

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## The "Poverty Gap"

There appears to be a move afoot to divide minority groups and to create competition among them for public services. Frequently heard is the phrase "feminization of poverty."

A U.S. Commission of Civil Rights Commission report, "A Growing Crisis: Disadvantaged Women and Their Children" details the economic hardships faced by female heads of households and their children.

Data in the report shows that between 1950 and 1981 the poverty rate for white male-headed families declined by 51 percent (of course the current depression has forced many families back into poverty). The number of persons in poverty level families headed by women increased 54 percent.

These facts demonstrate that women still suffer job and wage discrimination. The report concluded that "to ignore these implications is unconscionable negligence. The bodies, minds and spirits of millions of women and children are being inevitably... affected by the dispiriting

hand of poverty."

The forces of government must come to the aid of women who, in attempting to raise their families, are receiving the brunt of discrimination and neglect.

Those politicians who, for their own political ends, are using the hardships of women to attempt to foment conflict and competition between women and ethnic minorities neglect to add the other vital statistics contained in the report.

The situation is even worse for families headed by minority women. In 1981 the poverty rates for persons in families headed by women with children under 18 years was 68 percent for blacks, 67 percent for Hispanics, and 43 percent for whites.

It is imperative for those who are adversely affected by discrimination to work together to force the changes that will bring justice and equality and to resist the influences of those who would divide and conquer.

## No right to know in Oregon

The "right-to-know" bill that would have required employers to inform their employees about toxic substances used in the workplace has gone down to defeat in the Oregon House of Representatives. Only 23 representatives voted for it.

With millions of workers suffering from exposure to asbestos, dioxins and many other chemicals, this bill was essential to the public

health. The bill included long-term record-keeping so that people exposed to substances now believed to be safe, but later determined to be dangerous, could obtain information on their exposure.

Apparently the representatives were scared off by those who make heavy contributions to their campaign chests and, of course, Governor Atiyeh had threatened a veto.

