

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Mayor Using Press as Scapegoat

Last week Mayor Bud Clark accused the press of unfair criticism of Chief Penny E. Harrington, for abolishing the Drug and Vice Division. Clark's statement attacking the press is just an excuse for his administration's failure to halt the city increasing drug and prostitution problems.

The press is sometimes guilty of creating news when there is none; to report and focus on incidents that aren't news worthy. However, politicians are often guilty of blaming the press for reporting on issues they would like to forget. This is the case with Mayor Clark.

Criticism of Harrington's reorganization of the Department's Drug and Vice Division has come from members of the Police Bureau and from the public; not from the press as alleged by Clark.

Stan Peters, President of the Portland Police Association, has repeatedly attacked Harrington's administrative policies. He once told the Piedmont Neighborhood Association that Harrington's "administrative policies have been disastrous, and her decisions have increased the rate of crime in Portland."

Peters said the reason why Portland ranks high in the

nation in crime; and the reason why prostitutes and drug dealers have taken over city streets is the direct result of Harrington disbanding the drug and vice division. Also, the Chief's decision to reorganize the two units has been criticized on several occasions in the Police Union newspaper the "Rap Sheet."

Portlanders have criticized the Chief's policies regarding the bureau's drug and vice units. Especially residents living in the Northeast. Neighborhood associations have held pickets along Union and Alberta Ave., protesting the presence of drugs and prostitutes in their community.

At community forums, citizens have complained to the Chief by what they perceive as the Bureau's lack of concern in reducing the drug and vice problem in their area. Describing how they have called the police informing them of illegal drug and vice activities, only to be told that due to the lack of jail space and personnel, prevent the police from doing anything.

The job of the press is to report news and to ask questions. If citizens and city employees are unhappy with the policies of city officials, the press has the obligation to report it. This, Mr. Mayor, is news, not unfair criticism.

Strachan Reports Dramatic Decline in SROs

Commissioner Margaret D. Strachan recently released a draft report on single room occupancy (SRO) housing in downtown Portland. It points to an alarming 59% decline in the number of SRO rooms over the last 16 years. In 1970 the SRO inventory was 4,128 rooms. By the end of 1986, the inventory is estimated at 1,702.

Reasons cited for the loss include fire, deterioration, poor management, pressure for conversion to more intense uses, and lack of funding for rehabilitation and operation.

In transmitting the report to the City Council, Strachan's Housing Advisory Committee urged the Council to make SRO housing a priority in the upcoming budget debates. In addition, the committee asked that Bureau of Planning staff examine all existing tools and explore new strategies to preserve and develop the City's SRO housing.

"The SRO hotels are a crucial component of the City's housing stock," declares Strachan, Commissioner re-

sponsible for the Planning Bureau, and long an advocate for preservation of low income housing. "They provide housing opportunities for low income persons, many of whom have special needs. Without an adequate supply of SRO rooms, people will have to live on the streets, under the bridges, or in emergency night shelters."

The decline in SRO rooms was vividly demonstrated this past winter. Hotel closures such as the Shoreline and the Cornelius forced low income persons into emergency shelters. Estimates show that at least half the people occupying night shelters have sufficient resources to live in SROs, if they were available.

The Portland Development Commission calculates that 1,000 closed SRO units are potentially usable, if financial assistance for rehabilitation can be obtained.

Comments Strachan, "It's tragic that our SRO housing has continued to decline so dramatically just when the fed-

eral government is cutting back on the dollars available for housing assistance. Compounding this problem is the restructuring of our shrinking HCD funds in the City 1986-1987 budget. It is proposed that a smaller percentage of HCD funds will go for housing than in the past."

Draft HCD budget documents show the City's allocation will go from 13.9 million in 85-86 to 11.1 million in 86-87. In 1985-86, 51% of total City HCD dollars were allocated to housing, while in 86-87, that percentage will decline to 46%. The highly successful Investor Rehabilitation Loan program may be reduced from \$1,795,000 to \$1,025,000, a drop of 42%.

"The IRL loan program is one of the few tools available to stem the loss of low income rental housing in general, and SRO housing in particular," points out Strachan. "IRL loans have been saved 866 SRO units in 14 buildings over the past 8 years. Without the program, many other units would have been taken out of the inventory. We just can't afford to lose any more units."

AFL-CIO News

Brothers and sisters:

Once again we are gathering in a day of solidarity.

But this time we are not demonstrating the solidarity within our own ranks. We are demonstrating our solidarity with our black brothers and sisters of the South African trade union movement, and with all the victims of the racist apartheid system.

And we are not alone. Today, in seven cities across the nation, trade unionists are assembling in rallies like this one.

At each rally we will hear from a leader of the South African labor movement about their struggle against apartheid and the economic exploitation on which it is based.

These brave men and women are on the front line of a battle which they wage under the most difficult and dangerous conditions. We want them to know that they are not alone, that we stand at their side.

We want that message to be heard, loud and clear, by the government that represses them. And by the employers who exploit their labor or who passively acquiesce in the apartheid system.

When the AFL-CIO Executive Council last month called for today's rallies, it was responding to a call from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions — which in turn was responding to an appeal from our South African brothers and sisters.

The AFL-CIO is responding to these appeals just as we respond to the appeals of embattled trade unionists in Poland, the Philippines, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti — wherever workers are struggling to build effective democratic unions and seek our help.

We respond first of all because their cause is right and just. We also respond because we know that we cannot make it alone in this world.

We live in a global economy today. The exploitation of foreign workers threatens the American standard of living no less than the substandard wages and working conditions that prevail in too many areas of our own country.

If we live in a global economy, then labor's mission must be global. That is why we are here today.

Why this day? Because 26 years ago yesterday, there occurred one of the most brutal and shocking manifestations of apartheid — the Sharpeville massacre.

On March 21, 1960, 15,000 black South Africans — men, women and children — gathered in front of the Sharpeville police station. This was part of a national campaign against the so-called Pass Laws, which tightly regulated the physical movements of the black population.

In Sharpeville, the police had been notified of the de-

monstration. They were assured that it would be nonviolent and orderly. The organizers had put together a system of patrols and monitors to ensure that the demonstration would be peaceful and dignified.

But when the demonstrators gathered, they were met by British-made saracen tanks. The children in the crowd — and there were many — had never seen such machines before, and they moved forward to get a closer look at them.

The police did not even wait long enough to tell the crowd to disperse. They simply opened fire. When the smoke cleared, 89 men, women and children lay dead, many of them shot in the back as they were fleeing. Another 300 were wounded, shot or trampled as the demonstrators ran from the line of fire.

The world was shocked. It finally understood what apartheid was about. The United Nations proclaimed March 21 as an International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

This is a day of solidarity — and remembrance. It is a day of solidarity — and resolve; that we will not rest until the odious system that produced such brutality, and so many more subtle forms of violence, is undone.

It is hard to think up more words to condemn apartheid. It is universally despised. Even those in our own country who stood on the sidelines during our own struggle for civil rights and racial justice, or who resisted it, seem to have recognized that apartheid is an evil that cannot endure.

Yet, it has endured, despite the denunciation of world opinion. That is because world opinion is not enough. When apartheid falls, it will be brought down from within.

I have no doubt that the system will be brought down. The big question is whether that can be accomplished without massive bloodshed and under conditions that are favorable to the development of true democracy in that tragic land.

The best hope for a peaceful dismantling of apartheid lies in the emergence of the black trade union movement. That's why we have a special responsibility.

We have been assisting that movement for some years. We are not Johnny-come-latelies in their struggle — even if others get the headlines.

But we are not interested in headlines. We're interested in the front line — where the real battle is taking place. We're interested in the people who are on the firing line.

They need all the moral and material support we can give them. We are here today to let them and the world know that they will have that support.

Thank you.

To the Editor:

Prior to Qhaddafy's triumph to power on Sept. 1, 1969, Libya was a monarchy. The reigning monarch, King Idris, was a great friend to the U.S. When King Idris was gone so were the U.S. military bases in Libya.

When Qhaddafy came to power in 1969, average yearly per capita income in Libya at the time was around \$50. Eight out of every 10 people were illiterate. Diseases ran rampant but medical services were non-existent, except in the two major cities and even there they were limited. The rate of population growth, under 1 percent, reflected Libya's high infant mortality, malnourishment and short life expectancy.

Since 1969, average yearly per capita income has soared to well over \$6,000. Today in Libya education and medical care are free. About 70 percent of the population is literate. Both urban and rural areas have good medical facilities.

According to the World Bank, Libya has become one of the world's best fed countries. Most basic foods (including baby foods) are available at low government-subsidized prices.

Unemployment officially was above 8 percent in the 1960's. Today unemployment is eliminated and a labor shortage exists. Land was given to landless peasants and farm laborers, and the gap between rural and urban incomes has steadily narrowed. By law, no one in Libya can own more than one house. Thus landlords were eliminated. The government has resold houses and apartments to tenants at low, subsidized prices. This is indeed a revolution.

The 1969 Libyan revolution occurred in a mainly pre-capitalist society. The revolution was a national democratic one that chose a non-capitalist path of development and an anti-imperialist foreign policy.

F. Mohamad
P.O. Box 1262
Portland, OR 97207

To the Editor:

On behalf of our entire company, I would like to thank you for the front-page coverage you gave to Ben Holt in two successive editions of *The Observer*. It was quite a delightful surprise.

Ben is a rare individual and it was wonderful to have him here. We were pleased to be able to share him with some segments of the community. We had some special moments when he mesmerized the children from the Black Educational Center, and charmed everyone at the Links reception.

We are hoping to bring in a touring production of *Porgy and Bess* in April, 1987 — a collaboration with the Houston Grand Opera and 14 other companies around the United States. We will keep you apprised of developments. *Porgy and Bess* is my all-time favorite musical work, so I'm quite excited. My one regret is that Ben Holt won't be in it!

I have also enjoyed working with Richard Brown. He is a wonderful photographer and a wonderful "gentleman."

Sincerely yours,
Jane Blume
Public Relations/
Marketing Coordinator

To the Editor:

Thank you for your recent courtesy article regarding our 2nd Annual Musical for Sickle Cell Anemia, however, there was a mistake as to who the director is. Ramona is a peer counselor and I am the Executive Director. The last article had our phone number incorrect.

The corrected phone number is 249-1366. Please make the corrections when appropriate. Again, many, many thanks.

Sincerely,
Marcia Taylor
Executive Director
Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, Inc.
3802 N.E. Union Ave. #206
Portland, OR 97202
(503) 249-1366

To the editor:

Black people represent a disproportionate number of the prison population because they have been systematically denied the full value of their labor. This exploitation of Black labor found initial expression in the African slave trade and continued through the practice of peonage and sharecropping. In this sense Black people are exploited in the same way and by the same group of people who exploit poor caucasoid workers. However, an economic analysis of crime does not explain why Black people are incarcerated in far greater numbers than poor caucasians.

Racism, therefore, becomes crucial in understanding capitalist exploitation of Black people. In a homogeneous society, racism would not be a factor, but in America where the Black person at one point in history was considered non-human, it becomes indispensable.

Racism and the Black person's economic status in society makes it almost impossible for him to get a fair trial in this country. The judiciary system is composed entirely of caucasoid middle- and upper-class individuals who have a vested interest in protecting their property rights from Black members of the oppressed group. The criminal justice system becomes, therefore, the means by which those who own and control capital siphon off those individuals who place their right to live above criminal law.

A Black man before the court system is much more likely than a caucasoid man to get a prison sentence, a sentence which is usually way out of line with the crime committed. For example, George Jackson was sentenced to one year to life for being an accessory to a \$70 robbery and spent ten years in prison, while caucasoid men such as the Watergate defendants get token sen-

tences in country-club prisons for committing high crimes that involve fundamental issues of public trust.

As the economic conditions become more oppressive, political consciousness among the oppressed increase, which results in the oppressor group calling for law and order as the nation moves toward a police state. Therefore, criminal repression assumes its true character as a politically repressive agent of the state.

The system is designed to protect the interest of the propertied class and to eliminate from society those who threaten the status quo. Although the economic cost of white-collar crime such as embezzlement, tax fraud and Watergate is much higher to the society, very few of these people are jailed because for the most part they are caucasian and from the so-called upper classes. Blacks, on the other hand, because of their color and poverty, are jailed for the slightest offense.

Since the economic system is not designed to survive on full employment, there will always be a class of people who are perennially excluded from the benefits of society. Racism determines that that group be Black, Brown, Yellow, Native American or in some other fashion, not caucasian.

As long as Black people suffer economic exploitation and racial discrimination, genocide becomes more of a possibility; particularly when the Black population is increasing at such a great rate. America has historically dealt severely with its unwanted and obsolete population. The experience of the so-called American Indian (Native American) provides a precedent for racial genocide.

Around this nation, even those who know nothing of world politics, conflicting ideologies, international trade and commerce market, spheres of influences, artels, secret agreements or power blocs stand terrified eyes the silent question. Just when are we supposed to die and why?

Today, the process of genocide is underway as America's prison system expands to accommodate Blacks whose only crime is that they desire to live free and with human dignity. Prisons are nothing more than concentration camps for Black people. Therefore, Blacks will continue to be incarcerated in these concentration camps as long as capitalism and racism remain the primary forces that determine social status and human worth.

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

Conversational Spanish for travelers is a spring quarter offering of Portland Community College.

The non-credit course will extend over an eight-week period starting Tuesday, April 1, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., in Room 135 of Lincoln High School, 1600 S.W. Salmon St.

Instructor for the class will be David Hunt, who has taught previously for PCC. Cost of the class will be \$15.50.

More information about Spanish for Travelers is available from Community Services, 240-5303.

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