



## From Multnomah County

By Donald E. Clark  
Multnomah County Executive

Politicians everywhere are holding their fingers to the air trying to get an accurate gauge on the mood of the voter. While the public mood about government is changing, I believe that most politicians have misjudged it.

The *Observer* has kindly allowed me to write a column from time to time to discuss current themes in County government. I think it is appropriate in this first column to look at the fundamental values of our citizens and whether they are changing.

Let's face it: we do have a problem in America. We have a problem of how the burden is to be distributed, how the wealth of our country is to be distributed, and who is responsible for those in our society who cannot carry their own load without help.

Recent elections have brought home the fact that Americans no longer feel that we have unlimited resources, and want governments at all levels to trim their sails and operate programs more efficiently.

But the question remains: Are politicians reading the values of the American people correctly? I think they are not. I do not believe that our values as a society have changed.

What has changed is the interpretation of politicians about the mood of the people. And I don't think that mood is to whip inflation on the backs of the poor.

In a recent meeting in Portland for the Coalition for Human Services, Doug McDaniel, chairman of the Coalition, observed that we are not experiencing a systematic cam-

aign against social programs, but instead a concern about inflation, higher prices and taxes.

This is an apt distinction. We as Americans remain a good and generous people who want to share and to assist our less fortunate neighbors.

Our analysis of the proposed Federal and State budgets show a substantial reduction -- perhaps in excess of \$2 million -- in funds coming to Multnomah County for health and other human service programs. Loss of that money will have a debilitating impact on our ability to serve citizens whom I call the "invisible poor."

The "invisible poor" don't have clout. They aren't organized and aren't effective at lobbying government. They're the little old ladies living alone, the handicapped, the poor and uneducated. Too often, no one stands up for them unless it is government itself.

We share the responsibility for helping these citizens -- for helping them receive health care, proper nutrition, opportunities for upward mobility, education, jobs. In times of economic distress, the problem shouldn't be solved by taking more from those who can afford it least.

I think the general public is not saying that we should eliminate or defund human service efforts, but that we should revamp the systems to make them work. The public wants our programs to be more effective and more efficient.

Take for example Medicaid and Medicare, which are programs designed by the Federal government to provide health care to our elderly and our poor. Both systems are

costly and complicated. They employ the costly fee-for-service system -- providing few incentives for controlling medical care expenses -- and are difficult for recipients to understand.

In contrast, Multnomah County has created Project Health to provide comprehensive health care for the poor and near-poor. But we do it in a prepaid, competition model which encourages the health industry to keep costs to a minimum. It's the same objective, but done more cheaply than the fee-for-service system. And our clients have the dignity of being treated in the same convenient system used by other citizens.

The challenge of governments and private social service agencies is to promote such basic reform. We must make our human service programs into workable, cost-effective systems.

Having done that, we can be assured that the average citizen will continue to see human services as a public responsibility and important for the well-being of our community.



## From the Capitol

Congressman Ron Wyden

*Q. Congressman Wyden, the administration has defended its proposals for cuts in social security benefits as being necessary to keep the system afloat. How do you feel about the proposed cuts?*

*A. I'm very disappointed - and I'm not alone. The Administration is breaking an often repeated promise not to touch those benefits - and it's doing so at the expense of one of the most vulnerable segments of our society.*

*I'm especially concerned about the abrupt nature in which the cuts would be implemented. Delaying a scheduled cost-of-living increase from July 1982 to September 1982 and drastically reducing benefits for those who retire at age 62 effective January 1982, is too much, too fast.*

*We simply cannot ask these people who have relied on the government's promises to change horses in mid-stream. Senior citizens have a contractual commitment that entitles them to this money - and many of them will be placed in severe straits if they don't get it.*

*There is one aspect of the Ad-*

*ministration's proposal, however, that pleases me. The proposal to phase out the outside earnings limitation which prevents Social Security Security recipients from earning more than \$5,500 in outside earnings each year without having their benefits reduced is a good idea that has been a long time coming.*

*I have long said it is unfair to penalize seniors who prefer or need to continue working. In addition, with birth rates on the decline, in the next 30-40 years industry will badly need older workers just to keep plants and factories open.*

*Q. On the subject of small business, you told a group of Portland businessmen this weekend that small business has been getting the short end of the stick from the federal government. In what way?*

*A. Small businessmen and women provide more than 80 percent of the jobs in Oregon and in America. In addition, studies show that small business was responsible for creating 90 percent of the new jobs as many innovations per research dollar as large firms.*

*Yet despite these significant contributions to our economy, small*

*business gets little more than grief from the federal government. It is overburdened with paperwork, besieged by regulation, tormented with financial problems.*

*It is high time we press for a new economic agenda that not only gives small business room to breathe - but actually encourages its growth.*

*At the federal level, this agenda should include (among other things):*

*- Implementation of the Paperwork Reduction Act to reduce the mountain of paperwork business people face.*

*- Tax relief so small business has more after-tax profit to reinvest, modernize, expand and stay competitive.*

*- Elimination or reduction of federal estate and gift taxes that jeopardize the continuation of small family operations.*

*Oregon is a small business state - as the Third District is a small business district. It is essential that the federal government institute programs that will help - rather than hurt - the small business community. To a great extent, the good health of our country depends on the good health of small business.*

# ALL BANKS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL (=).



## Dick Bogle

Two very important issues affecting Black people are pending, one in the courts and the other in Congress.

The first and perhaps the most important is the battle shaping up on whether to extend a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act for ten years.

Some say the law is the most important civil rights legislation ever passed. It provided voting rights for hundreds of thousands of Blacks in the Southern United States.

For example before the Voting Rights Act was passed, only a relative few Blacks in the South were registered to vote. In Mississippi, only 6.7 percent of eligible Blacks were registered. By the mid 70's, 67 percent were registered.

Those who wish to weaken the law say the law has done its job and is no longer needed. But, apparently a new threat to equal representation has come on the horizon in place of intimidation, literacy tests, and poll taxes. That threat is that some cities and counties are changing election rules.

The Christian Science Monitor says the two most common methods are annexing a mostly white area to a city or switching to an "At Large" voting scheme for councilors. At large elections require a majority from the entire city or county for each councilor, making it nearly impossible for a Black or any other minority to win. Minorities have a better chance in smaller districts.

The present voting act targets those states which used the old fashioned methods of intimidation, plus Alaska and parts of about a dozen other states.

The part of the act which rankles its opponents the most is the section

which requires that each time a government from one of those areas wants to change its voting procedures, it must clear the change with the U.S. Justice Department. They must present evidence that the proposed change will not weaken minority voting.

Since the law was enacted, the Justice Department has reviewed more than 30,000 proposed election changes and objected to only 815.

Opponents say the small number of complaints is evidence the law has outlived its usefulness while its backers say the law is still a deterrent.

The U.S. House Judiciary committee will be hearing testimony on extension of the act until the end of June.

The other significant issue, the ultimate outcome of which will affect Blacks, is in the courts apparently headed for the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and could eventually end up in the U.S. Supreme Court.

U.S. District Court Judge Frank Battisti last June ruled that the City of Parma, Ohio through a series of intentionally passed laws and consistent opposition to low income housing, had practiced deliberate racial exclusion. He felt the degree of that wrong was so heavy that it required a broader than usual remedy, he ordered the city to begin building low income subsidized housing units at the rate of 133 a year.

He also ordered Parma to establish an education program for its officials, set up a fair housing committee, and begin advertising itself as an open community in Black newspapers.

Until the Judge's decision, the city's voters only had the right to approve any changes in Parma's 35 foot limit on building heights and to give consent before any public housing projects are built.

The case began in 1973 when the Justice Department sued the largely white suburb south of Cleveland. Parma was accused of a series of actions designed to keep Blacks from renting or buying property amounting to a violation of the 1968 Federal Fair Housing Act.

Watch for a decision on this one, it should be in the hands of the Appeals Court within the next several weeks. And regardless of that court's decision, it will likely end up in the Supreme Court.

"One man with courage makes a majority."  
Andrew Jackson

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