



The Editor's Desk

ALFRED LEE HENDERSON

WE SEE THE WORLD THROUGH BLACK EYES.



Affirmative action: A piece of paper?

Over the years, Oregon's young Blacks have left the state and gone to California or other states where they could find more opportunity in their chosen professions. It is not an accident that we have just three doctors, three dentists, and one practicing attorney. Last year the State of Oregon put into effect an affirmative action agreement — agreeing to seek minorities for state employment. The City of Portland and Multnomah County made similar agreements — necessary to obtain certain federal funds.

Black people are now wondering if the state really intends to implement its program, or whether this is just another piece of paper, a method to get federal money or a gesture of tokenism to hold off criticism.

Many young Blacks are still unable to obtain positions that often go to less qualified white applicants. Other Blacks are in state positions far below their capacities — and can see less capable fellow employees advancing beyond them.

The Governor says the state is seeking qualified Black employees — and in fact will give preference in some cases if the Black is as qualified as the white applicant — especially in departments that have not hired minorities.

But this does not seem to hold true. The Observer has just heard from a young man who applied for a position in the Executive Department. He has a B.S. in Economics and spent nearly two years at the University of Oregon Law School. He has held responsible positions — supervisory positions — in private industry. This young man was told that he was well qualified for the position and was given the impression that he would be hired. However, he was not. We would like to know why not. Was he better qualified? Why did the state not take this opportunity to hire a capable young Black man who would have been an asset to the department?

It is because of these unexplained incidents that Blacks look elsewhere for opportunity. We have known for years that the State of Oregon is not an EOE employer. Now, although the Governor says there has been a change, we see no great increase in minority employment with the state. But we do hear constantly of Black people who have been rejected. The affirmative action agreement must be just another piece of paper.

Right this time!

Mayor Neil Goldschmidt should be commended for his forthright manner in nominating members to the Planning Commission. Commissioners Ivancie and McCready complained that they did not have an opportunity to make suggestions but this cannot be true, since the Mayor asked even the press and the public to submit suggestions. Goldschmidt nominated for reappointment those members he thought could give service, but placing the city's interest above political expediency did not rename Glen Parks, a labor leader.

Mayor Goldschmidt's appointees are a good cross-section, yet have the education and professional backgrounds to do the necessary research and planning. He has drawn from several fields: law, architecture, business, social work, engineering. These appointees are not just names drawn out of a hat, but are persons who possess over and above their professional skills, a commitment to city planning.

Commissioner McCready calls it "King Arthur" or "Daley Tactics". We call it leadership — a mayor being sensitive to the needs of the city. If Commissioner McCready had her way, we are sure it would be "Petticoat government".

Mayor Goldschmidt has nominated Ocie Tratter, a young Black social worker, to the Planning Commission. We believe Tratter will add much in the area of social services and that he will speak to the needs of Blacks and of the poor.

In this case we think the Mayor used good judgement.

Barriers to Black Political Participation

by Vernon Jordan, Jr.

(The material for this article is drawn from *Abridging the Right to Vote*, a study prepared by the National Urban League's Research Department.

This Nation has been lulled into a state of complacency by the apparent success of the Voting Rights Act. However, American citizens must now be made to realize that the right to vote is being abridged by a web of antiquated regulations that discriminate against the Black and the poor, a web that affects the entire country.

Because of this, the National Urban League recently launched a voter registration and education project that concentrates on moderate-size cities with relatively large Black populations outside the South. This non-partisan project is part of a long-range effort to significantly increase Black participation and representation in the political process.

Most discussion of voting rights and barriers to Black voting centers upon the South, the region that historically has enforced the pattern of exclusion of Blacks from the voting booth.

It is true that the South gave birth to the "grandfather clause" and to the white primary as methods of denying Blacks a voice in the political process. And when those were ruled unconstitutional, the region took refuge in illegal means to achieve the same ends. Terrorism and violence followed. Combined with confusing regulations and capricious administrations, Black citizens were robbed of the right to vote.

Consequently, any discussion of Black voting rights has been filtered through a "Southern perspective". With passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which removed the most blatant forms of disfranchisement, most Americans assumed that the constitutional right to vote was secured and afforded to everyone who wished and exercised it.

Opinion

The Observer asked a number of Portland citizens for their reaction to the cutting back of federal funds and the withholding of appropriations by President E. Shelton Hill, Executive Director of the Urban League of Portland, said the cutting of the federal budget cut services needed by the common man. "It effects the common man in a negative way."

Rance Spruill, Director of the Albina Youth Opportunity School, said the cutting of the federal budget leaves the non-profit agencies in a very precarious position. It starts an evolution back to nothing since the private contributors follow governmental trends. This will force many people onto Welfare.

Voter participation in America is generally much lower than in other Western countries and is especially lower among Black people, a situation that has been "explained" by their supposed apathy and disinterest in political affairs. Even many who have actively encouraged greater Black participation in the political process have assumed that people that do not vote because of disinterest, poverty, family and health problems, and a host of other reasons that have nothing at all to do with the actual external barriers to Black voting.

The fact is that low voter participation rates among Blacks and other minorities is not due to internal causes, but to the external impediments placed in their way by antiquated State and local registration procedures and regulations. Since the late 1960's, with the dramatic rise in Southern voters, it has become apparent that the right to vote has been abridged in the North and the West, and that Black people and all poor people are victims of discriminatory practices which exclude them from the democratic process.

This may seem an odd, perhaps even an extreme, statement to make at a time when front-page publicity is regularly given to the Black bloc in Congress and to the proliferating numbers of Black mayors of major cities. But minority group members are still sharply under-represented in important elected positions, and we cannot let the visibility of a few obscure but continued powerlessness of the minority.

There are some 522,000 elected officials in the United States, from county school board members up to and including the President. Of these, one might expect that roughly a tenth would be Black, corresponding to the approximate Black share of the population. That would come to more than 50,000 office-holders. But what are the figures? There are a mere 2,264 Black elected officials in this country, or 0.4 percent of the total!

Only 14 of the 535 members of the U.S. Congress are Black — 3 percent of the total. There is 1 Black Senator and no Black Governors in any of the 50 states. Blacks elected to State offices make up 1.6 percent of the total of State elected officials, only 0.7 percent of elected municipal officials, and 0.2 percent of the total county elected officials across the nation.

So much for the highly vaunted Black political power that has been so exaggerated in recent years. Black people do have political power, but to date it has been a latent power that must be brought to bear on a situation marked by gross under-representation of Black people in the elected offices that affect

their lives.

The under-participating in registration and voting by Blacks is a nationwide problem affecting all regions, but available statistics show that it is particularly acute in small and medium-size cities in the North. Fewer Southern Blacks are registered and fewer vote than in the North, but their numbers are steadily increasing and, to a degree, the overall regional differences in voter registration.

The major causes of the lower Black voting participation are the residency and other registration qualifications that disproportionately affect lower-income individuals.

Under provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1970, the residency requirement for voting in presidential elections is 30 days. However, more than 30 States have 1 year residency requirements. A National Urban League survey of local registrars indicates that about one-third of the areas outside the South have residency requirements of 6 months or more in order to vote in county or municipal elections, and only a third apply the 30-day Federal standard for presidential elections to local races. Last term, the United States Supreme Court, in *Dunn vs. Blumstein*, also indicated that the residency requirement should not be more than 30 days.

Restrictive residency requirements hit hardest at minority groups, which tend to have high mobility rates within States and cities, and so are disproportionately affected by outmoded residency requirements.

Minorities are also hit hardest by the disqualification of convicted felons in most States. Studies of police records suggest that a sizable proportion of Black men in particular are ineligible to vote because of this requirement. Most ex-convicts, who have supposedly paid their debt to society, are also denied the franchise. Persons in pretrial detention and prisoners, too, cannot vote.

The limited period and hours for registration and the relative inaccessibility of registration offices, however, loom as the largest of the many obstacles to the would-be voter.

In 1972, about half of the registration polls around the country were closed 2 months before the primary elections, effectively limiting participation to party stalwarts. The same situation holds true for general elections. Depending upon the region, between 25 and 40 percent of cities have registration deadlines that end 2 or more months before the elections. Since election

campaigns create an interest in the candidates and their programs, and since issues emerge in campaigns that stimulate citizen concerns, this requirement effectively disenfranchises many people whose educational backgrounds are relatively limited and who are not aware of the limits placed on registration.

Most year-round registration sites are located far from predominantly Black neighborhoods. Most are in county courthouses or some other official building site average of 3 miles away from the ghetto, often in the area that is unfamiliar to most Blacks, or regarded with a degree of hostility. And they are open on a 9-to-5 basis, meaning that working people must take a morning off, frequently with a loss of pay, in order to register to vote. For a typical low-income ghetto dweller without a car who is paid on an hourly basis, a downtown registration site open only from 9-to-5 might just as well be located on the moon. The inaccessibility to sites combined with their inconvenient hours effectively discourages low income working people of all colors from voting.

Evening and Saturday registration hours would go a long way toward making the registration process available to large numbers of people now excluded from it. But when such hours are instituted it is usually for a very short time — several days or a week — and so poorly publicized that it offers no real answer to the problem.

Another means of increasing citizen participation is to use community organizations and minority individuals as deputy registrars. This seems a logical step that would bring the electoral process closer to the community at very low cost, since volunteers might be used. But two-fifths of the registrars polled indicated they would not use this approach.

While officials are fully aware of the problem of inaccessible registration sites, an overwhelming majority — three-fourths — do not intend to use mobile units.

It is clear then, that Black voters face institutional barriers to voting that limit their right to full participation in the political system. It is also clear that it will take a concentrated campaign to win the necessary legislative reforms and to sensitize State and local officials to the need for change.

The time has come to move beyond the surface appearances of equal access to the political process and to recognize that the reality of registration procedures and regulations have closed the doors of the political system to millions of Americans.

As I See It The NAACP and the Community: Some observations

by Lenwood G. Davis

In the past this writer has been one of the staunchest critics of the NAACP and other civic organizations in the community. When these groups did things that I thought were not in the best interests of the community, I let them know how I felt. Moreover, some may have even thought that I was antagonizing them. (The fact is that I am a member of most of these groups, i.e. NAACP, Black Caucus, etc.). On the other hand, when they did things that I thought were laudable I praised them. Hence, which brings me to the point of this article.

I am pleased to see that the NAACP has a regular column, "Voice of the NAACP", in the *Portland Observer*. This is a worthwhile project. One of the historical criticisms of the organization, other than being elitist and a closed group, has been that non-members (and even members), were not sufficiently informed of its activities.

Consequently, this was (and is) one of the superficial reasons that people do not support the NAACP. Even though the past presidents of the groups may have had articles in the Black presses, they were not continuous. It may have been that they did not have the time (or took the time). Information and public relations are vital organs to any group.

Therefore it is refreshing to see that the president of the local NAACP is preceptive enough to see the value and need of informing the general public of what his organization is not only doing, but its position on issues that affect the Black community.

Other groups in the community have recently become lax in informing the community of its activities. The most conspicuous is the Oregon Black Caucus. At one time, it captured most of the headlines in the newspapers. However, of late, we have not



heard much about it. We in the community have come not to expect any regular news from the Black Panther Party. We only hear about or from them when they do something grandiose. Obviously, it would be to their advantage to inform the community of its activities. The Urban League and Albina Ministerial Alliance are doing a laudable job of keeping the community informed of its activities.

I suggest that other organizations, clubs, and groups follow the lead of the local NAACP and inform the community of their activities — on regular basis!



With Ron Hendren

A YOUNG VIEW OF WASHINGTON

OBITUARY FOR WAR ON POVERTY

WASHINGTON—Even as the body of Lyndon Baines Johnson lay in state in the Austin, Texas library which bears his name, his successor in the White House made clear his intentions to abolish the Office of Economic Opportunity, the war room of Mr. Johnson's battle against poverty.

It was ironic that the news of OEO's demise should come at the time of Lyndon Johnson's death, but the news itself was no surprise. The organization's life has been as stormy as was the Johnson Presidency.

Head Start was perhaps OEO's best known creation. A program to aid underprivileged pre-schoolers, it was the mainstay which assured the agency's continued funding by Congress in the midst of failures on other more turbulent fronts, failures like the Job Corps, which created expectations both in Congress and among its participants which the program's administrators knew it could not fulfill.

Therein lies the real cause of OEO's failure and the failure of the "war on poverty" itself: expectations were created, among the poor and within the American public as a whole, which the government had no intentions of fulfilling, indeed, which it knew would be impossible to meet.

The existing programs administered by OEO were divided among various federal agencies, the bulk of them going to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Predictably, the organization's controversial legal services program is not among those proposed to be transferred, and presumably the President will again push for the creation of a separate legal

services corporation, more directly under his control.

R. Sargent Shriver, the Democratic candidate for Vice President in 1972, is OEO's best known former director. Known on Capitol Hill as a "super-salesman", Shriver was able to wrangle funds for the agency's programs but failed to deliver the results he so eloquently promised.

He is likely to join the large group which will no doubt oppose the dismantling of OEO when Congress considers the President's fiscal year 1973-74 budget proposal, scheduled to be presented this week. The Administration exudes confidence that the President's proposal will carry in Congress. We don't intend to do away with OEO programs, they say, merely transfer them to the appropriate agencies for administration.

What they fail to add is that hidden away in the cavernous bowels of HEW, programs which now operate under the flag of the Executive Office of the President will have little muscle of their own to use in fighting for survival at the departmental money trough. Thus, good programs in time will stand a better-than-fair chance of perishing along with the bad.

There's a word for it. It's called backlash. It's what happens when expectations consistently exceed, and by astonishing margins, that which is delivered. So it was with OEO.

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Notes on LBJ

(Editor's Note: Hobart Taylor, Jr. served at the White House as a personal and legal advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson. He also was Executive Vice Chairman of the President's Committee on equal Employment opportunity, of which Mr. Johnson was Chairman.)

Lyndon Baines Johnson was my father's friend and mine for more than thirty years. He was always motivated by a strong desire to make life better for the disadvantaged, in America and around the world. He did not see these people as objects of charity, but as potential assets who could help the nation and humanity at large if they themselves had a chance to develop properly. When he became President of the United States, he finally

had an opportunity to put his ideas to work and he was responsible for the greatest amount of social legislation in the history of the nation. Medicare, the Higher Education Act, reforms in the Immigration Act — all were a part of his work. But he always considered as his greatest achievement the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, which eliminated formal discriminations against Negroes in employment, public accommodations, housing and voting for the first time in the nation's history.

Lyndon Johnson was a Southerner and thoroughly familiar with segregation and discrimination. He was always ashamed that at one stage of his life he had been a participant in the maintenance of institutions which condoned and furthered such practices. He resolved to

order matters so that other Southerners would never have to degrade themselves by being forced to engage in discriminatory practices which they knew to be wrong.

He had a special affinity to the Negro people. He knew and understood them as one from the same soil and background. He made equal opportunity the main goal of his Administration and the monument by which he would like to be remembered. He was without illusions — he knew what he was doing — and why. In his passing, all America loses a stalwart champion; but, if we are wise, we also gain a deepened sense of unity and common purpose which will enable the republic to prosper and to make reality of our ideals for generations to come.

Our personal memories of President Lyndon Baines Johnson include meetings with the members of the Executive Board in 1966 and in 1970. In 1966 at the White House, he talked with us for two hours of his plans, hopes and aspirations for the rights of all Americans, and specifically for Americans of minority groups. In 1970 our entire Board of Directors chartered a flight and visited with him at the LBJ Ranch in Johnson City. It was there that he held fast to his strong beliefs in Civil Rights and his faith in

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