

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Douse the flame of inequality

The recent disclosure of institutional discriminatory hiring practices in the Portland Fire Bureau should not go unnoticed or unchallenged.

With only 17 people of color and one woman employed as fire fighters, out of 565, there is evidence that the administrative commitment to affirmative action is not indicative of the bureau's hiring practices. The situation suggests a confrontation between two concepts: equality as a theoretical right and equality as reality.

The City is at the cutting edge of a serious dilemma. To provide employment opportunity to all taxpayers who want a share of the rapidly dwindling right to be employed while keeping their budget in the Black.

In June, '84, the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission released an evaluation that found the city exceedingly low in the numbers of people of color and women employed. MHRC questioned the city's commitment to affirmative action and fairness in its hiring practices.

"In the first nine months of 1983-84, there were 37 positions where a woman or minority

were among the top three candidates, and they were not hired," MHRC revealed.

A flutter of memos circulated from City Commissioners to bureau heads with a verbal commitment to affirmative action, attached. The situation at the Portland Fire Bureau is one example where a city commissioner did not practice what she preached.

The Portland Fire Bureau is not unlike other governmental entities, where an "old boy" hiring network ambushes affirmative action. This practice prevents people of color and women from ever filtering into the system to help bring about change.

The city commissioners should take the initiative by basing appointments on underutilization of people of color and women, and they should review the policy of only hiring those who score number one on the civil service exam, when the degree of difference between number two and number three is not that great.

The City Council has the responsibility to douse the flame of inequality in city government before it engulfs the city with employees who are not reflective of the population or its taxpayers.

FELLOW HEADS OF STATE - PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR FUTURES

THEY SEE HUGE DEBTS, FAILING BANKS AND SKY-HIGH INTEREST RATES



OBVIOUSLY, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FAST

I SUGGEST WE ALL ENDORSE EACH OTHER FOR RE-ELECTION



Reagan's political hocus-pocus

by Dr. Manning Marable
"From The Grassroots"

Perhaps President Reagan's greatest publicity coup in the past year has been the widespread belief that the administration's policies have produced an "economic recovery." Technically, there has been a marked decline in unemployment rates. From December 1982 to December 1983, the unemployment rate declined from 11 to 8.5 percent. As of July, 1984, the Reagan Administration proudly reported that only 8.5 million Americans were jobless, roughly 7.5 percent of the labor force.

However, the Joint Economic Committee of Congress noted recently that real unemployment is still worse than ever. The Labor Department does not count "discouraged workers" in figuring the labor force. These are women and men who have lost their jobs, have exhausted all unemployment compensation, and who have not "actively" applied for a new job within a month or more. If discouraged workers are counted, the real rate of unemployment increases to 9.7 percent. Then there are millions more workers who have part-time jobs who would like to work full time, and millions of others who are employed on a temporary or marginal basis at minimum wage levels, which cannot support a family. The Reagan Administration counts none of these marginally employed adults in their unemployment statistics. And the total number of Americans who were either out of work, underemployed, or who were in families whose incomes were halted or disrupted between June 1983 and June 1984 was 71.2 million.

The Reaganites and conservative Democrats have suggested several "solutions" to the unemployment crisis. One popular scheme is "workfare," in which welfare recipients are ordered to work at a public job in order to receive benefits. In theory, workfare provides the poor with occupational skills which permit them to be competitive for other jobs. But in practice, it is little more than slave labor.

In New York City last year, 27,000 welfare recipients had benefits cut or halted for months for "failing to meet work requirements." Nearly all welfare recipients do not object to working—but they receive less than half of the salary normally given to nonwelfare employees with identical skills for the same jobs. Few of the workfare participants ever obtain permanent, "regular" jobs; none of them may join the public employee's union, by court order; and their use by the city weakens the unions and reduces the number of positions for full time workers. A second strategy of the reaganites, the proposal for a "subminimum wage" for youth, would reduce positions for adult workers and tend to lower the overall wage scale for service workers and manual laborers.

Congressman Charles Hayes (D-Illinois) recognizes the inadequacies of these and other "solutions" to the jobs crisis. "With residents of urban ghettos and areas which suffered disproportionately from industrial decline, reaching twice the national average, it is obvious that new and innovative strategies" are needed "to attack this critical problem." On June 14, Congressman Hayes introduced before Congress, H.R. 5814, "The Income and Jobs Action Act of 1984," which in comprehensive scope and political vision is one of the most profound documents in recent years. The "Income and Jobs Action Act" declares that "every adult American able and willing to earn a living through paid work" should have the human right "to a free choice among opportunities for useful, productive and fulfilling paid employment at decent wages." Those unable to work have the right "to an adequate standard of living that rises with increases in the wealth and productivity of the society." H.R. 5814 calls for one percent of the annual Pentagon budget to be transferred to a new "Conversion Planning Office" which would promote planned conversion "from military to civilian"

sectors of the economy, and from old industrial civilian sectors (steel, auto, etc.) to "areas of needed civilian expansion." The bill also calls for decentralized, "non-federal planning for sustainable recovery and full employment" by town, city, state government agencies, with direct input from neighborhood associations, women's and civil rights groups. The long-range goal of it is "bottom-up" planning is to foster genuine economic democracy, and cutting the average work week to 35 hours.

It is absolutely imperative that all constituencies from the Rainbow Coalition—Blacks, Latinos, farmers, women's groups, progressives in trade unions, etc.—push the Hayes jobs bill at local levels through educational meetings and public demonstrations. Various groups, including the National Congress of Unemployed Organizations and trade union locals, are mobilizing members to lobby for this bill. Last year, unemployment cost the nation over \$200 billion in unpaid taxes and benefits, a guaranteed income of job not only makes solid economic sense—it is the most fundamental moral and human right of all.

Nicaragua

(Continued from Page 1, Column 4) Nicaraguan workers, and what is their relationship to the government?

• What relations exist between the labor movements of Nicaragua and the U.S. and how can these relations be strengthened?

Upon their return, the Oregon delegates will report back to the Multnomah County Labor Council and many other local labor bodies including Painters, Carpenters, Letter Carriers, Hotel and Restaurant Employees, Laborers, Clothing and Textile Workers, Bakers, Food and Commercial Workers, Teachers, Electrical Workers, and TV and Radio Artists. In addition, the delegation plans to produce a comprehensive written report.

Letters to the Editor

One only please

To the Editor:

Once again, Black political leaders are displaying a lack of political wisdom. Three Black candidates running for the same office is not the best strategy toward 'bonafide political power.' All candidates are well qualified and have good ideas that will benefit the Black community and the City of Portland. The fact is, to win the vacant seat in the City Council, only one Black candidate should run.

It is time to advance beyond individual ambitions and become a block-busting power. Black politicians, therefore, must be willing to sacrifice personal power and replace it with togetherness power. Black political organizations must take a firm stand on this issue, for it is "Political Suicide".

Herb Cawthorne, Dick Bogle, Kay Toran, Oregon Rainbow Coalition, Black United Front and all those in the political arena, "in the name of God" let us organize from a block-busting position and show our true strength. "Together we stand, and divided we fall." The time is NOW. Let's all get together.

Vernell Carter

Christ was Malcolm

To the Editor:

The christian church no longer understands her role in terms of revolution and change. She has

become status quo oriented and stagnant. In so doing, she not only betrayed her founding fathers but she betrayed the Christ whose gospel she yet claims to be preaching. Generations of Black preachers have lost sight of the radical and revolutionary nature of the Christian gospel. They have forgotten that Jesus the Christ stood in opposition to the religious, political and social status quo of his day because he found those positions to be oppressive and dehumanizing to his people.

Christ was a Malcolm X. One of the reasons it is so easy for us to forget about the real reasons and the real meaning behind the death of Christ, is the fact that, if we can do so we can then absolve and remove ourselves from suffering and struggle.

Many Black people in America and the Caribbean are suffering from what I choose to term the Afro-Saxon Mentality. In short, achieving all of the status and success symbols of the caucasoid community. The Afro-Saxon Mentality is the psychological urge to be caucasoid, and so strong is the urge that men who have Black faces and who have suffered the reality of the Black condition, can seemingly brush aside their blackness and embrace values that are caucasoid.

Although Christianity has its

roots in Africa, it has become too exclusively Aryan to suit Black people. Christianity encouraged slavery, taught Black inferiority and self hatred, denied Blacks positions of leadership and arrogantly denied African customs and culture. Not only did Christianity condone slaves, it gave slavers missionary zeal in "doing their duty to God."

I'm inclined to believe that it is the role of the church to struggle against the forces of injustice and to struggle against the structural inequity of this society.

It is interesting that Christ's priority for living was to liberate his people—not God the Father, who is analogous to our "religion"—but people: Christ lived in God for people, because Christ was so much in God. It is necessary that one's philosophy nourishes and sustains his work. Christ the living revolution and "church," reached people's philosophies or religion or reason for being through tending to their primary needs—providing them with food, clothing, shelter, and even "community"—a safe environment of persons like themselves.

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.

Wow! The Observer survey:

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