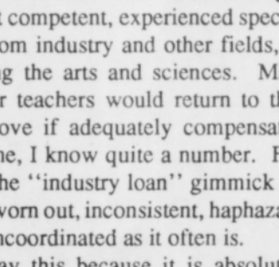
EDITORIAL / OPINION

Perspectives

Education, Part II:

To Be Or Not To Be (Paid For Competence)

by Professor McKinley Burke



As to be expected I got a few dissenting calls from last week's headline inquiry, "Should We Pay Teachers For Performance? However, most comments were positive--though I am not sure about an extreme negative from one caller who claimed to represent a teachers union, but would not leave a name. It is a needed reassurance since my position is in substantial agreement with most of American industry which is increasingly coming to support the school systems that produce its workforce. I know that the organization to which I belong, "Educators of Excellence," gains more such funding and support for its programs each day.

I have another such controversial position to put forward. That given all the pressing need for an upscaling of early childhood and elementary/middle school funding, there be may even more immediacy that there be a massive intervention at the "high school" level. And, I think, especially in the form of increased salaries and merit pay to retain teachers of excellence--and funding to attract competent, experienced specialists from industry and other fields, including the arts and sciences. Many former teachers would return to their first love if adequately compensated. Ask me, I know quite a number. Further, the "industry loan" gimmick has been worn out, inconsistent, haphazard, and uncoordinated as it often is.

I say this because it is absolutely critical to redouble our efforts at the high school where graduation is thebridge not only to higher education, but, for an increasing number, the last step before entering the workforce. And an even more compelling case for major intervention is the fact that a catastrophic number of students simply are not graduating (whether white or minority). You will note that last week I described a scenario of such educational excellence and commitment that many of us "drop outs" were able to enter college on the basis of examination (this circumstance still obtains).

I quote Dr. Manning Marable (Ohio State University) who recently remarked that "between 1977 and 1984, the rate of Black high school students going "directly" to college plummeted from 50% to 42%... while the percentages slightly improved the next four years, that now appears to be only an anomaly, not a long term upward trend." This is exactly the circumstance with figures for Oregon. Last year James Payne, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Curricular Affairs reported to the State Higher Board on Enrollment Trends that African Americans, Hispanics and Native American college enrollments have been climbing for the past two years--but "only after a lengthy downward trend." Efforts are "insufficient. . . fragmentary," he reported.

"African Americans earned 78 college degrees in 1977-78 (the state population of Blacks is about 37,000) compared with 83 nine years earlier. Hispanics gained 124 degrees, a 50% improvement. The Native American's rate was 116, up 52%." This is frightening to say the least. The percent of Blacks who drop out of college is another grim figure, as bad or worse than for high school students. I understand very well that intervention is neede here just as badly as in the other areas; I simply make the point of, and suggest, a particular priority level for action, i.e. high school.

But let us return to the classroom itself and the teachers, those arbiters and critics of their own performance as well as that of their students. Again, I make a case for differntiated compensation. Few, I think, realize that some teachers (at all levels) spend a great deal of their "disposable" income on their students--a lot of it nonreimbursable, but what choices do you have when commitment is driving one to enhance the learning environment in any way possible? The expenditure may be planned or impulsive, ranging from the photocopying of materials encountered in an unexpected place to the purchase of books or slides not on an "adopted" list. Always, as in my teaching experience, the dedicated are perceiving new vistas or icons which they know can be turned into a new frame of reference, capable of guiding the slow as well as the gifted. My records for just one three-year period indicated expenditures of over $5000--not counting the rental of vans for several field trips where my prior experience in industry indicated a close examination of the cities infrastructure to be a must.

Next week we will return to my own personal TAG program . . . Talented And Gifted Teachers.

To be continued.

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To Be Equal

by John E. Jacob

Rights Act Counters Job Bias

Congress is considering a new bill cosponsored by an impressive bipartisan array of legislators, the Civil Rights Act of 1990.

The Act aims at overruling some of last year's devastating Supreme Court decisions that drastically reduced federal protections against workplace discrimination.

One decision overturned a 1971 ruling that said employers had to prove that a practice had a disproportionate impact on minorities was justified by legitimate business reasons. Now, it's up to the victims of such discrimination to prove that such practices are unreasonable.

Another decision limited the rights of victims of racial harassment to sue.

And in two cases decided on the same day, the Court allowed white firemen to challenge a standing consent decree enabling more African-Americans to be promoted, but that it was not OK for women demoted under a two-year-old seniority plan to challenge it.

Already, those rulings have had a chilling effect on anti-discrimination efforts.

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund found that over 100 cases where victims of discrimination and harassment sued for damages have been dismissed or are likely to be lost.

Standing local government minority hiring and promotion plans have been challenged, despite meeting the strict legal tests that prevailed before the Supreme Court's actions.

In effect, the Court has sent a terrible message to America--that it is drilling loopholes in anti-discrimination laws, and minority rights may be violated.

Now, the Congress must send a positive message to both the Court and the American people--that discrimination will not be tolerated.

The proposed Civil Rights Act of 1990 does that, and a measure of its probable effectiveness are the alarm bells set off among its opponents who are waging an all-out effort to defeat it.

They're claiming that a new law is not necessary--despite the overwhelming evidence of gross disparities between African-Americans and white workers that scholars have found is largely due to discriminatory practices.

They charge the Civil Rights Act of 1990 is a new affirmative action law and raise the specter of quotas, when it is nothing of the kind. The proposed law would simply restore employment practices to where they were before the Court acted.

It doesn't even address damaging affirmative action decisions, such as the Court's overturning a city minority set-aside purchasing program. If anything, Congress needs to undo that decision.

Critics also want to scrap the provisions of the bill that allow victims of discrimination and harassment to sue for damages.

It seems to me that when the judicial system finds that someone is wronged, they should be entitled to compensation. Otherwise, the perpetrator gets away free.

And where the courts find gross, intentional violations of rights that warrant punitive damages, such punishment should be enforced.

Those means of redress are an integral part of our justice system, routinely applied to other forms of victimization. Refusing to apply them to discrimination cases is itself discriminatory--a way of saying that bias is a minor misdemeanor, like a parking ticket.

By restoring the right to sue for compensatory damages, the bill helps to make anti-discrimination laws largely self-enforcing, just as product liability claims force manufacturers to do a better job of ensuring that their products are safe.

It is urgent that this proposed new law be passed without delay. The last time Congress tried to overturn a Court decision that encouraged violation of basic civil rights, it took four years to pass.

With discrimination so common and the legal tools to counter it limited by the Court's actions, we can't afford that long of a wait. Congress and the Administration need to enact into law a measure that would roll back last year's Court challenge to justice and fair play.

This Way for Black Empowerment

by Dr. Lenora Fulani

Not "Deceptive"--Attractive!

This past week the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith--an organization whose mission is supposedly to monitor anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry--published its latest attack on the New Alliance Party, Dr. Fred Newman--the progressive Jewish activist who is a dedicated builder of the Black-led independent political movement--and me.

The ADL's 13 page "research report" is called The New Alliance Party: A Study in Deception. It is an attempt to smear the independent party that I chair as an anti-Semitic, "far left" cult controlled by Dr. Newman. Some people believe that it is better to ignore such vicious (and stupid) attacks. But I think it is important to pay very close attention to what the ADL is saying--because what you see is not what you get.

While pretending to be concerned about NAP's anti-Semitism, the ADL report reveals that the organization's real problem is the coming together of Blacks and progressives--particularly progressive Jews like Fred Newman--who share a deep and passionate commitment to building the Black-led, working class-wide independent organizations and alliances such as NAP and Reverend Al Sharpton's United African Movement, that are rising up to lead the fight for radical (meaning real, people's) democracy in this country.

In a section of the report called "Targeting the Black Community," the ADL says that "The NAP . . . has attempted to forge an alliance with New York radical activist Rev. Al Sharpton . . ." The implication is that the United African Movement/New Alliance Party coalition is a scheme which hasn't worked out yet. But the fact is that it's very, very real--far too real for the likes of the ADL. Because what the forces of reaction and their agents fear most of all is exactly such an alliance between Blacks and progressives.

Together NAP and the UAM have emerged as the organized, grassroots-based pro-democracy opposition to the corrupt and long-entrenched Democratic Party establishment in New York which runs the city in the anti-people interests of the bands and the big landlords. That political establishment is now represented by David Dinkins, New York's first Black mayor, who spent the last days of the campaign advertising the fact that in 1985 he had tried to prevent Minister Louis Farrakhan from speaking in the city. The message was that Dinkins was one of those "good Blacks" who--unlike the outspoken, "uppity" ones such as Minister Farrakhan, Reverend Sharpton and me--deserved the trust of Jewish voters.

Last week Mr. Dinkins and I ran into each other when we were both panelists on the nationally televised TV show America's Black Forum. He is still highly annoyed with me, because as an independent mayoral candidate last year, I dogged him around New York to demand that he be responsive to the concerns of the African-American and Puerto Rican voters he was counting on to make him the mayor.

On the show David defended himself against my charge that in his efforts to attract the most racist elements of the Jewish community, he had betrayed our people by saying that his repudiation of Louis Farrakhan was a matter of principle--David Dinkins doesn't want this Black people's leader in "his" city! Yet David isn't prepared to acknowledge that my "doggin' Dinkins" campaign was also a matter of principle--I will do whatever is necessary to make him accountable to the African-American community (and I won't back off just because he is a "brother").

The ADL's attack on NAP, and the stepped-up campaign by New York's political and legal establishment to harass Reverend Sharpton, comes at a time when the new coalition that we are building together is just coming into existence. It is a dangerous moment for David Dinkins, the anti-democratic, corrupt Democratic Party that runs the city, and the financial Mr. Bigs to whom the professional politicians owe their souls. This coalition represents the coming together of those whom the powers that be all over the world will stop at nothing to keep apart--people of color and progressives.

From the ADL's vantage point, the problem and the danger is not that the New Alliance Party is "deceptive," but that this Black-led, multi-racial, people-instead-of-profits independent party is attractive to progressive Jews like Fred Newman.

New Alliance Party

Dr. Fulani's Lawsuit to Democratize Presidential Debates Dismissed by Federal Judge

Federal District Judge George Revercomb has dismissed a lawsuit brought by Dr. Lenora Fulani to compel the Internal Revenue Service to revoke the tax exempt status of the Commission on Presidential Debates on the grounds that the CPD's exclusion of her from the 1988 debates it sponsored constituted partisan political activity expressly prohibited by the Internal Revenue Code. Dr. Fulani, now the chairperson of the independent New Alliance Party, made history in 1988 when she became the first woman and the first African-American Presidential candidate ever to be on the ballot in all 50 states. She was also the first Black woman ever to receive federal primary matching funds.

Dr. Fulani argued that her exclusion from the debates by the bi-partisan Commission--jointly created in 1987 by the republican and democratic national committees for the explicit purpose of taking over control of the Presidential debates from the non-partisan League of Women Voters, which had sponsored them since 1976--undermined her legitimacy as a candidate, cost her media exposure, voter recognition and support, and impaired her ability to compete with the major party candidates.

Fulani's attorney Arthur Block described as "fantasy" Judge Revercomb's assertion that the CPD and the IRS could not be held responsible for injuring Dr. Fulani's historic Presidential campaign because it is "possible" that the CPD could hold a Presidential debate and the news media would not cover it. "For more than 30 years aspiring debate sponsors have insisted that they would not hold Presidential debates unless they had guaranteed broadcast coverage," Mr. Block pointed out. "That's why Congress passed a special resolution in 1960 to waive equal time rules for the Kennedy-Nixon debates and why the Federal communications Commission was successfully pressured in 1975 to create a permanent equal time exemption for Presidential debates."

Added Dr. Fred Newman, who served as the manager of Dr. Fulani's Presidential run, "This decision allows the government, hiding behind some claim of freedom of the press, to abandon its responsibility to ensure fair elections in America. while it's critical to have a free press in a democratic society, it's ludicrous to substitute a free press for a democratic society.

Said Dr. Fulani, who conducted her historic 1988 campaign as a crusade for fair elections and democracy, "it is particularly ironic that while demonstrations by masses of people around the world are forcing the abandonment of government-sanctioned monopolies on political power, judge Revercomb's decision perpetuates the democratic and republican stranglehold on our electoral process and prevents the masses of the American people from hearing any new voices calling for fair elections and more democracy." The African American independent is planning to run for governor of New York this year on the New Alliance Party line.

Attorney Gary Sinawski, the independent party's general counsel and one of the country's foremost experts in electoral law, condemned the "absurd logic" that he said Judge Revercomb had substituted for "common sense" in ruling that the exclusion of a national candidate for President of the United States from the national candidate for President of the United States from the nationally televised debates by an organization formed and controlled by the two major parties is not partisan. "To say that she was not sufficiently impacted on by that exclusion to have 'standing' the right to sue is not justice but gobbledygook," Mr. Sinawski charged.

Showing Effectiveness With At-Risk Youth

The Minority Youth Concerns Actions Program (MYCAP) has been operational for almost two years now. The program concept was started at MacIaren School for Boys by Lonnie Jackson and Roger Wilder. Due to its success at MacIaren, the program has received statewide acclaim and even some national attention. But realizing the need for a continuum of care beyond MacIaren, Mr. Jackson set out to develop a similar program in the Portland community. After meeting with various community groups and youth providers, a small but determined core group emerged. And on April 14, 1988 MYCAP, Inc. was founded in the Portland community.

Among the founding members of MYCAP are: the program's current executive director: Samuel Pierce. The MYCAP Board of Directors inlcudes: Representative Mike Burton, Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury, Commissioner Earnestine Berkey, Commissioner

Lurlene Shamsud-din, Dr. Floyd Jackson, Dr. O. Virginia Phillips, Reverend Bernard Ings, Reverend Phillip Nelson, Jorge Espinosa, Carmen Jeffery, Jeannette Pai, Emmett Wheatfall, Greg Gudger, Linda Kelly, Kathy Martin, and Chris Pierce; Members-at-large: Jerome Kersey and Senator Jim Hill; and Special Advisor: Lonnie Jackson.

MYCAP is a transitional program designed to help gang-related at-risk youth develop positive alternatives to their negative lifestyles. Over the last twelve months MYCAP has been holding intervention group meetings for youth who have been paroled from the state training schools. These youth are also provided assistance in finding employment and educational opportunities. The primary objectives of the program are to stabilize youth, prevent recidivism, develop self-esteem and cultural awareness, and teach independent living skills. Each youth will be matched with a mentor proving him with an immediate role model.

Last year MYCAP had a success rate of 81.75% (no new crimes, no returns to MacIaren, participation in MYCAP intervention groups, etc) and a retention rate of 100% youth still involved in the program after one year. These statistics are noteworthy because youth participation is voluntary.

MYCAP target young men between the ages 15-19 years. Because, according to Sam Pierce, "these youth are the most at-risk to becoming the next generation of black males who populate the state penal system. And if the cycle of recidivism is going to be broken, then this is the age group that has to break it! Yes, they require the most energy, but they also are the ones who can give the most back; because these fellows are the ones the younger kids look up to.

The focus of the organization is longevity. Participants have the option of spending up to two years in the MYCAP program. Each youth's program, called a "success plan" is developmental in nature; therefore by year two the youth is prepared to live independently and be a productive member of society. Said Pierce, "for those youth who have been in our program for an entire year, not only is the retention rate a hundred percent, but the success rate is a hundred percent as well. That suggests to us, the longer the youth remains in our program, the more likely he will be able to make a complete turnaround in his life.

On Saturday, April 7, MYCAP will hold a work session at its Northeast site (4732 NE Garfield). The work session is part of a national event sponsored by fraternities across the country. Portland State University and the University of Portland are sponsoring the MYCAP event. About 40 to 50 volunteers will be on hand: including youths involved in the program, County Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury, and other city and state officials. The work session begins at 10:00 am and will last until 2:00 p.m.