

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Unions: Fighting the working class

The City of Portland has an extremely poor record in minority hiring. Few City bureaus have anywhere near the numbers of minorities they should have if hiring were done, as the say, "color blind". Those who fear affirmative action will favor Blacks and lead to large numbers of Black employees can relax. It doesn't happen.

Affirmative action does not lead to any over abundance of Black employees. Those who are afraid that whites, especially white men, will no longer be hired should look at the facts. In Portland, which prides itself on its "tolerant" attitudes, employment in City, County, State and School District jobs are minimal.

The proposal the Civil Service Commission is considering would not force hiring of minorities. It would not even guarantee that minorities are hired. It would allow a manager - in a bureau that has few minority employees - to find some on the eligible list.

This is an extremely weak proposal and only with extreme pressure from the City Council will it have any effect. Those Bureaus that have traditionally discriminated will continue to do so, unless the Commissioners in charge

make minority hiring a top priority and evaluate managers accordingly.

It is unfortunate that such a do nothing proposal would meet with opposition. And even worse, that opposition is from the unions.

Minorities are deluged with anti-union, "right to work" propaganda. At the same time unions are losing much of their respect, power and political influence.

The union movement cannot be helped by those who push their own self interest at the expense of working class minority people.



Friend or foe?

## Open letter to the School Board

Dear Board Members:

We are a group of ordinary Portland residents who have gotten organized in response to the general decline in living standards poor and working people are facing today. We feel that inflation, nuclear accident, war, low wages, racial and class oppression, sexual harassment, etc., are not going to go away by themselves. We feel that our philosophy—that the only way to solve our problems is for ordinary people to get active and united—is becoming more and more accepted in our communities (St. Johns and the inner Southeast). We have been working with and learning from other grass-roots groups like the Black United Front. We would like to share with you some of our ideas about the Portland Public Schools and Dr. Blanchard's administration.

We would like to emphasize that we do not presume to be speaking for the Black community. It is our observation that the Black United Front represents that community very well. Rather we represent a growing trend in our somewhat integrated, mostly white communities.

We have two points we would respectfully like to submit for your consideration. First, we would like to urge you to adopt the Black United Front's school program. Black children (as well as white) have a right to quality education in their neighborhood schools. This goal cannot be reached through a complex, gerrymandered busing system, but through improving education in the neighborhood schools. This is the obvious way to improve education: the Board, we are sure, would never think of raising the quality of education at James John or Buckman by busing white children to the West Hills schools. For Black children improved education requires an affirmative action hiring program with lots of room for community involvement in selecting teachers and administrators; inclusion of Black history and culture in curricula as well as training in these subjects for teachers in the district; additional schools in the Black community; an end to racist disciplinary measures.

Secondly, we think it would be good for you to ask for Dr. Blanchard's resignation. Here's why. Dr. Blanchard seems to administer the schools with the prime objective of preserving the power of his administration and to the detriment of the School Board's authority, the wishes of parents, students and teachers for good schools that are appropriate to the needs of the particular communities. He seems to use his position to establish an administrative staff that is loyal to him by making decisions that favor the advancement of administrators over the advancement of education. Also, he seems to use his position to serve and curry favor with the rich and powerful sectors of the com-

munity to the detriment of the relatively poor and powerless who need high quality education desperately, in order to face the critical problems and hard times our country is entering. We have noticed that upper class communities don't have to get up in arms and make threats to be taken seriously like we in the lower class communities do.

These opinions are based on numerous conversations with community residents, parents, and school employees. In particular, we would like to point out three examples which support these conclusions: the case of the Metropolitan Learning Center (MLC), the plight of the Job Corps program, and the experiences of the Black community.

Several years ago, Dr. Blanchard's administration decided to transfer Amasa L. Gilman, the very well-liked principal of MLC, and to replace him with Dick Wheatley. Students and parents were outraged that they hadn't been consulted. MLC had been an alternative school that had a high degree of parent and community involvement. People were upset because Mr. Wheatley had very little experience or understanding of alternative education. In spite of many meetings, including a large fund-raising rally and cultural event that involved the vast majority of the MLC community, Dr. Blanchard's administration wouldn't budge. The parents were referred to various administration-controlled bureaucratic channels and School Board Member Jonathan Newman. All to no avail: Wheatley stayed. He came out pretty well, too: he was able to use his tenure at MLC to get his Ph.D. in alternative education!

Another incident was the loss of the Portland Job Corps Center contract with the Department of Labor. Under Portland Public School administration the Center became top-heavy with administrators and yet discipline was lax, the facilities were poorly maintained and morale was low among students and staff. The Job Corps contract was eventually lost to RCA Corp., which was able to underbid the Portland Public Schools. The real losers, however, were the hard-core unemployed youth the program is supposed to serve.

Thirdly, we have the struggles around school desegregation. The Community Coalition for School Integration spent two years doing a very thorough study of the whole question. This work was treated in a very off-hand manner by Dr. Blanchard. An administration should welcome, encourage and cherish this kind of community involvement in the schools but Dr. Blanchard and to some extent the School Board under his leadership has instead largely ignored this effort. When the Black United Front was formed to continue pressing for changes in the way Black children are treated they were called "irresponsible" instead of listened to. Some compro-

mises were made to avert the Black United Front's boycott. However, most of the terms of that agreement have been violated. The Black United Front has been met with rebuff after delay after insult by an administration that should be actively soliciting this kind of community input.

Why has Dr. Blanchard's administration acted toward the Black community in this fashion? It seems to us that the administration's attitude stems from the fact that lots of federal money follows Black children to wherever they are bused. Under the misleading banner of achieving "racial balance," (the administration, it seems, still has not realized that a school which is 95 per cent white is more racially "unbalanced" than the 55 per cent Black school whose children are bused to achieve "balance"), Black children are bused to richer schools—largely white—whose enrollment, and therefore funding, is too small to allow for certain "extra" programs like music teachers. We have noticed that it is the richer white schools who receive this extra money: we don't see Black children being bused to the poorer white schools in St. Johns, the inner Southeast, or Lents. Thus the administration, all under the guise of "desegregation," has been able to keep the relatively powerful sectors of the community happy at the expense of Black children. How else can it be explained that a Black child, who has lived in the same house throughout her school career, has been bused to over twelve schools?

We would like to see our schools be places where ordinary people of whatever race or nationality would feel comfortable, that would welcome our ideas and involvement and use our skills and knowledge and teach all our histories to all the kids. We believe that hard times are here and harder times are coming for everyone; and that the only way out is for everyone to stick together and help each other out. The present school administration has consistently ignored the input of community groups like the MLC parents, the Community Coalition for School Integration, and the Black United Front—perhaps out of fear of being "deluged by the rabble wanting things changed" if it once "gives in." We hope that you, members of the School Board, do not have this fear of the community. We hope you will be far-sighted enough to act in the spirit of unity necessary in this increasingly difficult period. We urge you again: carry out the Black United Front's school program; ask Dr. Blanchard to resign.

Yours truly,  
The Portland Fight Back steering committee.  
(Portland Fight Back may be reached by contacting The Portland Observer.)



## Zimbabwe: Outfoxing the fox

by N. Fungai Kumbula

Two weeks after his landslide victory, Robert Mugabe continues to confound would be critics. The prophets of doom had predicted, if Mugabe wins, the whites will leave en masse; the whites will stage a coup d'etat; there will be civil war; Nkomo and Mugabe will turn against each other; South Africa would invade and so forth and so on. Not only has Mugabe proved all these "experts" wrong, he has also proved to be the best leader Zimbabwe could have had at this time. So far he has proved that the people's mandate was not misplaced.

The task facing Mugabe is not to be underestimated. On the one hand, after nine decades of colonial oppression, the Africans look to him for deliverance. They would like to see him overturn the system as quickly as possible. They would like to start "tasting the fruits of 'rusunungukso, inkululeko' freedom." On the other hand, watching very apprehensively, are the whites, the perpetrators of the system about to be dumped. Mugabe's task is to cater to both Black and white aspirations: aspirations that all along have been diametrically opposed. In a nutshell, his task is to build a single nation out of these fragments.

For reasons that may not be too apparent, Mugabe cannot go ahead and simply ignore the whites. For one, the international community, so long dormant, is now scrutinizing Zimbabwe for any signs of racism. So many people are just waiting to point a finger and say, "I told you so." For another, all along

Rhodesia's whites have demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the nuances of civilization. They have controlled the economy all these years. If they leave en masse, it is not beneath them to sabotage that economy. A sabotaged economy is one problem Mugabe would rather not have to deal with.

So, showing a sophistication and political savvy that no one, not even his closest watchers expected of him, he has opted for diplomacy. He has assured the whites they do not have to worry about expropriation, nationalization or any of those good revolutionary remedies - just yet. Instead, he has promised to be "pragmatic." As apprehensive and naive (and without any other options anyway), this is just what they wanted to hear. The easiest way to outwit the fox is to play by his/her rules.

In the Cabinet portfolios that he announced last week, Mugabe appointed two whites, one the the Ministry of Finance, the other to the Ministry of Agriculture. Their deputies are both Black. In addition, he has retained Peter Walls as commander of the army and gave him the task of integrating the guerrillas and the former Rhodesian army. His deputy is Rex Nkhongo, Mugabe's own commander-in-chief of his ZANU army. That one move alone killed several birds (like killing four birds with one stone). For one, it reassured the whites that they are still in control of the army, but are they? Not really. The Rhodesian army was about 80% Black and, in the last days of the war, the loyalty of most of them was becoming

highly questionable. With Mugabe retaining the Ministry of Defense for himself, he is Wall's immediate boss. With Mugabe breathing in his face and Nkhongo down his neck, how much leeway does Walls have? With these former Black Rhodesian soldiers finally realizing how they have been used by the whites and how, all along Mugabe was actually trying to liberate them, can they be expected to go on owing allegiance to Walls?

What this points to is that, far from retaining control of the army, by being appointed commander of a national army, Walls has been effectively stripped of his military "muscle." Better still, it also removes once and for all the threat of a white staged coup.

Walls himself has repeatedly warned the whites that any of them who "attempt" such folly will be severely dealt with. He feels that by staying close to Mugabe, he will maintain some form of authority. Now, where have I heard that one before? In a few years, once Zimbabwe's national army is in place, Walls can be eased out, retired or fired and Nkhongo takes over. By the same token the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture can be similarly eased out. At that time the economy will be in shape again, the Africans will be in charge and the Zimbabwe government, then firmly in control, will be in a position to deal with any foolishness on the part of the whites.

At that time we shall be talking about how the fox outfoxed the "fox."



## Notes from City Hall

By Charles Jordan,  
Commissioner of Public Safety

"Legislation alone will not totally eliminate victims of institutional abuse; but it will serve as a deterrent to those who commit such abuse"

To prevent abuse, safeguard and enhance the welfare of patients in long-term care facilities, mandatory reports and investigations of allegedly abused patients are required, according to the Legislature.

In accordance with that legislation, a new law enforcement policy has been initiated by the Portland Police Bureau to investigate alleged cases of abuse to citizens living in long-term care facilities or nursing homes.

Within two hours of any reported case of abuse where a patient has been injured accidentally, obtains an injury which appears to be in disagreement with the explanation for the injury, suffers neglect which leads to physical harm, OR, is

refused direct patient care, a uniformed officer will be sent to investigate. The patient may be photographed as proof of abuse at the time of the investigation. If the investigation shows reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred, a report will be forwarded to the Long-Term Care Unit of the Adult Family Services Division, or a call made (238-7558) for immediate follow-up.

The Legislature has attempted to provide a solution to an ever-growing list of complaints in care facilities. For most of us, the fortunate majority, having good health care is a matter of choice. However, for many, those choices are limited and that type of freedom just never exists, because circumstances force us to reside in long-term care facilities.

Most of those facilities are quite adequate and provide the necessary

care. However, there are some that have been reported for mistreatment and abuse of patients. That is where you and I, along with a peace officer, can play an important role in assuring that the quality of patient care is maintained. Our "caring" can be an important part of a patient's good treatment.

Mistreatment is a different matter. Anyone who reports or has reason to believe that someone residing in such a facility is being mistreated or abused, is encouraged to call the POLICE EMERGENCY NUMBER at 760-6911. You are exempt from civil or criminal liability regarding any phase of your involvement in the abuse report, and all records are kept confidential.

Let's make those CARING years COMFORTING years.

## Unions oppose City affirmative action proposal

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be demoralizing."

Asked whether there has been a significant difference in performance of those who head the list and those lower on the list, he replied, "No."

Sam Gillespie of AFSCME Local 189 said his union is very concerned about minority and women's right, but there is a question of "reverse discrimination". He explained that the union had not had time to meet and

decide whether to support or oppose the proposal.

Support for the proposal came from William Wheeler of Legal Aid who called the proposal a conservation compromise point of view and said that based on statistics the City could be required to adopt and meet quotas. Calling Police Bureau employment statistics appalling, he associated crime and police brutality with the absence of employment

statistics appalling, he associated crime and police brutality with the absence of minorities on the police force. Blacks make up 1.3 per cent of the State's population, 12.3 per cent of persons incarcerated, and the crime rate for Blacks is the highest in the nation.

The Civil Service Commission will hold another public meeting on the proposal.



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