

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Prison decision no answer

In a long awaited decision U.S. District Court Judge John Burns decided that overcrowded conditions at Oregon State Penitentiary are not a denial of inmates' rights. He did order the State to improve medical care, food handling and fire safety.

This decision reverses an earlier decision in which Burns had found that overcrowding violated the Constitution's ban against cruel and unusual punishment.

The State should not be complacent in the face of this decision. It is a documented fact that levels of violence at the prison have risen along with the severe overcrowding. There is also the long range picture to consider: inmates who do not receive proper health care, counselling, education, work assignments, etc., will come out of

prison having learned nothing except to hate those who have imposed these conditions on them. Nothing will have happened to enable them to live productive lives or to reject a return to crime.

Proper sentencing that would divert persons guilty of non-violent crimes to treatment, restitution and community programs would free space in the maximum security prison for those who require that security. This, along with adequate funding, could provide time, space and programs for those who could benefit from rehabilitation programs. Not all prisoners would succeed, but the current position of warehousing prisoners for longer and longer periods and then turning them loose with nothing serves neither the criminal nor the public.

Where were they?

Two days before Christmas the home of a Salem family was burned and racial epithets painted on the house and fence. The family—Robert White, a Libyan, his wife Betty, black, and their five-year-old daughter were out of town at the time of the fire and robbery.

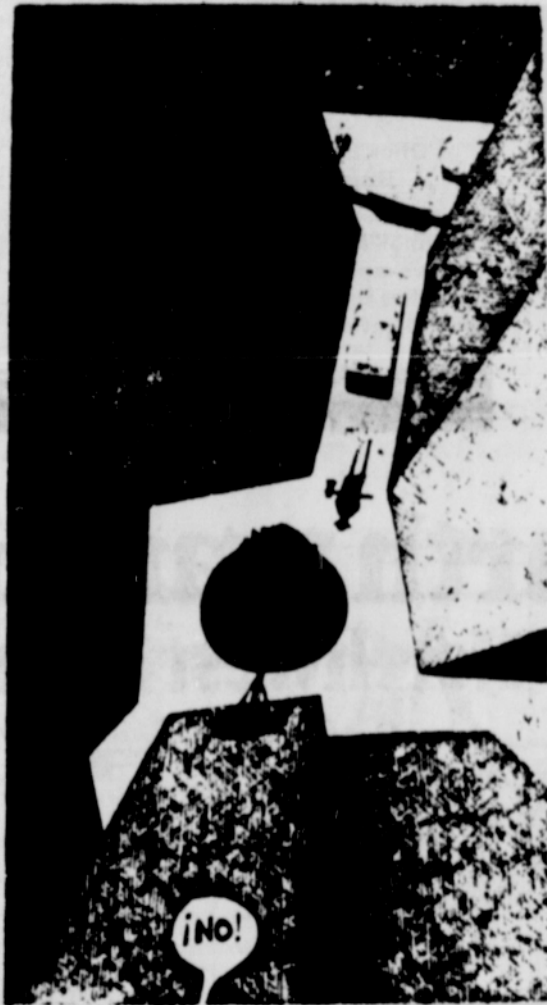
Last week the Salem Human Rights Commission held an emergency meeting to determine how they could best assist the family and how they should address the community about the blatant racism.

Strangely absent was any outpouring of support and assistance. Usually when a family is hit by fire or other disaster, especially at Christmas time, they are inundated with help from neighbors and other community residents. Perhaps the people of Salem were put off by the racist nature of the tragedy; perhaps they did not know how to approach the situation.

However, the Human Rights Commission did get some offers of assistance and concern and a few community organizations were represented at the meeting.

Those significantly absent were the black citi-

zens of the Salem area and the leadership of the black organizations that serve that part of the state. Were they kept away by whispered rumors? Were they too busy to attend? Do they not consider this attack on the Whites to be an attack on all black people? What will this lack of involvement in such a serious event in their community say to Salem's white citizens?



Thinking about Watts? by Rogelio Narano, Mexico.

Apologies

In the December 29th edition of the *Observer* we confused the record of Judge Lee Johnson. It was not Johnson who had problems with the law in California, but then-Multnomah County District Attorney Harl Haas. Our apologies to Judge Johnson and to Mr. Haas.

It is our point of view that the appointment of Lee Johnson by Governor Victor Atiyeh to the position of Circuit Court Judge was one of political expediency and based on his record as Attorney General is not in the best interest of those black defendants who appear before him.

Letters to the Editor

Prisoners like crime series

To the editor:

I had once thought that the quality of your newspaper had decreased, yet I find that I was mistaken. Your articles entitled "Black-on-black crime" were well received

here at O.S.P. I feel that this series addressed a serious problem in the black community, a problem that we as a people must learn to deal with.

The article about Stephanie Brown and her struggle was another newsworthy article. We need more

women like her who are determined to be successful regardless of the obstacles.

Therefore, keep the good, positive and informative articles coming, because they are well appreciated.

L.C. Moore

Legislature faces crucial session

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

sion should be no different. In all likelihood, the economic debate requisite to innovative job creation policies will not occur at the legislative level. And in all likelihood, Oregonians expecting help from the State will be disappointed.

Regardless of one's opinion on Hyster's multi-million dollar bailout request or on plant closure legislation, it is clear that the State of Oregon's past efforts to create jobs have fallen far short of the goal. One reason for this failure has been the lack of clear, well-constructed job-creation policies.

Instead of asking tough questions and seeking hard-hitting answers, legislators have cavalierly tossed money after the problem (through corporate subsidies) in the hope that

new jobs would be created—and that Oregonians would get those jobs. Few legislators are asking if revenue bonds actually create new jobs; few are asking if jobs in high technology firms will help unemployed woodworkers or their families. No one even knows where jobs in Oregon are created, nor where nor why jobs are being destroyed.

The task facing Gilmore and his Republican vice-chair, Rep. Donna Zajonc (R-Salem), will be to generate this essential debate and to find answers for these questions. Hardy Myers, who officially represents the speaker on the economic development committee, will need to develop a high profile if the committee is to have any credibility and any

chance of pushing its legislation through the House. Myers, however, will be chairing the House Judiciary Committee, and Trade and Economic Development may not be highest priority.

Until a meaningful debate on economic alternatives occurs—and it did not occur during the last governor's race—the ineffective policies of the past will remain. And as long as the Democratic and Republican House leaders toss their discards into a dead-end economic development committee, this debate will not be heard.

In the end, the losers will be those thousands of Oregonians who voted for the promises and the platforms—and remain unemployed.

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The election and Reaganism

by Manning Marable
"From The Grassroots"

The conventional wisdom concerning the recent November, 1982 elections concurs that Reaganism was largely repudiated by American voters. House of Representative Speaker Tip O'Neill termed the 26-seat loss of the Republicans in the House "a disastrous defeat for the President" and a "victory" against Reaganism.

Nothing could be further from the truth, unfortunately.

On the positive side, the midterm elections produced several constructive gains for blacks, Hispanics and working people. A number of reactionaries and anti-labor candidates were defeated. Most of the 77 freshmen members of the House informed the *New York Times* in a pre-election poll that they would be "opposed to trimming domestic social programs." Fifty of the new legislators stated that they "were in favor of canceling the scheduled 1983 cut in income tax rates," and 54 "strongly opposed increasing the age for eligibility for Social Security benefits." It was in the South that the Republicans suffered their worst reverses. Democratic challengers won three Republican House seats in Virginia, and also defeated a series of reactionary Republican incumbents in North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and West Virginia.

Democratic leaders pointed out repeatedly that the 26-seat gain was the highest gain in off-year elections in decades. It is true that all parties which have won the Presidency lose a number of seats in subsequent off-year elections. Under Kennedy, for example, the Democrats lost four seats in 1962. During Nixon's first term in 1970 the Republicans lost 10 seats, and more recently, in 1978 under Carter, the Democrats lost 12 seats.

But given the current economic situation, with general unemployment above 10.4 percent, and black joblessness exceeding 20.5 percent, the Democrats should have attracted even greater support. In two major states, California and Illinois, Republicans won gubernatorial races; in the Senate, the Republican majority of 54 to 46 remained the same. Reaganites inside the Democratic Party, the notorious "boll weevils" or Southern Conservatives, were uniformly reelected back into Congress over token Republican opposition.

What lessons can we conclude from the off-year election?

First, the elections laid bare the lie of true democratic government in the nation by illustrating once more that money is at the root of power

with the electoral system. Over \$90 million was spent in the 32 Senatorial races. Usually, the candidates who marshalled the greatest fiscal backing was victorious. In New Jersey, Democratic candidate Frank R. Lautenberg, a millionaire businessman, spent \$5 million (including \$2.6 million of his own money) to purchase a Senate seat. His Republican challenger, Representative Millicent Fenwick, spent \$2.7 million in the primary and general elections. In the Minnesota general election, Democratic nominee Mark Dayton, another millionaire, spent \$5.7 million in an unsuccessful effort to unseat Republican incumbent David Durenberger, who was only able to come up with \$2.7 million. A total of \$1 billion was spent on the 1982 U.S. election campaigns.

Money was an important reason for the modest number of losses suffered by the Republicans. According to one source, in most close-contested Congressional races, Republicans outspent Democrats by an average of almost \$100,000.

Second, racism played a more critical role than in previous elections. The number of black House members increased by four, and in Brooklyn alone, two new black Representatives, Adolphous Towns and Major R. Owens, were elected. But Robert Clark, Jr., a black Mississippi State Representative, lost a very close House race to a conservative white Republican whose campaign slogan, "He's one of us," smacked blatantly of redneck racism. In California, all the polls predicted that Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley should have little trouble defeating Republican state attorney general George Deukmejian. Three weeks prior to the election, however, Deukmejian's close friend and campaign manager, Bill Roberts, bragged that "race" was a factor in Deukmejian's favor. Roberts predicted that in a close contest, at least five percent of California's white electorate would vote against Bradley for the sole reason that he was black. Roberts was promptly dismissed for his candor, but on election night, his words were affirmed by white voters. Bradley lost the election that every pollster predicted he would win by less than 50,000 votes out of over 7.4 million cast. In another California race the state's highest ranked black elected official, Wilson Riles, was also defeated. Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition, noted ruefully that racism continues "to be a potent negative political factor—whether in California or

Mississippi."

Third, and probably most decisively, the true test of the meaning of any election is found on Wall Street, among the nation's powerful corporate elites. Significantly, they surveyed the so-called Democratic victory and breathed a collective sigh of relief. The day after the election, the Dow Jones industrial average jumped 43.41 points, closing at 1,065.49 points, its highest level in history. Corporate executives noted quite candidly that the incoming Congress was less inclined to endorse the extreme "supply-side" programs of radical Reaganites, and that a bipartisan consensus of "moderate" Republicans like Howard Baker and Robert Dole and more conservative Democrats such as James Jones and Dan Rostenkowski would forge policies which benefited big business. Reagan himself may no longer be in the political "driver's seat," but the vicious austerity of "Reaganism" can and will continue through Congressional attacks against workers, national minorities, the elderly and the poor.

What can black Americans learn from the recent elections? I think we have to view the electoral failure to check Reaganism as indirectly a product of our own inability to reach lower-income blacks, the jobless and blue collar workers, and to mobilize this constituency within the electoral process. Despite the NAACP's important efforts to register blacks, we must redouble our local efforts in voter education. Only about one out of every three black who were over 18 years old votes; less than one quarter of blacks who earn less than \$10,000 income cast ballots. Had truly vigorous voter education campaigns inside the black community occurred last month, the number of progressive blacks elected to public office would have increased dramatically.

More importantly, we must not be deluded with modest Democratic gains to believe that Reaganism has been checked. We must fight to create legislation which democratizes the U.S. electoral system, which encourages Third Party challenges, and which facilitates access to the media. Blacks and the oppressed do not have a billion dollar coffer to express our views on television. We must mobilize our numbers, demanding the right to proportional representation inside the government, and must prepare an all-out assault for 1984 against all "Reaganites" inside both major parties.

House burning remains unsolved

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

"I took the opportunity to go to Los Angeles to see children I had not been able to see in prison," he said. "When we came back, everything we owned was destroyed." White was informed of the fire while in Los Angeles and left his five-year-old daughter there with relatives.

Mrs. Betty White, who is black, said she had been the target of racism when she moved to Salem in July of 1981 to be near her husband. "Niggers move" was painted on the door and eggs thrown at the door. "The neighbors were shocked," she said. She had been treated kindly by her neighbors and did not believe they were involved. She reported the incident to the police. She also had been warned not to allow her child to play in the nearby park because she might be in danger.

White, who is Libyan, expressed fear for his life and said his main hope now is to be able to leave Oregon. "It's been a racist fight ever

since I came to Oregon." White does not know if the arson was connected to his problems in prison or was the result of his getting a man fired for discriminating against his family, but believes the Klan is organized and active in the Salem area.

Although the neighbors had expressed concern and friendship in the Salem newspaper, White said this was not the case. "We moved to a new area; we were the newest people, the only blacks. The children were told they couldn't play with our child. When we went back after the fire, the neighbors didn't come up and say they were sorry it happened."

"I am afraid my family will be hurt," he said. "I don't know what is happening. I am just scared."

The Salem Human Rights Commission is providing temporary housing for the Whites and hopes to

serve as a clearing house to arrange for other needs. White said the family does not have an immediate need for money but he is concerned with safety.

The Police Department has advised White not to leave Salem during the investigation of the fire and robbery.

It is the opinion of Detective Walter Fuhrmann that the arson was not a Klan action but that the racist epithets were a cover-up of the robbery. The Department had not asked for FBI assistance, as is usual in cases involving denial of civil rights.

The Human Rights Commission will meet Thursday, January 5th, to decide on a public response. The special meeting was attended by church and civic groups but the only person representing the black citizens was Plummer Williams who filled in for his wife, Matthee, who is 1983 Chairman of the Governor's Commission on Black Affairs.



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