

OSHA 'reform' threatens worker life, safety

by Norman Hill

Young people today might not realize that Black workers, even after the elimination of slavery, were frequently treated as expendable pieces of machinery. If a particularly hazardous job needed to be done, employers would seek out Black men for the work, even when the survival of the Black workers was highly problematical.

Protecting the lives of workers costs money, money which sup-

posedly cuts into profits. Thus, whenever an employer confronts the stark trade-off of higher profits versus worker safety, the choice is simple -- profits take precedence.

But with the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (commonly known as OSHA) in 1970, the United States Congress soundly rejected the corporate argument on worker safety. In short, Congress declared that a worker's right to a safe and healthy work environment is more sacred than the

employer's alleged right to operate plants and job sites in a hazardous -- but profitable -- manner. Now, however, Congress seems to be changing its mind largely because of an intense and well-financed corporate campaign against OSHA.

So far, the corporate attack on worker safety has been ingenious. Rather than calling for the outright repeal of OSHA, business groups and their conservative allies have introduced legislation to "reform" OSHA. But the so-called OSHA Im-

provements Act of 1980 does no such thing; instead it scuttles existing regulations and exempts 90 per cent of employers from OSHA coverage. In effect, it strips workers of their right to a safe job.

Black workers, more than anyone else, have an especially large stake in saving OSHA. According to several reliable studies, Black workers, when compared with whites, have a 27 per cent greater chance of dying from job-related injuries and diseases, and a 37 per cent greater chance of con-

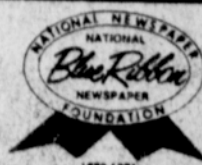
tracting occupational illnesses and suffering from serious industrial accidents. Also, while cancer mortality among whites rose by 5 per cent over the last 25 years, the increase among Blacks was an astonishing 26 per cent, much of it job-related. Moreover, Blacks are disproportionately concentrated in dangerous jobs and industries. For instance, 22 per cent of the labor force in the steel industry is Black, but 91 per cent of those Blacks work in coke ovens which spew out benzo(a)pyrene, a

known cause of cancer. And in the rubber industry, 60 per cent of the workers in the mixing and compounding areas are Black. They are regularly exposed to cancer-causing substances like benzene, asbestos, beta-naphthylamine and nitrosamines.

Unless OSHA survives Black workers, especially those in non-union plants, will have little or no protection from life-threatening chemicals and other workplace hazards.

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Orlando Ramon Colbert, 5, and Loressa Colbert, 9, get acquainted with a friendly garter snake during ranch visit. (Please see page 3)

Photo: Richard J. Brown

BUF rejects desegregation plan

The Black United Front has rejected the School Board's new desegregation plan and has scheduled a community meeting for April 24th to discuss plans for future action.

"I am very disappointed," Ronnie Herndon, Front co-chairman, said, "The Board did not keep any of the promises made last August."

"The School Board did not provide for any meaningful way for parents to participate in staff selection, so we will just have more miseducation nearer home."

"We did get one middle school, but who will select the staff. I hope they don't think we should have faith that the administration will select the right kind of staff for this school."

Among the policies adopted by the Board was to direct the principals to discuss staff needs with the Parent Advisory Committees -- appointed by the principal. The Front had proposed a selection committee made up of administrators and citizens to recommend selection of principals and parent participation in advising principals on staff selection.

"We are most concerned with quality education -- not just geography. They did a little geography and nothing else."

Herndon also objects to the transfer of King Area III children to Sabin and Alameda. This move, to alleviate crowding at King, was strongly opposed by parents. Herndon pointed out that these families -- mostly Black and low income -- had suffered most from the scattering caused by the administrative transfer program. There is also serious question whether there will be space for many of the children at Sabin, which is also nearly at capacity.

Nothing has been done to improve the education at the Early Childhood Education Centers, Herndon said. "They have talked about curriculum changes, but we haven't seen anything concrete. Nothing has been done about discipline -- Black students are still being suspended at a disgraceful rate."

The new policy allows all children to attend neighborhood schools, and fourth and fifth grades will be

restored to Humboldt. "We don't believe there will be space for children to return in many of the schools; neighborhood children will still be pushed out."

Herndon expressed no surprise at the Monday night vote. "Rieke and McNamara voted as expected; at least they are honest and don't pretend to want to do something for us. But the community should take notice of Board members who voted against what we asked for, especially those who want us to think they are acting in our behalf."

Herndon was especially angry at remarks made by Sarah Newhall in explaining her decision to vote in favor of opening Eliot middle school with 6th, 7th and 8th grades. She had previously supported

opening with only the 6th grade. Ms. Newhall expressed the opinion that if the school is to be ready to open in September, the Black community will have to demonstrate more responsibility than exhibited on previous occasions.

"I was shocked to hear Ms. Newhall say she expects to see a lot more responsibility on the part of the Black community. What gives her the right to say that; this community doesn't have to prove anything to her. This Shirley Temple mentality is the worst kind of paternalism. If it weren't for the Black community, she wouldn't even be on the Board. Newman will still be there."

The Thursday meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at King Neighborhood Facility.



Linda Johnson leads discussion group on school desegregation proposals presented by the School Board and the Black United Front at BUF community meeting. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Home arrest requires warrant

The U.S. Supreme Court determined Tuesday that police officers cannot enter a person's home to make an arrest without a warrant. The Court had previously ruled that police must have a warrant to search a home, but had not included the issue of entering the home to make an arrest.

The decision does allow police to enter the home to make an arrest in case of emergency, but does not define "emergency".

First American Black joins pro hockey

NEW YORK - The world famed Cosmos soccer team will soon field the first American-born Black player, according to Rafael de la Sierra, executive vice president of the club.

In becoming the Jackie Robinson of a sport where the nation's major league teams have lacked any native Blacks, 17 year old Darryl Gee comes well qualified with the potential to follow in the footsteps of Pele one day. The latter is the South American player who revolutionized the game in America when he joined the Cosmos and brought out record crowds of 75,000.

Set to negotiate his contract in June when he graduates from Oakland Mills High School in Columbia, Md., a Baltimore suburb, he is rated one of the most outstanding American soccer players to emerge in the past three years. Sought after by ever top soccer college in the nation, he started playing when he was nine years old. Winning honors from that age

on, he played with the Columbia Association soccer teams. Gee scored as high as 27 goals while a junior and 25 in his senior year. Altogether he's credited with 76 goals during his high school career, and 52 assists.

In Los Angeles and Florida recently he played the West German National team. In March he is scheduled to play in a tournament in Switzerland with the U.S. National team.

Sports seem to run in the Gee family; his brother Chester A. being recruited last year by Duke University as a freshman quarterback. Gee's father, Dr. Chester A. Gee is an orthopedist, played football, tennis and was a top flight swimmer as a young man.

Just recently have America's Black youth started to turn from Basketball, baseball and football to the nation's newest and fastest growing professional sport, soccer. In most foreign countries soccer is regarded as the world's most

popular pastime.

Now with Gee about to join the Cosmos it is expected that other major league teams will be beating the bushes to acquire Black players as Gee's presence on the team is sure to attract a horde of Black fans in the same manner that Jackie Robin-

son did when he became the first Black to join the Brooklyn Dodgers, now the L.A. Dodgers. The majority of players on the current teams are German, Spanish, Italian, and South American, countries in which the sport dominates all others.

Judge halts minority hiring rule

Judge Charles Crookham of the Circuit Court in Multnomah County has granted a temporary restraining order against the Civil Service Commission, stopping implementation of its new two-list certification process. The suit was filed by the Portland Police Association.

A date will be set for trial in Circuit Court.

The Portland Police Association charged in the suit that the new rule is in conflict with the City Charter, which states that when a vacancy occurs the Civil Service Board should certify the three eligible can-

didates standing highest on the register of qualified applicants. The new rule would allow a department that has an under representation of minorities or women to request two lists -- one with the three highest eligible candidates and one with the three highest minority and female applicants.

The suit alleges that "hiring of other than the highest three ranking eligible candidates will cause irreparable harm to the Plaintiff's members by interfering with the safety, moral and working conditions in the Portland Police Bureau.



TOGETHERNESS - AROUND THE WORLD. The Urban 4-H program in Multnomah County is sponsoring its third annual International Cultural Fair April 19, at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 N.E. Knott Street, Portland, from 5 to 9 p.m. A variety of dances, singing and food will represent different ethnic groups living in the Portland inner city. The program is designed so that one can attend for a two hour period any time during the evening. There is no charge.