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"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"

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Black Press — White Advertisers

by Nyewusi Askari

Recently, in a major metropolitan city, a Black newspaper editor took white advertisers to task for not advertising in a local African-American newspaper. In response, many of the ad departments said they didn't advertise in Black newspapers because they were of the opinion that Black newspapers didn't reflect the views and perceptions of white businessmen and their patrons.

On the local scene, it appears that some of Portland's major business establishments have also chosen to adopt the same attitude towards Oregon's two African-American newspapers.

One does not have to come up with a reason in order to understand the inequity of such business practices, especially when one takes note of the fact that a large majority of Black Oregonians spend their money with these businesses. It's a problem that needs to be addressed, and, in order to do so, it is necessary to define what a Black newspaper is.

Historically, the Black press has performed an important function in Black communities throughout the country. Black historian, John Hope Franklin, gives a vivid picture of this role:

"Black newspapers of the twentieth century took up the cudgel

[heavy club] in behalf of the underprivileged. They became the medium through which the yearnings of the race were expressed, the platform from which the Black leaders could speak, the coordinator of mass action which Blacks felt compelled to take, and a major instrument by which many Blacks were educated with respect to public affairs.

"In the decades following World War I, the number of Black newspapers increased steadily. Every Black community apparently felt the need for its own newspaper to perform the services that few white newspapers could or would undertake to perform. Here and there a white paper devoted a part of a page to Black news, while most of them reported a generous share of news of crimes committed by Blacks.

"By 1973 there were more than 350 Black newspapers, magazines, and bulletins that were issued on a regular weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis," Dr. Franklin concluded.

Traditionally, Black newspapers have served as the "eyes and ears of the Black community." They have also kept white America informed about "the policies and views with regard to the important issues affecting African-American

cans," said Franklin.

The lack of support for Oregon's two major Black newspapers by major businesses and corporate establishments points to an almost total disregard of the purchasing and spending power of Black Oregonians. The pattern is repeated throughout the nation. Yet, the Black Enterprise Board of Economists estimates that the total income of the Black community nationwide will grow to \$238 billion this year, roughly a 7% growth rate for per capita income.

The majority of Oregon's 37,060 Black citizens reside in Inner Northeast Portland. Residing in a neighborhood whose median household income is \$13,450 and whose mean household income is \$16,270, these Black residents are frequent patrons of corporate/business tenants like the Lloyd Center, Safeway, Fred Meyers, Albertsons, First Interstate Bank and others too numerous to name. The money they spend allows those establishments to remain healthy and financially secure.

However, Black America, like the rest of America, is in transition. Dr. Bernard Anderson, Philadelphia Urban Partnership, estimates that "Black women will make up the largest share of the increase in the non-white labor force during the

next decade and will outnumber Black men in the workforce — a contrast to the pattern among white workers, where men outnumber women almost three to two." Black women, for example, control approximately \$180 billion dollars, over 75% of the total Black dollars available to profit America's economy.

It is a shame that data on Blacks is always focused on the negative side: how many Blacks commit crimes, how many Blacks are on welfare. Why doesn't white corporate America keep track of the contributions Black make to American society and economy? Without the Black communities' financial stability and buying power, the American economy and businesses would be out \$238 billion dollars.

In response to these corporate and business attitudes and practices, Black communities across the country have placed Black economic development at the top of the agenda. Already a "Buy Black" campaign is underway. The campaign is designed to encourage African-Americans to spend more of their money with Black businesses. At the same time, some major white corporate and business establishments are supporting the movement by employing African-Americans, establishing scho-

larship funds, moving more Blacks into management positions, granting franchises and supporting Black newspapers by advertising.

Business and corporate establishments, and the broadcast and print media, must be held accountable for the way they wheel and deal

within and influence the attitude towards to Black community. "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." If Black Oregonians are to continue to spend their money with such establishments, it is in the best interest of these establishments to reciprocate.



Adrian Anderson, an unemployed janitorial worker, joined the 30 or 40 "Justice For Janitors" demonstrators at the Wilcox Building Thursday, Jan. 28th. In 1986 median janitorial wages downtown fell \$.91 an hour with most non-union workers now starting at \$4.00 per hour with no health care or other benefits. "These wages qualify many workers for food stamps, public health care and other forms of tax-supported relief," said Tom Cunningham, spokesperson for the "Justice For Janitors" campaign. Photo by Richard J. Brown

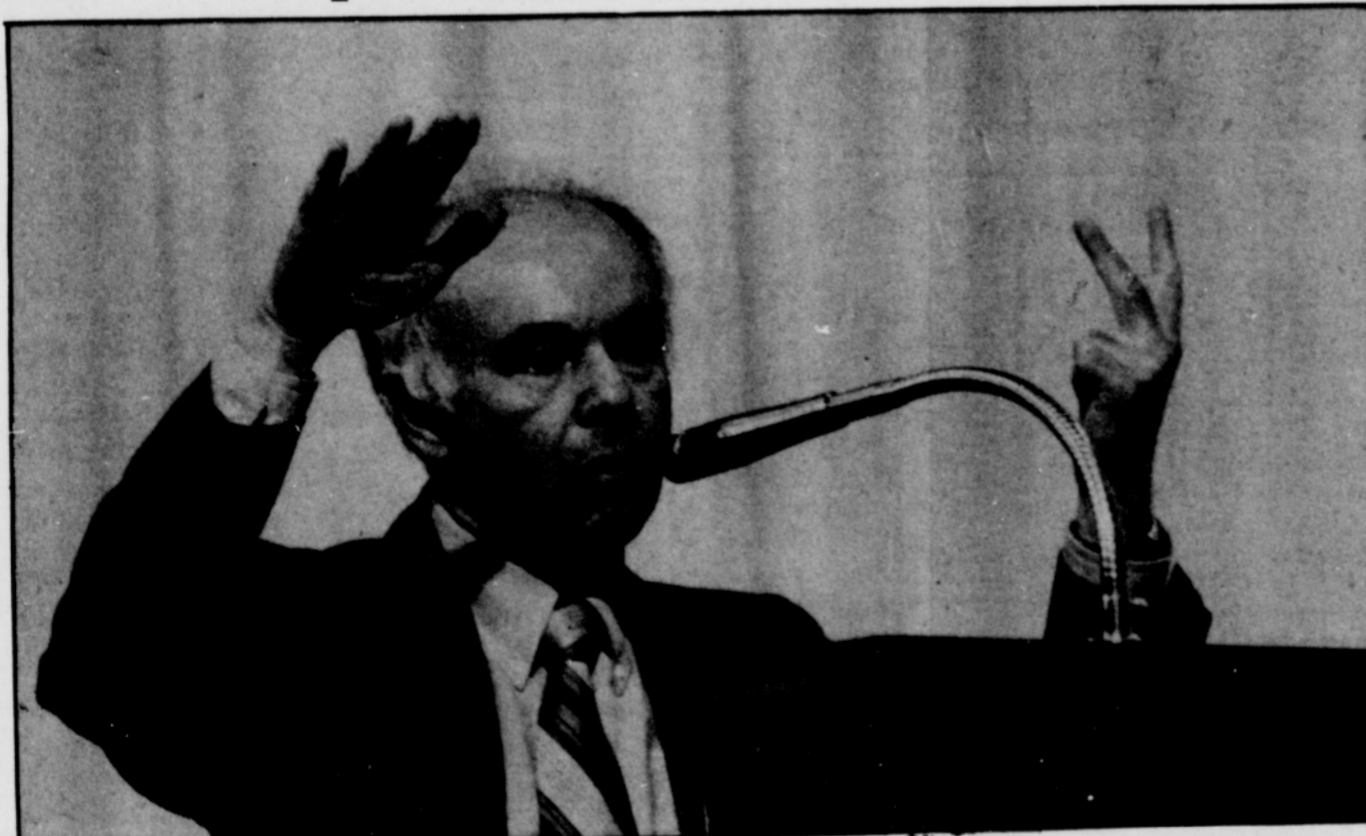
Don Clark Reports to County Commissioners

by Ian MacCrae

"Triage." The term brings to mind scenes from the television series M.A.S.H. — scenes of doctors and nurses examining the wounded as they arrived from the Korean battlefields. Medically speaking, the term "triage" refers to the assigning of priorities for treatment of patients, but the word was used in an entirely different context Tuesday, Jan. 26, when former sheriff and county executive Don Clark urged the county to adopt a strategy for fighting a different kind of battle — the battle against crime.

Clark had been asked to take a long, hard look at the problem of crime by County Chair Gladys McCoy back in August of 1987. Specifically, McCoy wanted to know Clark's views on how the county could reorganize its services to tackle the roots of crime instead of its symptoms. His conclusion: the county should integrate its human services and criminal justice system into a coordinated system offering a "continuum of services" to persons at risk of entering a life of crime. Clark also urged the commissioners to heed the recommendations of a think-tank of county professionals which he had called together for the purpose of developing a program to implement the continuum concept. It was the report of that think-tank which explained what "triage" is all about.

According to the think-tank report, the triage system would work something like this: On first coming in contact with police, offenders who presented no immediate threat of violence to others would be referred to a Triage Center for evalua-



Don Clark recommends a strategy to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners for fighting the battle against crime. Photo by Richard J. Brown

tion. At that point, the suspect would be interrogated by an examiner who would pose a number of questions: Does this offender have a history of drug or alcohol abuse? Is he or she likely to benefit from treatment? Will the offender probably continue to break the law, clogging the criminal justice system and occupying jail space that ought to be reserved for dangerous criminals? And most important of all, can this offender be released back into the community without endangering the lives of others?

If the answer to all of these questions is yes, persons charged with Class C felonies or less — including such crimes as prostitution, forgery, possession of drugs or theft — could be assigned a case manager

and be enrolled in programs which help them deal with the habits which led them down the road to crime. If not, they would be treated in much the same way that the system now handles the vast majority of criminals, that is, booked and sent to jail or cited and released, depending on the seriousness of the crime.

Deputy District Attorney Frederick Lenzser, think-tank participant, emphasized that the examination of offenders would be "intense," and that offenders entering rehabilitation would suffer "swift and immediate consequences" for not adhering strictly to the treatment regimen. In other words, the new system would offer habitual criminals the stark choice of either coming

to terms with their problems or re-entering the criminal justice system.

Clark used the expression "womb-to-tomb" in describing the range of services that would be offered under the program. The think-tank report lists 14 different "treatment approaches," including the following:

- Drug and alcohol treatment for adolescents and adults;
- Family assessment and referral, to intervene against substance abuse, domestic violence and child abuse or molestation;
- Prenatal care with emphasis on childbirth education, health and nutrition, and drug treatment for expectant mothers;
- Housing referral, to address emergency and permanent housing

needs;

• Job readiness training, to address the lack of skills which so often leads to chronic unemployment;

• Treatment of mental illness for those who do not qualify for treatment in the community health system;

• Victim compensation, to promote restitution to crime victims as a part of the "treatment/sanction plan".

Harley Leiber, the county's Director of Community Corrections, described the plan as an attempt to "create a separate track" for offenders who repeatedly recycle through the system. Clark too referred to the burden placed on the criminal justice system by repeat offenders. With the cost of new jails and prisons ranging from \$25,000 per bed for minimum security to \$100,000 per bed or more for maximum security, he said officials of city, county and state government are searching for "cost effective alternatives to incarceration."

Clark's report outlined the reasons he believes a "holistic" approach offers the best hope of stemming the rising tide of crime in the county. Describing the county's justice system as "fragmented, expensive, overcrowded, and not adequately linked with human services," he concluded that "the system isn't working" to reduce crime.

Repeatedly, he stressed the need to intervene in family situations where drug abuse and child abuse are documented facts. Eighty percent of inmates at Oregon penitentiaries have a history of involvement with drugs, he noted, and a large majority have also been victims of child abuse. The fact that these "common denominators" appear "over

and over again" in the families of convicted criminals, he said, constitutes a "clear mandate" for the county to become a "change agent" in their lives.

When confronted by Commissioner Polly Casterline with the question of whether rehabilitation really works, Clark responded with conviction borne of personal experience. Referring to former drug and alcohol abusers now employed at Central City Concern, the social service agency he now heads, Clark said many of his employees had been repeat offenders. After getting treatment for their illnesses, however, those same individuals had proven themselves to be "hard-working, reliable employees" and "law-abiding, tax-paying, voting citizens" as well.

Will the county adopt the triage/continuum of services approach to dealing with repeat offenders? If the response of the commissioners is any indication, the answer is yes. McCoy and several of the other commissioners expressed enthusiasm for the concept, with McCoy expressing the consensus view when she said, "more jail space is part of the answer, but not the whole answer."

Neither Clark nor any of the commissioners ventured a guess as to what a triage system would cost the county. Nor was a timetable mentioned for the implementation of the new program. However, informed sources indicated that a schedule for adopting the triage strategy would be a decision for the new director of Justice Services — who has yet to be hired — in conjunction with McCoy and the other board members.

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