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A grim Mayor Wilson Goode answers questions from reporters regarding the who, what and why of the tactical bombing and fire that destroyed 61 homes, leaving 250 homeless.

Sub-min wage attacked

by Norman Hill

Conservatives both Black and white have long argued that poor people do not benefit in the long run from Welfare and other "interferences in the free market" such as minimum wage laws; rather they are priced out of the labor market and they become sucked into a cycle of dependency. For example, the Black conservative Thomas Sowell has attributed the rise in Black teenage unemployment in comparison with white teenage unemployment since the 1950s to the rise in the minimum wage.

Such arguments have resulted in many policy prescriptions. The latest to be pushed in a big way is the youth subminimum wage bill, which is

meant to combat teenage unemployment, especially Black teenage unemployment.

The bill would allow youth under 20 to replace older workers. Proponents of the bill say it would create 400,000 new jobs and give many unemployed youth sorely-needed experience in developing work habits and discipline.

There are serious flaws in this plan. Even Walter Williams, the Black conservative economist who has long advocated a subminimum wage for youth, when he was asked some years ago, "How many more jobs for teenagers might be created with a subminimum wage?" replied: "There's no theoretical evidence to answer that question. It all relates to what economists call "elasticity" — the response of employment to wage increases or decreases — and that cannot be measured very well." In other words, he doesn't know — which is more than some proponents of this bill will admit.

The idea that a subminimum youth wage would create jobs and not displace older workers is very hard to believe. People who are working at the minimum wage are already at the margins of the workforce, in jobs that are by their nature not permanent. Employers will not find more low-skilled jobs to offer merely because they can legally pay \$2.50 an hour. However, if they can get away with firing their \$3.35-an-hour workers and replacing them with the cheaper teenagers, they may very well do so.

It is highly unlikely that such employers will be caught. There is already a form of youth subminimum — it's called a student subminimum, and it's set at \$2.85 an hour. In 20 years the Department of Labor has

not sanctioned one employer for displacing an older worker to hire a student.

The subminimum bill cannot really create jobs; it can only depress wages at the bottom level of the labor market. The minimum wage itself has become an ipso facto subminimum, since it has steadily fallen with respect to the average wage. It fell from 51 percent of the average wage in the 1960s to 45.8 percent in the 1970s — and today is 40.7 percent. According to Sowell's thesis, then, Black youth unemployment ought to have fallen during the 70s and 80s, but instead it was skyrocketing.

Proponents of the bill are also ignoring the fact that a large percentage of businesses are already exempt from minimum wage laws — mainly small businesses, which employ a third of the workforce. That's not counting employment in the "underground" economy.

The real causes of the rise in black youth unemployment over the decades can be traced to some large trends, such as the mechanization of agriculture in the rural South; the decline of smokestack industries and all its effects on the Black community; the tightening of the job market in the 1970s and 80s; the exit from cities of the Black middle classes, portions of which traditionally provided an informal job network; and the growth of the "underclass."

The government must take on the difficult tasks of promoting economic development and initiating greater educational and job opportunities for those who need it most. The subminimum wage is simply another way for the Reagan administration to avoid dealing with the real problems.

Philly foul-up falls on Goode

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — The inability of the bureaucracy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to handle, respond or control a cult known as MOVE led to the historical police bombing of their compound on 62nd and Osage. That bomb ignited a destructive firestorm that destroyed 61 homes and created 250 urban refugees.

The history of MOVE in Philadelphia

MOVE, a name — not an acronym — was formed during the early part of 1970 by Vincent Leaphart, who later changed his name to John Africa, and Donald Glassey, a white social worker.

Basically, MOVE is a back-to-nature, anarchistic cult who believe animals and man are the same. They

eat raw vegetables, raw meat and abhor modern technology.

One of the MOVE's teachings require women to give birth naturally, bite off the umbilical cord with their teeth and lick their babies clean with their tongues.

Chuck Stone, a columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News, described MOVE as a cult or clan, "dedicated to making a symbiotic alliance with Mother Nature, they believe in recycling the earth's resources and that human beings belong in their natural habitat.

"They were an exotic aberration like the hippies of the 50s and 60s until they became aggressive and hostile," Stone added.

Ray Mahiri, a poet and community activist, became familiar with MOVE in 1971 after MOVE led a march to the Philadelphia Zoo to protest the caging

of animals. "They also believe in confrontation with the system."

Skobi Matunde, communication chairperson from the Philadelphia Information and Education Coalition, said a component of this confrontational philosophy was the use of urban street profanity as their "official language."

"They used language that would anger anyone. MOVE stated the reason they did it was that they wanted to show society its own madness," Matunde added.

Stone said MOVE has received attention far out of proportion to their membership, respectability and impact on society.

"Their only impact is like a terrorist holding a city at bay. White America is fascinated with MOVE. It's just a form of self-flagellation. Periodically, they have to excise the evil spirit out of them. In between these interludes they practice the most insidious forms of racism. The majority of White America endorses the Reagan Administration. A lot of whites think MOVE is representative of Black people. I'll be shocked if they have more than 25 members," said Stone.

One MOVE supporter explained, "We are about life and total revolution. We're about wiping this system out, and not forming another one because John Africa teaches us there ain't nothing as a system. All systems are corrupt."

Their confrontational goals made them easy targets for the police. A clash in 1976 left a baby, Life Africa, dead. Reporters and politicians were invited into the MOVE house and shown the baby's corpse. This was reportedly the event that accelerated the aggressive confrontational mood of MOVE.

On August 8, 1978, 300 police and firefighters arrived at a MOVE house located in the Powelton Village area, one year after a 50-day blockage failed to remove MOVE from their house after some neighbors complained of odors and rats.

With a battering ram as their weapon, followed by water and tear gas, officials assaulted the house after MOVE failed to vacate the premise. "F---k a court order!" they replied to officials.

The siege erupted into a gun battle between police and MOVE. Official James Ramp was killed. MOVE women and naked children emerged

from the house. Delbert Africa came out with his hands up and was grabbed and kicked by police. Hours later the house was bulldozed.

A police riot against the Black neighborhood next to the now bulldozed MOVE house went unreported by the local press. However, Jane Mancini, an independent film producer, documents the police assault in her 1981 award-winning documentary "MOVE Confrontation in Philadelphia."

In 1980, nine MOVE members were found guilty of third-degree murder in a 19-week trial which was one of the longest and costliest in the city's history. Each was sentenced to prison terms of 30 to 100 years.

MOVE's co-founder Glassey turned government informant and John Africa was arrested on federal bomb-making and riot charges. Africa, who defended himself, was acquitted. Africa has since gone underground. Where is John Africa? "That's MOVE's business. But he's here," replied one MOVE supporter living at one of the remaining MOVE compounds.

City of Brotherly Love?

The police beating of Delbert Africa was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of police brutality in Philly. In 1981, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a class action suit for violations of civil rights by the Philadelphia police chief and Mayor Frank Rizzo. The charges were later dropped.

"Mayor Frank Rizzo was trying to turn Philly into a police state. I wonder if he succeeded," stated one resident.

Rizzo, like Mayor Goode, declared war on MOVE. Prior to the assault on Powelton Village, Rizzo, campaigning in South Philadelphia, said, "Whites are

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Duke gets award

Lanita Duke, news director of Grassroot News, N.W., recently received a national award from Trans-Africa for her consistent and hard-hitting reports, articles and editorials about South Africa.

"I'd like to thank the management of The Portland Observer, professional photographer Richard Brown and Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom."



In a classic photo of police brutality, Delbert Africa is being kicked by Philadelphia Police.