

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## PIIAC should push for subpoenas

The Portland City Council should follow the recommendation of the Police Internal Investigations Auditing Committee (PIIAC) and the City Council Committee, which oversees the PIIAC, by ordering three Portland police officers to testify before the panel concerning two cases of alleged police misconduct. The auditing panel has been requesting the three officers to testify since October.

Refusal of the officers to testify before the committee is a direct attempt by some rank-and-file officers to defy Ballot Measure 51. This measure, which was approved by voters in 1983, is to review police handling of public complaints.

According to Gary Roberts, a Portland attorney and a former member of the STORRS Committee which recommended the formation of the PIIAC, the committee has the power to conduct its own investigations of public complaints against police. Roberts also said the ordinance forming the committee gave it subpoena power, which could enable it to investigate charges itself.

For several years some members of the police bureau have engaged in acts such as the Special Investigations Division scandal, the dumping of dead opossums in front of a Black-owned restaurant, the death of Lloyd D. Stevenson and the selling of "Don't Chock 'Em, Smoke 'Em" T-shirts. These actions by individual officers have resulted in deaths and injuries to innocent law-abiding citizens. Furthermore, they are draining City resources, as a result of claims against the city; and straining police-community relations, creating a lack of respect by the public toward the police.

The time has come for the police to be held ac-

countable to the public. Police officers are paid by the public, therefore, they should be held accountable to public agencies such as the PIIAC.

Portlanders voted yes on Ballot Measure 51 in spite of opposition from the Portland Police Union, former Mayor Frank Ivancie and former Police Chief Ron Still.

Police Union President Stan Peters once said that the audit committee was good for "bleeding hearts" and that he didn't agree with anything the committee was doing. Peters' remarks reveal the attitude of many rank-and-file officers on the Bureau. Many police officers are locked into a narrow us-against-them mentality and regard any attempts by the public to monitor their behavior as criticism.

Those three officers who refuse to testify before the audit committee are showing their contempt for the public by ignoring the wishes of Portlanders who voted for Ballot Measure 51.

The City Council should seek subpoenas of the officer, requiring them to testify before the PIIAC. It is the responsibility of city government to insure that voter-approved ordinances are enforced.

It is also time for city officials to deal with those in the Police Bureau who think they are above the law. Commissioner Mike Lindberg was correct when he said that the Portland Police Bureau was almost an unsupervisable force at this point in time. Lindberg made this statement after two officers were reinstated by an arbitrator after being fired by Mayor Bud Clark. The failure of the three officers to testify before the PIIAC are prime examples of Lindberg's statement.

# EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY

## An Educator's Opinion

### Vouchers: The Hoax Is Transparent

The Reagan Administration recently unveiled a plan to radically revise the federal program that targets the special educational needs of disadvantaged youngsters. This program—Chapter 1—delivers nearly \$3.2 billion to local school districts for services to improve the basic academic skills of millions of poor children.

The Administration's new plan would halt this process. Chapter 1—arguably this nation's most successful federal aid-to-education effort—would be converted into a voucher system and administered like Green Stamps. Parents of disadvantaged children would receive government coupons, then redeem them at a school of their choice, public or private.

I have said publicly that this plan is a cruel hoax. Simple fairness compels me to explain so harsh a characterization.

Massive revision of a program whose success has been amply documented is normally justified by cataloging the problems the revision will solve. This approach has been entirely absent from the public pronouncements of Education Secretary William Bennett and others who seek to revamp Chapter 1.

This gap in the Administration's argument is revealing. When doctors issue a prescription, they explain what the medicine is intended to cure. Dr. Bennett has departed from this standard medical practice. And I suspect quackery. The Administration's failure to detail the ailments that voucher medicine is designed to cure stems from one simple fact: the voucher scheme wouldn't cure anything. It's a medication in search of a disease.

Let's test this hypothesis. In the most recent Gallup Poll of attitudes toward the public schools, the American people identified discipline and student drug use as problems of crisis proportions. Would vouchers have even a negligible impact on these problems? Surely not. Troubled students—rich and poor—seldom find a welcome mat awaiting them at the doors of private schools. Poor families with troubled students will confront that tough reality the moment they try to cash in their vouchers. Private schools choose their clientele. Public schools have been—and remain—the only schools that

accept the challenge to educate all youngsters. Americans have also listed overcrowded schools and attracting good teachers as fundamental and growing problems. What difference would vouchers make here? None.

Perhaps the Administration believes vouchers will solve the problems the President's own National Commission on Excellence in Education identified with its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. That document says our schools suffer from diluted standards, poor teacher preparation programs, incompetent leadership, and inadequate funding. Are vouchers the answer to these inadequacies? Obviously not.

Where, I ask again, is the problem to which the voucher "solution" corresponds? Will a voucher plan help any of the 80 percent of Hispanic students, the 72 percent of Black students, and the 50 percent of white students currently dropping out of New York City's schools? Will it halt this tragic waste of human potential that is a fact of life in virtually every major American city? Not one bit. The *New York Times* commentary on the Administration's proposal is right on the mark: To give children of poverty a voucher is not to help them—it is to taunt them. It is also to taunt millions of caring and devoted parents.

An Administration committed to these parents and their children would cherish Chapter 1 and strive to expand its scope. Sadly, the current Administration has chosen the opposite course: It has abandoned needy children, systematically slashing Chapter 1 funds. As a result, the program now serves 900,000 fewer students than it did in 1980.

Substituting vouchers for what remains of Chapter 1 signals further retreat. The intent of the Administration's proposal is not to improve but to impoverish public schools, to weaken the very institutions that have most helped the most needy. Vouchers are a hoax, a guise for funneling public monies to private schools. When this strategy is defended on the grounds that it will unleash the potential of 11 million disadvantaged children, the hoax becomes hypocritical, odious...cruel.



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# EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY



## 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 usually published).

We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to: Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

### Mighty Malta in news again

To the Editor:

The recent flurry of airline hijackings in the Middle East has suddenly thrust Malta into the headlines, suggesting an article on "Mighty Malta."

The little island of Malta is accorded a memorable place in Holy Writ, with the super-missionary Paul (formerly Saul) of the New Testament, having been shipwrecked upon it, on his way to eventual martyrdom in Rome.

Malta enters modern history through being incorporated into the British Colonial Empire in 1814. The seemingly insignificant but pivotal part the island played in World War

II will always be remembered in the annals of military history. Mighty Malta, tenaciously held and reinforced by Churchill at heavy cost, denied the Axis powers full use of the central shipping lanes of the Mediterranean, laying as it does, astride them. Malta was the thorn in Hitler's side that contributed to the defeat of the Desert Fox in North Africa. Eisenhower used and expanded the air fields of Malta to dominate the air battle for Sicily, and attacks on Italy.

The tiny isle of Malta may just prove once again to be the modern rock that breaks up the political terrorist forces.

The tension raised between Egypt

and the United States over the October cruise ship hijack and the eventual arrest in Sicily, caused some to fear that the terrorists and Arab governments would come to friendly terms and unity. Now mighty Malta has dispelled those fears and brought into glaring light the contrasts between the United States and the terrorists. Arab nations desiring peace should have no doubt as to who their real friends are.

It is clear that terrorists worship gods of violence demanding human sacrifices!

Rev. J. Robert Hall  
Pastor

### Portland Observer

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# EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY

## White House still seeks to water down Civil Rights

by U.S. Rep. William H. Gray, III

Once again, the Reagan administration has made another U-turn on Civil Rights—this time attempting to water down the 20-year-old Executive Order requiring affirmative action plans by federal government contractors.

Executive Order 11246, is the latest in a series of Presidential mandates, dating back to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, including the Philadelphia Plan, which attempts to eliminate discrimination by major federal government contractors. That executive order requires all businesses with government contractors to take "affirmative action" to ensure that workers are employed without regard to race, creed or color. Failure to comply can make a contractor ineligible for federal work.

The administration's proposed executive order would outlaw the use of numerical goals and timetables by federal contractors in their affirmative action minority hiring programs. More importantly, it would forbid the government from using hiring statistics to prove that a federal contractor has discriminated against Blacks, Hispanics, or women.

The administration claims that the required "goals and timetables" are really quotas, which in effect result in reverse discrimination. Attorney General Meese justified the administration's position by stating that "counting by race is a form of racism."

That's a neat and facile argument, but thoroughly inconsistent with

reality. "Counting," notwithstanding Mr. Meese's definition of racism, is inextricably tied to combating discrimination. Whether it be minority hiring by federal contractors or minority business participation in government work, minorities continue to play on an uneven field—a fact Mr. Meese and this administration choose to ignore.

The fact is that discrimination, with or without Executive Order 11246, continues to exist.

The question then, is why did the Justice Department propose to change this long-standing policy, particularly given the strong support for the order by mainstream corporate America?

The President will long be perceived as heading the most anti-civil rights regime since Woodrow Wilson ordered separate facilities for Black and white servicemen. And let's face it, when one hears of "civil rights," one thinks of the struggle by Black Americans for racial equality. This administration has an apparent missionary zeal in waging war against civil rights and affirmative action. With unprecedented speed and dedication, this administration has effectively sacked, reduced and ignored a wide assortment of civil rights laws and rules that even previous Republican administrations saw fit to leave undisturbed. Perhaps that explains why Blacks voted ten to one against Mr. Reagan's reelection.

And while William Bradford Reynolds argues that the administration seeks "the color-blind ideal of equal opportunity for all,"

and is sincere in those beliefs, his real objective is to remove and destroy all race-conscious remedies from key civil rights laws and rules.

No one claims that Executive Order 11246 is the magical solution to discrimination. But the evidence suggests that the current policy has worked. A study released last year shows that from 1974 to 1980 government contractors did better than non-government contractors at hiring minorities and women and advancing them to higher paying job categories. During that period, government contractors showed an increase of 19 percent more minorities and 15 percent more women. The comparable increases for non-government contractors were only 12 percent and 2 percent. The numbers tell the story.

Apparently, some in the administration don't want the story told. Theirs, however, is an uphill battle. I believe that the majority of Americans feel that this nation is big enough for everyone to share in its dream on a fair and equitable basis.

Those who would have this nation retreat on civil rights may win a battle now and then, but they should know that many of us in the Congress remain committed to a policy which makes clear the government's intent to continue to open the doors of employment and business opportunity to all Americans.

William H. Gray, III is the Second District—PA U.S. Representative.