

Blacks bid for power in 1980's

by Mike Alexander

It is the presidential primary season. Jesse Jackson's candidacy is the focus of a resurging movement for Black political power. President Reagan proclaims "America is back" and Walter Mondale promises to bring it back further. As the election approaches, 1/2 of Black families in America struggle to survive below the official poverty line, Black unemployment remains at depression levels, Black elderly live in fear of further budget cuts to lessen the federal budget deficit. What happens beyond 1984? How can Blacks "organize for power" in the 80's?

The answers to these questions will be the focus of a major conference, entitled "Organizing for Black Power in the 80's" at Atlanta University March 2-4 which the National Black Organizers Conference (NBOC) says is of historic importance. NBOC co-convenor Nelson Johnson of Greensboro, N.C. explains, "Unless we think the conditions of Black people are going to get better, rather than worse regardless of whose elected, it's clear that we must forge greater unity between the thousands of organizers, activists, progressive politicians, clergy, and students around the country who are struggling to achieve Black political

power."

Thus, he adds, NBOC's objectives in hosting the conference are to "bring together as many organizers and activists as possible, across a myriad of ideological and organizational lines, to forge a unified view on the road ahead for the Black liberation movement; begin the process of building a structure to solidify the unity; develop a common program that will enhance our local work and tie it together and, lastly, put forth a clear view on the situation facing Black people and our struggle for power."

According to Dr. Mary Hoover of California, another NBOC co-convenor, the central purpose of NBOC, since it was founded at a conference at Fisk University in December, 1982, is to forge a unified core of dedicated Black organizers and activists to "fill the void in leadership in the Black liberation movement." Since then, she said, the 50 veteran and newer activists, representing clergy, academicians, politicians, grassroots organizers, and students who met to soberly assess the situation facing Black America after two years of Reaganomics and increased racism and racist violence has "established groups in over 40 cities, worked to build the March on Washington, and began supporting

Jesse Jackson for President before the idea of a Black candidate was a viable discussion."

NBOC credits Jackson for "tapping and arousing the tremendous sentiment among Black people to fight for political power," but, Johnson said, "there is no group of organizers who are themselves united enough to consciously organize and direct the movement towards self-determination. That task remains to be completed and it is crucial if the movement is to reach its potential."

NBOC hopes the opportunity to speak to perhaps 1000-1500 such organizers will lure Jesse Jackson himself to give the main presentation at the conference Saturday night. Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam is already committed to speak on Friday. Francisco Campbell, a representative of the government of Nicaragua, where Johnson said a "U.S. invasion is imminent," is scheduled for Saturday, as are representatives from the African National Congress and the Palestinian peoples' movement.

The plenarys, workshops, and panel discussions will focus on "how to achieve and utilize local power." Veteran Black activist Owen Brooks of Greenville, Miss., the third NBOC co-convenor, said "We want to discuss things from the

standpoint of how do you take over locally now, as a prelude to merging into a movement for power on the national level." The lists of panelists, workshop leaders, etc. includes Oakland City Council member Wilson Riles Jr., Juanita Wade who coordinated the Mel King campaign in Boston, Mr. Aludin Mohammed from North Carolina, Phyllis Jones, Executive Director of Common Capitol in Washington D.C., Attorney Johnnie Walls of Greenville, Miss., Den Haskins from the Gibson organization and Jackson campaign in New Jersey and Rev. Leon White of N.C.

Also on the agenda are workshops to discuss specific questions such as the role of students, women, religion, education and the media in the Black liberation struggle, Black trade union organizing and Black independent politics, and a special workshop to discuss renewed efforts to bring the U.S. government before the United Nations for its "genocidal" policies towards Blacks. Several cultural performances by noted artists Ojida Pen, Jean Sindab, the Harambee Singers, and others are also planned. The conference registration fee is \$10, \$5 for students and unemployed.

In urging activists of all stripes to attend, Owen Brooks reiterated the point that Jesse Jackson's can-

didacy is inspiring people who had little hope to fight for political power, but, he adds, "the potential for power can be forged into real power only if we unite and utilize all the rich lessons of our previous struggles. We must close ranks across old lines of disunity and organize for power. It is in this spirit that we call on Black organizers, grassroots leaders, student leaders, religious leaders, and professionals to join this historic "Black Power" conference in Atlanta.

Jackson campaign kicks off voter drive

A statewide door-to-door voter registration drive is being organized by the Jesse Jackson for President campaign on Saturday, February 25. Volunteers will meet at St. Andrews Community School at 4919 N.E. Ninth at 9:00 a.m. and noon for training before going out canvassing.

There are 368,000 unregistered eligible voters in Oregon and 168,000 in Multnomah County. Jesse Jackson said, "By and large, people are unregistered because they are unmotivated." One of the major goals of Jackson's campaign is to involve these unmotivated people in the political process.

What's your stand on new jobs and industry for Portland?

"Ask anyone out of work what a job is worth. Yet, as a member of the Portland Planning Commission, I've seen government bureaucrats use studies and red tape as excuses to do nothing. That's intolerable. It's an economic and human waste to have qualified people sitting on the sidelines with no jobs available. As City Commissioner, I will push the Council to work together for once as a team to support the growth of local businesses and to bring new jobs and industry to Portland."

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"Fair Pay" petition = government pay cuts

by Helen M. Erlanson

Petitioners will soon be asking you to sign a petition to put the Fair Pay Amendment on the ballot. This amendment is a potentially lethal weapon that can be detrimental to all employed Oregonians as well as the unemployed, retired and small businesses.

The Fair Pay Amendment, if adopted, will become a permanent part of the Constitution of the State of Oregon. The objective of the Fair Pay Amendment is to save money for all Oregon taxpayers. This will be accomplished by reducing the "elements of pay" of all government employees to equal the pay of those doing similar jobs in the private sector. The sponsors of this amendment define "elements of pay" as wages, fringe benefits, vacations, educational benefits, and literally anything you receive as part of your employment. The "private sector" is industry, business, hospitals, restaurants and others who have non-government employees. Government employees, according to the sponsors of the amendment are all city, county and state employees. It is necessary to know the definitions to understand the Fair Pay Amendment. This amendment has nothing to do with Federal Government employees. . . yet.

The Fair Pay Amendment will remove from the cities, counties,

schools and state government the right to set salaries and other elements of pay for the people they employ. It will reduce the ability of these government units to offer or provide incentives to attract well-qualified people. This right will indirectly be given to the leaders in the private sector. The private sector will set the standard average of pay for government employees. That being the case, wages of non-government employees can also be decreased or increased to set and determine the average wage of all clerks, secretaries, carpenters, nurses, cashiers or whatever you do in your employment.

An example will explain the mechanics of the Fair Pay Amendment. A tax paid school janitor may not receive an element of pay greater than the average pay of all janitors in the private sector. According to the sponsors, if a tax paid janitor is receiving more than the average, his pay will automatically be reduced. Sounds fair, but is it? If the tax paid janitor is found to be earning less than his counterpart in the private sector, his wages will not be automatically increased.

This janitor and other underpaid government employees would have the right of appeals. Can you afford to pay your school administrator over \$100,000? This is not an unusual salary for his counterpart in private employment. Conceivably,

in a class action suit, the courts would rule in favor of all government employees in as much as Paragraph 2 of the Fair Pay Amendment reads: "Will require fairness in all elements of compensation between government unit and private sector employees who have similar job classifications." However, the sponsors of this amendment deny it would open the door for large numbers of government employees to receive enormous salary increases.

The sponsors claim it will result in saving huge amounts of tax money and will cost very little to administer. The amendment calls for a commission of five people to serve five years at \$1.00 a year. Government employees are specifically excluded from serving on this commission. This commission will hire a staff. The staff will gather data from the private sector to determine wages for government employees. Someone will analyze all the government positions and compare them to similar positions in the private sector. Tax paid nurses will be compared to private sector nurses; clerks to clerks; teacher to teacher; doctors to doctors; administrators to administrators and so on down the line. It is not clear who will do this monumental task at little cost. The cost of living, the needs and numerous other variables that exist in different parts of Oregon must

also be considered in arriving at fair pay for comparable employment. Thus far, the amendment has no provisions to verify the accuracy of the data collected from the private sector.

If the Fair Pay Amendment is adopted the most immediate impact will be upon government employees. The hidden and perhaps the most lethal impact will be upon those employed in the private sector, the small business and the retired. If the average pay is set by the private sector, what controls are there to prevent large businesses from setting new salary averages by increasing wages until the small business is squeezed out and all of us, including the retired and unemployed, pay higher prices to compensate for these increased wages? What controls are there to prevent large businesses from reversing such a tactic and start reducing the wages of those in private employment in order to further reduce the wages of government employees?

The Fair Pay Amendment has been designed to control and set wages for city, county and state employees. It will cost money to put this amendment on the ballot. Once on the ballot many of us will vote "yes" without thinking. The most we need to see is something says it is going to reduce our taxes. Should you sign this petition? Before you make a decision, consider the possibility that any legal precedent that controls the wages of one group of people can also be used to control your wages.

Portlander helps educate lowans

by Lanita Duke

Grassroot News N.W. — While the mass media constantly reports the results of the Iowa caucus, it is ignoring the resolution adopted by the 67 precinct caucus on February 20th.

"We call on the next administration of the United States to end all economic, military and nuclear support for South Africa until South Africa holds elections on a one-person-one vote basis. And implements United Nations resolutions on an internationally supervised election in Namibia."

This progressive stand from the farm belt did not occur because the cows came home. Rather, it was the result of a ten-day whistle stop tour through Iowa by a group advocating freedom for Southern Africa's freedom—a group including Portlander, Avel Mayfield.

Mayfield, co-director of American Friends Service Committee's Southern Africa Program in Portland, joined South African poet Dennis Brutus, Naomi Tutu, daughter of Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, and 14 others from state and anti-apartheid programs to raise the awareness level of lowans during the bone chilling cold of January.

Mayfield stated, "We went to the



AVEL MAYFIELD

churches, grade schools and universities with a list of questions to ask the presidential candidates."

She said lowans were unaware of the situation in South Africa and their humanity flowed as they absorbed the vital statistics which says that the Black majority can not vote, they must carry passes at all times and that the government institutes a policy that resettles three

million Blacks to poor villages where the infant mortality rate is greater than 50 percent.

Mayfield also said lowans were not aware of U.S. ties in South Africa which impose a cold war perspective (Russia vs. U.S.) on the conflict, by increased sales of high technology nuclear equipment and rejection of the international effort to censure South Africa for continued illegal occupation of Namibia.

The more direct issue of the U.S.'s corporate expansion and maintenance in South Africa and the Reagan Administration support of the racist regime, was also addressed.

However, anyone listening to the three major news networks, outside of Iowa, could not tell this type of advocacy had occurred in Iowa. Those who watched the debate in its entirety heard one of the few questions, that received applause, dealt with divestment of funds and aid to South Africa.

Mayfield said she believed the reason why the major news networks censured the visit or never aired the resolution was their direct or indirect investment in South Africa.

"But the resolution proved to us that our work was valuable. It proved that Iowa heard us."

Death train makes Portland run

A special train carrying 100 hydrogen bombs will pass through the Portland area early Saturday on its way to the Trident base in Washington.

The all-white train has 17 heavily armed cars, including 3 for guards, and is capped with gun turrets. It is guarded by Department of Energy personnel carrying machine guns, hand grenades and other weapons.

The train left the Pentex plant in Amarillo, Texas, passing through Topeka, Kansas early Wednesday afternoon and proceeding westward through Nebraska. It is expected to reach Pocatello, Idaho, Thursday night. The exact route to the west coast is secret, but according to a spokesman from Ground Zero, it will probably take the Union Pacific line on the Oregon side of the Columbia and cross to Vancouver or take the Burlington Northern line on the north bank of the Columbia and go directly to Vancouver. The exact route will be known when the train leaves Pocatello.

Demonstrators have lined the tracks as the train proceeded through the Midwest. For further information, call Fellowship of Reconciliation, 222-7293, or Pax Christi, 244-6099.

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