

PERSPECTIVES

By Professor McKinley Burt



Our History is the Biggest Grant We Will Ever Get

Doubt that and you doubt yourself. Forget your history and: you are "doomed to repeat it." That latter adage certainly could apply to northeast Portland. Just a limited look beneath the surface could reveal not only economic wreckage from the past, but a reprise of yesterday's errors.

I thought about this when I wrote last week about David Crosthwait, the black engineer whose 34 U.S. and 80 foreign patents facilitated the structure and amenity of high rise buildings all over the world. And particularly relevant to the historic "reprise" was my description of his frustration at not being allowed to deliver his gifts of genius and realistic resource to the Detroit community. I neglected to add that one of his most important forward-looking ideas was the perception that the ever-increasing importation of Japanese autos would lead to a parallel reduction of the large black labor force in the industry.

Consequently, he designed and advocated an extensive RETRAINING PROGRAM FOR AUTO WORKERS early on (1974). At the time, this concept, as did his early explosive growth of

gangs (Of course, those in Portland who early on expressed their alarm about the potential for gang immigration here fared not one bit better). We can see that in the case of the auto workers, Mr. Crosthwait was trying to prevent a "reprise" of another classic economic disaster for blacks--the demise of the passenger railway systems in America when thousands upon thousands of unprepared African Americans lost their jobs--from dining car waiters and Pullman porters to baggage attendants (redcaps).

Here in Northeast Portland we have an economic history which might be examined to see if the ubiquitous and disastrous "reprise" theme is at work--that is, if history is to teach us anything at all. The history of African American ownership and utilization of real property, apartment houses and commercial rental; the latter leasing to a variety of mostly independently owned enterprises. These firms ranged from restaurants, dance halls and bars to dry cleaners, barber-beauty shops, pool halls, to nightclubs, contractors, service stations, auto garages and detailers to physicians and dentists and after hours joints. Other lessees were fraternal groups and social organizations. Also, there was a large hotel on Interstate, "The Medley".

The area might be generally described as being bounded by Union on the east, Russell on the north, the Steel Bridge on the south (Hassalo), and on the west, partly by the river, and partly by Interstate. Blacks were definitely a minority in this section as a whole, but N. Williams Avenue was by far the main drag for commerce and entertainment for African Americans. The black investment corporations cited included the "Acme Business Club, Fraternal Hall and Porter's Club".

The thing to understand here, if we are to determine that once again

we may have failed to read history, is the exceedingly strong structure and commitment of these early African American business groups--membership was almost exclusively railroad workers who financed the operations by monthly assessments against salaries. The management of the millions of dollars in assets was carried out by elected, middle-aged officials, thoroughly experienced in a southern tradition and history of successful black ownership and effective use of capital.

Two of these operations were MY ACCOUNTING CLIENTS, so these evaluations are firsthand and factual. What has intervened over time between this period of successful black entrepreneurship and today's uneven commercial efforts in the inner-northeast (Minority Business) is "the great demographic and physical expansion of the black environs following, first, the VANPORT FLOOD and, later, the destruction of that great business and population center by the URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMS (removal) which brought in freeways and the coliseum."

There were, of course, the further attritions occasioned by the EMANUEL HOSPITAL EXPANSION (Taylor Act) and the erection of the UNION AVENUE MEDIAN BARRIER. Are we able to say at this point that the failure of blacks to mount organized and effective legal opposition to these assaults upon their economic well being indicates that they have learned nothing from their history? And may we say that today's failures and fragmentation of effort in the area of MINORITY BUSINESS indicate that blacks have not brought to bear (refused?) an easily accessible history of successful approaches to the problem? "Doomed to repeat it", we stated at the beginning of this article.

The True Colors of War

A series of articles by Dr. A. Lee Henderson



War comes in all colors...black and white and yellow...Caucasians, African Americans, Orientals, Arabians, and Native Americans, all with only one color in common: the color of blood. Blood is red. Blood that can link us in brotherhood also links us together in war.

The United States' Congress, divided ideologically, finally mandated the President of our United States to act aggressively--if needed--with an act of war.

President Bush did so, expediting our entry into the dramatic Mideast mix of malicious manipulations triggered by the demonic dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Hussein's swift gobble-up of Kuwait swallowed it whole as a part of Iraq by using force and atrocity with the calm of a smiling Pac Man videogame caricature. He challenged the conscience of the world to respond.

The wisdom of the President

of the United States and his advisors prevailed, holding the war reins in check before allowing the United Nations voice of the world to echo a global censure.

The "linkage" excuses of Hussein's appropriation of Kuwait was written off as a ridiculous rationale by those who had the facts--and nothing BUT the facts--in front of them. Emotionalism lost a round. Saddam Hussein's August 2 invasion of Kuwait drove hordes of helpless Palestinians from their native land as aggressor Iraqi troops offended the conscience of the world, and even Saudi Arabia to protest upon behalf of its neighbor, Kuwait. Linkage connects a Mideast peace conference to withdrawal from Kuwait!

The barbarous invasion of Kuwait filled brother Arabs with heinous disregard for their lives by Saddam Hussein. He then turned around and deviously pretended to be his brother's keeper in "linkage" to the

Palestinians right to solve their problems with Israel.

This strategic divide-and-conquer propaganda is a Saddam Hussein tactic that can be used against the uninformed, poorly educated, geographically illiterate.

You would be amazed at how many people in our own nation fall victims to ignorance.

Educate yourself against propaganda.

"...facing worldwide condemnation, Saddam quickly realized that his best chance to divide the opposition was to pose as the champion of the Arab dispossessed. This revived a hardly diplomatic concept called "linkage"--in this case connecting withdrawal from Kuwait to a commitment to a Mideast peace conference. Even the United States has embraced the idea, with reservations. But strongly backed by American public opinion (Newsweek poll...), the alliance refuses to reward Saddam by connecting Kuwait to the larger issues of Mideast peace. By some lights, the best hope for peace is to replace that "link" with a "wink": an implicit rather than an explicit deal..."

"(Linkage) would work only if Saddam's annexation came after mighty Kuwait had attacked tiny Iraq, not the other way around. Israel says it has held on to those territories for defensive purposes because its Arab neighbors (other than Egypt) continue to refuse to abide by U.N. Resolution 242 and fully recognize Israel's right to exist. Iraq, obviously, has no such problem with recognition. In fact, the United States has explicitly pledged not to destroy it (if it withdraws from Kuwait)," a promise most Arabs have yet to make to Israel", notes Newsweek (January 21, 1991).

We believe, heart and soul, that our loyalty belongs to those troops who have now been committed by United Nations' mandate, United States' Congressional mandate, and United States President George Bush's decision to lead our nation into an awesome assault on January 17 (our U.S. dateline) against the further unprovoked aggression of Iraq's despot Saddam Hussein. We should now support our nation's courageous stand.

We are not hawks vs. doves...we are not blacks vs. whites or whites vs. blacks...we are not self-righteous enough to pretend that the color of the blood on either side is other than the red blood, that is the same mortal blood, that unites us as human beings in a Brotherhood of Death, rather than Life, for which our

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



...And Justice For All

by Angelique Sanders



"Operation Death Storm": The Pentagon Sent 45,000 Body Bags to Saudi Arabia

"Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace," said Martin Luther King, Jr. How was he to know that the day after his birthday, in the year of 1991, that war would break out (as Nostradamus had predicted)?

I've dubbed this war--using a twist of Bush's "Operation Desert Storm"--"Operation Death Storm". War brings out the inherent primitivity in humans...emotions both positive and negative. Many rallies have already taken place--"for" and "against"--and I'd like to address the matter of personal conduct at these rallies or confrontations. Remember, no matter which side you're for, we must remain peaceful while rallying. Thankfully, in America we have the legal right to express ourselves, but only as long as we remain nonviolent. This is, fortunately, the most effective way to convey a message anyhow: through less memorable, nonmilitant underscores the intelligence of the messenger. At Portland's first rally after war broke out, the estimated attendance of protesters was 14,000-15,000: the largest attendance ever at Pioneer Courthouse Square. Police expressed their awe that their were no problems: no arrests, injuries, or fights. Clearly, rallies for peace punctuate their statement much better by showing they can practice what they preach (and proponents of the war can prove--by avoiding altercations--that they aren't militant, but simply

back the message he war is sending).

I've heard talk lately that rallying "for" or "against" is now pointless, that we can no longer make a change. I think that is true TO AN EXTENT, but should we shrug into complacency when we're malcontent?...only if you're lazy, or don't have firm conviction. Inaction by

Kuwait, and is still not recanting, there are three possibilities:

- 1) Hussein's either a madman or a fool or both, and does not realize what the full consequences of his actions would be.
- 2) His actions were simply an excuse to initiate a holy war, at any price (the religious discipline of the Middle East teaches to be unafraid to die for your cause).
- 3) He's got "something up his sleeve" which we are unaware of.

I'm hoping the last possibility is not the case.

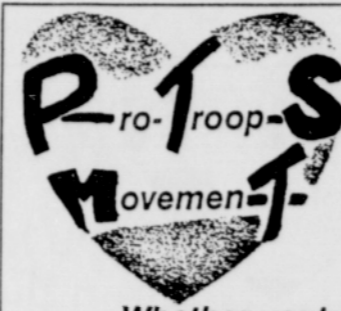
We need to break out of this rut, and free ourselves

from the "need" (as propaganda would have us believe) for war, and focus on the true necessity of a flourishing culture: peace.

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I'll offer one more statement on the war...a poem I wrote for this week's item:

*The girl with the purple umbrella  
Opened  
Closed  
Opened  
Her shielding toy.  
She does not know her country is at war  
She does not know who Bush is  
She does not know where Kuwait is.  
Her thoughts are of her pretty rain barrier.  
She is a happy girl.  
I asked if I could hide under her umbrella  
But she said I could not.  
And I know that she is right.*



VS.



Whether you're "for" or "against" this war, there are a few actions you can take

the masses may press the government further; if not this time, it sets a precedent for the future. The government might figure in similar future instances (if we haven't--as a planet--wisened up toward the misfortunes of war) that the people will silently go along with their decisions. If you care, don't sit on your hands!

Another point people are making is, in essence, "well, our troops are already there; all we can do is support them." One of the major points of encouraging peace, however, is to save the lives of the troop members--isn't that helping our troops more than tossing them into the lion's den and then cheerleading?

My thoughts on Saddam Hussein at this point are, as he must surely have foreseen just what would happen if he would not pull out of

"I have a strong opinion about this war, but don't know who to get in touch with..."

These are the people to contact if you want to express a view on the war (or anything else!)-and don't be afraid to bother them: we live in a democracy, and it's their job to base decisions on the views of the people (only two members of Congress, in fact, have sons or daughters serving in the war--Congress may be out of touch with public empathy):  
**Senator Mark Hatfield**, 114 Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, OR 97204. In Portland, call: (503) 326-3386  
**Congressman Les AuCoin**, 2159 Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. In Portland, call: (503) 326-2901  
**Congressman Ron Wyden**, 2452 Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. In Portland, call: (503) 231-2300  
**Senator Robert Packwood**, 259 Russell Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. In Portland, call: (503) 326-3370  
**President George Bush**, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20500 (202) 456-1111

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Reinvestments in the Community

When Is Enough Not Enough

The readers of this column are quite aware by now how events at home or abroad impact upon the economic and social condition of urban blacks--local, regional, national, and now, international. If submarine warfare World War I had not cut off European immigration in 1914, Blacks would have soon been displaced to reservations right along with the Indians (has our vast drug-besieged and incarcerated underclass fared any better?). It has been made equally obvious that it is education and the workplace that comprise the urban stage for scenarios that can match any Shakespearean tragedy. But is it all the fault of that middle class which Black essayist Shelby Steele says should get rid of its victim-focused Black identity...our real problem is lack of ability to take responsibility and seize opportunities?" And, is that what Darin Scott meant when he told a standing-room only audience at the University of Southern California last month. "We (Blacks) are the first group in modern history to see those who follow behind us have fewer opportunities and rockier road to travel than we did?" I wonder about the validity of these statements when I look back through my files which are 35 years compendium of activism and observation. Beginning with my ten-year sojourn in Los Angeles (1954-1964), I find that, supported by an equally-committed peer group, there was an intensive involvement in every aspect of a history-making upwardly

mobile decade. These were precedent-shattering times and there were breakthroughs on major fronts: Employment opportunity, housing and school desegregation and public access. All of us were heavily involved in the NAACP, Urban League and black Press, and given our professional careers. It was also about how to utilize a 70 hour week effectively.

If there was any consensus among us at all, it was that the rest of the tribe would move right in behind us, climbing the rungs of the ladders we built; it had always worked that way before, hadn't it? Certainly, in Portland immediately after World War II this was the case. The marching, picketing, striking, pushing and screaming of the new immigrant Black population carried the city past the period when there were no black retail clerks, bank tellers, busdrivers, long shoremen, supervisors in industry or a public agency, and only a handful of teachers or postal workers. The opportunities for minorities burgeoned to a point.

But, today, as we begin the last decade of the 20th century, Blacks rail at whites, the establishment, and the world in general. "We are still far behind in jobs and promotions--and in education dropouts are accelerating and enrollment in higher education has dropped precipitously since 1980. And on top of this we exclaim, we have developed a huge body of individuals euphemistically described as

the underclass or disadvantaged.

Now, think about it, aren't these the very same people who would move right in behind us, climbing the rungs of the ladders we built?" What happened? Is Shelby Steele right about a "lack of ability to take responsibility and seize opportunities?"

I could run through a vast litany of "what happened" type recitations. That Black upwardly-mobile middle class moved to suburbia taking with it the economic and political skills necessary to maintain an urban infrastructure of viable housing and school systems, or even retail stores and shops. The neighborhoods of the rung climbers rapidly degenerated and the absentee landlords and developers moved in, utilizing every device from Urban Renewal (Removal) and eminent domain to more sophisticated forms of gentrification. Today, we look at television programs like "Tony Brown's Journal" and we see groups of the black middle class managers and executives lamenting their difficulties and alienation.

"We have titles but we are on soft money in industry, we are on staff, not in line... we have no path to the top, and in these days of reorganizations and frequent buyouts we are more insecure than ever. We try to spin out and set up businesses but the banks have no money for us (nevermind the loudly heralded franchise purchases in sports--also 80% of those auto franchises failed)." Did we do this to our children and ourselves?



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