always Decoration Day, and we never missed the opportunity to see that there was a small American flag and a bouquet placed on each grave in that hallowed little plot.

To The Stroller, this was one of the biggest days of the year — almost exceeding Christmas — because his grandfather, the self-styled colonel, was commander of the Grand Army post. The Stroller never felt prouder than when he walked with him to the sacred plot in the cemetery.

As he now sits in his easy chair, listening to these muffled sounds in his memory, he can again picture the setting for the one Decoration Day he never will forget.

The cemetery back home was on the other side of the Lehigh River and was atop a knoll that made it unique because it presented a view of the entire town. The old steel bridge that provided passage to the graves lent a bit of color to the ceremonies' setting.

To make the scene more memorable there was a tall monument on the lawn in front of the little chapel where the memorial services were held. It was the first monument erected to the memory