

# Reagan's merit system for teachers called unfair

By Diane Gale  
staff writer

Mounting concern with the nation's education system is spurring comment on merit-system pay plans for teachers among local educators.

The practice of paying teachers on the merit system was called "inappropriate and unfair" by National Education Association President Willard McGuire.

"I need to point out that the highly controversial salary proposals being touted by President Ronald Reagan reward only a small segment of America's teachers, while the great majority of highly skilled and competent teachers will work for disgracefully low salaries," McGuire said in an article.

Attracting and maintaining high quality teachers is a crucial problem facing the education system, he said. The first step to alleviate some of the trouble is to raise the salaries of all teachers, McGuire said.

"NEA does not object to the concept of paying some teachers more than others," he said.

"Teachers do object, however, to historically inappropriate and subjective decisions about who is considered a 'superior' teacher. Experience indicates that personal relationships or subservient behavior is too often equated with 'merit,'" he added.

**LOCAL EDUCATORS** admit there are pitfalls in the system, but the overall benefits of rewarding teachers for superior work is a worthwhile incentive to improve teaching techniques.

The average entry level salary for a teacher in the tri-county area is about \$15,000. Teachers with master's degrees may start at considerably higher salaries depending on their specialty and their district.

McGuire said personal relationships and other political factors too often overlay actual working techniques.

"There are a number of things that

need to happen to improve the system, and one of those things is teacher's pay," said William James LeDuc, president of the Wayne-Westland Board of Education. "We need to form a better partnership between teachers, students, parents and the administration. The problem is who's going to be the judge."

"People are looking for a fool proof method of evaluating teachers and I don't think there is one," said Tom Yack, president of the Plymouth Board of Education.

"You can't expect to achieve perfection."

Sheila Schmittel, president of the Ro-

chester Board of Education, agrees sometimes teachers who "politically play the game" advance quicker than those who don't, but said teachers should be paid extra for putting in more effort in their teaching techniques.

"There should be some way of rewarding the excellent teachers," she said. "But there would have to be an equitable situation." "Peer, parent and administrative evaluation would be ideal."

If teachers are looking for lucrative salary steps, Schmittel advises them to seek other professions.

The rewards of the merit plan

outweigh the snags, said Bruce Van Deusen, president of the Birmingham Board of Education.

"It is a subjective process, so you have to select the right individuals for

the principal and central administrative positions," he said.

In addition he said, "Nationwide salaries should be raised, but our teachers' salaries are one of the highest in the state and the nation," he said.

**'The great majority of highly skilled and competent teachers (would) work for disgracefully low salaries.'**

—Willard McGuire  
National Education Association President

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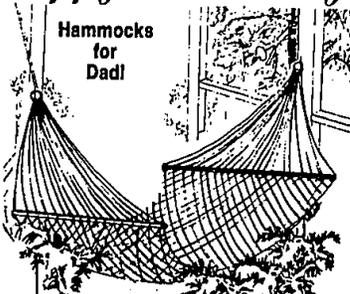
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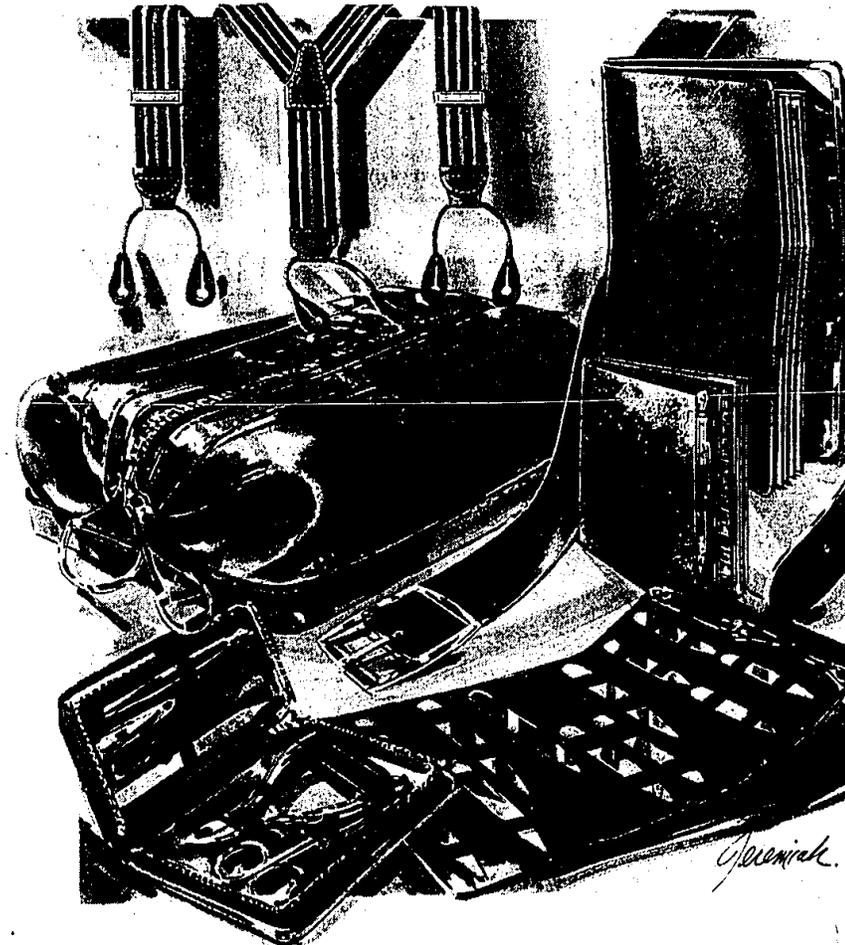
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