

PORTLAND OBSERVER

MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR FULL AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT.

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The Editor's Desk

ALFRED LEE HENDERSON

Voter brings apathy and ignorance

In recent years many have come to wonder if the representative form of government can exist or if it is doomed to failure. If our system of government does not work, it is not the fault of the system, but it is the fault of the citizen. The failure is the result of public apathy and ignorance. The citizens of the United States hold a unique power that many peoples throughout the world are fighting to obtain - the right to vote. Yet many Americans are not interested enough in their government - which determines all of the major aspects of their lives, even life or death itself - to bother to vote once every four years. In the 1968 election, which was one of the most crucial of our history, only 60 per cent of those eligible to vote did so.


And most of those who did vote, did so in ignorance. They voted for the candidate because of his appearance, his personality, or because of their friends' advice rather than considering his principals, his ideals, his goals for himself and his country. They voted without understanding the position to which he aspired or the qualifications needed to do a good job.

We put our fate in the hands of a few men and women whom we fail to investigate until we find them in office. We do not remember them again until they vote against our interest, and even forget that in a few weeks, then we go back and vote for them again (if we vote at all) because they have a familiar name. Representative Edith Green is a good example. She has voted against nearly every bill that would improve the lives of blacks and the poor, yet blacks and the poor reelect her time after time.

Party politics, which are the backbone of the electoral system, are left to a handful of people who are then put in the position to make the decisions for all of us. Of the thousands of registered Democrats in Oregon, how many attended the State Convention held this weekend? How many attended the County Conventions? Party politics are still open in Oregon and anyone who is interested can participate. But few are, because there is hard work and little glamour except during presidential election years.

But this is the reason the system is not working, why the common citizen really has no say about who will run his government or how it will be run. This is why the large corporations and business interests are in control of the decision making, why a few political leaders can make the decisions in their own interest instead of in the nation's, why their is secrecy and deceit on the highest levels of government. The only way the people of the United States can recapture control of their government is through the power of the vote.

We blacks, who were for so long denied the vote, have become as apathetic as the white citizens. We have seen the power of the vote when it rested in the hands of others and was used against us. Now is the time to seize this power and, forming coalitions with other oppressed groups, use it to renew our government and to bring true liberation to all Americans.



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Product of the Black Revolution?

Letters to the Editor

Secrecy repeats

To the Editor:

The fourth and fifth appointments in the past year to the powerful board of the Portland Development Commission were made recently -- as usual, veiled in secrecy and with no input from the people they serve.

Twice before -- last July at the expiration of Ned Look's second three-year term, and in January when Ira Keller and Harold Halvorsen resigned, I was part of a coalition of neighborhood groups asking that at least one of the board members be a person living in an area actually affected by urban renewal. Each time we are ignored by all but one member of the City Council.

The current PDC board members live in Dunthorpe,

Mt. Tabor, Portland Heights, and now, the newest appointee, Dr. Jenkins, lives in Tigard! Obviously none of these areas will be facing the real problems of urban renewal now or in the foreseeable future.

Is it asking too much that EVEN ONE of the board members know and understand firsthand how the decisions they make affect the lives of people in an urban renewal area?

Apparently Mayor Schrank (who makes the appointments) and three of our City Commissioners (who continually vote to approve them) think so.

Sincerely,
Caryl Waters
3805 N.E. 18th
Portland, Oregon 97212



With Ron Hendren
A YOUNG VIEW OF WASHINGTON

A FRESH LOOK AT TWO DIRTY WORDS

By Ron Hendren

WASHINGTON--"Juvenile" and "delinquency" are words which, when used together, are sure to arouse the passions of Americans in all parts of the country. And with good reason. Juvenile arrests for violent crimes have risen a whopping 167 percent in the last decade, and today almost two-thirds of all arrests for serious crimes are of persons under the age of 21.

The picture is bleaker still. According to a recent F.B.I. report, upwards of 85 percent of convicted youths who have spent time in some sort of reform school end up committing second offenses, often more serious than the first.

This tragic ineffectiveness in dealing with juvenile crime prompted the House of Representatives recently to pass H.R. 15635, the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Act of 1972, which promises a new emphasis on reaching and helping troublesome children before they become delinquent.

If the bill passes the Senate, as is likely, the century-old era of reform schools will be on the way out officially. Its demise has already been heralded in many states, including Massachusetts, where America's first publically run reform school was opened 126 years ago.

The Lyman School for boys was considered a model institution at the time of its christening in Westboro in 1846, and was widely imitated here and in Europe. Today it is closed, and by the end of this summer Massachusetts will not be operating a single juvenile prison. Florida, California and Minnesota are among a host of other states which are following suit.

No one is absolutely certain why reform schools failed. Their ineffectiveness has been laid variously to financial corruption and physical brutality. "Stockyards for wayward children nobody else wants," one congressman called them.

In addition to their near total failure at rehabilitation, the costs per child in these institutions often range from \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year -- more than most families earn.

Half-way houses and foster homes are

two substitutes currently in vogue to replace reform schools. Some are proving successful, at least in attaining certain minimal goals. Libra House, an experimental half-way home in Cambridge, stresses the need for a highschool education as an effective incentive to contribute to society, and thus an important deterrent against repeated offenses. Harvard students tutoring convicted juveniles report the youths generally have a strong and sincere motivation to learn.

Of the 200 juveniles who participated during the last twelve months in the Community Aftercare Program, a similar effort in Boston, fewer than ten percent have been re-arrested. As East Boston Parole Officer John Granara asserted about this positive approach to rehabilitation, "...for many it is the first time they have been able to feel they are needed by anyone."

But these alternatives to reform schools are not without their critics, some of whom see the end result as pampering instead of punishing. The Community Aftercare Program, for example, has come under strong criticism for providing a \$5-per-week incentive to delinquents for regular attendance at training sessions. Nevertheless, most admit that these innovative methods do provide some rehabilitation, and that in itself is a marked improvement over the past. Moreover, the new Juvenile Delinquency Protection Act, if enacted, will provide an additional basis for reaching troublesome youngsters even before they become delinquent.

Preventing delinquency, coupled with increased, effective efforts to rehabilitate those juveniles who have already committed crimes, may provide a means to minimize lawbreaking by youths. And to the degree that we are successful in curbing juvenile delinquency, crime in general ultimately will be diminished. Certainly there could hardly be a more laudable and needed undertaking.

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As I See It

A diabolical act

By Lenwood G. Davis

This columnist rarely writes about isolated incidents that happen in the community. However, since one incident that occurred was of such a diabolical nature, I deem it appropriate to speak out. Namely, the theft of goods from the Community Care Association. (C.C.A.) How any normal person or persons can steal from the needy and poor is beyond all rationale. To say it was inhumane, unthinkable, uncivilized, preposterous, absurd, barbarous, ghastly and uncouth does not adequately describe this incident.

As most people very well know the Community Care Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides food, clothing and other items for the needy and poor regardless of race, color or creed. This organization had just completed the most massive campaign in its existence to collect thousands of pounds of food, many boxes of

clothes, many cooking utensils, etc. And for persons to come along and steal those items is beyond my comprehension.

Obviously, it was not the work of needy people because they probably would not have taken everything. Besides, the needy know that they only have to ask the Community Care Association for food, clothing, etc., and they will get it without a lot of red tape. To my knowledge, the C.C.A. has never refused to help anyone. Clara M. Peoples, Director of the Community Care Association, has stated over and over again and again that this organization is a community agency designed to serve the needy in and out of the community.

It is a sad state of affairs when society drives individuals to a point of desperation that they have to steal the basic essentials of survival from the poor. In an affluent country like America there really should not be poverty



Lenwood Davis

stricken people. Even though we spend billions of dollars on defense, we have done as little as possible to deal with internal problems, such as poverty, in the United States. Therefore, until the United States Government redirects its priorities it will be necessary to have programs like C.C.A.

I was happy to see the state and local governments, as well as private citizens, come to the rescue of C.C.A. and replace most of the items that were stolen. This gesture is a classical example that SOME PEOPLE DO CARE ABOUT PEOPLE.

To Be Equal

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The Supreme Court ended its 1971-72 term with the dramatic and heartening verdict that bans the death penalty as it now exists. This is something long overdue, since the death penalty is a cruel and unusual punishment that has been applied in a discriminatory fashion. As Justice Thurgood Marshall pointed out, the penalty fell disproportionately on "the poor, the ignorant, and the underprivileged members of society."

But the fact that this decision was by a slim 5-4 margin, and that the Court left the door open for reinstatement of the death penalty by states which provide for uniform application or otherwise meet some of the justice's objections indicates the Court stopped far short of the humane goals of outright abolition.

It also indicates that the post-Warren Court is less bold in charging new paths in law. This was especially evident by another decision announced the same day that sharply limits the rights of the press. Black newsmen porters lost their suit to prevent forced testimony before grand juries that could imperil their sources of news information. Since reporters have been called before such bodies as part of "fishing expeditions" for evidence, the verdict could wind up harming the public's right to know and the freedom of the press.

The Supreme Court's record this past year has, in

general, been one of retreat on issues of personal and civil rights in favor of property rights and local government. The clearest indication of the Court's turnaround on equal rights was last month's ruling that private clubs, even when licensed by state agencies, can practice racial discrimination. The Court, in a decision authored by Justice Rehnquist, the ultra-conservative whose appointment was so bitterly protested, ruled against a black man denied service by a Moose Lodge operating under state liquor license and state regulation.

If this decision is an indication that the Court means to narrow black people's rights of access to private facilities licensed by the state, a recent school desegregation case could indicate trouble ahead in that area as well. The Court ruled, by a slim 5-4 vote, that a small town in Virginia whose schools were predominately white could not secede from a school district whose schools were predominately black.

The real significance of that case is that for the first time since the historic 1954 decision outlawing school segregation, the Court was less than unanimous on a major case in that field. The firm stand shown in past cases has been broken; one vote separated victory from defeat on a crucial school integration case.

With a number of vital school cases coming up in

the fall term, this could mean that the Court will join other branches of the government in retreating from the effort to finally desegregate America's schools. This narrow decision rings a warning bell for the future.

One of the hall marks of the Warren Court was its rulings enlarging the protection given the rights of defendants faced with the power of the state. But two recent rulings show that the Court is taking a strong "law-and-order" stand against individual rights.

In one case, it ruled that suspects are not entitled to legal assistance at police lineup identifications before the former charges are brought. In another, perhaps more important case, it ruled that juries in most criminal cases in state courts can convict defendants by less than the unanimous vote that has been a hallmark of our system of justice.

This raises the question of what happens to guarantees that guilt must be determined "beyond any shadow of a doubt" if people will be sent to jail on 8 to 4 and 9 to 3 jury votes? Black defendants especially, can expect little justice under these new rulings.

These are just a handful of the cases that, taken together, indicate a turnaround by the Supreme Court. That is why we look to the coming Court term with apprehension.

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