

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## No death penalties for Oregon!

Robert Sullivan, 36, was executed by the State of Florida Tuesday morning, bringing to six the number of executions committed since the death penalty was restored in 1976.

The people of the U.S. will soon have to determine whether it will condone the mass slaughter of over 1,200 death row inmates across the nation. If not, the execution will be as selective as the process that leads to this sentence.

Of those waiting on death row, 42.3 percent are Black (508), 4.8 percent are Hispanic (58), 0.6 percent are Native American (7), and 0.4 percent are Asian (5). Only 51.8 percent are white.

Sullivan's last appeal, which was lost, charged that people convicted of killing whites are more likely to be sentenced to death than those convicted of killing Blacks. A 1982 study of the 208 people sentenced to die in Florida showed that 90 percent had killed whites.

A second evidence of discrimination is that only one percent (12) of the persons currently sentenced to die are women.

Geography is also a factor. Thirty-nine states have a death penalty; 34 states have imposed the death penalty. California (with 131), Florida (196), Georgia (113), and Texas (159), have the most people under death sentence. The U.S. military has seven men under sentence, one of whom is white.

An unusual event in the death of Robert Sullivan was the intercession of the Catholic Church, which entered his appeal processes as a friend of

the court, and a personal plea for clemency. The fact that Sullivan is a practicing Catholic who has had the support of Florida church authorities for several years, brings forth the question of whether death met the legal criterion that the person be beyond rehabilitation. In this case death appears to be retribution. There also remains, even after Sullivan's death, the question of whether he was really guilty.

Oregon is one of 13 jurisdictions (12 states and the District of Columbia) that does not have a death penalty. As has been the case since our death penalty law was invalidated in 1981, there is a strong move to institute it here.

Do we really want to go through the emotional orgy of a legalized killing in this state? Can the demonstrators shouting "Death! Death!" outside the prison walls in Florida and Texas have done anything to further humanity in those states? Do we need the excessive amounts of money needed to go through years of litigation to our tax bills? Is there any evidence that the death penalty deters?

Evidence presented to the President's commission on organized crime this week indicates that, rather than using their resources to kill individuals sentenced to capital punishment, the States should be mustering their forces to fight the rapidly growing crime syndicates that have reached their tentacles not only into such sordid pursuits as drugs, prostitution and gambling, but are controlling large segments of business and industry.



## Political fallout from "The Day After"

by Dr. Manning Marable

The American people have never experienced "total war"—widespread epidemics, limited water and food supplies, the collapse of civil order, millions of dead, the dying and injured in the streets and countryside.

The ABC film, *The Day After*, is instructive in the most direct and elementary manner in acquainting Americans with the human dimensions of a general nuclear conflagration. Millions of people, trapped in central cities or near military and industrial centers, would be vaporized or burned alive. Millions more who survived the assault would die in the next days and months from radiation sickness. Communications, public transportation and most health facilities would be nonexistent.

To think seriously about the "unthinkable" creates fundamental problems for the Reaganites and the superhawks of both the Democratic and Republican parties. The basic idea behind current national defense policy is that the U.S. must arm itself with increasingly sophisticated and more powerful weapons in order to make the likely "costs" of warfare unacceptable to any rational adversary. There are, however, at least two problems with the "deterrence" philosophy. It assumes that both major powers will respond "rationally" in a time of political crisis, and that the Soviets will ultimately back down when confronted by the American nuclear threat. But how "rational" was the U.S. invasion of Grenada this fall—an illegal act of gunboat diplomacy which could have easily triggered a larger confrontation with the Soviets? How "rational" was Soviet behavior in shooting down the Korean airliner?

The second problem is underscored by the U.S. decision to place

Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. From West Germany, it will take a Pershing II less than ten minutes to obliterate a military target inside the Soviet Union. During a military confrontation with NATO, the Soviets would be forced to deploy their missiles upon the first warning signal of hostile Western action. As Joe Huxley, a professor in the film states, you either "use them or lose them." The faulty logic of deterrence leads inevitably to Reagan's mad quest for nuclear superiority, which would trigger a nuclear war.

The film skirts these issues, attempting to divest any sharp political content or analysis from the story. But sexist and racist elements were fairly obvious within *The Day After*. The majority of the female characters were idiots. Eve Dahlberg refuses to halt wedding day preparations during the national emergency, and calmly makes the bed after Minuteman missiles have been launched. Even during the postfilm discussion, no prominent women writers or spokespersons on the arms race—such as Helen Caldicott, Joanna Macy, or Randy Forsberg—were invited before the cameras.

There are over 150,000 Black people who live and work in Kansas City. Indeed, the Black population of the city is larger than the number of Blacks in Nashville, Richmond, Virginia, Miami, Boston, or Buffalo. Yet while watching the film, I got the distinct impression that the racial setting was off somewhere in North Dakota. The film begins with the sociological premise of security and comfort. No one lives in a ghetto here. Dr. Russell Oakes works at Memorial General Hospital and commutes from his upper middle class residence to teach a class at the university in Lawrence. We're not

told whether Black maintenance workers at the hospital were allowed into the fallout shelter at the terror-filled moment the bombs began to fall. The only major Black character in the drama is Airman First Class Billy McCoy, who portrays a kind of bewildered Afro-American version of King Lear, wandering aimlessly in the radioactive fallout, searching for a wife and home which were vaporized days before.

As films for commercial television go, *The Day After* was above average. But in the clutch, it failed to describe the real levels of destruction and human agony which a general thermonuclear conflict would create. However, there's no need to depict the destruction of Kansas City. Go to the 18th Congressional District in New York's South Bronx, for an understanding of the impact of Pentagon spending upon the poor and minorities. 41.2 percent of all South Bronx families exist below the poverty line; only 40 percent of the adults are high school graduates. The median income per person in the district is \$3,567, and the median age is less than 25 years old.

Instead of Kansas City, why not use Bedford-Stuyvesant or the Chicago South Side, where the unemployment percentage of Black youths exceeds 85 percent? Brooklyn's eleventh Congressional District has a 37.2 percent poverty rate, and a per capita income of \$3,981. Chicago's South Side has 27 percent of its families living in poverty. Reagan's \$1.6 trillion nuclear and conventional weapons budget is draining urgently needed resources from our central cities and from minorities, women and labor. For the South Bronx, "the day after" is today: the real impact of the arms race is no movie.

## Holmes should retire now

Rumors are spreading that heavyweight boxing champion Larry Holmes will announce his retirement next Wednesday. The 34-year-old undefeated boxer has held the WBA title for 5½ years, longer than any man since Joe Louis.

Holmes won his title in a split decision on June 9, 1978, defending Ken Norton. If he retires undefeated, (45-0), he will join Rocky Marciano, who retired with a 49-0 record.

Holmes is said to have been upset by the Marvin Frazier fight, which he won handily in the first round. "It made me feel rotten," he said. "I was more hurt winning that fight than I would've been if I had lost. I didn't want to beat this kid up."

The only thing standing in the way of Holmes' retirement is a possible shot at WBA

title holder Gerrie Coetzee of South Africa.

Boxing is a dangerous profession and is the only "sport" in which men directly strike and attempt to injure each other. Although boxing can be an exciting spectator sport when fighters are skilled and evenly matched, it is a brutal sport. Death and serious injury have become commonplace and recent studies have shown that even limited blows to the head can cause irreparable brain damage. The health organizations of the world are increasingly calling for an end to professional boxing, and we agree.

Holmes is a lucky man. He has earned millions; he is involved in successful business enterprises. He is highly respected, has a young family and still has his health. His wife is right. He should retire now.

## Jackson campaign reveals issues

HOUSTON, NOV. 15—A national Jewish leader says that while Jesse Jackson stirs "deep and justifiable concern" among Jews, his presidential candidacy should not be turned into a Black-Jewish confrontation.

Albert Vorspan of New York, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, told the organization's biennial assembly in the Westin Galleria, with 3,000 delegates in attendance:

"Jesse Jackson will probably infuriate us, but his candidacy may just help to expose the American people to the real world and the real conditions of our cities, our minority families, our youth, our elderly, our future."

The Reform Jewish leader said Jews should "refuse to turn the Jackson campaign into a Black-Jewish confrontation."

He added, "We and the rest of the responsible Jewish community should repudiate and condemn the vigilante campaign of the Jewish

Defense League thugs who have announced they will disrupt Jackson's political rallies.

"Does that mean we should ignore his views and his record, especially his unconscionable theatrical embrace of Yasir Arafat and his ties to Arab groups, which stirred deep and justifiable concern among thoughtful Jews? Decidedly not!"

"Jesse Jackson should be subjected to tough and sharp scrutiny, exactly like all other candidates, and on issues across the board, not only on the Middle East. To exempt him from judgement because he is Black would be supremely patronizing."

"To seek to delegitimize his campaign and to hold him to a separate standard would be racism. Jesse is a showman and an opportunist, but he has become a symbol of Black aspirations in our time."

Mr. Vorspan compared the Jackson candidacy to that of John F. Kennedy in 1960. "Jesse Jackson challenges the white monopoly on the White House," he said, "as JFK

did the Protestant monopoly more than 20 years ago. In so doing, he will help achieve a more open society in which even the White House will someday become an equal opportunity employer.

"If he can articulate the pain in the streets and the desperation of those Blacks and others who feel rejected and outcast in our society, America will gain even though Jackson loses. An understanding of the hurt and fear and despair, of what is really happening in that other America, cannot come from the board rooms and executive suites and think tanks which advise the President and the candidates. Jesse Jackson will help to broaden the agenda for debate, to extend participation in the political process and to achieve a more open society... an America in which women and Jews, Blacks and Hispanics, Catholics and non-believers will have full access to the American political process, even at the top."

**The concept of a limited, winnable nuclear war was conclusively disproven when...**

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