

perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

Education Is Still The Priority

I would suggest that *economics* should be next and that the integrity and safety of our families and neighborhoods should closely follow. At this point, it occurs to me that, actually, we are talking about the very same thing.

As for education professionals, peons, students and parents -- not to mention taxpayers--they may take great satisfaction (smiles) in the fact that yours truly was right again (make that a grin). You were privileged to have *The Portland Observer* correctly assess the validity of all those grandiose establishment hypes that forecast, "The U.S. will achieve international parity, if not leadership, in education by year 2001!"

I have consistently described such protestations as unmitigated garbage which could be placed on the same nebulous plane as such past multibillion-dollar adventures as *The New Math* (A mastery of "Sets" will make all our children mathematical geniuses) --or *Metric* (American kids [and industry] will not survive in a world where they cannot dexterously and instantaneously manipulate values between British and metric systems (a tad more reality in this latter concept)).

In placing all this in perspective, I wish every reader--not just those who called me--had seen the November 6, 1991 airing of the "College Board National Forum." The facilitator for this CNN special was Charlene Hunter Gault, the noted African American correspondent for the evening news program of the Public Broadcasting System. She was very skillful in directing her *heavyweight* charges toward

what obviously was a more honest evaluation of educational progress than had been intended. The panel of seven educational luminaries included the present and four past U.S. Secretaries of Education--and several independent educators of national rank.

A recent guru of right-wing educational politics, William Bennett, was as fast as ever with his caustic, but less-than-informative, one-liners. His usual *comedy store* presentation, (intertwining half-truths about "choices" patently unavailable to people without transportation with ill-disguised contempt for teachers,) brought the remainder of the panel into frequent confrontation with his superficial and supercilious diatribe. Their pointed response indicated that they were more than a little aware why education goals were not on track; why they have been *derailed* would be more succinct.

These tour guides to an educational promised land pulled out all the stops as they reiterated the entire litany of polemics and rhetoric with which we were enthralled at the beginning of this mission several years ago (some in fact originated at the time of Sputnik when President Kennedy assured us that only a successful landing on the moon could assure that America had an educational establishment that could handle modern technology). Our illustrious panel went through the entire gamut and spectrum: "Don't teach to tests; Parent involvement is essential; every child must come to school ready to learn; It's all about caring; we must reward good teachers; Bring in Industry; Get control of the teacher unions; We don't need more money/yes we do." A kindly old

sage on the panel intimated that Year 2000 wasn't that far off. Strangely, no one mentioned Japan, China or Germany.

Given that scenario, and keeping in mind the very real possibility that the current economic downturn will last for years, where can we look for assurance that our education system will even be able to hold its own--let alone make par on the international course? How helpful will it be that many of us within and without the system will continue to challenge the inertia and ambiguity that has been demonstrated here? Does last fall's 245-page REPORT CARD on school progress issued by President Bush and the 50 state governors really indicate that there is not one piece of evidence for improvement in 1992-1994--or even Year 2000?

While Colorado's governor, Roy Romer, expresses disbelief that several years after that momentous "Education Summit," they can't figure a restaurant tip, recap a newspaper article or punch MacDonal'd's cash register (in many places). A lot of us know exactly where to go to obtain an accurate assessment of educational progress. In better days "Buick" used to advertise, "Ask The Man Who Owns One!" Today we need to go right *where the buck stops*, INDUSTRY. This is the place where that former pupil must be able to read manuals for unsupervised direction, manipulate gauges and calipers, measure lengths and areas, and must make major conclusions based on minor premises. Industry and governmental employers are the ones to whom we must look for valid, real time feedback on educational progress.

Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc.

'Where The Best Of North And South Come Together'



Art Oliver and Sam Patton, two owners of Ragin Cajun Market, Inc.

Although Portland does not sit on the riverbank of the Mississippi, the distinctive tastes of such fine foods as jambalaya, gumbo and crab soup can now be shared with the Northwest. Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc., a Portland based company, has been in existence in the area for approximately four and a half years. The owners, Sam Patton, Art Oliver, and Linda Oliver are from the Louisiana area. Another of the company's owners, David McNeil hails from Trinidad.

Without question Louisiana has produced some of the finest cuisine in the country, particularly, from the New Orleans area. The family of Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc. has sought to bring to the Northwest the unique flavors of Louisiana. The aromas of authentic creole and cajun cooking can be en-

joyed by those who do not wish to travel all the way to Louisiana to enjoy the fine foods.

Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc. saw its first customer when it opened a shop located at 24th and NE Broadway. The original concept was to bring the finest foods of Louisiana to the people of the Northwest. Customers were soon coming from as far north as Seattle and as far south as Eugene and Springfield. Mail order business soon developed as a result of the ability to ship anywhere. The decision was made to close the shop and concentrate on mail order. Soon after they felt in order to establish themselves even further they should develop their own line of products. A year and a half was spent developing products and in June of 1990 Ragin'

Cajun started offering them wholesale to the retail and restaurant markets. They package everything from seasonings to premixed packages of gumbo, jambalaya and hushpuppy mixes. All any cook would need to do is add whatever stock is needed. They've packaged everything else for you. The products contain no additives, preservatives, or food coloring.

Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc. often receives travel-related questions regarding Louisiana. They usually are able to answer clients' questions or are able to locate a source of information for them. Many of the questions range from where they might be able to get some of the best foods, to which antebellum homes are the ones to visit. They're able to let people know there is more to Louisiana than just visiting New Orleans' Bourbon Street. A number of cities in southwest Louisiana have tours that go into the bayous. Some of these are flat bottom boat tours as well as motorized tours. Sometimes their clients would like to get off the beaten track and try something different. They try to help them if at all possible and whenever possible.

The people that make up Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc. are also very conscientious about community support. They provide support to churches whenever possible. The president of Ragin' Cajun Market, Inc. is a board member and Mentor for Jefferson High School's Financial Services Academy Program. They feel they can become an asset to this community. Their motto "Where the Best of North and South Come Together," expresses what they want to bring to the Northwest, by way of their products and community support. Ragin' Cajun products can be found at local Sentry stores, participating Thriftway stores and independent grocers.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

African National Congress Advances In South Africa

In the wake of the recent initiation of a process leading to a constitutional convention in South Africa, the African National Congress under the leadership of Nelson Mandela has clearly advanced its position as the leading political force concerning the future dismantling of the apartheid regime.

The eyes of the world will be watching to see if de Klerk keeps the promises made in writing committing to the Constitutional convention process. The signing of an agreement following a recent two-day Convention between the ANC, the government of South Africa, and 15 other South African organizations formally marked the beginning of the end of 300 years of racist political and economic domination in South Africa. Historically in Africa, it has been very difficult to negotiate freedom and self-determination short of violent revolution. This is because of the refusal of the colonizers to give up the wealth-making exploitation without an armed fight.

The African National Congress should be saluted for their steadfast leadership and successful struggle thus far against the ruthless and state terrorist tactics of the apartheid regime. As the world is changing rapidly, so will South Africa change at a much more rapid pace than ever envisioned several years ago. to the credit of the ANC, a strategy to permit the broadest possible coalition of natives of South Africa to be involved as representatives and participants in the development of a new constitution is a wise and prudent move.

Ultra-right conservative forces here in the United States are still channelling money and other forms of support to "splinter groups" in south Africa in a bid to divide and conquer the coalition that the ANC has managed to build. It becomes increasingly important for the remnants of the anti-apartheid movement here to be vigilant in support of the current efforts of the ANC and others like the south African Council of Churches in their mutual efforts to speed the end of apartheid.

Of course, we stand with the African National Congress in their demand that the "interim" or "transition" government in south Africa last not more than 18 months so that a democratic government can be elected. De Klerk had the audacity to suggest that the "interim" government last for 10 years before allowing "one person, one vote" democratic elections in South Africa. It will be interesting to view the position of the Bush Administration on this issue. Will Bush try to further justify the immorality of so-called "constructive engagement" with South Africa as de Klerk attempts to stall the dynamism of the process now unfolding as a result of the ANC's leadership?

There are many issues still to be negotiated. One of the controversial matters is the eventual truth-telling concerning South Africa's nuclear weapons production program which has been secretly developed over the last two decades with considerable help from the West, including technology from the United States. Again, when south Africa was controlled by a racist gov-

ernment, there was very little done by the U.S. government to prevent south Africa from becoming a potential nuclear power. Now with the good prospect of the majority African population in South Africa gaining political control with the ANC in leadership, what will be the U.S. official attitude towards that democratic government's potential nuclear capability?

For the record, we are in favor of nuclear non-proliferation agreements in the international community as currently being fostered by the United Nations. It is important though to understand the double standards of justice as certain international principles are related to African and other non-western nations.

As the African National Congress continues to make advances, we should keep our level of support for the ANC visible and strong. In fact, the positive developments in South Africa are likely to serve as a motivation for the vast majority of the more than 35 million African Americans to attempt to make further advances here inside of the United States. This is not to say that there are no more serious problems in South Africa. To the contrary, the turmoil in South Africa is far from over. We are required to understand that some real progress has in fact been made, in large measure because of the sacrifices of all of the people of south Africa and the leadership of the ANC.

Our hope is that South Africa's apartheid will be done away with very soon. We believe that a victory of the African National Congress will be a victory for all of humanity.

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