



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.

"Raise the Minimum Wage"

When a full-time worker earns less than \$7,000 annually, it's almost impossible to provide the essentials for a decent life for one's family. Yet since Reaganites came to power back in 1981, the federal minimum wage, set at \$3.35 per hour, has remained the same. At that level, the five million people earning minimum wage or less earn at most \$6,968 per year. The federal poverty level for a family of four is currently \$10,989; for a two person household, it is \$6,998. Today's minimum wage rate would have to be increased to \$4.61 per hour to make up for the deterioration in inflation since 1981.

The good news on the political front is that the Iran-Contra scandal has hurt Reagan so severely that the conservative administration may be forced to capitulate to Democratic Party and AFL-CIO demands to raise the minimum wage. Senator Majority Leader Robert Byrd predicted late last month that Congress would hike the minimum wage rate. Liberal Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy, head of the Senate's Labor and Human Resources Committee, accurately states: "The minimum wage is not a living wage, and it is not a decent wage in which a full-time job means a lifetime of poverty." Democratic Representative Mario Biaggi has proposed legislation which would elevate the current minimum level of \$5.05 by 1991, and index the rate to one-half the average hourly earnings level. Currently, the minimum wage is only 38 per cent of the average hourly wage.

On the defensive, the administration now lacks the political muscle to eliminate the demands for higher minimum wages. In previous years, Labor Secretary William Brock has deplored and ridiculed calls for hiking the minimum wage. But at last month's AFL-CIO winter meeting in Florida, Brock insisted to reporters that the administration had not "made any decision" regarding the minimum wage. "We haven't even addressed it at the Cabinet level."

Regrettably but predictably, the ideologues of the ultra-right are attempting to hold the line on wage increases to the working poor. Prominent conservative journalists and economists alike—most of whom earn salaries in excess of \$50,000—are pretending to advocate the interests of poor folk and the unemployed by keeping the lid on their wages!

Chicago Tribune columnist Stephen Chapman recently charged that higher wages for the working poor would force thousands of businesses to "transfer their operations overseas to take advantage of cheaper labor", or to simply "go out of business." Chapman insisted: "Raise the price of oil, and people use less of it; raise the cost of unskilled workers, and companies will employ fewer of them. Raising the minimum wage helps workers who keep their jobs—at the expense of those who get laid off and those who are never hired, because their value is less than the cost of employing them." One recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago argues that a reduction in the hourly minimum wage for teenagers would greatly decrease youth joblessness. Bank economists assert that a 25 percent cut in wages for youth would increase the number of low-paying jobs by as much as 36 percent.

These arguments and other conservative apologetics for lower wages simply don't square with basic facts. It is true that higher labor cost can lead to higher prices, and many bosses tend to reduce the number of workers in response to increased wage rates. However, lower wages also contribute to increases in welfare rates, street hustling, petty crime and drug traffic, because people frequently will resort to anti-social activities if that is the only way in which their children are going to eat and survive. If a working mother with several children cannot provide for housing, day-care, food, electricity, medical bills, clothing, etc., from the meagre wages she receives at a dead-end job, she'd be foolish not to resort to welfare. Higher wages give the working poor greater self-respect.

What's the hidden agenda of the Reaganites who want to cut the wages of young workers? Conservatives may be vicious, but they aren't ignorant. By reducing wages for teens, youngsters will be given jobs which generally go to semi-skilled low wage adults. In the struggle to keep their jobs, adults will be forced to tighten their belts and take wage cuts as well.

Let's fight for a decent living wage for all. A minimum wage of \$5.05 is not only absolutely essential—we must also have massive job training and public works projects which give skills and much-needed experience to working people.

Letters to the Editor

Several Errors

Thank you for the opportunity to share my recent experiences at the Free South African Movement and Call to Conscience National Steering Committee meetings among others. However, I must clarify several errors in the article by Jerry Garner. (Portland Observer 2/11/87)

The American Committee on Africa event was a **program** in Oliver Tambo's honor and **not a conference**. **Lesotho** is not in South Africa. It is an Independent nation totally surrounded by South Africa geographically. The mass action planned for Philadelphia will take place around the **anniversary of the signing of the constitution** and the joint session of congress, not during the 200th anniversary of the nation's independence (which has already occurred). The person who organized the Sun City Album Project is Little Steven

Van Zandt, his name was misspelled in the article.

At the Free South Africa Movement meeting there was discussion about South Africa's regional **war** against the frontline states rather than regional war. There was also discussion about preventing aid to the **MNR OR RENAMO** which are acronyms for the Mozambican National Resistance, a rebel group backed by South Africa which is attempting to overthrow Mozambique.

Also for clarification, the African National Congress (ANC) is a **liberation movement** as opposed to a group.

I thank you for printing these corrections.

Avel Gordly
Director, AFSC
South African Program

Disturbing

It is extremely disturbing to read destructive attacks on Black leadership in any form, be it in letters to the editor or in articles. There have been several instances of this

lately in the Portland Observer. There also appears to be a one-sided approach to coverage of issues. I hope this stops.

Sincerely,
Avel Gordly

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Black Social Problems Deserves Attention

Glenn Loury, a Black political economist at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, caused quite a ruckus in Black communities throughout the nation. He criticized past and present civil rights strategies aimed at alleviating the many social problems afflicting millions of African Americans who live in poverty. Loury said that this approach blames all socio-economic disparity facing Blacks on discrimination and seeks governmental agencies to remedy the problem. The trouble with the strategy, Loury argues, is that it works well only on barriers aimed at African Americans such as poll taxes or restrictive housing covenants.

Furthermore, he states the strategy works either badly or not at all in the presence of disparities created by differences in social class, such as the different value

placed on education by the middle class and by the poor.

As harsh as Loury's analysis may appear, his assertions have merit. Although the civil rights revolution was effective in removing overt segregation in the United States—especially in the Southern states—it failed to address the problem of ghetto life—Black-on-Black crime, Black-on-Black murder (40 percent of all victims), drug addiction and trafficking, Black teen pregnancy, and welfare dependency.

If African Americans are to assimilate into mainstream America, solutions must be found to eradicate this social pathology. Loury is correct when he says, "The Black community is spending too much of their political energy and talent against the 'enemy without', while the 'enemy within' goes unchecked."

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

Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

Mr. _____
Ms. _____
Ms. _____
Miss _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CLIP IT
TO START THE PORTLAND OBSERVER COMING EVERY WEEK

MONEY MANAGEMENT

A weekly column on personal finance distributed by the Oregon Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Tax Tips For The Separated/Divorced Couple

Recent studies show that approximately one-million marriages a year end in divorce. According to the Oregon Society of CPAs, those two million individuals need specific tax advice. There are several tax issues that they should concentrate on, one of the most important being their new filing status.

If you were legally separated or divorced on or before December 31, 1986, you and your spouse or former spouse cannot file a joint return. You will have to file as a single individual unless you are the custodial parent.

The single individual status is available to those who have never been married, are widowed or who are divorced and do not have custody of their children or any other dependents. The head of household status is available to the spouse who is unmarried at year-end or was legally separated for the last six months of the year. In either case, a person claiming head of household must be the custodial parent and have provided the principal home for the child more than half the year.

Other important tax issues after a divorce or separation include the deductibility of alimony, professional fees and child support. Depending on the legal agreement between you and your former spouse, some of these expenses and forms of income will be deductible or taxable while other will not be.

The first tax issue to be addressed as a newly separated or divorced individual is alimony. Couples must determine who will pay taxes on the alimony settlement and who will take a deduction.

Alimony payments deductible by the paying spouse must be included in the income of the receiving spouse. In order to be classified as alimony, a payment to an ex-spouse must be paid in cash, in accordance with the divorce decree, and clearly designated as alimony

rather than any other purpose. For payments of more than \$10,000, additional requirements must be met.

Once alimony arrangements have been made, it is important to stick to them. If for example, an individual agrees to pay more money to his or her former spouse, this extra money cannot be taken as a deduction. Under the formal, written agreement, it is not considered alimony. If, however, an individual does agree to pay more money to his or her former spouse, together they can legally change their agreement and avoid any future tax problems.

Just getting a divorce can be expensive. But certain professional fees incurred by separation or divorce proceedings are also tax deductible.

Neither spouse can take a deduction for fees paid for arranging or resisting a divorce. Only those fees incurred as a result of arranging the details of the alimony payments and/or tax advice are deductible. Therefore, it is important that you have the attorneys and other professionals for both sides list their fees in two categories: 1) those for specifics of the divorce or separation, and 2) those which detail the arrangements of the alimony payments, property settlements, or tax implications of these issues.

Are child support payments tax deductible? Payments specifically designated as support for minor children are not deductible nor are they taxable to the recipient. Structuring of alimony payments and child support payments can be mutually beneficial to both spouses where there is the potential to take deductions at a higher income tax rate and include payments in the other spouse's lower taxable income.

Copyright 1987 AICPA



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

A NEWS SERVICE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST COMMISSION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

No Justice For Eleanor Bumpurs

The white New York City police officer who killed 66-year-old Eleanor Bumpurs, a Black grandmother, back in October of 1984, with two shotgun blasts at close range, has now been acquitted of all criminal charges. He has also been restored to full duty. Justice Fred W. Egbert, who presided over the non-jury trial, stated that it had not been proven that the officer, Stephen Sullivan, was guilty of "any gross deviation" from Police Department standards.

Let us just consider the facts of the case. Mrs. Bumpurs was killed during an eviction procedure. She was behind in her \$96 a month rent. An Emergency Service team was called because she was deemed dangerous, and this SWAT team proceeded to batter down her door to enforce the eviction. Mrs. Bumpurs is said to have met them with a knife in her hand. Officer Sullivan first blew her hand away, then aimed another shotgun blast at her chest, which killed her. It seems it never occurred to the police to simply leave the elderly woman alone until a less violent means of eviction could be decided upon.

At the trial two doctors testified as expert witnesses that after Officer Sullivan fired his first shot, Mrs. Bumpurs would have been completely disarmed and harmless. As Dr. Jon Pearl noted, "She couldn't have held anything in her hand after being shot. She had only two fingers left." In fact, most of her hand was shot away by Sullivan's first blast.

Yet, the judge decided that if Officer Sullivan "momentarily disregarded Mrs. Bumpurs' safety" it was simply because he wanted to ensure the safety of a fellow officer, and this was certainly, he said, no "gross deviation from reasonable conduct or care."

Just to put this matter in its proper context, let us, for a moment, imagine that Mrs. Bumpurs was a 66-year-old white grandmother who, it was rumored, has some mental problems. Her only offense, however, was that she was behind in her rent. Would a SWAT team have been sent to evict her? Would an officer

have forced entry with his shotgun already in his hand? And when this elderly white grandmother began to approach the team with a knife, would the officers have blasted her away rather than simply backing out of the apartment?

We'll never know because Mrs. Bumpurs was Black, not white. But a statement a Black police officer made shortly after the killing sticks in my mind. He said, "When I saw the pictures of Eleanor Bumpurs she reminded me of my own grandmother. That image would have stopped me before I made a move in that situation. However, that's not what Sullivan was when he decided to fire."

When Sullivan was first indicted, Mayor Koch praised Sullivan's police record saying, "Officer Sullivan has had an outstanding record of heroic public service to the people of New York City." Sullivan's colleagues also rallied behind him. When word got out that Sullivan had been indicted by a grand jury, a near police riot ensued. Approximately 8,000 primarily white officers, organized by their union, the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (the PBA), demonstrated outside the office of District Attorney Mario Merola. Waving American flags they shouted, "Mario must go!" and "Merola the Ayatollah."

Yet, despite the PBA, a trial did result, but to what end? The judge's decision essentially declares that it was proper conduct for police to ram their way into the home of an elderly woman with shotguns ready, just to perform an eviction. As it had done in case after case, the law enforcement and judicial systems continue to support the brutality of the police over the rights of New York's minority residents.

The city of New York is becoming increasingly polarized along racial lines. This is due not only to the actions of white mobs in places like Howard Beach. It is also due to the legal decisions of those like Judge Egbert who allow the unbridled, death-wielding power of the police to continue unchallenged.

Portland Observer

The Portland Observer (USPS 959-690) is published every Thursday by Eze Publishing Company, Inc. 1403 NE 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.

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

National Advertising Representative: Amalgamated Publishers, Inc. New York

288-0033

MEMBER NATIONAL NEWSPAPER Association - Founded 1885