

# EDITORIAL/OPINION



## ECOWAS: An encouraging signal

By Fungai Kumbula

### Need for communication

Now as never before the community's numerous organizations need to work together. Each has its own agenda, its own style, its own "territory." Some of these considerations need to be set aside for a time in order to provide the leadership needed at this crucial time.

Among the issues that will come together this summer are:

1) Increased unemployment and lack of recreational facilities for youth

2) Increased police pressure as demonstrated by new "crowd control" ordinances recently passed by the City Council.

3) Increasing lack of public confidence in the police.

4) New efforts to restrict Black students attendance at Jefferson, plus a new move to close Adams.

5) Cuts in social programs and unemployment and training programs.

A "long, hot summer" is expected - not so much by those who suffer all of the ingred-

ients that create disturbances - but by those who hold power. The police agencies across the nation are making preparations - not to alleviate the contributing problems - but to physically control any outbreak of violence.

Portland is no different. Laws to restrict the public's rights have been passed in anticipation of trouble, without citizen input, without citizen knowledge. This type of abuse of police power is what has always led to confrontations.

Only the residents of the community - working together - can control and alleviate situations that could be magnified into violent situations by misguided police power.

The Police Bureau also has a responsibility to open channels of communication and to cooperate with the community. Ultimately, the attitude of the police toward the community and their willingness to work with community organizations and individuals will be the deciding factor.

Some five years ago, leaders of sixteen West African countries got together and formed an economic entity called the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS. It was a bold experiment and, set along the lines of the now defunct East African Community, ECOWAS's objectives were to increase intraregional trade while cutting dependence on unreliable outside world. Among other benefits, this would strengthen the economies of the countries involved while increasing cooperation in other fields as well.

Given Africa's history of colonialism and neo-colonial exploitation, the skeptics were quick to pooh-pooh this latest attempt at African unity. It's been five years and the skeptics are still waiting for ECOWAS to fall apart. It was on the strength or resilience of this cooperation that African leaders met in several capitals throughout Africa over the past two years to go even further than this modest beginning. The result of those meetings was the blueprint for the African Economic Community, an economic grouping, on a regional basis initially, of all fifty-one countries that make the African continent.

Proponents of this school of thought were seriously concerned recently when an apparent squabble

between two members of ECOWAS threatened to tear the entity asunder. There have been in the past strains of mistrust between French speaking African countries and their English speaking counterparts. This of course is a result of the wedge the British and French attempted to drive between the Africans: divide and conquer, remember, remember?

Ghana has been buffeted by economic woes of late (oil prices, world recession) and thousands of Ghanaians have been forced to leave their homeland to go seek work in such neighboring countries as Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. Last year, some fifty so-called vagrants suffocated to death in a police van into which they had been crammed on their way to prison. Most of them were Ghanaian but not much of a force was raised over that one.

This past March, however, on the 5th, 46 Ghanaians who had been arrested and thrown into a tiny cell died of suffocation in the capital of the Ivory Coast, Abidjan. Ghana was furious and President Hilla Liman immediately dispatched his Internal Affairs Minister Ekow Daniels to Abidjan with a protest to Ivorian President Felix Houphet-Boigny. Houphet-Boigny supposedly was "on tour" some place but Daniels met two cabinet ministers. His report intimated that

the Ghanaian embassy had been refused permission to see the incarcerated Ghanaians and prison conditions had been so bad some of the prisoners had begun to drink their own blood urine.

Ghanian students, infuriated, attacked the Ivorian embassy in Accra, Ghana and Ivory recalled its embassy staff. As the situation steadily deteriorated from bad to worse, there was the very real possibility that an irrevocable schism was about to erupt between two ECOWAS members. Togolese President Eyadema quickly moved to resolve the problem by arranging a meeting between the feuding Presidents. The first week of April, the two met in Lome, the capital of Togo and emerged shaking hands with the Ivory Coast expressing regret for the incident and Ghana apologizing for the attack on the Ivory Coast's embassy.

The imbroglio has been amicably resolved, ECOWAS saved and the people of both Ghana and the Ivory Coast much the wiser for the experience. Greater caution will now be exercised in dealing with nationals of other African countries. All Africa is richer for this kind of brotherly/sisterly understanding indicative of the fact that the continent has reached another plateau: diplomacy replacing hasty and sometimes divisive use of force.

### Now what?

Last week the students of the Portland School District learned a lesson in democracy - American style. The students from Jackson High, whose affluent adult spokesmen had threatened to sue, to refuse taxes, to sue, who brought up race wars in other schools and "special interest" groups, celebrated their victory with shouts and cheers. The young people from Washington/Monroe - a school that is one-third Black and includes the City's poorest Black and white neighborhoods - went home in tears.

Shouldn't the concern of the affluent, those who do have the ability to determine whether school levies are passed, those who control school board elections, extend their concerns to beyond the boundaries of their own schools? Some of these same parents were the first to come forward and fight the recommendations of the Community Coalition for School Intergration. Yet Jackson depends on its 200 or so Black administrative transfers for its survival.

We agree with Steve Buel and Superintendent Jim Fennwick that no schools should

have been closed at this time. The district has no long term comprehensive plan - the district is still working on piecemeal planning as it has for the past 10 years. We have yet to hear educational plans to accompany school closures.

But the decision to close only Washington/Monroe was highly unfair and the failure to close Jackson will put Adams on the hit list again. It is interesting that Frank McNamara, one of the strong voices for closing three schools now, was the deciding vote to leave Jackson open.

The word is also out that certain Board members will not allow the students of Eliot and Boise to attend Jefferson - and that Tubman students will be assigned to the west side or remain unassigned - that is, scattered among the various high schools. There are still those on the board that fear "resegregation" and will do whatever is necessary to insure that Jefferson does not go over the magic 50 percent.

So be alert for a move in early July. All of the gains of the past two years could be destroyed by a single vote.

### Letters to the Editor

#### Participants disturbed about ACT-SO

Dear Editor:

As participants in the recent NAACP sponsored ACT-SO competition we have several concerns that we would like to share about the ACT-SO awards. Our understanding, based upon information provided by the school district and the local NAACP office was as follows:

1. Nine local scholarships in the amounts of \$500, \$250 and \$100 in the areas of Arts/Humanities, Science and Social Science were to be awarded.
2. Gold, Silver and Bronze medals were to be awarded in all 14 categories of competition.
3. A local winner was to be sent to compete in the national ACT-SO finals. The reality was:

1. The overall winner was not selected, there was a tie and the two Silver medalists received \$250 each, the bronze winner received \$100.

2. No cash awards were made in the nine categories.

3. No gold, silver or bronze medals were awarded in any of the 14 categories. Our question as participants are:

1. Why wasn't an overall winner selected?
2. Why weren't the nine scholarship awarded?
3. Why weren't the gold, silver and bronze medals awarded in the 14 categories?
4. Are any local winners being sent to the national ACT-SO competition?
5. What happened to the over

\$7,000 in donations raised by local businesses?

6. What happened to the over \$2,500 in prize scholarships that was to have been awarded to local winners in each category?

The local NAACP ACT-SO Board has not acted in good faith. The philosophy of the competition is to promote excellence. This competition in fact, did more to insult and discourage the hard work that each participant devoted to his/her project, than anything. We deserve better treatment from our own community supported/funded organization.

Gloria Dempsey  
Donnie Haret  
1981 Wilson High School  
ACT-SO Competitors

#### Military spending ruins economy

To the editor:

Do you want to stop inflation? Get rid of the military. The military does not defend us, it just gets us into deep trouble.

The military produces nothing we can eat, drive on, live in, get well in or learn in. The military provokes the latest of our so-called "enemies" and keeps us poor. All the nations spend about \$500 billion annually for arms. The US and many larger nations are about to go bankrupt, mostly because of the military. Many US social programs are being cut drastically

to give billions more to the military.

Munitions manufacture is now mostly technical, requiring few workers. Enormous profits go only to a few owners. A nuclear war ending civilization could start any minute and would be over in half an hour. No winners. All dead.

We would have many MORE JOBS if our tax money did not go to fatten the military.

Millions more employees, world wide, would be hired to build badly needed houses, roads, factories, schools and to sell what is needed. Almost all could work, would have

a job and no one would be killed by an "enemy".

The U.S. should lead the way in removing the military. Other nations, including the Soviets, would soon follow because the financial load would be off their backs also. And soon all could have jobs in building not destroying. Let's make America first in saving humanity.

We don't have much time. The end could come any moment. Let's all be constructing, not killing and dying.

Howard D. Willits

#### Support Martin Luther King legal holiday

Dear Editor:

I recently wrote to my state representative in support of declaring the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a legal holiday. This is what she told me: There is a bill (HB2617) that would do it. However, it has been tabled in the House Committee on State and Federal Affairs.

Only through demonstrated interest by the people will this bill be brought off the table. We need to write to the members of the committee on State and Federal Affairs and tell them to get busy on this. Committee members are: Drew Davis, Chairman; Larry Campbell; Robert Harper; Grattan Kerans; Caroline Jagruder; Glenn Otto and Donna Zajonc.

We already have holidays which glorify militarism (Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day).

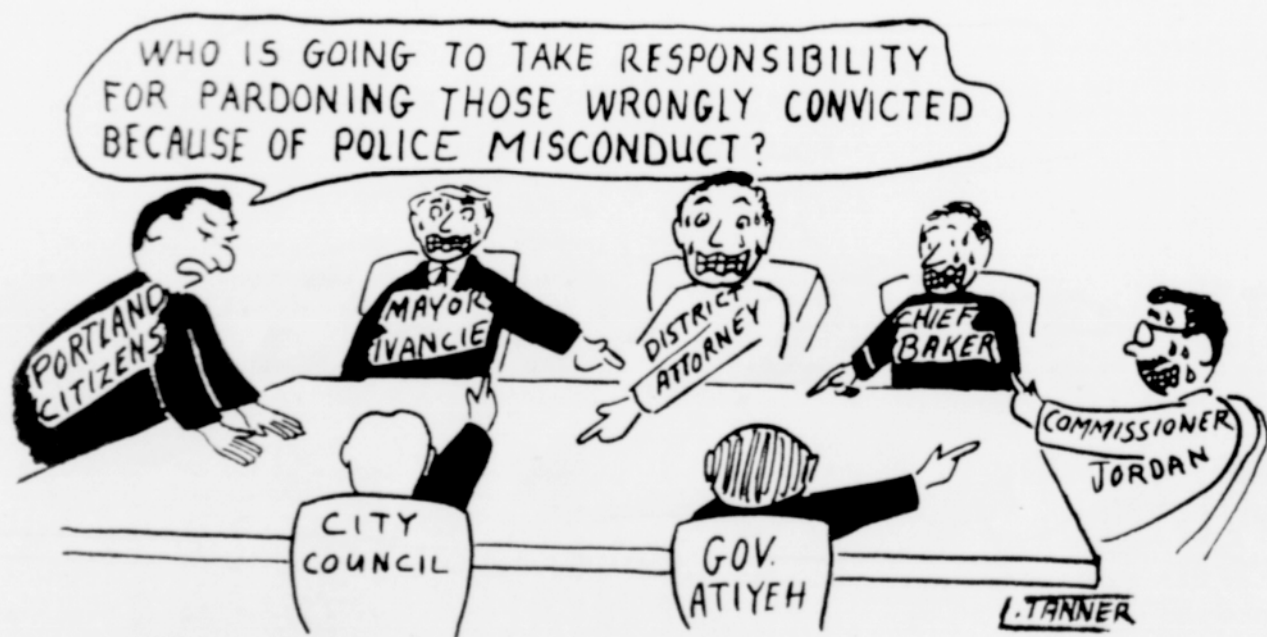
We should have an American holiday to promote peace and brotherhood. King's birthday would certainly be appropriate.

I feel that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s devotion to peace and non-violence averted a civil war in our

country.

Please write to the committee members and ask them to recommend passage of HB 2517 during this session of the Oregon Legislature.

Thanks,  
Donald W. Goller



Bruce Broussard  
Editor/Publisher

### Portland Observer

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The Portland Observer was founded in October of 1970 by Alfred Lee Henderson.

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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#### NEXT WEEK

Next week the series on the ACT-SO competition will continue with interviews with participants, counsellors and coaches.