

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Mayor Bud Clark: call anytime

Last week our general manager received a call from Mayor Bud Clark's aide who said our April 24th editorial was unfair. He was immediately directed, as all our readers, to write a letter to the editor.

Ironically, our editorial board felt that particular editorial was rather tame. We pulled our punches when we wanted to say how inexperienced the Mayor's staff is by the way they handled the Stevenson's tragedy. It was the Black United Front who called for an inquest and the Mayor responded to the community's demand for justice.

We wanted to say how the police union was really running the department but we gave Chief Penny Harrington the benefit of the doubt. We wanted to say that the lack of a definite

condemnation of racism among the rank and file of the police bureau makes Portland ripe for a long, hot summer. But when members of the rank and file sell T-shirts which say, "Don't choke 'em, smoke 'em," that says it for us.

Mayor Bud Clark rode to victory because of the way his predecessor handled the opossum incident. It left a bitter taste in our mouths that we cleared up at the voting booth. The fact that officers involved in Stevenson's death were also involved in the opossum incident, clearly proves an element exists within the bureau which has no business exercising the authority of a policeman.

Mayor Clark's aide should be thankful for an independent, outside analysis of an institution riddled with racism and reeking with political nepotism.

## Oregonian promotes racist views

How racist is *The Oregonian* newspaper when it comes to cataloging the progress, aspiration and failure of desegregation in Portland?

Well, according to their 7-day series penned by educational writer Kathie Durbin, *The Oregonian* is and continues to be among the perpetrators of institutional racism, sloppy journalism and disseminating a bankrupt analysis.

In a classic example of a character assassination, *The Oregonian* libeled the principal of Harriet Tubman Middle School, Herman Washington. And the majority of individuals quoted by Durbin told our educational writer that their words were taken out of context or misquoted. A glaring example of a deaf interpretation of source material was the incorrect usage of one of our editorials.

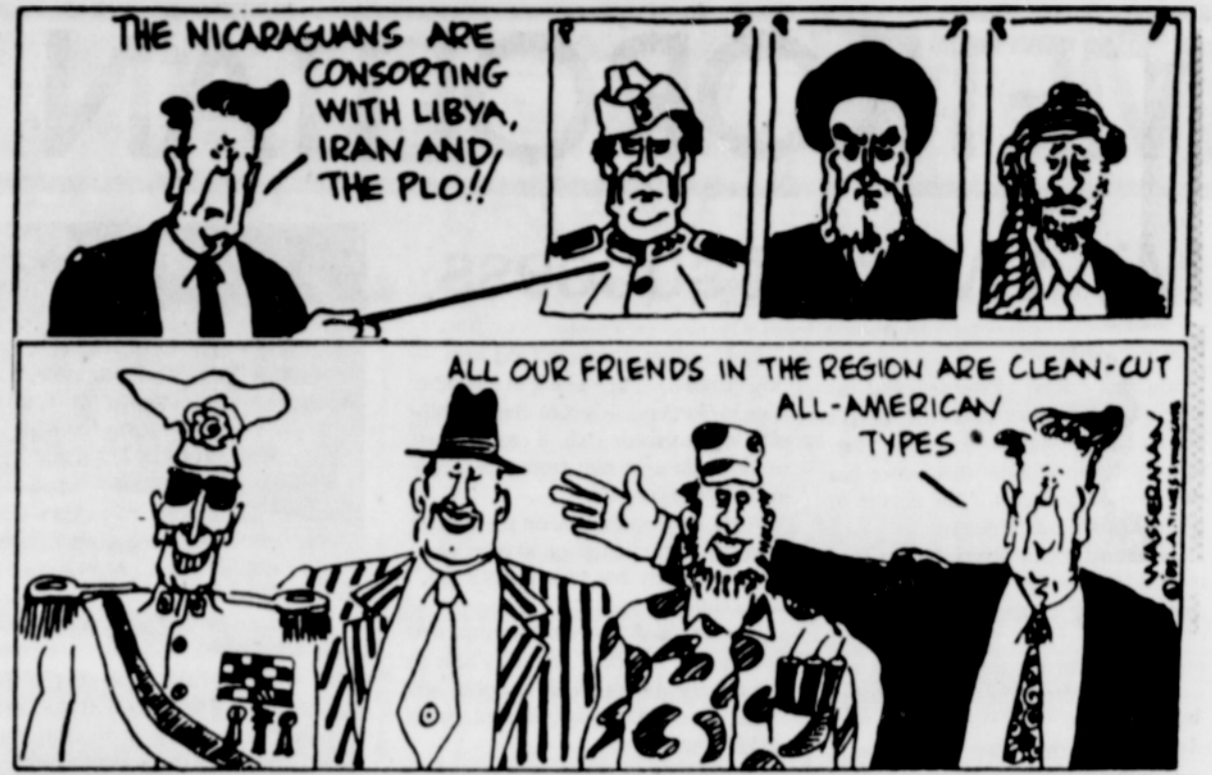
Durbin, who couldn't see beyond her own racism, said one of our editorials demanded Tubman teachers to upgrade the writing skills of Black students in light of only one Black student out of 15 winning an essay contest. This is a classic misquote. We used the essay competition as an example of systematic miseducation

in the district and called for a district-wide approach to attack the low expectations of classroom teachers.

Not only were the individual segments flawed and flowered with regressive terms such as calling low-income Afro-American children "poor" but Durbin's editor allowed the district to excuse their pitifully poor Affirmative Action record on the pages of Portland's only daily newspaper.

*The Oregonian's* underline theme of integration is insidious, outdated and destructive. Readers were left with an impression once Black children are mixed with white children, their achievement scores will rise. This angle unconsciously promoted white supremacy.

As consumers we have power over *The Oregonian*. If you read a passage that you know is incorrect, call up the reporter and the editor. Historically, *The Oregonian* has never represented progressive, low-income or people of color adequately or accurately. Their series on desegregation slandered, libeled and defamed our children and community. Therefore, their reporters are not to be trusted and their product is not to be believed.



## Bill Gray: first Black vice president?

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

It's no secret that the Democratic Party's leaders are now desperately attempting to repudiate their ties to liberalism, the welfare state, and the legacy of the Great Society. Last month's defeat of Gary, Indiana, mayor Richard Hatcher as party vice chair and the dilution of the "special interest" caucuses concerned with gay and progressive causes are signs that party officials are moving aggressively to the right. In late February, a group of conservative Democrats from the South and West announced the formation of an "independent council," led by "neoliberal" Representative Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri. The goal of this group, according to Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, is to move the Democrats back into "Mainstream America" — in short, to reduce or eliminate the influence of Blacks, Hispanics, women's groups, and organized labor.

In the House of Representatives, a similar rush to the right has occurred. In an interesting move, a pragmatic "neoliberal" has been named to replace Congressman James Jones as chair of the powerful House Budget Committee.

Although elected to Congress only in 1978, he has impressed conservatives and the corporate media for "preaching fiscal austerity." According to *Business Week*, the new budget chair is regarded by "some business lobbyists as one of the few congressmen capable of persuading his fellow Democrats to rein in social spending." What is most surprising, however, is that this new Congressional powerbroker, who tells his friends he is a "closet moderate," is Philadelphia's Black Congressman Bill Gray.

Gray's roots are similar to those of other civil rights leaders. The son and grandson of preachers, Gray is

also a Baptist minister. On his second attempt, he defeated longtime Congressman Robert Nix for Congress. During Gray's first years in Congress, his voting record was extremely progressive. Gray became Congress' leading figure in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. As chair of the Congressional Black Caucus' "Foreign Affairs Brain Trust," Gray proposed an amendment to the Export Administration Act, calling for penalties for U.S. firms that make new investments inside South Africa. In early 1984 Gray initiated an emergency appropriation of \$90 million for African drought victims, months before the Reagan administration even acknowledged the crisis of hunger on the continent. As vice chair of the Black Caucus, Gray helped to write progressive "alternative budgets" in 1982 and 1983 which would have shifted billions of dollars from the military toward human needs, including jobs and health care programs.

Yet along the way there were disturbing signs that Gray was maneuvering toward an accommodation with conservative forces. Joining the Appropriations Committee in 1980, Gray soon impressed Jones as being "accomplished on fiscal matters." He provided modest rhetorical support for Jesse Jackson's 1984 Presidential campaign, yet quietly kept all lines of communication open to Mondale's aides. After the 1984 Presidential campaign, Gray began to talk like Gephardt and other centrist white Democrats. Gray informed the press that he favored discussing a proposed joint spending freeze on social programs and the Pentagon budget. He now protested that the alternative budgets were "largely symbolic," and argued that all constituencies had to "suffer a little" in developing a budget. At least one member of the

Black Caucus complained that Gray had "sold out to the Boll Weevils to get the budget job." More surprises were in store when the "Free South Africa Movement" began this winter. Hundreds of Congressmen, religious leaders, trade unionists and civil rights activists — including one Republican Senator — have gone to jail in non-violent demonstrations to protest the apartheid regime's brutality. But Gray was not seen on the picket lines; he was not with his colleagues in November and early December when most of the Black Caucus went to jail for a moral cause. The "price" for the Budget Committee chair took precedence over anti-apartheid agitation.

This month Gray has joined "Gephardt's 'independent council,'" openly throwing his growing prestige with right wing Democrats, the strongest opponents of the Rainbow Coalition. What next? It seems probable that the insurgent conservative Democrats need a Black politician with "liberal credentials" to checkmate the liberals and progressives inside the party. Since Gray is more than willing to cooperate, we might expect a biracial Democratic Party ticket in 1988 or, at the latest, by 1992. At the top will be someone like Virginia Governor Charles Robb, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, or perhaps even the ultimate yuppie, Gary Hart. In the second slot could be Bill Gray, a man who claims that "the key to politics is to never let anyone pin a label on you." Sacrificed to this marriage of convenience could be the vital interests of the Black and Hispanic communities.

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## Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown

"With the Portland School District surplus in mind, the Street Beat team asked, 'Where would you like to see the district spend their surplus?'"



Donnie Hall  
Assistant Manager

"They need to return it to homeowners in the form of property tax relief."



Lynelle Stickney  
Room Mother

"Improve the facilities and hire more classroom aides so kids can get individual care."



Ray Lampkin  
Driver

"Purchase better books to give kids more homework and bring back better teachers into community schools."



Debra White  
Unemployed

"Buy more school materials, more books and improve quality of education."



Ruth Nelson  
Cook

"I think the kids might want better food in the schools."



Patricia Pratt  
Housewife

"Let them spend it on bringing us back to the basics, such as reading and writing."

## Letters to the Editor

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be typed or neatly printed and signed with the author's name and address (addresses are not published). We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to: Portland Observer, P. O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

### Prison protest

To the Editor,

Another life lost at the hands of those who are entrusted with the resolute duty to protect the very community. I was saddened by the news of the killing of another Black man in the State of Oregon, and I convey my empathy to the family of the deceased brother.

But I am writing this letter to the community to expose another death grip that has its hands around the neck of the Black population of Oregon. A grip that is systematically choking the community and carrying

out genocide of our Black communities of Oregon, the hands belong to the Oregon State Correctional and Penal System. Presently Blacks make up approximately 30-35 percent of the population being housed in state correctional facilities. This number may not appear to be much, but when one considers that Blacks do not even make up 18 percent of Oregon's total population, one begins to realize the disproportion as opposed to the penal population, and this is not by chance or accident.

The system of correction is designed and operated to make money and Blacks are just considered another commodity. The release center (correction division release services — CDRS) is geared to make people fail and return to the institutions; there is no transitional support offered to men leaving the facility (CDRS). The men being released back into the communities are filled with anger, frustrations, hostilities, and some-

times just plain confusions which are a direct effect of the way they are treated by the staff of this facility (CDRS).

I feel that the community is entitled to know what is going on here and how it will affect them in the long run. They should be enlightened about the State Correction Division System, as well as the local corrections and police department systems. The incident on May 19, 1985, of a man being choked to death in his own community at the hands of one who is sworn to protect should not and cannot be considered an isolated incident. Neither can the situation with the correctional system here at CDRS and OSP be passed off as just another inmate complaining. It is a very serious matter and affects all of the population of Oregon, especially the Black communities.

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