

letters

Glen & Shearer column maligned teachers

While there are certainly enough disinterested teachers to go around, the major problem in education is not teacher performance but the educational systems that support mediocrity and fail to keep competent teachers in the classroom (Glen & Shearer, April 21).

Although most departments have their share of "dippy" courses, I would definitely have preferred taking practical classes in leading discussions, teaching through games, and understanding child psychology (hardly dippy at all and which I could put to immediate use) to the long forgotten "History of Education" (which I could not). Besides, what makes Glen & Shearer think (good) teaching is any less "strenuous" or courageous than working in the business, science or language areas? Have they ever faced a room full of 30 kids?

The New York City Board of Education, for example, exists to save money and to serve administrators, not its students and teachers. The Board will lay off hundreds of teachers while it hires scores of new administrators (to administer to each other, one assumes). It will hire teachers for their special experience, then find some reason to deny them payment for that experience. The Board will pay you for your degree after you spend nine months

fighting for your contractual rights to get the money. It will hire you to teach one kind of student, and present you with another. It will want you to do this and to do that, but won't give you the materials with which to do it (buy your own: they'll reimburse you . . . some day). When you can't provide students with education they need, don't have administrative support, and aren't paid for your achievements, you either become numb or leave for higher salaries, less strenuous jobs (perhaps in business, science or the language arts).

If you want teachers' images to improve, don't promote that "teaching is an easy washout dead-end career" stuff. There are washouts in any profession. Most of the teachers I have worked with in New York, New Jersey, San Francisco and here in Lincoln are concerned about what happens in their classes and spent a good deal of time after hours preparing the most successful lessons they can. If the teachers who remain in the system are ineffective, it is more often the fault of the system than the teachers or the courses they took. It is the administration's responsibility to do the best it can to keep the best it has.

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There is, in brief, a feeling across this city that the *Washington Post* practices a sophisticated form of Gonzo journalism, that you can spend a lifetime doing good works but get caught once slipping on a banana peel, and that is the only time in your life you will be written up by the *Washington Post*.

"It hurts. It hurts . . ." cried one writer for the Post. Another veteran said tears came to his eyes when he heard the news that Janet Cooke had fabricated her story, that the Pulitzer Prize had been stolen, that the Post's credibility, its most precious asset, had been damaged.

Well, probably, it does "hurt." And, surely, it is uncharitable and un-Christian of some of us, with Easter Week just past to exult in the misfortunes of the Post management, and to throw a party (as some of my brethren did) to celebrate.

But the folks at the Post, who participated in the investigation of "How Could It Happen?" should ask themselves other questions: How many people has the *Washington Post* "hurt?" Why is it that a whole city—which the *Washington Post* claims to serve—appears so elated at its misfortune?

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Visions of an Iranian court in America

A Congressional Subcommittee is supposed to establish when life begins. I think their minds were made up before they started. Only anti-choice advocates were admitted and when six pro-choice

advocates barged in to be heard, they were quickly thrown out.

Ahh, visions of an Iranian court.
Robert Gilliam
Senior, Geography

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