



P E R S P E C T I V E S

By Professor McKinley Burt

Loggers Are Hurting Too

Well, maybe I have tongue-in-cheek and maybe I haven't. We will see. And what, if anything, has this to do with the problems or promise of Black people that I usually write about? Over the years, I've given more than a hint in this column that I've spent a great deal of time in the "boonies"—small towns and rural areas. A leading indicator would be the fact that I have owned many more pickups than sedans.

Several months ago I described a "travelling" course in Affirmative Action that I taught for the U.S. Forest Service during the 1970s. University-accredited for Personnel Administration and Social Science, I was "Instructor of Record" at many scores of sessions conducted all over the states of Oregon and Washington. These classes proved to be extremely attractive to a rural workforce residing so far out in the "boonies" that even Community College was not a viable option for further academics. Demographics dictated that the sessions were usually held at the nearest population center affording a Ramada or Holiday Inn.

How do "loggers enter this picture? First, these "Inns" serve a much greater role in the social and commercial fabric of the surrounding area than do their counterparts in the larger "Metropolitan Statistical Area," i.e. big cities. Scores of varied hourly and one-day occupancies and other amenities push the hotel's format far beyond the customary emphasis on "lodging." All day and into the evening there are meetings of peoples

and organizations from the surrounding areas widely dispersed throughout and around forest tracts, ranches, mountains and valleys.

Almost around the clock, beginning with huge breakfasts for loggers departing for the woods, there are meetings of the Grange, Cattleman's Association, wheat farmers, garden clubs, quilting bees, square dancers, lumbermen's groups, school boards, PTAs, athletic boosters, checker and chess clubs, Toastmasters, Rotary, Elks, Lions, showroom and parking lot rentals for the display of logging and farm equipment, theatrical productions, gun clubs, fishing, skiing, rock climbing and mountaineering groups, you name them.

Now, when you consider that rural people are much more friendly, inquisitive and garrulous than city people, it should come as no surprise that, as a stranger, you get all the attention and interaction imaginable. When we conducted those Forest Service sessions; our classroom environs were sometimes overwhelmed by curious people who had to be constrained. They would want to know, "where are you from, what is it all about, can we listen?"—and, "can you come to our meeting here tonight, or can you come to the local school and make a presentation?" I did a lot of that during those years. Once the true nature of the African American situation was explained to media-oriented people, there was a pronounced shift in viewpoint and attitude.

The classroom sessions lasted three to four days, while my appearance was usually for one or two days. Quite often I accepted invitations to visit a rural home after a daily session—or stayed over an extra day to speak at a school or service club. I had myriad opportunities to present a "real perspective" of the African American struggle against racism and discrimination. Interesting to

note is the fact that some of the Forest Service workforce had either been loggers at one time, or members of their families (or friends) were so employed. I had very interesting experiences among these people, especially when I followed up on invitations to "come back on your summer vacation at the university and spend a week with us."

A fascinating spin-off of all these intercultural associations was the level and type of feedback that occurred whenever I returned to Portland. A principal focus of my class—and the speaking engagements—was the documentation of the significant contributions of African Americans to the nation's technology and infrastructure. A prime tool was my book, "Black Inventors of America." Many hundreds were bought each year by session participants, local schools and individuals, and by organizations.

Loggers in the woods found and photographed older logging machinery equipped with the "Real McCoy Automatic Lubricators" and sent me the material at Portland State University. The personnel at a Forest Service ranger station at Cave Junction, Oregon did the same when they found photographs and 1940 newspaper accounts of the Black engineering battalions training to be parachuting "Smoke Jumpers" to fight forest fires. They are the ones who in turn trained the "Indian" smoke jumpers so famed in today's media.

When reading of the massive economic dislocations to be suffered by these people as a result of the "Spotted Owl" frenzy, I think we should all be aware of who it is that is really the ENDANGERED SPECIES. My sympathy to these people in the "boonies" who now face, ironically, the same traumatic circumstances I lectured to them about as being the lot of African Americans.



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KEEPING BLACK BEAUTIFUL: USE SUNSCREENS

Despite the widespread belief that black skin is somehow immune to damage from the sun, its natural protection factor is equal to an SPF of only about four, according to Dr. Nicholas Lowe.

"The idea that black skin won't burn, that blacks won't develop skin cancer after repeated or prolonged exposure to the sun, is a fallacy," noted Lowe, clinical professor of dermatology at the UCLA School of Medicine and director of the Santa Monica-based Skin Research Foundation of California. "Exposure to sunlight for more than an hour in the summer months may not

result in a burn, but it will result in skin aging or more serious damage."

According to Lowe, careful product choices will deter any special problems that blacks develop from sunscreen use. "Blacks prone to acne should choose sunscreens that have been tested free of acne-developing properties," Lowe said. "If a particular sunscreen is found to give skin an unattractive shininess, switch to one of the alcohol-based gels or lotions."

"In any case, sunscreens are not to be foregone. White skin may demand more protection than black skin, and lighter shades of black skin more than darker. But all skin needs protection if damage is to be avoided."

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