

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

Dr. Manning Marable

Why Clinton Has No "Mandate" For Change

Every successful American presidential candidate seeks a "mandate" for his policies and looks to his popular and electoral vote totals to justify his future objectives. Yet one of the genuine tragedies in the 1992 presidential election was the failure of Clinton and Bush alike to really address a host of critical public policy decisions. For example, neither Clinton nor Bush discussed a new law taking effect in December, 1992 which would require the Federal Government to seize control of many financially troubled or bankrupt banks. Total cleanup costs could reach \$100 billion-yet because Republicans and Democrats were equally responsible for the mess, no one was willing to discuss the problem. On urban policy, both major candidates were silent. Bush muzzled his Housing Secretary, Jack Kemp, from discussing new anti-poverty initiatives, because as one source explained, the President didn't want to "raise expectations that could not be met and help mobilize constituencies that typically vote Democratic." Although more than two million Americans were homeless, neither Clinton nor Bush made specific proposals on this issue.

But the seeds of defeat are also found within Clinton's "victory." 1992 marks a fundamental, generational change in the composition of the elected leadership of the entire country. In state legislatures, approximately one-third of all members will be first-time legislators. In the Congress, more than one hundred members of the House of Representatives were freshmen. The nation is plagued by doubt, yearning for effective solutions. About one hundred thousand Americans are now losing their

health insurance coverage and benefits every month. Reaganomics spelled disaster for million of working class people, and they desperately want new leadership.

Clinton astutely spoke to this profound desire for new initiatives in government by orienting his entire campaign effort around the theme of "change." But in his effort to shift his party away from "tax-and-spend" liberalism, renouncing close links with trade unions and African-American voters, Clinton sacrificed any coherent reform program in favor of tactical maneuvers to achieve electoral victory. One can best view Clinton's dilemma from the vantage point of recent American history. In 1964, the victory of Democratic President Lyndon Johnson was interpreted by the electorate as a "mandate" for a set of coherent policies: civil rights and racial integration; Medicare; federal initiatives for public jobs; housing and education; and a domestic "War on Poverty." When Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, everyone realized what his victory represented: lower taxes for corporations and wealthy individuals; governmental deregulation; opposition to affirmative action, women's rights and civil rights laws; extreme anti-Communism; anti-labor policies; and sharp reductions in the welfare state. Both Johnson and Reagan were "successful" in establishing a clear policy agenda even before they assumed office.

Clinton's failure is that his victory does not translate into any sort of "mandate."

Clinton constantly preached "change," but few knew what kind of change we could expect. At various

times during the campaign, Clinton embraced "free trade" and then criticized the recent North American trade accord; he called for middle class tax cuts and expansions in social programs without adequately explaining how "more" could be provided with "less"; he appealed for universal health insurance, but his proposal fell far short of the progressive, single-payer health care system used in Canada and which the United States should also adopt. Behind the attractive call for "change," Clinton's real quest was the pursuit of power. Bush's frequently-repeated warnings that a Clinton presidency would be like the unpopular administration of Democrat Jimmy Carter from 1977-1981 could easily become true. Neither Carter in 1976 nor Clinton in 1992 consolidated a coherent program for government, and Carter never achieved a national consensus around any of his best policies.

The major lesson which could easily be drawn from Clinton's victory is that the Democratic Party must permanently repudiate its image as being "too concerned" about African-Americans, Latinos, labor, the unemployed and the poor. As New York Times reporter Steven A. Holmes observed, "millions of whites" see Democrats as asking them to pay, either through taxes or by giving up a job or a promotion, for programs to compensate for a history of discrimination that they had nothing to do with." White liberal guilt is dead. The Democratic Party of Clinton-Gore is eager to please the white middle class at the expense of Blacks, labor and other traditionally Democratic constituencies. And what lies ahead is a fundamental conflict to define the agenda of the next four years.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The Agony Of Somalia Rises

The rising agony, suffering and needless death in Somalia simply cannot be tolerated. Over a million persons are certain to die if something more is not done immediately. The United Nations has not done enough! The Organization of African Unity has not done enough! The United States had not done enough! And yes, the African American community here in the United States has not done enough!

The fact that public attention, during the last several months has been focused primarily on the U.S. presidential election is no excuse for inadequate action on the crisis in the nation of Somalia. To be sure, the situation has deteriorated during the last weeks due to the increase in the senseless fratricidal warfare between armed Somalia parties fighting to control the country. To see women and children dying as they crawl helplessly on the ground begging for a few crumbs of food is an awful sight to behold. Yet, the world community seems incapable or unwilling to intervene in Somalia on the side of the oppressed people of Somalia who are being forced into irreversible starvation. genocide cannot be tolerated anywhere in the world.

When ethnic factions of a nation are supplied with weapons of mass death and destruction by the so-called civilized western nations, the resulting horrors of fratricide and induced-famine are ultimately to be the shared blame of the suppliers of the arms as well as the perpetrators of the internecine bloodshed.

Therefore the excuse that nothing more can be done to help Somalia until the civil war stops is totally unacceptable.

The civil rights and human rights community inside the United States must make this issue a priority even during all of the euphoria over the 1992 elections. As we have reminded our constituencies in the past, the fact is that Somalia up until 1991 was a staunch ally of U.S. foreign interests in northern Africa throughout the Reagan-Bush era. Most of the weapons now in Somalia were made in the United States. But this is not the first time that this nation has hid its hand of complicity in the suffering of others, particularly in Africa.

Of the first order, however, we would be remiss if we did not say directly and clearly to General Mohammed Farah Aidid and Mr. Mohammed Siad Hesse Morgan, "Stop the fratricide in Somalia! Your inability to resolve your conflicts peacefully as Somalians only aids and abets the evolving genocide of your own people whom you claim to represent...stop the bloodshed now!"

In the small town of Bardera in southern Somalia, it is reported that more than 3,000 have died from starvation in less than two weeks. All of those lives could have been saved because tons of food had been stored less than 30 minutes flying time away from Bardera. Sources have said the armed conflict in the area around Bardera prevented the relief efforts from reaching those starving.

The history of the African Ameri-

can community has always been relatively strong on the issues of charity and relief. Yet, given the current socioeconomic crisis confronting many in the community, there has been an unusually slow response to the tragedy of Somalia. Of course, there are significant exceptions, but in general there is a growing feeling of helplessness among many African Americans who think that nothing more can be done. We disagree with such a fatalistic approach to Somalia. If the African American community does not rally across the nation to demand action on Somalia then this tragedy will get worse.

Next, the United Nations should have a contingent large enough in Somalia to deal with the magnitude of the logistical and security problems. The 500 or more U.N. troops from Pakistan cannot begin to meet the challenge. Why is the U.S. so slow to see that its response to Somalia is insufficient? The U.S. contingent should be tenfold its present size.

Only when Africa unites, as Nkurumah has said, in both spirit and body will these situations of suffering really end. The Organization of African Unity has to offer a vision and a strategic plan to unify the continent economically, politically, culturally and most importantly, spiritually.

Africa needs a spiritual unity strong enough to defy the historic "divide and conquer" schemes of the forces of oppression. If the agony of Somalia does not bring together the continent, what will?

Now The Democrats Have To Put Up Or Shut Up

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

The presidential election last Tuesday may have been the most important election of the second half of this century. The American people "just said No" to the nakedly anti-poor, pro-Big Business economics of right-wing Republicanism and put a Democrat in the White House for the first time in 12 years. But the voters have gotten smart; they weren't simply counting on the Democratic party to come through for them: of the 65% who said No! to right-wing Republicanism, 20 million voters said Yes! to Ross Perot, to me, to Andre Marrou, to Dr. John Hagelin and other independents. It was the largest independent vote in U.S. history.

This was a landmark election. The American people made it clear that they won't be taken in again by a self-serving Democratic Party whose leaders have nothing against the spoils system as long as they get their "fair share" of

the spoils! There's a new force in U.S. politics-the American people-who have proven that they are ready, willing and able to create and hold on to some political leverage for themselves, even while giving a mandate for change to the Democrats. The American people figured out how to put pressure on the Democrats, not by relying on the Republican party, but by voting independent. Term limitations initiatives passed overwhelmingly in 14 states despite hard-core opposition from the Democratic Party. Now the Democrats have to put up or shut up.

This new "third force" was so potent that, in response to the profound voter dissatisfaction which made itself felt in the beginning of the primary season, Bill Clinton, a center-right Democrat, presented himself to the electorate as the candidate of change. He took this third force so seriously that a theme of his victory speech was the need to restructure the political process itself,

which he acknowledged he had learned about from Ross Perot. The people of this country had used independent politics to exert leverage on the Democratic Party-a lesson I have been teaching every chance I get for the last ten years.

Most people who voted for Clinton did so out of a serious desire for change. People always seek the shortest route to change-that's natural. And Clinton ran a first-rate campaign as the man who would turn the country in a new direction away from Reaganomics and the politics of meanness. But in my opinion, the Democratic Party isn't structurally capable of, nor is it politically interested in, bringing about the fundamental economic and social change that the American people have said they want. Only a new political movement, one which is independent, has the capacity and the political will to effect that kind of change.

The American people demonstrated that they had learned a very important

lesson-one which I have been working very hard to teach wherever I go. It is that simply voting for a winner is a throw-away vote; votes can be used to build something new whose presence rearranges and restructures the old. With almost 20% of the electorate voting yesterday for an independent presidential candidate who had no chance of winning, independent politics took a giant leap forward.

There have been many such victories in this astonishing year. The most dramatic one-except for the election itself-was the presence of Ross Perot in the nationally televised debates last month. Since 1988, my attorneys have been fighting in court after court for my right to participate in the debates-but to no avail. This year the bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates justified my exclusion and the exclusion of other significant independents, such as John Hagelin of the Natural Law Party

and Andre Marrou of the Libertarian Party, on the grounds that only possible winners could participate. But in spite of that criterion, the ground swell of support for Perot forced the CPD to admit him anyway. My point has been made. The independent political movement that erupted this year has permanently altered the American (and international) landscape. My role is to make sure that the Black community, which is the base of the New Alliance Party and its allies in the Latino community, the lesbian and gay community, and among rank-and-file labor and women, will be a vital force in that movement as it is further defined.

Clinton has already told the American people that he doesn't want a lot of constituencies and communities showing up to put their agendas on the table. As he said during the campaign, above all else he wants to promote unity in the Democratic party. Now he is instructing

that his administration wants the same thing. But people voted for him because they want a profound change in the economy and in the political process. The conditions for our people are very grave, and no one is going to be willing to wait very long for some results. That's why the independent vote is so key; because it gives the American people-including the Black community, 7% of whom went for Perot-leverage with the Clinton government and over politics in general.

It's great that Bush is out. But we need to be very concerned about how much Clinton is actually willing to do for the American people in general and the African-American community in particular. The ball is in the Democrats' court. They have to come up with some real change-or else; and the stronger the independent movement, the more pressure we can put on the Democrats to come through for the people.

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

Education Update I

Well, I am happy to return to my primary mission in writing this column, keeping abreast of the education scene in general and in particular for the northeast community. It's been a while so I invoke "Murphy's Second Law" as an excuse, "Everything takes longer than expected".

Before anything else, let me provide a few citations of books and materials that can prove quite useful in the education of your child or youth (even you). I usually do this at the end of an article, but I wish to get your immediate attention for the Christmas season is approaching and the mails will be clogged soon. Order these catalogs today (I notice that the Multnomah County Library orders books on the basis of my referrals [and Beaverton]. Publishers write me to that effect).

Edmund Scientific Company, 101 East Gloucester Pike, Barrington, N.J. 08007-1380, phone 1(609) 547-8880, Fax 1(609) 573-6295. Their catalog cites every imaginable kit or model for science education -at school or home, primary grades through college: Optics, electricity, biology, physics, chemistry, weather, hydraulics, mineralogy, astronomy, etc. For both science and general coverage (including Africa/Egypt.) Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, N.Y 11501, (516) 294-7000.

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For publisher's closeouts that cannot be obtained elsewhere, on every subject in the world and priced from \$1.95 to \$10.95, get a huge free catalog from Edward R. Hamilton, Bookseller, Falls Village, CT, 06031-5000. Get a compact, well-organized manual describing the functions of congress, its committees and support offices, bio on each congress person, also Executive Branch and Supreme Court, and "Think Tank" information. Send for the 1992 U.S. Congress Handbook, \$9.95 from C-SPAN, 400 North Capital Street, N.W., Suite 650, Washington, D.C. 20001 (or reserve an "election update") \$9.95.

An "absolute must mission" is a trip to the U.S. Federal Bookstore, 1305 S.W. First Ave., Portland, OR, 97201. Here, you will find economical coverage of any area imaginable. (Two goodies are "General Information Concern-

ing Patents, \$2.00 and "Basic Facts About Trademarks," \$1.75). Directions for "copyrights," ask!

And everyone (and I do mean "everyone") should have a copy of "Rogets International Thesaurus, Fourth Edition". Get this book at your favorite bookstore whether a student, writer, speaker or you just enjoy reading and writing"; a score of different ways to say almost anything and to say it better and more meaningful. Goes far beyond a dictionary of "synonyms and antonyms". This adds class to your prose, reports or letters. About \$12.95.

Many northeast residents do not realize yet that we again have a "Black Bookstore" in our area. Try Donnie's Accessories at 925 N.E. Broadway. They have added this to their regular line of African and African American Jewelry, art and art-facts. The phone is 249-7204 and they open at 11 a.m. daily, including Saturdays.

Well, I didn't get to the meat of the educational scene, did I? But the preceding seemed very important to transmit. Next week, we will indeed bring you "up to date" and carry right on from there. The educational scene is as volatile as ever and demands our close attention for our children's sake. I've got excellent programs going myself now.