

From the Capitol

Congressman Ron Wyden



Q. Earlier this week, Treasury Secretary Donald Regan advocated high interest rates as the only way to control inflation. How do you feel about this?

A. I couldn't disagree more. All high interest rates do is make a bad economic situation worse - particularly in a state such as Oregon which depends so heavily on the housing industry and which has traditionally been capital short.

High interest rates are killing our state and region just as surely as if

you cut off all train, truck and air traffic. To deliberately promote still higher rates would be suicidal.

What we need to do is come up with reasoned policies that stimulate productivity and real growth -- and begin to ease credit restraint. That will allow our workers to get back to work - and permit the juices of our free market system to flow again.

Congress will have its chance to go on record in opposition to high interest rate policies when the tax bill comes before it in the next few weeks.

It can make this stand by approving a targeted tax cut that encourages savings, rewards work and spurs increased economic activity -- without fueling inflation and mandating higher and higher interest rates.

Q. This week you joined forces on a bill (HR 4140) that would restore minimum Social Security benefits to individuals 80 years of age and older. Why only these people?

A. I would like to see minimum benefits restored for all beneficiaries

who are truly vulnerable and low-income. HR 4140 is just the first step in that direction.

But it is also a particularly important first step. Some 532,000 of the 3 million current minimum benefit recipients are 80 or older. And 401,673 (or 77 percent) of those 80 and over are women.

It is absolutely critical that these hundreds of thousands of elderly widows who barely subsist from check to check not be unfairly victimized as we balance the budget.

An Open Letter

Ronald R. Still
Chief of Police



In my first open letter to you and the citizens of Portland on June 9, 1981 I mentioned that a major goal of my administration would be to re-establish good communications with the Albina community.

A situation recently came to my attention which typifies how seemingly minor things can cause misunderstandings between the police officer and the community. A uniformed police officer (Frank Jolly) while working the area around Alberta Park at NE 19th and Killingsworth, was informed that some users of Alberta Park ob-

jected to "no parking" signs recently put up on NE 19th. They believed that the police had these signs put up to harass users of the park. These signs were put up in response to a citizen's petition. Residents of the area near the park complained that there was damage being done to their private property and traffic congestion so bad that driveways were being blocked. This type of situation occurs occasionally around parks throughout the city. Traffic control signs and devices are often used to resolve the problem.

It is my hope that by explaining this situation in your newspaper,

users of Alberta Park will better understand why the signs were put up and why the police are enforcing the parking ordinances at that location.

I know that there are other police issues of concern to the Albina community and all citizens of Portland with which, as the new Chief of Police, I must attempt to resolve. I will, on a regular basis, send you these open letters to the citizens of Portland. I want to communicate those issues and the resolutions I have in mind. That one situation I have just described is a minor example. In each open letter to your newspaper and readers, I will ex-

plain Police Bureau policy, laws, or issues which are timely and informative.

I invite your readers who would like to ask a question or address an issue to send them to me at the Portland Police Bureau, Public Information Office, 222 SW Pine, Portland, Oregon 97204. I will not be able to respond in my open letters to each and every concern, but will select those which are most important for improving communications and relations with the community. I will regularly distribute, to each community newspaper, my answers to citizen concerns.

Black political power thrives in California

By Mary Ellen Leary

(Editor's Note: Though Blacks represent less than eight percent of the California population, they have gained a remarkable degree of clout in state politics -- a trend which could be significantly increased by the predicted election of Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley to the governorship next year. PNS correspondent Mary Ellen Leary explores the reasons why Black political power has thrived in California and whether it may be a sign of future trends in the U.S., generally. Leary is a regular contributor to PNS and the London-based *Economist* magazine on Western politics.)

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the political landscape in trendsetting California these days is its color. Increasingly, the upper echelons of the state's political establishment are inhabited by Blacks.

Whether this fact portends an increase in political clout for Blacks in other regions of the nation, or whether it is merely another California quirk, remains to be seen. But for now, the trend is undeniably enriching California politics, and there is evidence that the greater ethnic mobility in the political sphere is spreading to other areas, such as business and the law, as well.

The clearest example of the expanding Black presence is the prominence now given Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley. California pollster Mervin Field has verified that throughout the state Bradley is the front runner in the race to succeed Governor Jerry Brown next year. Other polls concur, and as further evidence of his popularity Bradley recently won a third term as mayor by the largest vote he ever recorded, 64 percent, for the first time carrying even the conservative San Fernando Valley.

Popularity which increases a third time around confounds the experts; attrition of votes is normal. But Bradley's aura of assured competence has earned him a statewide favorability rating that is the highest of any political figure in the state.

Bradley has not yet concluded he will run, and if he does he may run headlong into President Reagan, who might commit his personal prestige to the Republican forces in his home state next year. But considering that no state in the union has ever elected a Black governor, the fact that Bradley rates so highly represents a remarkable dent in racial barriers.

And Bradley is not alone. California also has a Black Superintendent of Public Instruc-

tion, Wilson Riles, who in 1970 was the first Black elected to statewide office. He now plans a fourth bid for that post. The Los Angeles Black who served 1974-78 as lieutenant governor, Mervin Dymally, won election to Congress last fall, edging up to 18 the total of Black congressmen, three of them Californians. And the liveliest presence these days in the state capitol is not Governor Jerry Brown but the San Francisco lawyer-legislator who captured the lower house Speakership this year, the sprightly, witty and adept Willie Brown.

This array of California "Black Power" is reinforced by Black mayors in Oakland and Berkeley, by seven other Black legislators, and by approximately 75 Blacks appointed to the judiciary by Governor Brown, and one Black woman, Alice Lytle, a lawyer who is secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency. Samuel Williams, an influential Black Los Angeles attorney, recently turned down an appointment to the state supreme court, only to be elected president of the State Bar, the first Black ever to hold that prestigious position.

This remarkable Black accomplishment has not yet extended to the state's other principal ethnic minorities, Latinos and Asians. Latinos, inspired by the indefatigable union leader Cesar Chavez, are now at about the entry level where Blacks stood two decades ago. Asian participation in politics is very active at the local level, and a feminine descendent of Chinese immigrants, March Fong Eu, now holds Governor Brown's former position as Secretary of State.

In short, while Bradley's popularity and Willie Brown's cocky command of the capital are the two highlights of this new phase of ethnic mobility, the record seems to suggest that voters in California, when presented with a candidate of proven political ability, simply cease to consider race or color.

But from another perspective, the Black leadership has to be viewed in relationship to overwhelming white preponderance. Unlike some Eastern cities, where Blacks are numerous and have produced notable leadership, California's Black leaders came to office on white votes. Among the 23.6 million Californians, more than two-thirds are white. Blacks constitute only 7.7 percent. This prompts some to ask whether there are ethnic characteristics among these Black leaders particularly suited to the moment, or whether their experience in the struggle for civil rights may have sharpened their political edge.

Mayor Bradley, especially, has been described as a man who exudes "self assurance," and "makes people feel confident." Said one associate, "He has this inner serenity that people seem to need at a time of insecurity. People sense a character they can trust at a time when politics has lost trust. Many find the roots of this quality in his Blackness."

It is also said of school superintendent Riles that he defies polarization; that he has a gift of bringing factions together because "he seems to offer something larger, a humane understanding."

Some cynics scoff that these are simply Blacks who "don't frighten white people." But others, like State Consumer Chief Lytle, believe the answer is far more complex. "The contributions of the Black race to American society in music and the arts are widely recognized," she said. "But the more subtle contributions, the anthropological ones, are not recognized. Not yet."

Another dimension was identified by Black Assemblyman Elihu Harris. Today's leadership stems from a sense of "assertiveness" Blacks learned in the 60s, he said. All Blacks now in top California positions have been involved in public service back to that period. To a great extent, their talent was shaped by their personal involvement in the serious issues of the civil rights era.

Among the successful Black politicians the prevailing view is that sheer individual drive, energy and persistence built their careers. Said Speaker Brown about Mayor Bradley: "Most voters don't know his color and don't think about it. He is perceived as a decent human being who inspires trust."

Brown added: "Each of us has fashioned a political career in an individual style. Our success relates to us as individuals. Only demonstrated ability can elevate Blacks to a role that is beyond considerations of race."

Of Speaker Brown, Black Assemblyman Elihu Harris said: "Willie is recognized in the legislature as intellectually the most gifted, the best orator, the quickest and wittiest mind and the ablest politician of us all."

Some see this leadership development as evidence that California is increasingly tolerant, in contrast to the prevailing trend in Washington politics. The national figures President Reagan has summoned to Washington come primarily from business or academic top rungs, accustomed to success and wealth and they have not included any notable Blacks. The minority personalities

in California's public life come from poverty and personal experience with discrimination and racial hostility. Both Bradley and Willie Brown were born in Texas, endured broken homes and scrambled for jobs as youngsters; March Fong Eu worked in the fields and as a domestic. But each moved upward through the University of California.

Prejudice does still make itself felt in California. "Not in personal politics but in issues," said Speaker Brown. "There is still a strong negative feeling about Blacks."

Dr. Troy Duster, head of the Institute for Social Change at the University of California, observed, "Blacks don't dominate urban life as clearly in California as in many parts of the East, and so they don't arouse as much fear."

The Democratic Party's canniest political leader in California, Los Angeles attorney Micky Kantor, suggested that California's prosperity and expanding economy has accommodated more easily to incoming Blacks than static Eastern cities. He expects Bradley to be California's next governor.

Robert Maynard, editor of the *Oakland Tribune*, believes that "the rhetoric about opportunity being at hand if you work hard seems to pay off here in California more than in some Eastern states." Maynard is the nation's first Black editor of a major daily newspaper.

Yet ugly incidents of racial discrimination do intrude in California's public life, observes Dr. David Wellman, another U.C. Sociologist. Klan demonstrations, the Nazi Party presence, cross burnings, housing harassments, all attest to the continuing problem.

"There is no evidence Californians love Black people," said Wellman. "We just have examples of shrewd politicians. Bradley's popularity is just a new California quirk."

But a number of Californians -- including Jewish leaders, Blacks in the professions and white scholars -- feel the state's mobility, its relative lack of fixed ethnic neighborhood patterns, and its freedom from either party or ethnic control over political access, provide a flexibility that makes it easier to break through racial barriers.


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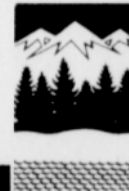
Linda Johnson can be seen nearly any day of the week involved in activities to promote the rights of people. She is executive director of CRIB, a three-year-old program that develops cooperative programs in education, child development, food and housing. Among its activities are serving as advocates for students and parents with the school district, operating a Summer Academy for young people, and operating a tennant hot line.

Ms. Johnson is chairman of the new 25 member Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee. The committee will advise the City on use of its federal HCD funds. She is a member of the Northeast coalition of Neighborhood Organizations board.

One of her main interests being education, Ms. Johnson is a member of the King Parent Advisory Council and the Citizen Involvement Committee for King (teacher selection). She is active in the Black United Front.

She is also active in the Oregon Human Rights Coalition, which seeks to protect rights of welfare clients.

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