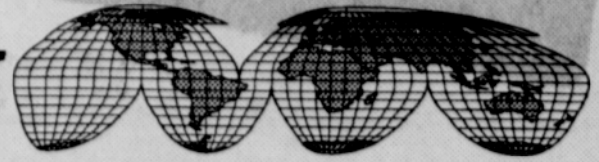




EDITORIAL / OPINION



Guest Editorial

Where, How, and Why We Must Count! More!

by A. Lee Henderson

There is a need to take a careful measure of the way we count success in the recent elections.

We have to consider where the elections are held and how they were conducted before determining the future of our political strategies as minority peoples. It is essential that we share this message with each other, because we know we count. And we know for our future and our children's future why we must count! More!!

We stand to lose the advances of ghetto politics which is shifting our electoral districts into areas of pure Black or pure White racial divisions. Ironically, the Voting Rights Act which was put into force in 1965 "to end such things as poll taxes and literacy tests that disenfranchised millions of Blacks" has helped to set up guarantees to Black and Hispanic candidates. It does so by establishing inner-city districts. Local politicians, therefore, appeal to the segregated populace and confine Black candidates to stay put on local levels rather than risk winning with an interracial platform in a non-ghettoized district. Virginia's new Governor and New York's new Mayor offer stunning examples of a future we have ahead of us! But we must heed the critical local level! There is an advantage certainly to Black congressmen that the law offers in protecting their seats which they might find in jeopardy with a population decline.

U.S. News and World Report cites figures that claim Blacks hold just 15 percent of elective political offices while ac-

counting for 11 percent of the voting-age population."

Black influence is felt in confined districts of concentrated Black populations, such as in Chicago, but what would happen if this influence was encouraged to extend beyond these set boundaries?

Our vision ought to include this type of expanded democracy so that we can impact humanity. Where? Universally. How? By fixing our sites beyond our present boundaries. Why? Because we must count to make a difference in effecting changes that will strike all levels of society for economic, social, and political progress. We must Count! More!!

We wish to avoid the inequities that occur when districts are depleted of Blacks, as happened in Atlanta to raise the proportion of Blacks in an adjacent district. The depleted district elected conservative Republican Pat Swindall to office in 1984. However, Atlanta's fifth congressional district did elect Black Andrew Young in 1972 who became the Mayor of Atlanta!

Carol Swain, a Black political scientist at Duke University notes, "More Blacks could be elected. It's just that there's general perception among Whites and Blacks that Blacks can't win in a majority White district."

We contend that the stage is set for a greater participation of political action, and that this is a meaningful time to stride forward and erase all inequities.

We can be meaningful and mighty as we participate in our own future and the future of humankind.

Perspectives



by Professor McKinley Burt

I called it right again, didn't I, when forecasting that the political upheavals in Eastern Europe would mean very little to this nation's Blacks—who might have believed that big cuts in the military might translate into an improved economic situation. I'm sure you saw that headline quoting the president, "Don't hold your breath expecting a peace dividend—there isn't going to be a lot of excess money floating around out there." In case you were naive enough to think that any "excess" would be funneled into such critical areas as health education, housing or drug wars, you've been forewarned in this column—the money is going to our kinfolk overseas to get them back on their communist feet.

So much for our relatives; let us proceed with the task we assigned ourselves last week; "where do we go from here?" Writer Shelby Steele said we suffer from a "victim-focused Black identity," and we were admonished for a "lack of ability to take responsibility and seize opportunity." Now, here is something we really need to consider here. The American media works overtime to convince this nation (and the world), and perhaps Blacks themselves, that this is just the case. Day and night all of us are bombarded with the shrill assault of the denigrating images and verbiage which can only serve to portray—one sidedly—a poor, forlorn, despised and hopeless mass of people (with no future and no **Statue of Liberty** to beckon "Send me your poor and downtrodden masses").

This debilitating radiation pours from the tube: "illiterate, imprisoned, jobless, drop out, drugged (from womb to serenity), rapist, unruly, unhusband, uneducated, and unparented." If there is another level of Black existence, it is not intended that the world should know of it. The media is not interested in how these situations came about—it would not dare explore these issues—the media is interested in sales and ratings, the balance sheet. If there is an ebony body politic, beleaguered but alive and functioning—then it is certainly going to have to assert itself or we may all perish under the weight of the assault.

It is my belief that Blacks have got to

Way To Go!

escalate their communication modes. Our names need to appear a lot more in the **Reader's Column** in the press, answering the many slanted and prejudiced news articles that are more **view points** than news (some should be on the Editorial Page). We should go around the media and address establishment organizations ourselves—the Rotaries and others service organizations, business and professional groups. Request a place on the agenda of organizations, request **guest editorial** space in the press, answer both the racists and the pseudo-liberals. It is unthinkable that we could have as many college graduates and professionals as we do, and then not carry a counterattack against the thinly-veiled diatribes and denigrations beyond the confines of the ghetto.

I also believe that another "way to go from here" is to re-examine our organizational bases. It is quite possible that our old-line traditional groups such as the Urban League and the NAACP no longer effectively serve the purpose of a beleaguered race as we approached the 21st century—at least not entirely, and, certainly, there must be some serious restructuring. We may inter from recent local events that the area of administrative controls and procedures is one that needs a great deal of work and education (for example, a smoothly functioning and well trained board of directors is as much a prerequisite in the social organization as in industry). Then, too, there is the exterior interface with a new technological workplace and infra-structure—progressive social organizations are now selecting members of their boards with considerations of the experience and ability to deal with a 21st century interface.

This is just a glance at one aspect of a necessary new order. It is imputed that Blacks are going to have to develop some new structures to train, educate, guide and monitor their social and economic efforts in this age of computerized information systems. Next week we will examine some possible formats in such needed areas as Consumerism, Health and Safety, Urban Development, Director Training, Etc. We can no longer build on cronyism and popularity.

VANTAGE POINT

Articles and Essays by Ron Daniels

Progressive Black Politics: The Vanguard For A New Society

If the masses of African-Americans are to survive, develop and prosper in America, indeed if the masses of working people, Black or white and other minorities are to benefit from the "good life" in America, then Black politics must move beyond mere skin color to a progressive vision and agenda for change in America.

African-Americans most assuredly should aspire to gain access to power both in the public and private sectors and we should seek to forge coalitions. But our access to power and the coalitions which propel our leaders into positions of prominence, may only produce disillusionment if black politics is not grounded in a progressive vision and agenda. Without a vision, an agenda and the capacity to wage struggle to enact that vision and agenda, Black faces in high places will make no difference. In fact there is the danger, absent a progressive vision and agenda, that Black faces in high places may only legitimize the present system and thereby perpetuate the status quo.

What does it mean to be "progressive"? The Gary Declaration which was issued at the historic 1972 Gary Convention summed up and set the tone for progressive Black politics in terms of vision, goals and a sense of mission. It is useful to cite this document from this great gathering as a basis for guiding our deliberation and actions in this crucial period.

"The crises we face as Black people are the crises of the entire society. They go deep, to the very bones and marrow, to the essential nature of America's economic, political and cultural systems. They are the natural end product of a society built on the twin foundations of white racism and white capitalism." The progressive vision is based on an analysis of the problem facing African-Americans and other oppressed groups in this country. America as is, with its racist institutions, chauvinist culture and an exploitive economic system which promotes and tolerates extremes of wealth and poverty is not acceptable. Hence the Gary Declaration went on to state "... all truly Black politics must begin with this truth: **THE AMERICAN SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK FOR THE MASSES OF OUR PEOPLE, AND IT CANNOT BE MADE TO WORK WITHOUT RADICAL FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE.** (Indeed, this system does not really work in favor of the humanity of anyone in America)."

Progressive Black politics is based on a race-class analysis and perspective. That is to say that progressive Black politics

recognizes that while racism and racial oppression remain major barriers to African-American progress, an explorative economic system also works to keep African-American progress, an explorative economic system also works to keep African-Americans, other minorities and poor and working people locked at the bottom of the economic ladder. The American political economy is a system of prosperity for some and misery for many. That system must change.

The mission of progressive Black politics, therefore, is to "... accept major responsibility for creating both the atmosphere and the program for fundamental, far ranging change in America... It is the challenge to consolidate and organize our own Black role as the vanguard in the struggle for a new society." Progressive politics is not a politics of the status quo. It is not about the business of apologizing for or legitimizing the present system. Progressive Black politics is a politics of social transformation.

Progressive Black politics is forced to raise hard questions as it relates to the present system. How is that the wealthiest and most technologically endowed nation on the face of the earth can have 3-6 million homeless people, 37 million people with no health insurance, 60 million people who are either functionally illiterate or completely illiterate, 30 million plus people who live in poverty, and urban inner city centers that are collapsing under the weight of joblessness, crime, drugs and decay? As Martin Luther King put it: "true compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

Progressive Black politics therefore must be about the task of exposing flaws and contradictions in the American political-economic system and it must press for "restructuring." It seeks not to plunge into the "mainstream" of what America is, but to transform the very nature of the mainstream. Progressive Black politics therefore must forge a fighting program and enter into coalitions not to dilute the Black agenda or to accommodate the status quo, but to unite any and all who have a vision of a new America and a new tomorrow. And as the Gary Declaration exhorted African-Americans nearly two decades ago: "the society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming." Such is the vision, mission and challenge of progressive Black politics in our time.

Letters to the Editor



MINORITY OUTREACH LETTER

I am writing to let you know about some important services Human Solutions offers which we want to bring to the attention of racial and ethnic minority persons.

Human Solutions, Inc. is a social service agency offering a wide variety of services to low-income, elderly and handicapped persons in Multnomah County. Our services include homeless and aging case management, housing counseling, energy assistance, information and referral, and weatherization. Our services are outlined in the enclosed brochure.

I am writing to you because Human Solutions wants to boost the participation of minorities in our programs, particularly in programs which have had a low participation rate by minorities or which are intended to benefit minorities. These programs are:

- * Critical Maintenance. This HUD funded, Multnomah County sponsored program provides funds for the repair and maintenance of owner-occupied dwellings in portions of east Portland, and mid and east Multnomah County. Repairs are made where the health of the occupant is threatened, where the habitability of the building is in jeopardy, or to increase the energy efficiency of the dwelling. Funds for this program are limited.

- * Fair Housing Counseling. This counseling is for persons who feel they are or have been discriminated against in any area of housing including rental, pre-rental, purchase, pre-purchase, shared housing, displacement and re-location, or landlord-tenant issues.

- * Weatherization. We can weatherize qualifying homes and rental units at no cost to the home-owner or landlord. Weatherization will help reduce the amount of money clients spend on energy and allow them to spend their money on other necessities. Human Solutions performs the weatherization work but intake for this program is handled by Multnomah County.

Human Solutions programs usually are limited to low-income, elderly or handicapped persons. Fair housing counseling is an exception to our guidelines; it is available to anyone regardless of income, age or physical condition. Access to all human Solutions programs is available to anyone regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, sexual preference, familial status, or physical or mental handicap. All services are handicapped accessible. In addition, we have Spanish speaking staff available.

In the meantime, if you would like more information about Human Solutions' programs or would like to refer a client to us, please call Lucy at 248-5200. If you would like to refer a client for weatherization please call the Multnomah County Community Action Program Office, at 248-5464.

We appreciate your referrals of qualifying racial or ethnic minority clients.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Steven H. Rapp,
Public Information Officer

OPINION

Excise Tax Overload

There has been talk lately in Congress about increasing federal excise taxes on everyday consumer goods. Many economists argue that legislators favor consumer excise taxes on alcohol, gasoline and tobacco products because they can be hidden in product cost. A nickel here, a dime there doesn't sound like much, but the total cost can be staggering.

Even more staggering is the fact that Congress is proposing an increase in federal consumer excise taxes after 23 states raised gasoline taxes, 13 states raised tobacco product taxes and seven states, alcoholic beverage taxes in 1989.

According to a survey newly released by the National Conference of

State Legislatures (NCSL), the number of states increasing consumer excise taxes in 1989 was the highest in years, and these regressive taxes were the favorite target of state legislatures. A recent comprehensive study by the non-profit, non-partisan Tax Foundation found that consumer excise taxes on alcohol, gasoline and tobacco, along with sales taxes, absorb almost 10 percent of the income of the lowest income families, but less than 2 percent of the highest income class.

How much more will we pay in state excise taxes for 1990 alone? Try approximately \$1.5 billion. The estimates by individual state from the NCSL survey tell the story. **ll**

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To Be Equal

by John E. Jacob

Long Term Health Care

When the history of the 1980s comes to be written, the strange saga of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act will likely be a prime illustration of how greed and special interests undercut compassion and social needs.

The Act was passed in 1988 after a two-year struggle to meet the disastrous impact of long-term illness on the elderly, many of whom found their lifetime's savings wiped out when Medicare coverage ran out.

Many of the elderly have chronic conditions that require steady consumption of expensive prescription drugs, and the Act partially reimbursed those expenses, as well.

The improved coverage was financed through a surtax on the elderly. In effect, the beneficiaries of the bill would pay for it. All seniors pay a small monthly fee; those liable for federal income tax pay a modest surcharge, and the wealthiest 5 percent of the elderly wound up paying the top surcharge of \$800 per year.

When the Act was passed, everyone—leaders of both parties, senior citizens groups, and health experts—hailed it as a long overdue improvement benefitting the most vulnerable of the elderly.

Then greed took over. Affluent seniors balked at having to pay up to \$800 a year extra, although they'd benefit from the legislation, too. A massive letter-writing campaign was launched for repeal and Congress, fearing the shrill opposition of the affluent elderly, backed down.

In the rush for Thanksgiving adjournments, Congress repealed the Act, although congressional leaders say new proposals for Medicare expansion will be high on the agenda after New Years.

Congress should reconsider its action and reconstitute a Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act, for it is just as important

today as when it was passed, and there was no reason to give in to the hysterical calls for repeal.

It's estimated that the average Medicare subsidy to high income retirees is worth well over \$2,000 per year, so the extra tax surcharge to pay for it just reduced an already large subsidy to the affluent, while extending benefits for the less well-off.

The greed factor, so typical of the 1990s, is going to boomerang on the affluent, too. Many objected to the modest surcharge because they can afford private insurance that provides similar benefits. But private insurers held premiums down only because many benefits were picked up by the Medicare program.

With the Act's repeal, those private insurance premiums will go up—most likely by a lot more than the surtax that upset so many of the affluent.

Most important, the Act provided important benefits for the elderly poor, such as a requirement that state Medicare programs provide Medicare deductibles, premiums and co-insurance charges for the poor. That must be part of any new legislation.

The African-American elderly have a special stake in an improved Medicare-Medicaid program that caps out-of-pocket expenses for covered hospital and physician services.

Any changes in the Act must preserve features that benefit the poor, such as Medicaid buy-ins, caps on out-of-pocket payments, and prescription drug expense caps.

It is unconscionable for Congress to pander to a relatively small group of affluent people who have benefited from the tax cuts of the 1980s while stripping vital protection away from the poor and the moderate income elderly.



Creed Of The Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

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