

EDITORIAL/OPINION



Muzorewa struggles for recognition

by N. Fungai Kumbulu

'Responsible leaders'

"I am certain in my association with the leadership in the black community that such a recommendation will not be considered seriously by thoughtful members of the community." Those are the words of Dr. Robert Blanchard, Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools, regarding the planned school boycott.

Dr. Blanchard also had some things to say about what "responsible Black leaders" would do. Dr. Blanchard's statements demonstrate the lack of communication between him and the Black community. In all the years that he has been in Portland, Dr. Blanchard has not gone beyond the few he considers to be "responsible leaders" to see what others are thinking and saying. It has been too easy in the past to condemn those who speak out more forcefully as radicals and to blame them for the conflicts that continue to develop.

Dr. Blanchard held a "secret" meeting with some of those he considered to be "responsible leaders" two years ago during the controversy over the Newman Plan. Those "responsible leaders" knew the role chosen for them was to go out into the community, divide the opposition, and persuade the people to do it the school district's way.

It didn't work. Perhaps for the first time, the "responsible leaders" told the Superintendent and the members of his staff assembled that they must go to the people and listen to the problems and the demands. These "responsible leaders" did not join the School Board in its effort to fool the community.

Now, two years later, confronted with the same and yet more severe problems, the Superintendent apparently does not realize that the "responsible leaders" have joined the radicals. Dr. Blanchard -- whose contacts with this community are largely second hand -- does not realize how broad the base of support for the boycott has become.

The latest effort of the district to capture the

leadership -- an appeal by an Assistant Superintendent to a ministerial group -- served only to make the support of that group stronger.

Dr. Blanchard and the School Board will find that this time they will have to deal directly with the people -- to come and talk on an equal basis -- or they will face some difficult times ahead.

Investigate the murders

The House Assassinations Committee has finally submitted its final report. The report recommends that the Justice Department investigate the murders of President John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. There was no specific evidence, but enough to lend credence to the generally held notion that both men were the victims of conspiracy.

The Committee indicated that individuals or groups in organized crime might have been responsible for Kennedy's death. Now that the collusion between the CIA and organized crime are known and the inter-infiltrations of the FBI and organized crime are becoming public, the implication of organized crime in Kennedy's murder brings both agencies into suspect.

In the case of King, the FBI's hatred of him is paralleled only by its infiltration of and attempts to destroy the civil rights movement and all Black organizations. These activities are becoming increasingly revealed as more groups and individuals claim their FBI files through the Freedom of Information Act.

Not only did the FBI attempt to destroy all efforts to win civil and human rights for Black people, but its agents were actually involved in the harassment, brutalization and murder of civil rights workers.

These facts make the investigation of the two murders crucial. Not until the FBI and the CIA are either convicted or cleared can this government be safe.

If the Muzorewa regime in Rhodesia can be likened to any other country in the world, that other country would have to be either Transkei or Bophutswana. All three have been rejected by all of Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations and virtually every other country in the world. This rejection has stemmed from the fact that all three governments are illegitimate, illegitimate in the sense that the agreements worked out to establish each were discriminatory, excluded the vast majority of the people, did not change anything even though they claimed to be more 'democratic'. They all masquerade as Black 'independent' republics but, it's only tokenism.

A further reason for this ostracism has been the three countries' close ties and cooperation with South Africa. While Transkei and Bophutswana are little parcels of land carved out of South Africa and offered as Black homelands, the situation is somewhat different in Rhodesia. Rhodesia always has been a separate country, with a people and colonized at a later date than South Africa.

The reasons for the setting up of an 'independent' Rhodesia were also entirely different than the pressures that formed the setting up of the homelands. In South Africa, the homelands were set up as a way of squelching Black demands for independence, as well as depriving Black South Africans their just share of the wealth. By giving them these barren, economically destitute homelands, the Africans are simultaneously stripped of their South African citizenship so when they come to work in the cities and the mines, they are actually foreigners, without any rights whatsoever.

In Rhodesia, after decades of stubborn resistance and defiance of the whole world, the whites finally faced up to the grim reality: They were up against an immovable Black tide that was surely going to sweep them away into the Indian Ocean. The Africans had finally gotten hold of something with which the whites could not argue: the gun. Initially, the whites had scoffed at the ability

of the Africans to use a gun. In a few short years, however, that laughter turned first to surprise, then consternation and, finally, utter panic.

Consequently, they rushed to offer the Africans some crumbs if they would live and let live. At this point, there was no need for the Africans to concede anything. They had everything going for them but, best of all, they had time. They could afford to wait; there was no need for any hasty decisions.

With all this in mind, however, Muzorewa decided he was going to let the racists off the hook; he was going to accept the crumbs, give the 'internal settlement' some legitimacy and try to sabotage the revolution. Why did he do it? Even now, more than a year later, no one has yet come up with a plausible answer. Was it just plain greed, a lust for power, a need to play the 'good' guy (show the whites that we are civilized) or was it just naivety, plain and simple?

When he first 'came to power', he was making all those pompous statements about making Zimbabwe the envy of Africa but, so far his efforts have been frustrated at every turn because what he has is not power but the shadow power. So why does he continue with this charade? Again, no one can give an explanation that would satisfy even a three-year-old.

Recently, he was in South Africa to "report on the military situation in Rhodesia." Now, how absurd can one get? Isn't that just like President Carter going to Canada to explain his leadership problems? From Smith's perspective, the beauty of the present debacle is that now he does not have to do his own dirty work. Muzorewa is now the tool through which all of Smith's dubious schemes are now carried out.

Muzorewa and his ineptitude are also very good news for South Africa. As long as he remains in 'power', strapped not only by Smith but also by the myriad problems he is currently facing, he poses no threat to South Africa at all. Matter of fact, he acts as a cushion. Can you see Muzorewa offering South African freedom fighters sanctuary and the other necessary facilities? No way! Matter of fact, he has agreed to join

a South African sponsored 'Confederation of Southern African states.' The member countries would coordinate efforts and pool resources and finances to "combat terrorism and the spread of communism" in Southern Africa. In other words, the Muzorewa regime has pledged itself to cooperate with South Africa to maintain the status quo.

In the meantime, however, the war grinds relentlessly on. More and more people are getting killed—already the death toll has gone over the 16,000 mark and there seems to be no end in sight. More and more whites continue to flee the country—figures for May were the highest for any single month to date. This has created a crisis between Smith and Muzorewa as Smith pressures Muzorewa to do something to stem the tide.

Since President Carter has refused to lift sanctions and Britain has delayed any decision on Rhodesia until November, this is a crisis that's not likely to go away any time soon. The war is getting costlier every day, up from the previous \$1 million a day and the coffers are just about exhausted. The whites, who shoulder most of the tax burden due to their higher incomes are becoming increasingly restive at having to continue funding a war that they all know they cannot win.

To top it all off, even those Blacks who had been duped into supporting the Muzorewa clique are becoming very disenchanted with his lack of progress in carrying out his campaign promises. In Bob Marley's (Jamaican reggae superstar) song *We Hungry But Them Bellyful*, there is an immortal line that goes: 'A hungry man is an angry man....' The anger of the impoverished Zimbabweans, tormented by perpetual hunger threatens to be another time bomb with which the good bishop will have to reckon before too long.

Any circus performer will tell you, walking a tightrope is tricky business. One false move and it's curtains. Muzorewa has been walking a political tightrope now for quite some time. When he falls, we shall hear the crash all the way to Cannon Beach.

President shows courage in Rhodesia decision

by Vernon Jordan

President Carter acted boldly and decisively in deciding to maintain economic sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

He was bold because he acted in the face of an overwhelming Senate vote in favor of lifting sanctions. The Senate bought the idea that since that country's elections were nominally fair, sanctions ought to be lifted.

The President said there were three basic reasons for his decision. Keeping the sanctions would be in the best interest of the United States and in the best interest of the people of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Finally, the progress made there has not been sufficient to justify lifting sanctions according to the guidelines set by the Case-Javits amendment.

Those guidelines require free elections open to all political groups, and demonstration of willingness to negotiate with the Patriotic Front whose armies pushed the old Smith government into making concessions to the Black majority.

There's been a lot of talk about the fairness of the April elections in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. But parties opposed to the new Constitution were not allowed to participate in any meaningful sense.

Whatever the conduct of the elections themselves, there hasn't been much attention given to the fact that the Black majority was excluded

from the real decision -- to approve or disapprove the new Constitution.

That document provides for real power to reside in the white population -- four percent of the nation's people. The 96 per cent who are Black were not allowed to vote. The Constitution was imposed upon them. Those April elections were for Parliament, not for the Constitution. So they were rigged long before any Blacks went to the polls.

The merit of providing some temporary assurances to the white minority that their rights will be recognized is not the issue. The issue is that minority advantage -- disproportionate representation in Parliament, control of the army, courts, police, and the civil service -- is frozen into the Constitution Blacks could not vote on. The future reforms will be impossible because of the built-in veto power enjoyed by the white majority.

So the fairness of the April elections is a phony issue. The real test is whether the country has a majority government, and that test cannot be met by simply having Blacks installed in top government posts. Ian Smith's continued presence in the government is symbolic of the power he and the small minority he represents still wield.

If the President had gone along with the Senate's inclinations, the United States would have been the only country in the world, aside from

South Africa, to formally recognize the new government and to break the UN ban on trade.

That would have been disastrous to American foreign policy. The long, patient process of overcoming our past racist image on the continent would have been destroyed.

And it would have been an invitation to the Russians and the Cubans to escalate the military struggle in Southern Africa, with all the bloodshed and suffering for Black Africa that would mean.

In essence, the President has left his options open. By maintaining the sanctions he's putting heavier pressure on the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government to negotiate with the dissidents. He's serving notice that the U.S. takes its world citizenship seriously and will not unilaterally break the world's boycott. And he's letting the Patriotic Front know that we continue to support democratic solutions to the formation of a new nation.

Justifying his decision, the President said: "It means a lot to our country to do what is right, and what is decent, and what is fair, and what is principled."

His decision fulfills those requirements, and demonstrates the kind of active leadership we hope he will increasingly supply in fighting Congressional intransigence on the domestic scene.

Social Security cuts and the Black community

by Bayard Rustin

Ever since social security became the law of the land in 1935, its conservative opponents have repeatedly sought to destroy it, or failing that, to substantially weaken the system. Of course, Barry Goldwater's frontal assault on social security in 1964 proved to be quite a political disaster. Learning from that experience, the enemies of social security have adopted a new, more effective strategy. They have begun to chip away gradually at the system by cutting benefits, changing eligibility requirements and opposing any creative changes.

This quiet, almost unnoticeable attack on social security has ominous implications for everyone, but especially for Black people. I say this for two reasons: First, the proposed cutbacks and changes are largely in the life insurance and disability insurance components of social security. And second, it is these benefit areas—rather than "old age" insurance—which are critically important to thousands of Black families and youngsters.

To begin with, let us consider the Carter Administration's proposal to reduce benefits paid to disabled workers. These cuts, which I find especially baffling at a time of chronic inflation, will make it far more difficult for workers to maintain a decent, but far from luxurious standard of living. Since Black

workers are twice as likely as white workers to be seriously injured on the job, they are disproportionately represented among recipients of disability benefits from social security. Also, disabled Black workers are more likely than whites to have dependent children at home. In light of these facts, then, it is clear that the suggested benefit cuts will have a broad, and severely adverse impact on the Black community.

While disabled Black workers watch their income from social security shrink, their children will also be harmed by two other cutback proposals. The more serious of the two is a move to completely phase out social security benefits to dependent students under age 22. Under the present setup, youngsters who lose their father receive a monthly cash payment while they attend high school or college. For Blacks this student aid program has special importance for two reasons: the mortality rates for Black fathers are higher than rates for whites, and Black families have a greater number of children than whites. Subsequently, Black youngsters of college age are less likely than whites to have an income-producing father at home. Moreover, the financial strains of a large fatherless family make it significantly more difficult for a Black youngster to raise sufficient funds for college. If Congress accepts this proposal to kill student benefits, it will be in effect by voting to destroy

the ever more limited opportunities available to Black youth.

The second proposal which will affect Black youngsters is the plan to lower the cut-off age of children who live with widowed mothers. Presently, widows receive a monthly payment for each child under 18. But under the proposed change, all payments would end when the child turns 16. Quite understandably, this will mean a substantial reduction in income with no off-setting reduction in the costs of decently supporting a child.

Other radical changes under serious consideration include raising the retirement age, eliminating the lump sum death benefit (a mere \$255 usually spent on funeral costs), and abolishing the minimum benefit (a scant \$122 per month). In every instance, these proposals strike hardest and with their most devastating impact against poor people and Blacks. And the supposed savings realized by these cuts are at best minimal.

This planned rip-off of the social security system, I think, teaches us some useful political lessons. It once again reminds us that in a time of "fiscal austerity," groups which have the least amount of power will inevitably bear the brunt of the sacrifices. It also reminds us that attacks against the weak will always be quiet, discreet, and aimed against the least expected target like that old stand-by, social security.



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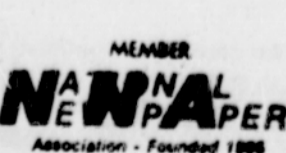
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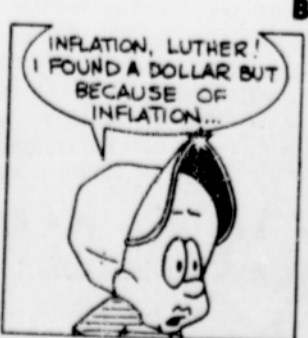
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