

A Taxing Problem for Black Businessmen

by Alexander R. Jones

As hard as it is for a black man to get together the capital to launch his business, it's a tragedy to see that business destroyed by unfair taxes from a government that should have known better.

In one major metropolitan city, a high sales tax on gasoline has been one of the key factors in the decline of minority owned gas stations, where they have been shutting down at the rate of 25 per year for the past seven years. Surprisingly this is in a city with a black city government, one which should be especially sensitive to the problems of its black businessmen. But apparently the insanity of taxes does not discriminate. It knows no color but green.

Let's face it. Governments need money. Someone has to pay the firemen, policemen, garbage men, teachers, etc. But raising money to pay these people should not be done at the expense of minority owned small businesses. It's crazy. When a business goes under because a heavy sales tax made it uncompetitive, how many tax dollars does the government get then? Even 50% of zero is still zero.

This is bad for the government as it loses a productive taxpayer. It's bad for you and me because guess who gets to pick up the slack.

Things like this give taxes a bad name, and make people look for ways to avoid paying them, legally or otherwise. Taken to the extreme, it then becomes necessary to frighten people into compliance the way the IRS does with its brutal and un-American tactics.

A large part of governments and taxation boils down to a violation of the principle that if you penalize the productive and reward the non-productive, what you end up with is no production. The case with the gas stations is just a stark example of this. And who are the non-productive? Anyone who gets money and/or services from the government, employee or otherwise, who does not produce anything in exchange, or who produces something which is harmful. There is a lot of waste in government that can be easily seen, from our ineffective criminal justice system to government supported psychiatric wards which take millions but produce only madness in return.

The Civil War was fought around a basic economic issue. Would the future economy of the United States be a mechanized, industrial one or an agricultural one based on slave labor? The industrialized North won the War. We live in an industrial economy. We are a nation controlled by businessmen. Certainly, there is a place for professionals in America's business economy, but they are servants of—and not the prime movers in—this society.

There is an adage which says "when in Rome, do as the Romans." Why, then, have we not tried to emulate White America's preoccupation with business?

Part of the reason is that Whites wanted to reserve this area for themselves. But that is not the whole story. Some believe the other basic reason for Blacks not being in business in greater numbers can be traced to perceptions that took root during the enslavement of our forefathers. When generation after generation of enslaved Blacks were demeaned, treated like chattel and forced to work long hours in the fields, the dream for many became to wear a white shirt and live in a big house like the master.

The enslaved Black knew nothing about economics or the rigors of business practices, much less plantation management, because the enslaved deliberately was kept as ignorant as possible. Thus the dreams of our ancestors were based on the outward attributes of wealth without substantive knowledge and extremely hard work commitment which to make dreams a reality.

Some Blacks blame our diminished interest in business on White efforts to keep us outside of the economic mainstream. Our ancestors when freed were not even given forty acres and a mule with which to make a new life. Today's inmates leaving prison at least have a new suit of clothes on their back and some money in their pockets. The freedman had nothing but what he stood in, could neither read nor write, and was not wanted in the salaried workforce.

Still others trace the paucity of Blacks in business as a legacy stemming from an over-simplification of the issues in the great philosophical debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois about the direction in which the Black man should move. Some Blacks read into this debate that being an artisan or small businessman was tantamount to admitting that Blacks could not achieve in the "liberal arts" arena. Many Blacks of the time seemed to feel that one had to accept one or the other view.

Another view gaining increasingly wide acceptance is that many Blacks, in trying to be like White, unconsciously hate themselves just as do Whites appear to do so. Thus, they will not support their own. "Even the White man's ice is colder" is among the deep-seated evidences of this imposed negative self-image. And as long as Blacks feel secondary to White, Blacks never can become first class—because they can't "become White."

A number of today's Blacks who are in business feel that all of the above—and particularly the latter situation of unconscious Black self-hate—have contributed to the miniscule number of Black businesses—and then even concerned supporters have to ask "How can more Blacks go into business knowing that so many of their own people will not support their efforts? The specific basis for their concern is a set of new government figures. According to a recent Census Bureau estimate, the revenue of Black-owned companies last year equaled only about 7% of Black income. In 1969, that portion was much higher—13.5%. Among other racial groups, that percentage often is 8 or 9 times higher for dealing with their own.

Because of this outwardly induced and often unconscious negative image of—and hostility toward—Blacks in business, these businesses have to face unconscionably poor support from our own people.

Rail Crossing Safety Continues Improvement

When your vehicles and a freight train are on a crossing at the same time, it's no contest. You lose.

While the safety record at highway-rail crossings has improved dramatically over the last decade, there still are too many preventable crashes.

Oregon's crossing accidents have steadily decreased, from 182 in 1976 to only 46 in 1985. This follows the national trend, where the number of train-vehicle crashes has been cut in half, with corresponding decreases in personal casualties.

Reasons are safer crossings, more signals, and concentrated public awareness campaigns to alert motorists to hazards. Many people do not understand that heavy trains cannot stop, for example—a typical freight train requires one-half to one full mile to stop after emergency brake application.

Education, engineering and enforcement are the three "Es" of Operation Lifesaver, a government-railroad cooperative program launched in Oregon in 1977 and renewed in 1984.

Last year, hundreds of thousands of Oregonians heard the Operation Lifesaver message through various media and driver education classes. Another 70,000 students in elementary grades witnessed classroom Lifesaver presentations on general railroad safety subjects.

Crossing accident trends, patterns and explanations have been intensively studied in recent years, and studies reveal some astonishing facts.

More than half now occur at crossings equipped with active warning signals—flashing lights, gongs, even gates. About 60 percent happen in

daylight hours, and more than one out of four involves a vehicle running into the side of a train.

These findings bear out three main causes of crossing collisions: —inattention or carelessness, or complacency when traversing a familiar crossing.

—driver attempting to beat train, even snaking around lowered gates. —poor judgment; current psychological studies indicate difficulty in accurately perceiving the speed of large moving objects.

Add to this situation a lack of understanding that trains cannot stop on a dime, and that flashing red lights mean motorists must stop—not slow down or caution—and a frustrating problem continues.

Oregon state laws are adequate to prevent crossing accidents. It is up to the individual to Look, Listen, and Live.

Writing and Editing for secretaries

Hilda Jones will present a one-day seminar, "Writing and Editing for Secretaries," in Portland at the Chumaree Comfortel, 8247 NE Sandy Blvd., on Friday, October 24, 1986, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Jones is an Associate Professor Emeritus, College of Business, Oregon State University.

Topics covered include organi-

sing and outlining, formal and informal reports, letters, memos, proof-reading, editing, and grammar review.

Enrollments are accepted in the order received until the limit is reached. Registration is completed by sending \$75 to Endeavors for Excellence, Continuing Education, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331-1640.

Personalized & Custom Made Jewelry

Fine Jewelry/Watches/Diamonds
Diamond Setting

Watch & Jewelry Repair




Wedding Sets / Charms Pearls

PATON JEWELERS

4616 N.E. Sandy Blvd. 281-8801

Flu Season Is Here

Flu season is just around the corner. If you are a senior citizen—or know somebody who is—it is time to get an annual flu shot. Multnomah County Department of Human Services is offering special flu shot

clinics from October 6 through October 17. To find out the location near you, call Multnomah County Health Information at 248-3816, weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Grace Collins Memorial Center

Day Care

- Kindergarten
- Pre-School

'Latch Key Program'

Children 6 wks. to 11 yrs.

- Breakfast
- Hot Lunches
- Snacks

Call **281-6930**
128 N.E. Russell St.




4-year old kids at Grace Collins Memorial Center learn how to make cookies.




5-year old kids at Grace Collins Memorial Center study hard on school work before going outside to play.



Grace Collins Memorial Center

Day Care



MULTNOMAH COUNTY

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES WITH MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Multnomah County has had a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program since 1977. However, past MBE opportunities have been limited. For example, until 1981 the County's MBE program focused only on setting aside 10% of construction projects under \$50,000 for minority firms. In that year Multnomah County was one of the first local governments to increase to MBE construction projects to \$100,000.

Now participation by minority and female owned firms has been reaffirmed by County Executive Dennis Buchanan and the Board of County Commissioners.

- **LESS RED TAPE:**
 - Multnomah County is accepting Oregon Department of Transportation & City of Portland's MBE and FBE certifications

- **MORE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - To bid on construction projects
 - To sell supplies
 - To render services
 - To provide professional services

A NEW AUTOMATED PURCHASING SYSTEM TO ASSURE MORE FREQUENT BIDDING OPPORTUNITIES.

Contact A.M. Hazen, 248-5111

2505 S.E. 11th AVE., PORTLAND, OREGON 97202