

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Children suffer from Reagan cuts

More American children live in poverty than ever before, according to a recent study by the Children's Defense Fund. The Fund blames Reagan Administration cuts in human programs for the fact that 13.1 million children lived in poverty in 1982—31 percent more than in 1979. Because of "unjust Reagan budget cuts and economic policies," the fund report said, "American children are more likely to suffer death and sickness, hunger and cold, abuse and neglect and to be left alone without adequate child care than three years ago."

The study found an alarming erosion of prenatal care for pregnant women, although it is well known that children of women who receive no or inadequate prenatal care are three times more likely to die in infancy. The infant mortality rate (the percentage of children who die in infancy) increased in eleven states between 1981 and 1982 and in many urban areas the Black infant mortality rate equals that of some of the poorest underdeveloped nations.

About 15 percent of the U.S. population now lives below the poverty line (\$9,862 a year income for a family of four) and the poverty rate was highest in 1982 than any time since 1965. Between 1980 and 1984 Reagan Administration

cuts have dropped 1.5 million children from Aid to Families with Dependent Children; 700,000 children were removed from Medicaid benefits. There was a 28 percent cut in child nutrition programs; 900,000 were cut from free or reduced-price school breakfasts.

These cuts occurred during a period when 30 million workers were unemployed; when 10.7 million people lost health insurance through unemployment; when 454,000 families lost homes through foreclosures.

Any humane government would refuse to make more cuts in social and medical services, but the Reagan Administration's budget, to be submitted to Congress this month, will pare 11 percent more from the AFDC budget, cut maternal and child health programs and job training. Reagan also projects further cuts in Medicaid for low-income families.

Not only will these cuts cause death, pain and suffering for their victims, but they will deny the nation the talents and products of the future. Rather than add to the productive and creative life of the nation, the children raised under these circumstances will require corrective educational, health, correctional and social programs all of their lives, and "their fathers' sins will visit them into the fourth generation."

Commit funds to transportation

Last week Tri-Met announced a cutback in service, an employee lay-off and an adjustment in fares. These cut-backs were based on loss of revenue.

Tri-Met is mainly dependent on payroll taxes paid by employers in the service area and on fares paid by riders. The continuing depression has cut deeply into the payroll tax revenue and into ridership.

Mass transportation has been much in the news in recent years. It is the most economical method of moving people around; it saves energy; it decreases air pollution. Yet there has been no real commitment to mass transportation in this country: the railroads are decaying; the bus systems are inconsistent and too expensive; and airfares are unrealistic.

Locally, government has taken responsibility for public transportation—through Tri-Met—yet has failed to provide necessary financing.

Cutting back the service Tri-Met provides rather than improving it will bring a decline in ridership, a further loss of funds, and more cuts. Rather than building a more efficient and expanded system, Tri-Met will continue to shrink and to lose customers.

A real commitment to mass transportation would require an increase in the payroll tax, inclusion of businesses now exempt from the tax, and an infusion of public tax funds. The benefits of citizen mobility and environmental protection would far outweigh the small investment now necessary.

Where the profits are

Bill DeWeese, one of Portland's most successful industrialist, former School Board member and mayoral candidate, often says Oregon has been good to him. Nike—makers of shoes and athletes—sings the praises of the state that nurtured it (although much of its payroll goes to the Far East).

Rumor has it that both are strongly considering leaving Oregon—following Georgia Pacific, Evans Products and Hyster to areas more conducive to greater profits.

Is this pre-tax election rhetoric—or is it real? Has the love for the mountains, trees and people of Oregon been diminished by the shine of gold elsewhere? It's too bad the Oregon Legislature didn't pass that plant closure bill.

America's shame

A Tacoma benefit concert to aid Sugar Ray Seals, former professional boxer and the only gold medalist from the U.S. in the 1972 Olympics, fizzled and ended with a loss. The purpose of the concert was to aid Seals, who is legally blind as a result of boxing injuries. Seals owes at least \$90,000 in medical expenses.

Isn't it a shame that any American could owe such an exorbitant amount of money for needed medical services?

When will our country join the rest of the civilized world and provide free medical care for all of its residents? How long will the right to health depend on ability to pay?



AFL-CIO NEWS

Time for a progressive voice

Twenty years ago Martin Luther King attempted to embrace what is now called the "Rainbow Coalition" in 1984. The point is, that this is a coalition of human beings who are the victims of American Society. And Martin Luther King believed there was some way that you could bring all these people together under the banner of peace challenging the madness of the arms race, challenging the insanity of interventionist foreign policy and understanding the commonality of our struggles, speaking to freedom and justice and dignity and objecting to human misery of our people—that we could effect change. He realized that in a very powerful and profound way and I think we, now, need to embrace that principle. And that way we can solve these problems.

In the context of the presidential campaign, let us not allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep in a personality contest. Unfortunately the American media has reduced the Democratic primary down to a contest between Mondale and John Glenn rather than a serious exposition of the critical issues of our time. This is not about personality, in 1984. The issues are of too great a magnitude now to be talking about simple personality. Why are we now rushing—all those organizations—to endorse one person so that we will have no debate?

The Democratic Primary is supposed to be about debate. The Convention is supposed to be about give and take; if we don't debate the positions now, when will we debate them? We need to reject this personality approach and demand a critical debate.

I have backed the play of Jesse Jackson because I believe the interesting thing about Jesse's campaign—apart from all the other sides of it—is that Jesse is not encumbered by the notion that he's going to win. So that he can talk about peace and reality and force all those other candidates to talk about them too.

I heard the debate [the January 15th Democratic Party candidate debate] and they said the issue is leadership. The issue is the arms race; the issue is nuclear war; the issue is militaristic foreign policy; the issue is the human misery of the people of our country and around the world. The issue is not about some personality.

I believe there is no way that Ronald Reagan can win re-election with one exception, and that is if the majority of the people do not turn out to the polls. This man has alienated

women, alienated Blacks, alienated other Third World peoples, has tried to break the unions. Middle class people are concerned; senior citizens are frightened about their social security; environmentalists are concerned about acid rain; the peace movement is worried about militaristic policies and nuclear war. That's the majority of the American people. The only way Ronald Reagan can win is if a minority of the people turn out to the polls.

The reason why Jesse becomes an enormous asset in that context is: Jesse runs; he has the potential to register that 3.5 million Blacks and others who have not registered. You have the potential of bringing more people into the political process than have been involved in the process in the past.

What the election of Harold Washington as Mayor of Chicago said, beyond the parochial statement, was that people will go to the polls *en masse* when they feel that there is a colorful candidate and when they believe their self-interests are being articulated in the body politic. This is now a time for the issues to be articulated. To introduce someone who is not encumbered by the need to figure out strategies of winning, but to figure out strategies of clarification, forces everyone to a discussion.

We now have to give and take; we now have to negotiate; we now have to talk about developing serious commitments—in public, not in the "smoke-filled rooms." We have got to talk about the critical issues of our times.

In the course of that type of exposition of the issues we have potential. And for every "middle American" or so-called "right-center" vote we lose by making a clear statement, we will replace them with new people who are being registered by Jesse Jackson and others, who have not been involved in the body politic.

There is potential in that 3.5 million people, so if you lose somebody in the middle of the road to the right because you understand that the arms race is insane then so be it. You pick up that vote ten times by bringing this to the people. One of the things that Jimmy Carter didn't understand in the 1980 election—as he moved over to the center-right, to try to compete with Reagan—is that this pulled the covers off the rest of the people—the Blacks, the Hispanics, the senior citizens, the women, the environmentalists, the peace movement. And what happened? As

Jimmy Carter began to become more conservative in his campaign statements, they lost their enthusiasm for participation and in the process they decided to walk away.

Now, the way to stimulate these people is not to out-Reagan Reagan. This is the moment when a progressive voice must now emerge. These are progressive ideas and let's not make any mistake about it. They won't be implemented by some reactionary or moderate force. Progressive ideas are not going to be implemented by some reactionary or some expedient politician.

Equality and justice and peace for people: these are progressive ideas. This is the moment that progressive forces must now emerge and demand a true exposition of the issues. Then we will get this tremendous stimulation.

In 1984 we should have learned a lesson—that we cannot win by trying to compete for the conservative vote—that's not the majority. You cannot sell me on the idea that the majority of the American voters have become reactionary. We could not have gone from the civil rights movement to the peace movement, the struggle for Third World liberation, women's liberation, gay liberation, senior citizen liberation and what have you and evolved to 1984 as a majority of reactionaries.

The more conservative forces have dominated the body politic, have dominated the arena of debate. They have developed the parameters of debate and they have been, by virtue of their organizational capacity, able to raise funds, and have had a disproportionate impact on the body politic.

In 1984, we of the progressive forces must now emerge and compete in the arena of ideas. We must now force the candidates to talk about issues that are critical and vital to us and I deeply believe that the masses of Americans will respond enthusiastically to finally having somebody seek the presidency that is willing to talk honestly and profoundly about the critical issues of our time.

We can defeat Ronald Reagan, but more than that, we can defeat expedient politics, by putting in White House a truly progressive voice of truly progressive forces.

(Excerpts from the remarks of Rep. Ron Dellums (D-Cal) made at Oregon State University on January 15, 1984.)



Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

We've all heard about the much-vaunted economic recovery. Inflation is down, car sales are up, unemployment is down, production is up, and so on, with a litany of figures which point upward, ever upward.

Unfortunately, all is not rosy for everyone. Real interest rates remain high and threaten to explode if deficits are not controlled. Unemployment remains above 10 percent in Oregon as the Housing Industry has failed to really take off.

Worse yet, a recent study shows that the economic recovery has failed to reach our nation's Blacks. Indeed, the study, conducted by the National Urban League, shows that poverty has actually increased to record levels. Below are some of the highlights of the report.

Unemployment
The Black unemployment rate was 17.8 percent in December, 1983. That is compared to 8.1 percent for

the nation as a whole. The most disheartening figure, however, was that for Black males, aged 18 and 19, the unemployment rate was 42.7 percent.

Unless and until we take steps to ensure that minority and disadvantaged businesses begin to take off, the "recovery" will not be a recovery. Elected officials can glad-hand all they want about the "rising tide," but they can do so only if they ignore the Black community.

Poverty
The 1982 poverty rate for Blacks—the percentage below the official poverty line of \$9,862 for a family of four—rose to an astounding 35.6 percent. This is the highest rate since 1967 and is up from 1981's figure of 34.2 percent.

Yet at a time when the need is greatest, the Administration still plans cuts in Food Stamps, Aid to Families With Dependent Children, and other programs vital to those

living below or at the poverty line.

The figures in the Urban League report should be a call to redouble our efforts to aid minority youth with job training and give a helping hand to minority businesses trying to get on their feet. This is absolutely essential if the entire community is to recover from the economic doldrums of the last three years. They should also be a warning that social programs cannot be slashed as the Administration plans without hurting those in need.

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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