

# Black elected officials vote seven national priorities

Black elected officials from across the nation, who met recently in Washington on a seven-point action program to reorient the nation's priorities so that Blacks and others who are burdened disproportionately by the effects of a sluggish economy can be treated more equitably.

The three-day national conference, formally called the Third National Institute for Black Elected Public Officials, issued its seven-point mandate after examining problems suggested by the theme, "Politics and the Black Economic Condition." In numbers that ranged from 800 to 1,000 over the three-day period, Black elected officials and invited observers from civil rights and community service organizations exchanged views and experiences on subjects such as voter motivation, full employment as a national goal, identifying and using governmental and non-governmental resources to advance the economic interests of Black people and building linkages, networks and coalitions with other similarly situated interest groups.

Other national institutes of Black elected officials were held in 1967 in Chicago, when there were only an estimated 600 Black officials in elective offices, and in 1969 in Washington, D.C., when Black elected officeholders totalled a little less than 1,200. In 1975 the National Roster of Black Elected Officials, published by the Joint Center for Political Studies, counted 3,503 such officials in office.

In a statement issued to the press at the close of the Institute, the sponsors

cited seven key issues which straddle the political, social and economic arenas.

"We know this is 1975 and therefore understand two things very well. One is that there will for a time be fewer public resources available than in the pre-recession years. It is for that very reason that we are doubly determined to make sure that budget priorities do not provide large increases for defense and other items, while starving human need programs.

"The second thing we are quite certain of is that the political and economic battles of Blacks and their allies must be fought not only in the executive branch and the Congress in Washington, but also at the statehouses, the county and regional governments, in city halls and city councils. We intend to hold accountable as never before all those who hold or seek elective office and who serve on appointed boards and authorities."

The sponsors added in the statement that they "will be concentrating (our) attention on the following basic issues:"

1. **FULL EMPLOYMENT** - "...What is viewed as a recession by the nation is a virtual Depression in Black and poor communities. We cannot accept Alice-in-Wonderland definitions of full employment. In our view, there is no tolerable level of unemployment. At present, some eight to ten million workers are unemployed. National unemployment in November, 1975 was 8.3 percent - with Black jobless "officially" estimated nearly 14 percent.

"The unemployment that has plagued the Black community has had a particu-

larly devastating impact on the increasing number of Black women who are heads of household. These women earn wages that are generally below that of white men, white women, and Black men.

"Full Employment, a program which guarantees the right to useful and meaningful jobs for all those willing and able to work, now demands broad public understanding and support..."

1. **WELFARE REFORM** - "For a number of years, there has been a great deal of discussion about welfare abuse, welfare reform and welfare replacement. Welfare, or income security, must be discussed now in human terms.

"The Federal Government must assume a larger share of the welfare burden. There must be a guarantee annual income.

"Any welfare replacement or income supplement program is doomed to failure unless it is tied to job development, job training, a vastly expanded child care program and a thorough and far-reaching program to eradicate sex and racial discrimination in education, job training and employment."

3. **NATIONAL HEALTH CARE** - "The Congress must pass and the President must sign legislation to provide for a system of comprehensive health care...There are six essentials which must be included in any legislation passed:

a. "It must set forth a positive health concept, which includes preventive services, health maintenance and community education for personal and community health.

b. "Health care must be recognized as a right, not merely as a privilege.

c. "Health coverage must be comprehensive and include a full range of health care - preventive, diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation - regardless of one's ability to pay.

d. "There must be progressive trust fund financing so that health care is insured of continuation as a permanent program.

e. "Consumers, that is, the community residents, must be permitted and encouraged to participate in health care program operations.

f. "The health care program must be reinforced with adequate financing for research, planning and administration."

4. **AFRICA POLICY** - "The United States has virtually ignored an entire continent rich in mineral and economic potential, but whose countries are in great need of financial and technical assistance..."

"Two key steps for a more positive African policy are: (1) for the administration to stop supporting minority rule in South Africa, and (2) to take concrete steps to implement the final resolution at the Seventh United Nations Special Session providing for a new International Economic Order, specifically those relating to assuring just and stable prices for primary commodities. In addition, the United States should make a significant contribution to the African Development Fund.

"Finally, the Congress must reverse itself and pass the legislation to prohibit importation of Rhodesian chrome in violation of United Nations sanctions..."

5. **EDUCATION** - "In the first part of 1976, the Congress will continue its work on major pieces of higher education legi-

slation - extending the Higher Education Act and renewing the Vocational Education Act. We support the renewal of this legislation..."

"In extending the Higher Education Act, three goals must be met: 1) Eligibility for student financial aid must remain concentrated on those with the greatest need. We must resist efforts to open these programs to middle class students who have alternatives for financing their college education; 2) the Developing Institutions Program must be continued with increased funding; and 3) the affirmative action obligations of institutions to hire and promote minori-

ties and women must be vigorously enforced..."

6. **TAX REFORM** - "...Tax reform is crucial to any effort at redistribution of wealth. Tax shelters and loopholes permit wealthy individuals and corporations to pay no tax at all, or to pay at a rate considerably below that of the average American. For every dollar of income which escapes federal taxation through loopholes, the government is, in effect, providing a direct subsidy or appropriation. This foregone revenue has been labeled a "tax expenditure. The Congress must scrutinize these tax expenditures as closely as budget items."

7. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND AID TO MINORITY BUSINESSES** - "Presently, many minority businesses are being liquidated because of the inability to repay federal loans. We recommend a one-year moratorium on federal loan repayments. There should be a significant increase in set-asides and subsidies to minority businesses.

"A system of tax concessions for financial institutions and other investors should be developed immediately. Such loans and investments should be made available for business development and mortgage financing in Black and other poverty communities..."

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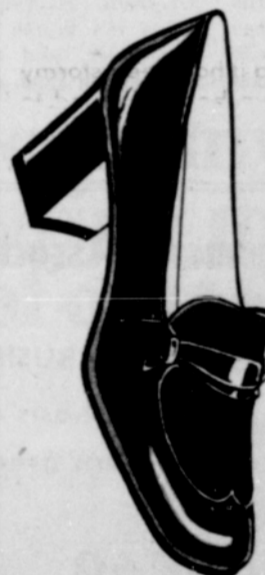
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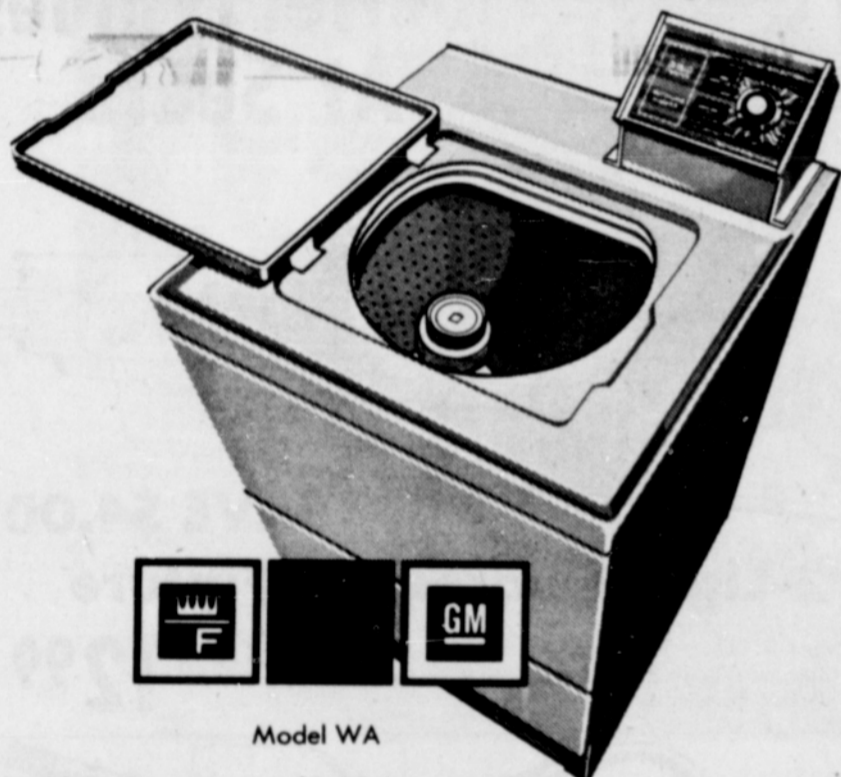
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## Oregon Legislature undemocratic

Speaking to participants in the American Issues Forum, a group participating in the Oregon Centennial Celebration activities, Senator Cook said that the greatest need in Oregon today is to return democracy to the Oregon Legislative process.

Senator Cook stated, "I don't know how long ago it was that the Oregon Legislature was a truly democratic institution, but it was long before my time as a member. I strongly suspect that this lack of true democracy at the level was what caused our true democrats at the turn of the century to successfully establish the Initiative, Referendum and the Recall which became known as the Oregon System throughout the nation. We have finally reached a time when we should reexamine what has been going on in Oregon at the representative legislative level and adopt some needed reforms to establish true democracy at the legislative level in Salem. "The ultimate result of these reforms should be to reduce the power of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House so that it won't make any practical difference who is President and who is Speaker. With these reforms we might even be able to safely elect Chuck Hanlon, Independent of Washington County, as President of the Senate.

"To accomplish this basic objective the following changes in the rules should be made: Have the types of committees, membership and chairpersons of all committees determined by the entire body and not by the presiding officers. Have decisions on bill referrals to committees determined by the Rules Committee and not by the presiding officers. Eliminate the power of committee chairmen to kill bills and of presiding officers to do likewise. If this is done at the 1977 legislature, and I intend to work for it, Oregon will have a truly democratic legislature."