

EDITORIAL / OPINION

Bite the bullet . . .

The Reagan Administration is now in the process of making cuts in the 1981-1982 budget proposed by President Jimmy Carter. Before looking at Reagan's proposed cuts -- mostly in human services -- we need to examine the document he is starting with.

The 1981-1982 budget calls for expenditures of \$739.3 billion, 25 per cent of which goes to the military. The military budget calls for a 14.2 per cent increase. This is the only part of the budget that Reagan hopes to expand -- he would like to buy more weapons.

Among the programs Reagan wants to cut are highways, synthetic fuel projects, community and economic development grants, food stamps, unemployment insurance, student aid, public housing, etc.

The Reagan administration would like to cut multi-purpose block grants to cities and "action grants" that are used to subsidize commercial developments by 30 per cent. Rather than build more public housing to offset the housing shortage, the Reagan administration wants to subsidize more old apartments.

Although removing oil and gas cost control, Reagan wants to eliminate much of the subsidy to transit systems.

While denying the economic development funds to provide more jobs, the Reagan people want to decrease money available to unemployed. Regulations over food stamps, medical care and other social programs will eliminate many families now eligible -- making only the poorest of the poor eligible.

The Carter budget is based on an unemployment rate of 7.5 to 5.8 per cent, but carries a reduction of unemployment benefits. Carter left 340,000 public service jobs for the unemployed. He proposed \$81 million for job training for youth and \$31 for job training for those unemployed because of technical changes. Reagan is expected to eliminate the public service jobs for victims of short-term joblessness and to drop the youth proposal.

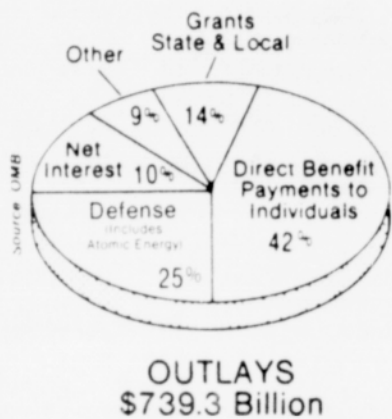
The military budget is a different story. While the American people are being asked to cinch up their belts and live frugally, the Carter

budget calls for \$180 billion to maintain current spending; bolster military construction, operations and maintenance, research and development and to raise military pay. Added money will be spent on recruitment and training; more on equipment to place in Europe; and massive increase in weapons purchase. Reagan is expected to add to the funds for weapons.

Among the weapons to be purchased with a \$49.1 billion price tag are: the MX Inter Ballistic Missile at \$3. billion; Trident Missile submarine at \$3. billion; cruise missiles (launched from air, sea and ground) at \$1.5 billion; B52 modernization at \$356 million; F15 and F16 at \$2.8 billion; tanks at 1.1 billion; nuclear attack submarines at \$779. million, etc. Hidden in the budget is the new "stealth plane". Atomic warheads will cost \$4.7 billion. And the Reagan administration will add to this arsenal.

This massive and growing military budget -- which is used to protect the economic interest of giant corporations abroad and to suppress many peoples of the world -- is being torn from the pockets of those who are least able to pay. Of the \$711.8 billion in tax revenue, only 9 per cent comes from the Corporate Income Tax. Individuals pay 74 per cent.

So as you consider the real needs of the American people -- jobs, food, housing, medical care, education -- do as they say. "Bite the bullet."



Sickle Cell Anemia

By Fungai Kumbula

That children look like their parents is no coincidence. Parents pass on to their children, genes, genetic material, in the form of chromosomes which determine the physical characteristics the child will have: height, skin colour, colour of hair, eyes, shape of nose, blood type and the like. By the time the child is born, all these characteristics are already pre-determined. Whether the child will resemble the father more than the mother will depend on whose genes are the more dominant.

If the mother's genes for height are more dominant than the father's then the child will resemble the mother more in terms of height. On the other hand, the father's eye colour may be more dominant than the mother's in which case the child will have "mother's height and father's eyes." Because so many other factors beside genes are involved and also because each physical characteristic is determined by its own separate pair of genes (one from the mother and one from the father), the child may end up looking like neither parent which is not always indicative of some "funny business" on the side.

Sickle Cell Anemia, is one of those blood diseases that parents can also pass on to their children. To understand the phenomenon of this disease, one has to delve into the science of Genetics which is the branch of science devoted to inheritance and all its ramifications. All people can be divided into three basic categories on the basis of their blood types. Those with normal blood are said to have Hb(a)Hb(A) blood (for adult hemoglobin - one Hb(A) gene from the father and the other from the mother). Those with Sickle Cell Anemia are said to have Hb(S) Hb(S) type blood and the ones with Hb(A) Hb(S), one good gene and one bad one, are said to

have the trait. This third category carries the potential for passing on Sickle Cell Anemia to their offspring depending on the blood type, genes, of the spouse.

If an Hb(A) Hb(A) person marries another Hb(A) Hb(A) person, the child will have Hb(A) Hb(A) type blood and be perfectly normal. With an Hb(A) Hb(S), they will be carriers. When two carriers Hb(A) Hb(S) marry, every time they have a baby, there is one chance in four that the child will be normal, one chance in four that it will have the disease and one in two that it will be a carrier.

Ironically, Sickle Cell Anemia disease evolved as a defense mechanism against another disease, malaria, which affected mostly people that live within the tropics. In parts of West Africa and Central Africa, the incidence of malaria, caused by the tse tse fly was very high and, over the years, people developed the sickled gene as the body's defense against malaria.

Blood cells are normally round and biconcave and they would therefore flow easily through the body's blood vessels. In the case of Sickle Cell Anemia, the red blood cells acquire a sickle shape which impedes their passage through the capillaries. When this happens, some organs of the body such as the kidneys and heart can be deprived of oxygen and, in the past, victims of the disease used to die from renal failure, heart failure, thrombosis and infection. Persons with Sickle Cell Anemia periodically go into shock when the percentage of sickled blood cells in the body is abnormally high.

The disease was first described by James Herrick, a Chicago physician in 1904 when he examined a Black college student who had come to him complaining of a cough and fever, a headache, dizziness and

feeling weak. The patient had also been having palpitations and shortness of breath and had been participating less and less in athletic activities as he had been in previous years.

To date, apart from treating the frequent crises, no cure for Sickle Cell disease has been found yet. The fact that it is a hereditary disease has made it that much more difficult to arrest. It is by no means restricted exclusively to Blacks since it has been found among Mediterranean people such as the Sicilians, Corsicans, Greeks, Italians and others bordering on the Mediterranean. The incidence is much higher among Black people though, with an estimated four of every thousand Blacks in this country having the disease and one in twelve having the trait.

The only suggestion that the medical establishment has for eradicating Sickle Cell disease is for every couple contemplating marriage to undergo genetic screening which is a process where one's genetic make-up is determined. Once one has obtained his/her genetic history and that of the intended spouse, the two can then decide whether they will marry or not. From their genetic charts, they can be able to tell what sort of children they are likely to have.

The idea behind this logic is to discourage people who carry the trait from marrying and so the sickled genes would die with them. Were this to happen, the gene for the Sickle Cell would eventually be wiped out. The weakness of this argument of course is that it deprives carriers of, that most fundamental of rights: the right to have children. Nonetheless, genetic screening is a good idea before one takes the plunge and gathers enough courage to walk down the aisle.

Next Week: Africa Dairy II.

Thinking about Reagan

By Dr. Manning Marable

At a number of levels, the election of Ronald Reagan presents serious theoretical and practical questions to the forces of Progressive America. The Right Wing in white U.S. politics clearly believes that it has realistic solutions to the continuing burden of inflation, high taxes, and high unemployment. Whether today's solutions become tomorrow's illusions -- as I believe they will -- can only be determined by history. Meanwhile, the Black and Hispanic movements, Feminists, Environmentalists, Civil Libertarians, Anti-Nuclear activists and others must begin the necessary process of constructing an alternative national program of public policies that has the potential for winning majoritarian support.

In this light, several hundred people met on January 21 in New York City's Lotos Club to discuss a progressive response to Reagan and Reaganism. The guest speakers were William Wimpisinger, head of the International Machinists union and one of the most liberal trade unionists in the country; Michael Harrington, the chairperson of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee; Barry Commoner, noted environmental scientist and former Presidential candidate for the Citizens' Party; Carol Bellamy, the President of the New York City Council; and myself, Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation*, America's oldest magazine of public opinion and social thought, moderated the conversation.

We were all asked a simple question: What now? Although the audience was somewhat informal and overwhelmingly liberal in political opinion, there was some tension in the air. My brief remarks that evening, in which a small section appears below, were designed to push progressives from a defensive strategy against the New Right toward an unqualified policy of constructive resistance and political empowerment:

"In the past seven days, there have been two public events which in many ways are symbolic of the future political direction of America. One event represented the best in us, the other, the worst in us. One spoke to the historic struggle for civil rights and human liberation over the restrictive legal constraints

of Jim Crow and racial injustice; and the other, a ceremony advancing the selfish interests of big corporations at the expense of unemployed, blue collar workers, Blacks, Hispanics, and other oppressed sectors of American society.

The first event was, of course, the demonstrations held throughout the nation in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the second, was the inauguration of a former movie actor whose sole claim to public fame was his performance in "Bedtime for Bozo." This is a man who declared that 85 percent of America's pollution "comes from trees." This is a man who thinks that we can meet the economic challenges of the 1980s by rushing blindly backward into the 18th century world of Adam Smith -- Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan is fond of quoting Franklin Roosevelt. The reason for this can be found in elementary science textbooks -- opposites attract. Reagan is everything Roosevelt was not. Reagan's "New Beginnings" are simply warmed-over-Warren G. Harding: the politics that says "What's good for General Motors is good for America."

In his inaugural address, Reagan called for reductions in public spendings -- without mentioning the critical human impact that these reductions would have in the social services and education. He called for "removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity," by an across-the-board tax cut that favors private enterprise more than the interests of the public generally. Reagan has promised to protect freedom across the world -- and does this by bringing into his administration men like Richard Allen, who served as a paid apologist for Portuguese colonial interests in Africa; and by appointing women like Jean Kirkpatrick at the United Nations who in a recent Commentary article implied that we ought to support Latin American authoritarian regimes that oppress the human rights of their citizens.

So the new President calls for more freedom--freedom for the corporations to fatten-up their bottom lines at the expense of unemployment lines; freedom from beneficial federal governmental regulations on the environment;

freedom from what Reaganites call the so-called exploitation of labor over capital, of welfare mothers over corporate executives, of government over multinational corporations, of Blacks and Hispanics over whites, of women over men. To Ronald Reagan, this "New Beginning" represents a neo-conservative version of the New Deal. To the rest of us, it represents a raw deal.

Reagan also likes to quote Karl Marx. Sometime ago he asserted that the federal income tax was a creation of Karl Marx. As steeped in historical materialism as our new chief executive is, he must surely recall what Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. All historical persons and events "appear twice, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." Because if F.D.R.'s unfulfilled legacy of social change and progress is tragic, then surely Ronald Reagan's Right Wing parody of Roosevelt is a farce.

Many on the left are asking: What comes next? Ronald Reagan sits in the Oval Office; James Watt is busy thinking up ways to strip mine the entire state of Wyoming; Al Haig is conjuring up a Communist Menace in Grenada and El Salvador to justify U.S. overt operations in these countries. Keynesian economics is dead; can the New Deal-Welfare state be far behind?

Liberalism has been at a dead end, politically, since the repudiation of the Johnson Administration in the 1960s. We must stop defending those social programs we know will not work, and begin by pushing the legitimate dialogue on public policy issues toward the democratic left. We must stop responding to the public initiatives of the Right, and articulate a principled agenda that is rooted in cultural pluralism and socialism, in a common sense language that American working people can understand and support. We must articulate a domestic agenda for full employment, for tough environment regulations, for restrictions on the flight of capital from innercities, for affirmative action for women and ethnic minorities.

This will be no simple task in an era of lowered expectations and even lower political morale. Many have already said that the time is not (Please turn to Page 3 col 3)

Letters to the Editor

Employee got no help

Dear Editor:

I believe that white racists and white institutions use employment as a means of controlling Black people.

This was true of the Portland Public School district during the short time I was an employee there. I had been hired as a public relations specialist by the district's public information department (PID) to work on the school's desegregation efforts. I worked from January through March of last year before I was fired. My superiors were content to assign me clerical duties at a very high salary rather than allow me to carry out the responsibilities detailed in the job opening advertisement.

When I insisted on doing public relations work of a meaningful nature, and, when I told my superiors our public relations to and with the Black citizens of the district should include more than expensive -- but separate -- dinner meetings, I

was first isolated then fired on grounds I was incompetent.

I reported to and also appealed my firing to the board of education. I had worked with them as a group. And I had previously confided to three of them -- Herb Cawthorne, Bill Scott and Joe Reike -- my suspicions that the PID office was intentionally not providing the board with the professional skills of which we were capable. (Following acting Superintendent Fenwick's appointment by the board, the director of the PID office was removed.)

I especially communicated my concerns to Herb Cawthorne; he initially shared my belief of the inadequacy and unresponsiveness of the PID office. But shortly before my termination, Mr. Cawthorne said "I was on my own."

Whenever the issue of my dismissal came before the board, Cawthorne, Reike and Scott continually affirmed the district administrators' actions. Steve Buel,

who is passed off as a liberal, took pains to complain the district administrators had not adequately documented the evidence to justify my firing. Then he voted a white hot affirmation.

Only Wally Priestly voted against my termination.

I understand why the other board members voted to affirm my dismissal. And I am proud that Wally Priestly did not buy that policy of control. But, I don't know why Herb Cawthorne voted time after time that I be dismissed or failed to ask -- as I suggested -- that the board investigate my charges. Surely a Black vote in a raging sea of institutionalized white racism would have been heard in this community.

I will not be surprised if there is no substantive conservative opposition to Mr. Cawthorne as he seeks election to an office to which we could not appoint him.

C. Eddie Edmondson



Bruce Broussard Editor/Publisher

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The *Portland Observer* is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the minority population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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