

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Freedom And Social Justice

by
Alexander R. Jones

Prisons — The Injustice Against Blacks

The U.S. prison system represents a great injustice for Black America. Fear, and the thirst for punishment are taking young black men gone awry and casting them into hell holes where they become angry, bitter, and more criminal than ever. There, they are the targets of untold brutality, ranging from beatings to psychiatric experimentation.

We have to do something about criminals, but what we are doing now is not right. It is unjust, it doesn't work, and it wastes billions. Consider some facts.

This country has more people in prison per capita than any other industrialized nation in the world, and the largest ethnic group in our prisons is Blacks. We also hand out the stiffest sentences, and on the average, black offenders in federal prisons serve 20 percent longer sentences for the same crime as do white offenders. Yet, all this locking up does us little good, for America has the world's highest recidivism (former inmates who return to crime) rate, generally estimated at 70 percent.

Further, the number of Blacks in prisons has little to

do with crime. One study found that the percentage of Blacks in a population was the chief predictor of incarceration rates, even though there was no direct relation between the number of Blacks and the crime rate.

Former prison warden William Nagel of the American Foundation did the study. Nagel discovered, for example, that Mississippi has the highest percentage of Blacks of any state, has a very low crime rate, but yet has a very high incarceration rate.

Colorado, on the other hand, has a very small percentage of Blacks, a very high crime rate, and yet a very low incarceration rate. Nor are these isolated examples. Nagel found that for every 10 percent increase in the percentage of Blacks in the population, any given state would tend to add another 37.6 prisoners per 100,000 population.

Our prison system must be changed. I'll discuss some innovative solutions in a future column.

Alexander R. Jones is the Director of Minority and Third World Affairs for the Council of Scientific Internationalism.

Democratic Controlled U.S. Senate Could Benefit Blacks

After the votes were finally tallied from the November General Election, the Democrats had 55 of the 100 U.S. Senate seats, a net gain of eight seats. The reconrol of the Senate by the Democrats was a major defeat for President Ronald Reagan. During the campaign, Reagan visited 22 states and traveled some 25,000 miles on the behalf of Republican Senatorial candidates.

With the Democrats now having the majority in both the U.S. House and Senate, President Reagan is surely to become a lame duck president. However, the control of the U.S. Senate by the Democrats could benefit millions of Americans.

For a Democrat-controlled Senate and House will probably make it more difficult for Reagan to continue some of his domestic policies which have brought despair to millions of Americans, especially the elderly, poor, farmers, and blue collar workers.

Equally important, perhaps, the Democrats will slow

the Reagan Administration's attacks on civil rights. Since Reagan's first term in office, he has made civil rights and civil rights enforcement the lowest priority on his agenda. In fact, just last week the Seattle office of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced that they will close as a result of federal budget cuts.

By gaining control of the Senate, the Democrats will also have the majority on the all-important Judiciary Committee. The Committee approves nominees of the President to the federal bench and decides on a host of civil rights issues.

Under the leadership of outgoing Chairman Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., the Judiciary Committee had become anti-civil rights by confirming judicial appointees who are overtly insensitive to issues important to minorities. Hopefully, a more sensitive Democratic majority Judicial Committee will reverse this disgraceful trend.



Along the Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

Dr. Manning Marable is professor of sociology and political science at Purdue University. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

"Economic and Black Political Power"

Since the Great Depression, most black politicians and the black electorate have supported public policies which are commonly identified as "liberal". Actually, in the context of international politics, the progressive policy agenda favored by most black Americans is "social democracy": increased unemployment programs, public housing, expanded health care, educational opportunity, major reductions in military spending, and so forth. Economic change was always tied to political change.

The strategy of black "social democracy" has been pushed in coalition with other mass constituencies, such as organized labor. At the height of the Civil Rights movement, this coalition secured the adoption of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, as well as the "War on Poverty." Shifts in demography and political culture, as well as the impact of Black Power and the debate over Vietnam, slowly destroyed this coalition.

The collapse of white liberalism and concurrently, the Reaganization of both major parties, has isolated and frustrated both black leaders and their constituents. In this harsh environment of the free market and "Ramboism," a political realignment inside the black community was perhaps inevitable. A new political mythology was created which attempted to negate the real successes of the Civil Rights Movement.

One promoter of this new mythology is Robert Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. In a recent interview, Woodson presented a thoughtful, if erroneous, critique of the past strategic shortcomings of civil rights organizations. "Most groups in this society didn't start off trying to achieve political equity. They went into business," Woodson observed. "Blacks, unfortunately, have

focused almost exclusively on civil rights for the past twenty years or so, as if applying civil rights solutions would somehow translate into economic equity. It does not." Woodson's basic argument, that "political power does not translate into economic power," is an oversimplification. It is true that specific social classes which exercise political leverage within the state may not wield similar authority in the marketplace, and vice versa. But to suggest that social classes or even ethnic groups which achieve a level of political empowerment do not at least indirectly increase their capacity to realize their objective interests in the economic realm is pure fantasy.

Moreover, Woodson hastily attempts to rewrite black political history by juxtaposing the struggle for civil rights with black economic development. The first March on Washington Movement, organized by trade unionist A. Philip Randolph in 1941, culminated in the achievement of Executive Order 8812, which desegregated defense factories. The second March on Washington, D.C., twenty two years later, called for a comprehensive jobs program. Affirmative action, a central tenet of the civil rights agenda, has created hundreds of thousands of job opportunities for minorities and women. But despite the actual record, Woodson insists that civil rights leaders have ignored economic issues. "If you have economic power," Woodson repeats, "you vote every day with your money. If you have political power, you vote only once every two years."

No black American can be against strategies for group economic development. But to counterpose them to a political strategy for empowerment is short-sighted and wrong.

POSAF ON SOUTH AFRICA

"WITHDRAWAL" FROM SOUTH AFRICA: A LEND LEASE SCAM

So lots of big American corporations are withdrawing from South Africa — or are they?

All the evidence say they are not.

Recent corporate pull outs all appear to have certain aspects in common:

1. In each case the "withdrawal" has been achieved by selling the existing plant and/or business to a conveniently available local group.
2. In each case the business is continuing uninterrupted. Coke, made from the company's syrup, is still being sold. Cars and trucks are still made in the former GM plants and sold to the South African army, among others. IBM has beaten the November deadline in the new American sanctions legislation with a long term contract for sales and service of its computers — so useful to the new identity card system and to South African military operations — as well as for the transfer of future technology. According to the Washington Post of 23 October, "it will be business as usual... behind the facade of new company logos in terms of sales and service..." Or as Business Day (Johannesburg) of 22 October puts it the local operations "are intended to serve as conduits for American exports into South Africa."
3. Furthermore, in each reported case the "withdrawing" corporation is not now repatriating the purchase price of the business "sold" to local interests. Instead, it is financing the deal for the local purchasers. Indeed, on 22 October The Star (Johannesburg) reported "huge

inflows of money into South Africa as American companies scrambled to reorganize their equity or financial structure in this country."

These new arrangements have many advantages: Current South African financial controls make repatriation of capital unprofitable; but by the time the purchase price is repaid controls may be lifted or eased. Meanwhile the "withdrawing" corporation draws whopping interest on its loan. And the New York Times reported on 24 October that at least some corporations are negotiation buy-back agreements.

Clever corporate strategists have thus devised a formula — likely to be followed by other U.S. companies — which is designed to win plaudits for pulling out of South Africa while enabling them to continue to shore up the South African regime with their products and their rolled-over capital contributions.

Opponents of the apartheid regime must therefore recognize that the new form of "withdrawal" is not a victory. It is the new strategem to undermine sanctions and to disarm the divestment campaign. The divestment battle must continue until not only all foreign corporations, but also their products, services, and money, have been totally withdrawn from South Africa and Namibia and they no longer give aid and comfort to the white minority regime in Pretoria.

Reprinted from Episcopal ChurchPeople for a Free Southern Africa, newsletter no. 47.

The Foundation of Your Child's Education is
IN THE HOME

Portland Observer

The Portland Observer (USPS 969-690) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 1463 N.E. Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97211, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The Portland Observer was established in 1970.

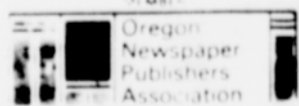
Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.



288-0033

National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
New York

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher
Al Williams, General Manager



USPS 969-690-006
© Exie Publishing Co., Inc. 1986

MEMBER



Association - Founded 1885

PORTLAND OBSERVER \$15 for one year
 \$25 for two years

Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

Mr. _____
Mrs. _____
Miss _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CLIP IT
TO START THE PORTLAND OBSERVER COMING EVERY WEEK

Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey, N.D.

The recent New England Journal of Medicine article on the relationship between alcohol consumption and the incidence of stroke (October 23, 1986) exemplifies how statistical analysis can be used to support insignificant relationships and still receive wide national recognition for the findings. This report concluded that people who drink 4 times the average amount of alcohol are much more likely to develop a stroke than people who drink an average amount. While I don't doubt that the statement is true, it is like the statement that people who pass a driving test are most likely to be the causative force in most car accidents.

The reason that I find the study to be insignificant is that the researchers failed to prove any specific causative role in this study. They failed to consider any social/economic, psychologic or nutritional factors in assessing their work. What they did show is that people who through sampling, report high alcohol intake are more likely, as a unified group, to develop stroke. Included in theis group are those who drink due to

severe depression, individuals who do cardiovascular damage due to high blood sugar, people who provide a significant portion of their daily caloric intake in "empty calories", people who imbibe in other drugs which may individually contribute to stroke development yet melt into the lump classification of "heavy alcohol" intake.

The next time you read a report of a study that concludes a fairly obvious generalized statement, take it with a grain of salt, for it may really have very little usable information in spite of all the glory that surrounds the findings. Certainly overuse of alcohol has many negative social and personal health aspects. There is much research to explain why it may individually worsen many health concerns, so why place so much excitement on the revelation that it does? Maybe our research dollars would be better spent on nutritional programs, educational programs on life style and substance abuse, and research on how to get some of these high level alcohol consumers to diminish their habits.

Support Our Advertisers!
Say you saw it in the

Portland Observer!