

COMMUNITY FORUM

The Economic Homefront:

by Sam Kahl

Carrying forward the work of Civil Rights may require, in this phase of its historical evolution, a focus on the development of prosperous, predominantly Black, businesses, to be located largely in the communities where African-Americans predominantly live and work. It is economic prosperity that puts meat on the bone of political freedom. But how is this to be accomplished? ... The issue is not whether Bush or Dukakis will be better for Black Americans. The question becomes whether the African-American Community is ready to put forth a position and direction of its own "that can bring forth an economic base" for the community "to anybody" in power. "We don't need to respond to Bush or Dukakis; they need to respond to us. But we've got to have something for them to respond to. If we sit back and say, 'Well, Dukakis is going to do this for us; Bush is going to do that for us,' what are we going to do for ourselves?"



Chad Debnam

These are the words of Chad Debnam, president of B. Chadwick Group Ltd., which is a management consulting firm located on Union Ave. Mr. Debnam's firm is in the work of developing businesses. Clients may be entrepreneurs who want to expand or diversify, or prospective entrepreneurs who have an idea that needs to be put to work.

Chad Debnam is not just a person after a livelihood, he's a person with a strong sense of mission, having insisted on locating both his home and his business, by choice, in the North Portland community, to put his expertise to work in the service of the community of his roots, to help it blossom into a beauty and prosperity which he envisions is its potential.

"I think that our community historically has operated on a personality basis: If I don't like you, if I don't like your philosophy, or if I don't like the way you approach things, then I am out to destroy you." In other words, it is the attitude, "If you're not for me, then you're against me." "I don't buy that. Black people need to stop jiving themselves. We need to quit saying, 'Because I can't get along with you, I'm going to work with this person against you, to prove to you that I'm good.' We need to look at each other and say, 'Wait a minute! I don't understand why I don't get along with you, and I don't understand why you don't get along with me, but we have to solve this problem between us first before any of us can get anywhere.' If we have a good relationship among ourselves, then nobody can take advantage of us. This is the cement of our community. We need to like ourselves..."

"This arena" we have to deal with "is about who gets what, when and how much and for how long. That's what we do in politics and business when we talk about economic development: Who's got it? What do they do with it? Did somebody benefit by it? You talk of community, talk about economic foundations. We've got opportunity; we've got resources. They say there is an approximately \$260 billion economy in the Black community" nationwide "that we generate ourselves. They say that in the Jewish Community the money" they generate "circulates five times, in the Korean Community five times, before it passes out" into the community outside. "If we can do it just three times! Our Gross National Product is the tenth largest in the

world! This is government statistics and those of the National Business League, though you may want to check those figures for exact accuracy....

"Can we create, and understand when there is, an opportunity and take advantage of it? For example, there's a guy, a contractor, who came to me and said, 'Hey, there's an opportunity at Metro, but I don't have bonding and I need to put in my bid bond.' Until we can say, 'Is that all you need? Here's \$1,000, here's \$2,000 for the bid bond. Now you pay back the money,'—now until we can do that, we'll continue to lose the opportunity. On Union Ave., there was a brother who had a burger company. They made excellent burgers. Now the banks wouldn't lend him any money, but there wasn't any network in the community that could lend him the \$2,500 or \$3,000 he needed to carry him through the next three months, so he went out of business.

Chad Debnam is constantly on the alert to problems facing Black businesses. His orientation is not to project bias, but to evaluate facts. His objective is not to pick a fight, but to work for a solution; "Until we get over the personality hurdles, we will remain in confusion" and captivity. Mr. Debnam then speaks of what he calls "networking." Networks actually buy results. What do you have to offer me? And you offering me something I already know? "Do you offer me a contact that can create something?—You see, networks actually have to perform" to satisfy anyone. "It is not a clique; it does not operate because I like you, or because you are neat, or because you are friends with somebody else. It operates because it is to each person's benefit" to enter into this partnership or relationship.

"I think there's a problem with the banks, but anyone in business will tell you that entrepreneurial opportunities first start with your friends, family and close acquaintances (who) lend you the money to attain the first level of success—private sources. There are very few people who can take an idea to the bank and get money. This is true of anybody. Maybe there's institutional racism—I do know it exists, but people don't realize, banks like to give money to people who don't really need it... If you can't cover your rearend, that's not something the bank will look at positively. I'm not here to argue why that is; I'm just here to state the fact. We have an alternative, so that we don't have to go "begging" to the banks. But the inward look hurts. Before we can say what this 'outsider' is doing to us, we must look at what we're doing to each other.

"I don't think we should be concerned about what whites think of us. I think we should be mostly concerned about what we think of each other. Until we stop the self-hatred, the self-denial," which is the basis of the youth gangs, "we can kiss off this game... The youth gangs themselves are "a means of identifying, though there is a criminal element that exploits it." "You talk about role models, the other side of the community doesn't have anything to offer" as a positive alternative. What is the future that we offer to our young people?

"In a situation where there is so much blight, a business like mine should be steadily busy. I want to see our community work. It can work. We have in our hands the means to do it, but we keep giving it away. I'd like all of us to participate and work to make this community the model community that I know it can be."

Clothing Drive

The Portland-Vancouver area's third annual "Children Helping Children" clothing drive starts next week (Oct. 10) and runs through December 23.

Last year's campaign provided clothing for 550 children of 150 families, a 50 percent increase over the first year.

"This year, we'd like to do even more," said Charles Carter, executive director for Low-Income Families Emergency (LIFE), a human service agency which operates clothing and food banks and other programs serving area families.



Charles Carter

"Children Helping Children" is a simple idea, according to its sponsors. Kids (or parents) can bring outgrown or unneeded clothing to any of 11 child care centers operated by Children's World Learning Center, or to KGW Television. There will be clothing collection barrels inside the entrance at each location.

Once the barrels are filled, the clothing will be collected by LIFE volunteers who will sort and display the clothing and provide it free for those in need.

Carter said the clothing drive is unique, in that donations are mainly made by children to other children, hence the name "Children Helping Children."

Clothing donations are tax deductible in the amount of the value of the clothing.

Following are locations where clean and wearable clothing may be dropped off during business hours:

Children's World Learning Centers - Beaverton: 17225 N.W. Corridor Ct., 12385 S.W. Longhorn Lane, 18425 N.W. Walker Road, 4845 S.W. Murray Blvd., 12360 S.W. Pioneer Lane; Gresham: 3200 N.E. Hogan; Hillsboro: 1771 S.E. Minter Bridge Rd.; Rockwood: 840 N.E. 181st St.; Sunnyside: 10501 S.E. Sunnyside; Vancouver: 622 S.E. 117th Ave., 10021 N.E. Hazel Dell Ave.; KGW-TV: 1501 S.W. Jefferson St.

Information will be provided later about the dates and locations where clothing can be picked up by those in need.

For information about the program or donation locations, call (503) 626-0541.

Appointment

The Portland Development Commission (PDC) has appointed David B. Nemo as Administrative Services Coordinator. His responsibilities include serving as the Commission's Minority/Women Business Enterprise (M/WBE) liaison officer and contracts coordinator.

Nemo joined PDC's Operations Department in July, 1985 as a Program Development Specialist. He has experience as a small business owner and worked previously as the Administrative Assistant to the City Manager of Milwaukie.

Urban League: Learning Center

The Urban League of Portland's Whitney M. Young Learning Center will open for the 1988-89 academic year on Monday, Oct. 3. The Learning Center provides homework assistance, academic encouragement, a quiet place to work, and study skill development to students in grades 7 through 12 who live in North/Northeast Portland.

Professional staff and dedicated volunteers are available to help students in an array of subjects, from English and history, to math and science. The Learning Center also sponsors rap sessions, a student newsletter, guest speakers, and other educational activities. High expectations, demanding standards and cultural heritage are integral to the

Learning Center philosophy.

The Learning Center, located at St. Andrews Community School, 4919 Northeast 9th, is open Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., whenever public school is in session. A parent or guardian must accompany a student on his or her first visit to the Center. For more information, call The Urban League of Portland (280-2600) or the Learning Center (288-4356).

All 7th through 12th grade students in the North/Northeast community, regardless of academic grades, are encouraged to take advantage of these free tutorial services, and make the most of their educational opportunities!

IBM Training Centers

IBM has expanded to 74 the number of major job training centers for the disadvantaged it sponsors in the U.S.

The training centers are located in urban areas with high unemployment and are operated in cooperation with non-profit community-based organizations such as the National Urban League, Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), SER -Jobs for Progress, and local businesses. The training offered includes courses in programming, computer operations, data entry and word processing. Specific programs vary from center to center.

More than 20,000 people have been graduated from these centers since the program began in 1968. More than eighty percent have been placed in jobs upon graduating. In 1987, more than 6,200 students enrolled in the program and more than 5,100 graduated, for an 83 percent completion rate.

IBM provides equipment and equipment-related supplies (and, in some instances, loaned instructors) as needed. There is currently over \$13 million worth of IBM equipment and employee resources on loan to job training centers.

There is no tuition charge. All classroom materials are provided. The program is for economically disadvantaged persons who cannot afford commercially available training.

The first job training center was opened in Los Angeles in 1968 in conjunction with the National Urban League and the Bank of America. IBM is still participating in that center.

Since 1972, IBM has also helped establish 40 Rehabilitation Job Training Centers for the handicapped. More than 2,400 people with disabilities have graduated as entry-level computer programmers or operators. This program also has a placement rate of more than 80 percent.

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