

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Keep federal food programs

A task force appointed by Ronald Reagan not only decided that cutbacks in federal assistance have not hurt the poor, but it recommended changes that will reduce benefits for many people at and below the poverty line.

The Task Force recommended that Congress make participation of states in federal food assistance programs voluntary. States could continue to receive federal money but set up their own "autonomous programs," setting their own requirements and benefit standards.

The panel, which was appointed to study allegations of hunger in the U.S., said hunger does exist but "it is impossible to measure the precise extent of hunger in America." So the panel went on to make recommendations that will increase hunger in many parts of the country.

Don't be too sure this won't include Oregon. Currently Oregon does not participate in some of the welfare and medical benefits available to it so many Oregonians are deprived of their rights to a decent standard of living.

## Dump anti-rights commissioners

The Reagan Administration will achieve another step in its effort to eliminate all vestiges of civil rights when the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announces its new position on affirmative action next week. The Commission will oppose the use of affirmative action goals (it calls them quotas) by public employers to correct past job discrimination.

The Commission will also consider a recommendation (sought by Reagan) that the U.S. Supreme Court reverse the Detroit Police Department decision that requires 50-50 Black/White promotions until equity is reached.

For years the Commission has been in the forefront of the fight for civil rights and has been responsible for bringing millions of minority workers into federal and local jobs.

Last fall, when Reagan attempted to fire some Commissioners in order to appoint persons who support his anti-civil rights position, Congress refused to refund the Commission. However, a compromise was reached and the Commission was expanded from six to eight members, with four appointed by Congress and four by the President. When all the appointments were in,

the commission ended up with five Commissioners opposing affirmative action and three favoring, including one with some reservations.

The new staff director, also a Reagan appointee, said the problems of Black unemployment are due to social factors and not white employers' refusal to hire. "Social problems like high unemployment, low educational attainment, a high rate of out-of-wedlock births are problems that are not amenable to solution by civil rights laws or the Civil Rights Commission."

The Commission's attempt to reverse past civil rights gains demonstrates that you can't compromise with the devil. As it has many times before and since, Congress blasted the President's position, then backed down and let him have his way. (Check out Tip O'Neill's response to the invasion of Grenada). Those who suffer because of the inefficiencies of a gutless Congress are, as usual, minorities and the poor.

It is clear that if minorities and the poor are to have any place in this country, we must dump Reagan. A few changes in Congress are also in order.

## U.S., S. Africa feed dictator

One of the recipients of U.S. aid is the corrupt Zaire government. Supported by the U.S., Israel and South Africa, Zaire represents the corrupt policy of aiding dictators to protect "American interests."

Sese Seko Mobutu took power in Zaire, through a military coup, shortly after the nation achieved independence from Belgium. Since then he has become one of the world's richest individuals, most of his wealth skimmed from U.S. economic assistance. An absolute dictator, with no government restrictions, Mobutu controls from 12 to 20 percent of Zaire's operating budget and 30 percent of its capital expenditures.

While the people of Zaire starve, have little medical care and rely on missionaries for educa-

tion, their ruler continues to acquire his riches. While the nation's foreign debt is almost \$4 million, Mobutu's fortune is also estimated at \$4 million.

Why does the U.S. and its allies support a dictator who refuses to allow elections or any other democratic activities, whose human rights record is among the world's worst?

The answer is two-fold: Zaire is rich in mineral resources—diamonds, copper, gold and precious stones—and South Africa holds the exclusive right to purchase Zaire's diamonds.

As long as Mobutu allows his country to be used as a U.S./South African base of operations his personal treasure is secure and the people of Zaire will continue to starve in the midst of wealth.

CONGRATULATIONS, JESSE!!



## Alliance for Justice 1984

by Dr. Manning Marable

Ronald Reagan may be the best organizer of progressive Americans in history.

Reagan isn't just carrying out policies which hurt the elderly, or harm the environment. Nor is his administration satisfied merely with destroying the lives of millions of unemployed people, Blacks and Hispanics. The Reaganites want nothing less than the destruction of the most basic economic and social gains achieved by the overwhelming majority of American people over the past half-century. And in their vicious and racist contempt for us, they have brought about the basis for a powerful anti-Reagan coalition.

Look at their criminal record on human services. Since Reagan was elected over 6 million people have fallen below the poverty level. One out of every four Hispanics live in poverty, while 36.2 percent of all Afro-Americans are poor. Seventy percent of all of Reagan's budget cuts have targeted the poor, and funding for programs which help low-income families this year is almost 30 percent below 1981 funding levels. Since 1982, 700,000 families have been dropped from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and another 260,000 had their benefits cut. Three million children have been dropped from the school lunch program.

The situation in civil rights is even worse. Reaganites originally fought against the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. The administration

opposes school desegregation and affirmative action. Only one Black works in a senior executive position, and Reagan has even tried with partial success to wipe out Republican and Democratic members of the Civil Rights Commission who oppose his racist policies. There were only eight women in his first 116 judicial appointments, and only 19 of his first 400 top administrative appointments were Blacks.

Many progressives recognize, however, that the electoral defeat of Ronald Reagan is not enough to turn the tide of political reaction, sexism and racism which is an integral part of Reaganism. We have to develop linkages between constituencies which have been victimized by the brutalities of the present administration—women, Blacks, labor, the unemployed, low-income people, Hispanics and others. The general focus we must take is to maximize voter registration, education and mobilization efforts within these groups.

A number of national leaders and organizations have called for a year-long campaign to mobilize this great majority of Americans—"Alliance for Justice in '84." Their goal is to force the presidential candidates of both parties to discuss meaningful issues—"jobs, peace and freedom,"—which were elevated by last summer's magnificent March on Washington, D.C. The "Alliance for Justice" has already met in 25 cities, and has engaged at local levels in educational work in churches and neighborhood centers; sponsoring

forums for the presidential candidates where they are forced to address the issues; and organizing voter registration and education drives.

The Alliance For Justice's list of endorsers represents a diverse coalition of forces. From the religious community: Bishop John Hurst Adams, chair, National Congress of Black Churches; John Holt, General Secretary, United Methodist Church; and the Rev. Ben Chavis. In the labor movement: Cesar Chavez, president, United Farm Workers; William Winpisinger, president of the Machinists union; and UAW vice president Horace Sheffield. In the environmentalist movement: Barry Commoner and Lois Gibbs, leader of Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes. From the Black community: Congressman Bill Gray and Congressman John Conyers.

The Alliance for Justice is the next logical step beyond the August 27th March, representing the key constituencies for social justice and economic rights. The culmination of the campaign will be a massive demonstration in Dallas to coincide with the Republican National Convention this August. A huge "Reagan Ranch" will be constructed, where Black, labor, Hispanic, poor people's and women's groups will stage workshops and strategy sessions. The effort is merely one more indication that a powerful human rights coalition of Blacks, Hispanics and whites is forming, and that its principal aim is the defeat of Reaganism, and the achievement of true economic democracy.

## Letters to the Editor

### Coverage good

To the editor:

On behalf of Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom (POSFAF) and the American Friends Service Committee's Southern Africa Program, let me express appreciation for the coverage your paper has continually given to Southern African issues. Our staff and committee goals are to continue to educate people in Oregon about all aspects of South African society: the oppression of the Black majority population; links between racism in the U.S. and South Africa; and the economic responsibilities of the U.S. We also want to continue to provide opportunities for people in Oregon to act on the basis of the above information; to lessen U.S. economic and cultural support for apartheid, with the focus on divestment; and influence U.S. foreign policy towards Southern Africa.

Again, your newspaper continues to play a significant role in exposing the most racist and oppressive regime on the face of the earth and in helping Oregonians understand the issues and how they can become involved in the struggle for Southern African freedom.

Avel Mayfield  
Co-director,  
AFSC Southern Africa Program

### Support King Day

To the editor:

We cordially invite parents, children and community members to join us in celebrating Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.'s birthday on January 16, 1984. We are asking everyone to take January 16, 1984 off from work. In addition we are asking you to participate in the planned program activities. We should be able

to do at least this much to honor one of our greatest heroes who gave his very life for us.

Dr. King's life was spent making this a better world for all people. To honor him, we are planning a commemorative program which will be held at the Jefferson High School Auditorium, at 5210 N. Kerby St. in Portland, from noon to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, January 16th.

We encourage you not only to stay home on that Monday, but to attend the program so that we as a united community may show appreciation and respect for the contribution he made.

For more information, call 281-0163.

We're looking forward to your support in this effort.

Rev. A. Bernard Devers  
Gloria D. Richardson  
Ron Herndon  
Rev. John Garlington

### Back to basics

To the editor:

We must start dealing with basics if we are ever going to think properly, (to analyze), act intelligently, (to bring about positive, non-random results), and create (new values, institutions, etc.) We must do so if we expect to reach our potential and make progressive contributions to humanity, with the Democratic candidate, brother Jesse Jackson.

Basics are root. They are principles (fundamental, essential laws). They explain what is at the core of an idea, an issue, an event, an institution.

To understand basics we must be able to think properly; to be analytical. Thoughts are ideas, and since we are at a thinking stage in our development, we must concern ourselves with ideas. Since all actions stem from ideas; it is necessary that we understand what we think and why we think what we think.

Ideas are mental conceptions.

Ideas are notions. Ideas are also impressions. This is important to poor and working people because impressions many times have no substantial basis, but they oftentimes determine what we do. This is unfortunate, because what we do, individually and collectively, should be based on an understanding of what has confronted us—of what we are dealing with.

Our experience in Amerika has forced and nudged us into the habit of attempting to deal with those things which confront us without getting a basic understanding of what those things are all about. Economics (not money) is a question of survival, as is politics (not voting). Therefore it is necessary that all of us study and attempt to understand all functions (things) which are vital to our survival.

Ideas are therefore very important. The process of thinking and attempting to understand is very important. Getting to the core of anything which is going to affect you/us is very important.

Let's support Margaret Carter; we really need help in the State Legislature. It may be the only intelligent act we have left. An intelligent act is one which is intended to bring about positive, non-random results. Positive because they are progressive; non-random because they are not isolated and do not benefit just a handful of individuals.

But before any of that can happen, before any type of real progress (progress which stands the test of time) can be made in District 18, or this nation, we have to deal with, and get an understanding of, basic ideas and concepts.

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

The Observer welcomes Letters to the Editor. Letters should be short, and must contain the writer's name and address (addresses are not printed). The Observer reserves the right to edit for length.

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