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TEACHERS

The Seattle Education Association's AFL-CIO alliance gives the union more political power, but it will not gain teachers the respect, recognition and reward they deserve as academic professionals. It merely increases their standing as blue-collar technicians in an industrial-style union-education model ("Seattle teachers union joins the AFL-CIO," March 30). It will further deter teachers' creativity, liberty, and ability to innovate as their union increasingly embraces a one-size-fits-all union culture characterized by intimidation, groupthink, and politicized representation.

A report by Carl Van Horn of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University underscores how unions have caused a loss of respect for teachers. He says, "Teachers are not the sympathetic group they were 20 years ago. They used to be perceived as a profession and now they are perceived as just a union."

Public education has become associated with unionism instead of public service. This has transformed schools from harbingers of freedom and ideas to coercive workplaces that damage teachers, students, and their educational mission. Yet, unions haven't even succeeded in raising teacher pay. Since the 1970s, teacher pay indexed to per-pupil expenditures has declined by nearly 50 percent.

Teachers don't get what they pay for, but the unions continue to get all they want--money and power for politics.

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