

PORTLAND OBSERVER

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A Black Owned Publication**

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It is really that time....



Caucus seeks plan

The Congressional Black Caucus is convening a conference of top black economists and entrepreneurs January 27-29, 1972, at Morgan State College, Baltimore, Maryland.

The purpose of the meeting as explained by Rep. Parren Mitchell (D-Md.), chairman of the Caucus' Subcommittee on Minority Enterprise and Economic Development, is to create a ten-year plan with specific timetables for Black enterprise in the decade of the 70's. The plan is to be used as an integral part of the Caucus' National Black Agenda.



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The Editor's Desk
Restrict the franchise?

A cornerstone of 19th Century southern conservatism was the restriction of the franchise to the well-to-do, owners of property the so-called "enlightened" classes. To those who embraced this philosophy, democracy did not include those whose skins were dark or who spoke with a foreign accent.

America has rejected the concept of government by an educated or economic elite. The rhetoric of all our political leaders speaks approvingly of the need to extend participatory democracy.

Yet the Nixon Administration, in its opposition to an important political reform measure, proclaims sentiments which closely parallel those expressed by southern aristocrats in their successful campaign to deny the Negro his vote following Reconstruction.

The reform, which could have a significant effect on the political participation of blacks, is popularly known as universal voter registration. There are several versions being considered by Congress, but all have in common the intent to abolish voter enrollment regulations which many states have adopted to dilute the political influence of minorities and the poor.

The most far-reaching bill, introduced by Senator Gale McGee, would enable every voter in the U.S. to register by postcard and would set a nationwide residency requirement of 30 days, substantially less than some states which require six months or a year.

Two Republican Party leaders, Chairman Robert Dole and Robert Erickson, a Justice Department official, have already testified against universal registration. The administration's reasoning, as summed up in the comments of one party official, are interesting. "Anytime you go out and drag people to vote," the official said, "you are getting a less well-informed electorate, and that can be dangerous in a democracy."

Compare this statement with those of spokesmen for the Old South who rationalized the disenfranchisement of the black man and you will discover striking similarities.

The defender of Jim Crow would often insist that he was not motivated by racial prejudice. The poll tax, literacy test and Grandfather Clause were not, it was asserted, designed to prevent the Negro from voting but only to ensure that control of the government did not fall into the hands of the ignorant and uneducated.

Senator Dole himself issued a statement which carried the harsh ring of the Old South mentality. Dole contended that apathy, rather than inability to register, was the underlying cause of failure to vote, a view which fits in well with the stereo-type of the southern black as too shiftless to care about voting.

Community Voices

In defense of Christmas

I read in the paper the other day that a clergyman has proposed we change the date of Christmas because "The modern commercial pagans have destroyed not only the religious basis of this feast, but also the human warmth and merriness that grew up around it." He pointed out that the Dec. 25 date for Christmas was originally a pagan celebration, before it was adopted by the early Christians.

He said the proper religious message of Christmas, "which is the gift of God's love for men and his visible revelation in history through Jesus Christ, has long since died an ignominious death." He also said Christians should celebrate Christ's spirit of selfless and unstinting love of our brothers, especially the poor.

Well, I'll have to take issue with the man. Yes, there is a commercial side to Christmas, but this is not as bad or as nearly all bad as he and some others would have us think. We only see and hear more of the "commercialism" because of the advertising and promotion, but underneath there are still the solid and rewarding values of Christmas time, the deep experience and appreciation of Christmas as a sacred observance for Christians and as a time for enjoyment of family and friends and the joys of giving gifts.

Since the giving of gifts is a traditional part of our observance of Christmas, businesses are doing us a service by making a wide variety of gifts available and by advertising to let us know what they have and where. What would it be like if stores didn't stock and advertise the many gift items? They wouldn't be filling our needs. Shopping for appropriate gifts would be much more difficult and time-consuming than it is under present circumstances. Thus, I think that if we look at it the right way, the "commercialism" of Christmas is actually a service and not a handicap. As long as we keep the buying and selling and giving of gifts in proper perspective to the other values of Christmas, it is not something bad. However, if too many "experts" continue to harp about "over commercialism," they make some of us feel guilty as long as we hold to the deeper meanings of Christmas also.

The Christmas season may indeed have originated in ancient times as a pagan festival, but it was so Christianized long ago that it is purely Christian for us. As far as Christmas for the poor is concerned, we here in Portland don't need to apologize. Generous donations to the Salvation Army enable them to help literally hundreds of deserving poor families have a better Christmas, and the churches and other organizations have Christmas aid projects for the poor. I think sometimes the poor families have it better than we near-poor people who don't qualify for help but don't have the means to do all the things we'd like to do at Christmas time.

The clergyman who suggested a change in the date of Christmas also suggested a new date of Jan. 6 which is observed by Eastern Orthodox as Epiphany, the manifestation of the Christ Child to the Magi; but a mere change of date would not eliminate his complaints about Christmas. It is not the fault of the particular date if there is too much commercialism and too many people are not participating in the real meanings of Christmas, but rather the fault of those people and they would be the same if the date changed to July.

I believe that Christmas is still the true Christmas to the big majority of people, and that the majority is as big as it ever was.

J. H. Davis

Notice
The Observer's official position is expressed only in its Publisher's Column (The Observation Post) and the Editor's Desk. Any other material throughout the paper is the opinion of the individual writer or submitter and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Observer.

CHUCKLE
A young man is on the road to wisdom when he learns that women, fish and race horses are smarter than he is....

Help! whose to blame?
To the Editor:
I am making a plea to the home owners and renters in North Portland, especially Model City Area. It is so disturbing when questioned, where do you live, and you reply North Portland only to hear, "Oh that area. This also applies to some Realtors giving the impression that we have some kind of blight."
We have lovely homes and beautiful streets with trees. Our parks are lovely. We have a college and many good shopping areas. All our good points more than off sets the bad. It is sad when one is forced to sell their home due to illness or old age and no longer can maintain them. It is heart warming to see our young couples buying some of these homes and keeping them up.
We have many good renters, some on Welfare, through no fault of theirs due to unfortunate circumstances beyond their control, who take pride in keeping their places attractive. There has been for many years a home on Williams Avenue not far from all those old buildings, kept up and greatly admired by many. It is a pleasure to live by these people.
We are in an integrated area, not one color, race or creed. We need our strong young men and women to volunteer their services to help patrol our streets and help with many projects in all areas. I hope some one can get something done so we can show people what a model area can do with our own resources. This does not take money. Only people with pride, giving a helping hand, and the willingness to work. Even if we start with one block cleaning the sidewalks and alleys. Vivian Barnett's letter "Paint your face", hits the nail on the head. Even a sheet can be made into a pretty curtain and clean patches are not a disgrace.
I am a desperate North Portland resident fighting to save our beautiful area. I can't do it along. Young people help.
Mary Goodwin

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