

# perspectives

## Educated Guess On Future Of Schools (Disaster?)

When my February 17 column bore the headline, "Education Update, 1993: Things Look Better", I was not guessing; I was giving an account of the progress being made by a number of the nation's governors (working with cooperative state legislatures) in "making repairs" to their education system within a context of budgetary and structural realities. I had nothing to say about the situation in Oregon or Portland.



by Professor McKinley Burt

If I had predicted the current turmoil and despair, you wouldn't have believed me anyway. Against a background of fearful headlines an frightening T.V. soundbites—"Teachers' Union Braces For Layoffs, All Sports Programs To Be Canceled, Superin-

endent Details Disastrous Hits"—the ensuing hysteria and turmoil must surely provide a hint of what the "End Days" are going to be like. Actually, there was no need for me or any one else to predict anything, the handwriting had been on the wall for over a year, vis a vis inept state administrators and legislators. Never was impending doom so precisely formulated.

Just look at the budget situation in one sector alone: totals for K through 12th grade and Educational Service Districts \$3.1 billion, up \$1.2 billion. All told, school say they need \$5.4 billion to maintain current programs and absorb enrollment increases; increase is \$550 million. In Portland proper, the district projects a 1993-

1994 need for \$369 million to maintain current services, but expects to receive only \$318.2 million, a shortfall of \$50.8 million.

This, of course, is peanuts compared to the state's overall predicament where competing agencies say they need \$7.4 billion from the general fund for the 1993-1995 biennium, while the legislature cites \$6.2 billion available; that is a \$1.2 billion short-fall. In terms of Oregon's school systems alone, we have that "Phantom at the Opera", Measure 5, the 1990 property tax limitation law (don't tell that to individual property owners whose "assessed values" have gone up dramatically). The tax rate limit is lowering to \$5 per \$1000 of assessed value for schools.

The state must repay districts for the lost revenue, \$435 million in 1992-93, climbing to \$1.4 billion in 1993-95, statewide, schools say the will

need \$5.4 billion to maintain current programs in face of increasing enrollments—an increase of \$550 million. Viewing figures like that, one can get pretty depressed, but just imagine the state of mind of hundreds of thousands of parents who could even yield to hysteria, trying to plan for the future of their children. The media reports a hodge podge of concerns and contemplated remedies, confusion is the word of the day.

Many (those who think they can afford it) are taking a close look at "private schools". In turn, there are mixed feelings in the private sector. Some operators in that education fraternity are rubbing their hands in glee, already developing matrixes that will tell them "who to accept" in terms of test scores and grade performance. Several minority parents have expressed grave concerns to me over this eventuality, and they are joined by

both school districts and teacher unions. I have commented for past years on problems presented by private corporations.

There is a terrible uncertainty among school personnel as well as parents as we all face changes whose impacts can only be guessed. While the superintendents office and the legislature try to develop a new "Endangered Species Act", let's look at some of the contemplated decimation of staff: 140 classroom teachers, 10 high school vice-principals, and additionally, substitutes, counselors, administrators, secretaries, janitors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc. There is some controversy over the fact that superintendent Bierwirth's projected cuts did not include the districts top level administrators at all—deputies, finance, instruction.

It will be interesting to see what will be the fate of a number of programs heartily endorsed by minority

parents; drug prevention, Baseline Essays, dropout prevention, TAG, Vocational Village and the like. I've received a number of inquiries as to whether I can tutor small groups in the special kinds of mathematics and science I have developed. One parent reminded me that years ago her little son was in a class at the Black Education Center when I demonstrated that a six or seven year-old could be taught algebra and geometry with a new innovative technique.

Yes, I do remember and have a copyright on the process which is now part of a demonstration project in Atlanta being funded by the Feds. We expect nationwide dissemination by 1994. The Japanese have expressed interest and a company rep will be down from Seattle in April. All over the country, people are gearing up for a major education shortfall. What happened to "Year 2000"? More next week!

## Time For a Black Economic Game Plan

BY JAMES L. POSEY

It's been a long time since I've played the game *Monopoly*, but I remember clearly that the one who acquires "Board Walk" and "Park Place" typically wins. And while in that game everyone starts out with the same amount of play money, it's the roll of dice that determines how you advance around the board. Most Blacks know something about shooting craps, but when it comes to economic advancement in Portland, many African-Americans are not even in the game. And it's not that hard to understand why. In fact, I can use an example that's pretty close to home to demonstrate my point.

In the Portland "March Madness," my oldest daughter played basketball for Benson in the girls' AAA-Playoff, (on an all-Black squad, I might add, including the coach). Oh yeah, they are naturally talented; that's why they got to the tournament in the first place. As they got to the next-to-the-

final game, I was obliged to coach from the upper bleachers, as any good parent would do. But they lost badly to Oregon City. The fact that they lost, and my daughter mostly warmed the bench, was not as troublesome as to why they lost. In contrast to Oregon City, they lost because they simply did not play as a team. And even when the coach knew they were losing badly, he didn't give all his players a chance to play.

That is also why Blacks are not winning in the economic game in Portland, and I dare say, the country. We are not playing as a team, and we refuse to use all our players. I've hit on this theme before, but I wish I could bring home the point that African-Americans, including those given up for lost, must start working together like never before. Indeed, there's a joke going around that there are three things God can't do: God can't lie, go back on his promises, or get Black folks to work

together!

Other players are coming in, stealing the ball and slam dunking it in our faces. And, we don't have anyone to blame but ourselves. We stood by and watched it happen on the Oregon Convention Center. And, while there appears to be some effort to capitalize on the Oregon Arena Project and Tri-Met Light Rail, the lack of team work, effective coaching and preparation means, again, that many Blacks will not even get a chance to get on the court, let alone suit up or play second string.

Don't get me wrong. A few well placed "Negroes" will get high profile jobs, and a few Black politicians will sit at the welcoming table. But not enough Black people will make any real money. We will again be left holding empty bags or getting just a few crumbs. As a friend would say, "The Tri-Met train has left the station, headed for the Oregon Arena, with none of us really on board."

But here's the kicker. There is the possibility that if Blacks do not get on board with Tri-Met, the Oregon Arena, Gas Co-Generation, the Northwest Pipeline and other multi-million dollar projects, we will never get beyond the posture of begging for jobs or contributions for our pitiful social services organizations. And, we will never fully appreciate the sense of accomplishment that comes as a result of creating business and employment opportunities for ourselves.

Time and opportunities are running out for us. When you think about what happen in the Reagan/Bush era, you realize Blacks will not get too many more chances to change the economic conditions of our community. All of these Black folks, who have been sitting on the fence and playing it safe, need to get off it. Start investment clubs, new businesses and joint ventures with existing businesses. We must change the image and reality that Blacks don't make nothing,

own nothing, save nothing, change nothing, influence nothing. In other words, Black are nothing, therefore they can be treated like nothing.

Now Blacks are natural survivalists. That's why, in spite of often less than humane treatment, we have been able not only to exist, but in some cases, prosper. But African-Americans must realize that our Black children are still getting the blatant message that they don't count. And that message is ever increasingly coming from other, typically older Blacks. Yeah that's right. We all know that white people have been constantly sending our kids this message, but when Blacks themselves send the same message (and not just to kids), the impact is devastating. Black teachers confirm the low expectations of Blacks students just like their white colleagues do. And, there are Blacks in positions of authority and responsibility who question the value and creditability of Black con-

tractors and workers more so than their white peers. Moreover, some Black politicians are more critical of the motives of their Black constituents than white representatives could ever be.

Something has got to happen to change this perilous trend less the white monopoly continues. *Monopoly* is not a game Blacks can afford to play; nor as a people can we continue to roll the dice. This game destroys our willingness to work as a team and diminishes any real chance to win. That's why as far I am concerned, African-Americans must make sure that in every way possible, everyone in the Black community, particularly Black youth, be included in efforts to develop and implement a serious economic game plan that will make the entire community a winner.

James Posey is a local, small business owner with a background in socialism and community activism.

## Civil Rights Enforcement: Reno's Mandate

It has taken a long time for the United States Senate to confirm unanimously a person to be Attorney General of the United States. President Clinton's choice of Ms. Janet Reno to be the nation's first female Attorney General was a sound judgement call given the political polarization that surrounded the other potential candidates.

National attention is now focused appropriately on the leadership team that Attorney General Reno will bring to the U.S. Department of Justice. We believe that the key positions for Deputy, Associate and Assistant Attorney Generals should be filled by persons who have experience and a demonstrated record of effective commitment to ensuring equal protection under the law and a

strong record of enforcing federal civil rights laws.

Racial discrimination still exists in the United States across a wide array of social concerns and institutions. Racism is alive and well and there is a renewed necessity for the U.S. Department of Justice to speak and act for the cause of racial justice.

After the Senate confirmed Reno in a historic 98 to vote, President Clinton and Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Sen. Joseph Biden, were elated with the conclusion of the confirmation process. Given the past questionable actions of the Senate Judiciary Committee on

### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

racial and civil rights matters, especially during the Clarence Thomas hearings, the confirmation of Reno gives the status quo an important advance in the quest for justice for women of which we fully support.

Racism and sexism are twin evils that should be consistently challenged. Once again, however, we must be steadfast in our demands for racial justice within the Department of Justice. There is not a better time than now for the Clinton

Administration to send a clear and priority message to the nation concerning the future of civil rights advocacy.

Attorney General Reno should recommend that one of the many gallant civil rights lawyers in the nation be chosen to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. In recent years we have witnessed across the nation a resurgence of racially motivated violence, resegregation of public schools in many school districts,

hyper segregation in housing, and the overall retrenchment of civil rights enforcement by the federal government.

The Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department should play a leading role in challenging the old and new forms of racial discrimination in the United States. But his will not happen if the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement does not demand greater civil rights enforcement from Reno and the Clinton Administration.

Reno was quoted as saying, "The first agenda item is to build a Department of Justice, to bring on the best possible people to create a team that

reflects America, that represents the best in their various areas, and move forward with that department." We support this goal. Now the mandate is to fulfill the necessity for racial diversity at the top of the Department of Justice.

Our increasingly becoming a multiracial society demands stronger civil rights protection for all persons and communities, in particular those communities that have had to bear the history of American's racial exploitation and discrimination.

President Clinton needs to hear a strong unified voice on the issue. Attorney General Reno needs to respond with an aggressive policy and action to enforce fairly, equally and forcefully our nations civil rights laws. The racial divide in the nation demands action now.

## This Way for Black Empowerment

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

### D.C. GETS "BIZZEE"

The Black community of Washington, D.C. has gotten bizzee with a new film, *Let's Get Bizzee*, starring rapper Doug E. Fresh. The D.C. Black business, media, political and grassroots community came out in force in February to support the premiere of this independently-made-film. Everyone loved the movie!

*Let's Get Bizzee* was written and directed by Carl Clay, Director of the Black Spectrum Theater in Jamaica, Queens, and produced by Spectrum/Clay Productions, in association with Fred Newman Productions. It's a contemporary comedy adventure that pits Sam Baker, a young rap artist (Played by Doug E. Fresh in his first movie role) and his homeboy and homegirl pals in a "do or die" political campaign against a corrupt Black elected official. The film features rap music in a very positive way, and

sends a strong message that urban youth can participate in the democratic process. The youth in the film "take on" the political establishment in order to do something important for their community. It contains a strong anti-drug and anti-violence message delivered by the youth themselves.

But there's a story behind *Let's Get Bizzee*. It's premiere in Washington was set up through an independent distribution company called "Screw Hollywood Productions." The film's producers, after years of trying to market the project to Hollywood, realized they had to go a different route.

They had spoken to literally every major distributor to secure financing and a distributor deal for *Let's Get Bizzee*. What they were told is that a positive "message" film about African American youth that features nei-

ther violence nor house party-type frivolity is a film that won't attract an audience.

The producers believed that was wrong. They came up with all the financing and decided to distribute it themselves, to prove it.

They picked Washington, D.C. as the spot to premiere the film. As a fan director Carl Clay, as a close col-

league of Fred Newman and as a founder of the All Stars Talent Show Network, which brought Doug E. Fresh into the project, I went straight to the D.C. community to ask for support.

Radio station owner and talk show host Cathy Hughes helped publicize the film extensively and brought hundreds of her WOL listeners to see the movie. Councilman Marion Barry

enthusiastically opened up his networks to help promote the film, as did Councilman Harold Brazil. So did Dave Alston and Tim Gordon of Third Renaissance, Yusuf Jackson-Rev. Jesse Jackson's son-the Young Marines, Congresswoman Eleanor Homes-Norton, staff members for Councilman Jack Evans, Principal Princess Whitfield from Hines Jr. High School in D.C., and Greg McCleave.

This is what Councilman Barry said at the film's opening night party: "It has a positive message Hollywood wouldn't touch it. Why? It's too positive. If it doesn't show the worst of us, they won't show it. This is just the beginning. Let's give our young people a round of applause. They're not just our future, they're our present!"

This film is special. It breaks with the stereotypical portrayal of Black youth as a dangerously alienated seg-

ment of society. Sam Baker and his friends look out for their families. They worry about what their mothers think of them. And when the older generation can't carry the fight for the community any more, they jump in with their youthful energy and enthusiasm to take their places in the struggle. This is the side of our Black communities that is rarely if ever acknowledged by Hollywood. But it's real.

Doug E. Fresh, the film's producers and the black community of Washington, D.C. took the film through completion to its opening. Now it's up to those who want to see this kind of positive Black entertainment succeed to take it further. If you're a business person, a politician or someone who cares about the community and you're interested in getting "bizzee," give me a call at 1-800-288-3201 and I'll hook you up.