

EDITORIAL/OPINION

War and Rose Festival don't mix

Portlanders should be proud of their Rose Festival—an annual celebration of spring and the fragrant blossoms that grow so profusely here—and of the pageantry and participation it attracts.

Tourists come from around the country to witness it, and the spectacle is beamed via satellite to millions of TV viewers.

There should, however, be no room in the Rose Festival for the increasing public display of militarism evident this year. Police and military organizations played a much too visible role, from the Seattle motorcycle police team which has begun the parade for several years now, followed by Navy men brandishing rifles equipped with bayonets, followed by mounted sheriff's posses, to the ships of destruction and intimidation docked for six days on the Willamette next to the Fun Center.

Spectacle and celebration are fine. That is what parades are all about. But using symbols of our aggressive foreign policy as a focus is to ignore the realities of war and the suffering of those touched by it.

The U.S.S. Leahy, one of the larger vessels that visited Portland last week, is a guided

missile cruiser that can carry nuclear weapons. Although the Navy will not affirm or deny the presence of such weapons on its ships, all vessels in the Leahy's class are outfitted with nuclear missile launchers, and the Leahy itself underwent an expensive refitting several years ago to upgrade it to accommodate the nuclear missiles.

The Leahy is named for a Navy admiral who bears the ignominious distinction of having led the 1912 U.S. invasion of Nicaragua. The vessel also was the flagship for the fall, 1983, military exercises off the coast of Central America, which were, and are, designed to terrify the people of Nicaragua and threaten its government—all because the Reagan Administration doesn't approve of its policies.

Portland voters have spoken out both on a nuclear freeze (2 to 1 in favor) and on U.S. intervention in Central America (2 to 1 against). It's time to act on these sentiments.

Let's welcome the sailors to Portland for the Rose Festival, but let's not welcome dangerous symbols of U.S. military aggression to our city.

Nuclear liability crux of debate

Probably few people have heard of the Price-Anderson Act, a 1957 federal law that places a \$585 million liability limit on a utility following a nuclear plant accident.

This means that after an incident such as Three Mile Island, the utility owning and operating the facility could be liable for only that amount (which would be paltry in the event of major contamination) before the federal government kicks in with the rest.

The act is due to expire in 1986, and Congress is now considering new legislation to extend and change it. Some want the liability limit raised. Some, including the federal Department of Energy, want nuclear waste dumps included under the act.

The Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington State is now being considered along with nine other sites as a repository for the nation's high-level radioactive wastes. Washington State is concerned that the federal government will not pay for damages should an accident during transportation or disposal of such wastes occur.

Leaks of radioactive materials at Hanford have occurred in the past. The Columbia River, which flows through Hanford, used to be called "the most radioactive river in the world" during the 1950's. Although some cleanup has been done, the river recently showed increasing levels of some radioactive elements.

The State of Washington, along with residents of Oregon who live near the Columbia, is correct to worry about this issue. An accident at Hanford could bankrupt Washington (and perhaps Oregon) and render the area uninhabitable, not to mention causing injuries and deaths.

Those who advocate nuclear power generation and all the dangers it poses should pay when it goes awry. If the federal government imposes a high-level radioactive waste dump on Washington State, the private sector firms involved and the federal government should bear the financial responsibility if, heaven forbid, an accident occurs.



Black leaders have forgotten

Black leaders who publicly went against the wishes of their constituents are now running to Jesse Jackson with open arms, taking credit for a victory they had nothing to do with.

The reality of Black leadership that benefits from the status quo vs. progressive change for their people is a dark historical chapter in the book of Blacks in America.

Some of our leaders have forgotten what it is like to be cold, hungry and imprisoned by poverty. Most live better than the people they are representing. It makes us wonder who they represent—themselves or their constituents.

These men and women have forgotten the golden rule of leadership. A leader does not lead the people. The people lead the leader.

The masses of Third World people in America cast their vote for the Rev. Jesse Jackson while some of their mayors played it safe. Like crabs in a barrel they felt threatened when other crabs reached for the top.

National unity in the community demands this togetherness. Let the so-called leader beware. The people will never forget. And we will reclaim our leaders while laying a path for progressive change for our communities.



Cuba's People's Power

by Dr. Manning Marable
"From The Grassroots"

Last month a delegation of Black American intellectuals was invited to visit Cuba. During eight busy days, I met with hundreds of Cuban teachers, political leaders, artists, physicians and students. Contrary to the Reagan Administration's polemics, the Cubans have developed, despite many difficulties, a productive and well-run society in the twenty-five years since the revolution. The two things which most impressed me during my visit were Cuba's political system—which is not a totalitarian regime—and the island's amazing achievements in the field of medicine.

Cuba's basic governmental structure, termed "Peoples' Power," is very different from that found in most Communist nations. All elections begin at the neighborhood level, and each electoral district has between 150 and 3,000 voters. Each district of "Peoples' Power" is subdivided into "areas" of several hundred persons, where public meetings are held to nominate municipal delegates from the neighborhoods. Persons nominated to run from various "areas" run against each other for the district's seat. After 30 days, there is a direct and secret ballot; voters must be 16 years or older. The candidate winning a majority is elected, but if no one wins 50 percent, the top two candidates face each other in a runoff election in one week. Once the municipal delegates are elected, the municipal assemblies in turn elect representatives to the provincial assembly. Provincial assemblies

elect national delegates who set national legislation in Havana. What is interesting about the Cuban electoral system is that voters are given a selection of from two to eight candidates, and membership in the Communist Party is not required to run for office. Throughout the country, about 30 percent of the municipal delegates who won local office were not Communists.

In the April elections this year, 98.6 percent of all eligible voters cast ballots—all the more impressive in a country where there is no legal requirement to vote. Three of this year's delegates in Havana were only 16 years old, and the youngest was a teenage girl who was not a member of the Communist Party.

The basic economic system of Cuba is, of course, socialism, but elements of capitalism are permitted to exist, and even to thrive. In rural areas, 25 years ago, almost all of the best farmland was owned by a select elite of Cuban families and American businesses. The Revolution seized these estates, and over the years, created agricultural collectives for the landless peasantry. Still today, about 15 percent of all Cuban agricultural output is in private hands.

The gross wage differentials between the peasants and the powerful have long been eliminated. The minimum monthly salary for everyone in Cuba is 85 pesos; the maximum salary, 450 pesos; and the average salary, 170 pesos. Most medical doctors, for instance, would earn about 370 pesos per

month, and skilled laborers could receive probably half that amount. But state control ensures that certain consumer items, when available, are accessible to all. A quart of milk in Cuba costs only 20 cents; a pair of leather shoes, 15 to 20 pesos; an average lunch at a restaurant, 70 cents. All workers, from janitors to Castro himself, receive 30 days paid vacation per year.

The greatest surprise I had however, was in the remarkable cultural diversity of the island. When visiting Santiago, the second largest city, our delegation was entertained by a local Cuban student choir—who sang traditional Negro spirituals from the U.S.! The lead singer and director, a handsome and very dark Afro-Cuban, was familiar with Afro-American gospels and "Freedom Songs" from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Throughout the streets of Santiago and Havana, music is continuous: sometimes a mixture of African rhythms and a Latin beat, which is the heart of Cuban music, but more frequently, especially on Cuban radios, the sounds of Gladys Knight, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. Occasionally I came across a sight I expected to find only in Black America: young Afro-Cuban males, donning knit caps, bopping along with huge portable radios. It is fair to say, at least from my observations, that the Revolution has learned to live with Donna Summer, Gloria Vanderbilt-type jeans, and a broad diversity in its popular culture.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

The letters I wrote to you recently brought both positive and negative responses. I am glad I ruffled a few feathers, this way I know the city is awake and listening.

I would like to reiterate my stand, when I referred to the white system looking at our Black leadership, to find weakness. Maybe Fran Ariniello is having a problem with what I said because (he or she) is white and doesn't understand the struggle Blacks have gone through, and are still going through in this city.

I know it is out of the norm for a Black to criticize the white power structure. I realize that what we all have strived for, for a long time is to have the unity between races. I have lived in Portland since 1944 and little has changed.

I am not trying to be vindictive or shallow in my thinking, but I am a realistic person, with battle scars received over sixteen years of trying to change things in Portland.

I appreciate Fran Ariniello's thought and sentiment, but we have always had these white liberals who get offended when the truth is told. But when the whites advance and the Blacks go backwards, hoping and dreaming is not enough.

We must have good Black leadership to pave the way for the unity that you speak of, in District 18, the State of Oregon and America.

Vesia DeWeese-Loving

To the Editor:

The *Portland Observer*, with its editorial "Black Victory Discounted" showed extreme callousness and completely missed the point of the recent *Oregonian* article by Foster Church. It was very clear from the article that the cohesion of the Black Community in Portland was the deciding factor in the

Primary victory of Margaret Carter for Representative in District 18. However, in using the article as another excuse to attack Representative Ed Leek, you have lowered your standards and diminished the impact of Margaret Carter's victory.

Rep. Leek's alleged arrogance, his support of George McGovern, and his rating by lobbyists have nothing to do with the point of the article. What is important was his support of the Democratic program and legislation that put people ahead of profits; support which earned him the enmity of the Alliance for Economic Development with its big business bias.

My letter to Bill Thomas (not, by the way, an official reprint) had nothing to do with Rep. Leek's qualifications for office, and hardly deserves mention in your editorial.

Ed Leek's record in support of the citizens of our community as well as the rest of the city and state is unchallengeable. To pin your credibility on his support of the precious civil rights of juveniles because one rapist was released prematurely is tantamount to advocating the reinstatement of the death penalty because one ex-con commits a crime. You tread on very thin ice.

While acknowledging the fine, outstanding qualifications of Margaret Carter and the positive support of her community, it is a disservice to her to continue to unfairly attack her opponent and his commendable record.

If Ed Leek owes Margaret Carter a congratulatory phone call or letter, the *Portland Observer* owes Ed an apology. I would wager Margaret will get the former before we see the latter.

Dick Celsi, Chair
Democratic Party of Oregon

To the Editor:

A meeting at the King Neighborhood Facility Friday, June 1st, was ostensibly called to marshal community support against the choice of R.A. Hatch Co., for receiving over seventy percent of contract dollars awarded by Tri-Met for the light rail project.

The meeting instead provided a platform for union sympathizers to assail the Black community as being "lazy and disinterested."

Two proposals were put forth without being enacted upon. One was the call for an "injunction against Hatch" which the union lawyer publicly advised Nate Proby against pursuing in this district because the court would not be responsive to the evidence to be presented by the union. Mr. Proby was admonished to use a judge in Washington, D.C. who would be more inclined to issue an injunction.

The other proposal was a call to "violence" by a Black union organizer, who later recanted his call on the basis that "the community was not together" of similar verbiage. What really came out in the meeting was the degree to which the union is prepared to use members of this community for free. The Operator's union spent something to the tune of \$1.4 million dollars in an attempt to close down Hatch.

It is unfortunate that a union could bankrupt itself against a merit shop and not even offer to spend a little change for supporting related actions by qualified Blacks.

J. Hill

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.



MEMBER



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