

EDITORIAL

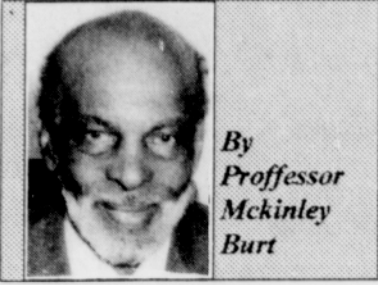
The Portland Observer

p e r s p e c t i v e s

More Walking And Talking In The Neighborhood

Those key rendezvous for social interaction and dialogue I described last week have their merit, but, still, there is nothing like the old fashioned street corner. Not as popular as it once was for gatherings of the brethren, though returning to popularity with community policing and all.

This time, I thought we might "listen in" on some of the conversations that go on and get some idea of what the neighborhood talks about. "Community policing" is a frequent subject these days as people compare early personal experience with media predictions of improvements in the community's quality of life. "Let's give it a chance" seems to be the governing consideration. Of course, the viewpoints are now modified by speculation as to the impact of the new police department appointments (seem very favorable so far



By Professor Mckinley Burt

and of the 'Fred Meyer Police Station'.

But all concerns about public health and safety in the neighborhoods have been underwritten by broader evaluations by householders, shippers, parents and even the children -- and over a long period of time. You have but to listen to the 'beat' of the neighborhood -- the conversations in those focal points of neighborhood interaction we've described; "Things ain't what they used to be" "Remember when you could go shopping without your 'piece' in your pocketbook?" "I used to like to go walking after dinner -- no more!"

That Portland Observer article on page 2 last week, "Girls Terrorize Safeway", sure got a lot of attention. For a week a group of teenagers had harassed shoppers at the

Martin Luther King store, snouting obscenities and even abusing the elderly. This weird conduct had been the topic of conversation in the neighborhood for sometime, with overtones of 'counterviolence'. However, it is reported that store management and police have corrected the situation -- we hope!

These circumstances have resulted in the revival of some earlier discussions in the area -- that while we are devoting so much of our energy and resources to "saving the young black males", we are sorely neglecting our young sisters. It goes without saying that these future mothers, careerists and role models are in as much need of nurturing and guidance as the boys. One of my neighbors suggest that there had been as much dangerous neglect here as in the 'women's health field' as recently highlighted in the nation's media.

No one around here has been able to find any relevant organizations operating in the area -- or attempts to

launch and secure funding for such an activity. Since there is a new organization of black 'men' (area residents) that has gotten off to a good financial start in the neighborhood, it is being suggested that a 'girls' program would be an excellent endeavor for them to sponsor; a club, if you will, that would bring in role models, tutors, career counselors and the like -- provide 'safe' facilities.

On a lighter side, the denizens of the neighborhood are as heavily involved in sports as ever -- both in real life and vicariously before the television set. You would be surprised at how many black men of all age groups who are (contrary to reports) actively involved with our youth in sponsoring and supervising sports activity. This ranges from baseball and softball to basketball, swimming, archery, scuba diving and golf. It goes without saying that many whites are equally involved, but I thought it good to offer some specific opposition to the rap that brothers take in respect to involve-

ment with our youth.

Who is "Chris Dudley"? Now, there is a name popping up everyday in the area (and probably all over the city). All the Blazer fans I've talked to or overheard have firm and often belligerent positions on this New Jersey center the Trailblazers have hazily spoken of as an acquisition. Comments have ranged from "Marketing realities dictate that we need a 'white boy'" to "My God, look at his specs: he averaged 3.5 points, 7.2 rebounds, 1.5 blocked shots, shot 3.5 from the field, and .518 from foul line". And, then, there are the countervailing opinions, "There must be some reason New Jersey offered him a seven-year, \$20 million deal".

These are just a few of the topics discussed in this neighborhood. The interests and activities of my nearby friends and acquaintances cover the same wide spectrum presented by the national media -- and with the same intensity, though I would say evaluated with quite a bit more "mother wit".

Strictest In Nation

Oregon's hearing aid licensing laws, established in 1959, the first of their kind in the U.S., are among the strictest in the nation, Scott Austen, a spokesperson for Willoughby Hearing Aids, Inc. said today. The company is the largest retail hearing aid dealer in Oregon.

Austen was responding to a NBC-TV Dateline program, aired Tuesday night (July 6, 1993) which criticized the industry by showing disgruntled employees in New York State, the one state in the United States that does not license hearing aid dealers or have conditions governing the sale of hearing aids.

Oregon licensing and testing

Oregon, in contrast, requires that all hearing aid dealers to be licensed. Class room training is required by consultants before taking the licensing tests which are based on written and practical examination. Topics of study include audio metric testing, otoscopic examinations, medical referral criteria, hearing and fitting, sanitation & safety, follow up care, state licensing laws and FDA regulations to list, a few. Many dispensers in Oregon also take a national board certification exam after they have completed two years of practical experience.

In addition, all hearing aid dealers must obtain an additional 9 hours of continuing education every year to keep current with industry standards and product improvements.

Consumer complaints

Last year, Oregon's 355 hearing aid dealers sold 28,000 hearing aids and only 30 complaints were filed by consumers with the State of Oregon Health Division, a ratio of .001 percent.

Consumer protection

In addition, Oregon law allows consumers to return hearing aids for up to 30 days after a purchase.

Currently, 355 Oregonians are licensed to sell hearing aids in the state. Willoughby has 30 employees and 35 dispensers who sell and service hearing aids at over 140 locations throughout Oregon including central and eastern Oregon. They also provide in-home services for house bound seniors.

Along The Color Line "Environmental Racism"

By Dr. Manning Marable

Last month, I walked the picketline in the struggle against environmental racism. Dozens of community activists in conjunction with the Los Angeles Labor/Community Strategy Center protested at the headquarters of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD), the regulatory agency responsible for controlling toxic emissions from stationary sources of air pollution in metropolitan Los Angeles. With an annual operating budget of \$110 million, the AQMD monitors a population of 13 million, the second largest urban area in the U.S.

This public confrontation concerned the ongoing battle over L.A.'s "lethal air", whether large corporations would continue to spew thousands of tons of dangerous, life-threatening chemicals into the environment--such as benzene (which causes leukemia), formaldehyde (another carcinogen), methylene chloride, lead (which attacks the central nervous system), and chromium. The L.A. basin is one

of the nation's most polluted environments. Labor/Community Strategy Center director Eric Mann reports that "smog-forming hydrocarbons released in the air each month equal the amount released by the Exxon Valdez oil spill." During the summer months, for southern California residents in Riverside and San Bernardino, "breathing the air is the equivalent of smoking one pack of cigarettes per day."

The economic and social cost of L.A.'s polluted environment are enormous. According to the AQMD, smog and particle pollution cost \$9.4 billion per year in human health care costs alone. Pollution obviously hurts all people who have respiratory problems, such as asthma. But it also targets many other potential victims: people with AIDS, whose immune systems are weakened; the elderly, whose health problems can range from bronchitis, emphysema and cancer; and children, whose lungs are developing and who take in up to three times as much air per body weight as

their parents. In Los Angeles, about 140,000 pregnant women each year are adversely affected by high levels of toxic air emissions.

The immediate issue being debated at the AQMD hearing concerned new definitions for "acceptable" levels of toxic emissions. On one side of the debate stood a regiment of lawyers, representing L.A.'s largest corporations. They fought against tighter safeguards on pollution, asserting that higher costs on businesses reduce profits and cost jobs. They asked for rules which, in effect, would permit them to become self-regulated!

In 1989, General Motors at Van Nuys, California, alone produced 4.2 million pounds of air emissions, primarily methyl chloroform, xylene, and acetone. Two huge aerospace plants owned by Douglas Aircraft, located in Long Beach and Torrance respectively, generated a combined total of 1.6 million pounds of methylene chloride and methyl chloroform that year. Chevron's large plant at El Segundo emitted 3,250 tons of nitrogen oxides.

But large corporations explain that the real health risks to the general public are small. Tall smokestacks can distribute emissions high into the air, distributing the toxic wastes to hundreds of thousands of people in small amounts. Thus, according to the corporate polluters, the actual health risks to what is termed the "maximum exposed individual" are reasonable.

Community activists and researchers from the Labor/Community Task Force challenged these claims at the AQMD governing board meeting. Standards for toxic polluters should take in to account the total quantity of toxic chemicals emitted, as well as the total number of people who are exposed. As the issue was debated, many board members literally stood up and walked out of the hearings, when black, Latino and working class people were testifying. But when the corporate lawyers in thousand dollar suits walked to the podium, all AQMD board members scrambled back into their seats. The board decided to delay its final vote for one month to consider the new

evidence. But many board members seemed all too eager to defend the corporate polluters, rather than to defend public health standards.

African Americans and other people of color have a major stake in the continuing struggle for a safe, clean environment. Blacks and Latinos are frequently overrepresented in jobs which use dangerous chemicals--such as custodial work, dry cleaning, textiles, and in the furniture industry. Is it surprising, therefore, that the average African-American male dies before he can even collect Social Security? The fight for strict environmental standards, worker's safety on the job, clean air, and the right to shut down huge corporate polluters, must be at the heart of our new movement for multicultural democracy.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of History and Political Science, and Director of the African-American Studies Institute, Columbia University. "Along the Color Line" is featured in over 250 newspapers and by over 60 radio stations internationally.

Activists Say Clinton Has Abandoned Blacks

Administration Proposals are Detrimental to Families, Communities

After pledging support for African-American communities during the campaign last year, President Clinton has failed to deliver on those promises and has "turned his back on blacks," according to a national Policy Analysis just released by The National Center for Policy Research.

Referring to Clinton's position on the creation of jobs in the inner-city, the reversal of the decline of the black family, and the strengthening of law enforcement in African-American communities, black writer and media consultant Derooy Murdock says that President Clinton has "overlooked most of us

mainstream Black Americans who are busy trying to improve our lives, families, and communities."

Murdock believes that Clinton's economic plan will further stunt private sector employment in the inner-city. Citing the President's budget proposal, which includes a ten percent capital gains tax surcharge plus an increase in taxes by some \$250 billion, Murdock asks, "Given these tax hikes, why would anyone open shop in, say, East St. Louis?" He points out that these tax increases will "shrink the amount of capital available for investment in the inner-city" and, consequently, will lead to economic contraction.

Murdock criticizes Clinton for encouraging the breakup of the black family through his economic policy, which leaves "the so-called marriage penalty intact. A couple earning \$12,000 a year each with hopes for three kids would pay \$2,744 in taxes if they got married but earn refunds of \$831 if they remain single." If such a couple does not get married, Murdock believes that it "makes it easier for a dad to walk away from such an informal union and turn his kids into socioeconomic statistics."

Noting that "homicide has become the number one killer of black men below the age of 25," Mr. Murdock thinks that Clinton's campaign prom-

ise to put 100,000 new cops to work is vital to the fight against criminal activity in black communities. "Clinton has yet to fulfill this pledge." Until Clinton acts to implement an anti-crime program, Murdock says, "let's hope that crime takes a holiday."

He observes that the abandonment of promises to support black communities has not come without its price. The Congressional Black Caucus, angered over Clinton's reversals concerning Haitian refugees and the nomination of Lani Guinier, has "twice refused to meet with the President in recent weeks."

Derooy Murdock serves as a leading advisory committee member of Project 21, an initiative which seeks community-based solutions to problems facing Black Americans. Mr. Murdock, who is currently President of a marketing and media consultancy firm, Loud and Clear Communications, has written political and foreign affairs commentary since 1979.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with Derooy Murdock, contact Ron Nehring at 202-543-1286.

Rate Relief For Seniors

On Monday, July 19th, City Commissioner Earl Blumenauer talked about his proposal to reinstate reduced rates for low income senior citizens and disabled residents. The Bureau of Environmental Services eliminated the discount effective July 1, 1993. Commissioner Blumenauer is asking the City Council to reinstate the Senior Citizen Sewer user Rate and the Disabled Citizen Sewer User Rate for at least one year while the City looks for ways to help low income senior citizens and disabled offset the impact of rising sewer rates.

Holland Joins Bank

Perry G. Holland has joined West One Bank, Oregon's International Banking department as Vice President and manager of Business Development. His responsibilities will include developing international business for new and existing Oregon customers, working closely with the Bank's Corporate Group and Business Banking Division to provide expert counsel on both domestic and international business transactions.

Holland is an accomplished executive with more than 25 years' experience in International Banking, Trade Finance and Business Development. He is a past president of the World Affairs Council of Oregon, the Japan America Society of Oregon and currently is treasurer and board mem-

ber of The Japanese Garden Society.

Holland received a bachelor of science degree in banking & finance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and is an honors graduate from the Pacific Coast Banking School, University of Washington in 1973.

Holland and his Sandy reside in Lake Oswego, Oregon. They have three sons and a daughter.

West One Bank, Oregon is a wholly-owned subsidiary of West One Bancorp, a diversified financial services company and the second oldest bank west of the Mississippi, with \$7.4 billion in assets, 4500 employees, operating for more than 200 banking offices in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Utah.

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Deadline Nears For Human Services Fair

The Tri-County and Clark County area human services organizations are being urged to sign up for a booth at the upcoming Social Services Resource Fair, designed to give human service professionals and the public an opportunity to learn about resources available in the metropolitan area.

The deadline for booth sign-up is July 31, 1993. The Fair, which will be held at the Eastport Plaza, is scheduled for October 1st, 1993, 10am until 9pm and October 2nd, 1993 from 10am to 7pm.

The Fair's goal is to bring together social services providers and

the public to learn and share information about all services offered by local governmental and human services organizations. Among the areas represented at the Fair will be, home health services, senior and youth organizations, drug abuse alcohol and mental health treatment, services for the disabled, and housing and employment. In addition to booths, the Fair will feature workshops and entertainment.

For more information on reserving a booth, organizations can contact Ralph Polcar of Vision Northwest at 284-7560.