

EDITORIAL

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A New Year's Resolution For Us All

"Along The Color Line"

"The Perils Of Centrist Government"

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

One year after Clinton's election to the White House, a clear political orientation has developed within the leadership of his administration. Clinton's core electoral base, the millions of African-Americans, Latinos, trade unionists, feminists, environmentalists, and liberals, expected the Arkansas Democrat to adhere to many progressive policies. Instead, on issue after issue, from Lani Guinier to NAFTA, Clinton has repudiated, insulted and alienated the people most responsible for his victory over George Bush.

The latest retreat appears to be on health care. For months, Clinton has preached that his strategy for health care reform had to embrace universal coverage, giving all consumers the freedom to choose their own doctors. Instead of the more comprehensive "single-payer" health care system used in Canada, Clinton called for an approach described as "managed competition", which attempts to incorporate market forces into a government-supervised system, with the objectives of reducing overall costs and maintaining general quality. The Republicans are divided on their response to the Clinton program. Some favor a much more modest managed competition approach proposed by moderate Republican Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island; others desire little to no change in the nation's health care system at all.

Now on the horizon comes the health plan of conservative Democratic Congressman Jim Cooper of Tennessee. Cooper's plan differs from Clinton's in that it would require businesses to pay 80 percent of all health insurance premiums, while employees would have to cover the other 20 percent. Cooper would control medical costs by promoting market competition between large corporate health care providers. Cooper's plan would also still leave 25 million Americans uncovered.

Cooper's "alternative" is being aggressively promoted by a motley crew of neoliberals and corporate interests. The editors of The New Republic have made Cooper their political pin-up boy, warning that Clinton's approach has too much federal bureaucracy. Leaders of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council--which Clinton once headed--support Cooper's initiative. And behind the scenes, as Cooper aggressively raises money to run for the U.S. Senate in Tennessee next year, the health care industry is financing his efforts. As

reported by the consumer organization Citizen Action, Cooper led all 435 members of the House in receiving large financial contributions from the health industry, with \$153,000 through June 30 1993. A compromise is probably in the works. And the odds are good, unfortunately, that the administration's final plan will embrace many of Cooper's ideas.

There is also speculation that the Clinton administration may refuse to include abortion coverage in his "revised" health care plan, as a concession to conservatives. Although it is many times more costly in tax dollars to pay for prenatal care, delivery, and social service support than for abortion, Clinton may sacrifice the interests of low income women who cannot afford abortions, in order to please his conservative critics.

On the environment a similar picture emerges. Huge corporations which pollute the environment and their insurance companies are lobbying to rewrite the Superfund law, which has forced them to spend billions of dollars to clean up hazardous waste sites. Clinton's Environmental Protection Agency is advocating the position of environmental organizations. But his Treasury Department under conservative Democrat Lloyd Bentsen favors changes in the Superfund favoring the corporations. Clinton will probably split the difference.

What we have in power in Washington today is neither fish nor fowl, neither liberal nor conservative. It is the frustrating maneuverings of "pragmatic centrism". Clinton is clearly devoid of any deep convictions beyond his own dedication toward reelection. He is contemptuous of his most loyal supporters, and lacks any capacity for strategic planning. We can therefore anticipate in 1994 continued concessions both to the left and right. For his labor union constituency, the President will probably increase the minimum wage and support a job retraining proposal favored by House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and his Labor Secretary Robert Reich. For conservatives, Clinton will call for a major overhaul in the welfare system, and may endorse the line-item veto on congressional legislation.

The chief perils of centrist government are that by appealing to nearly everyone, no one is fully satisfied. Clinton doesn't understand that the primary principle of successful politics is leadership: people must always know where you stand.

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

African Americans face the possibility that we will become the next endangered species on earth. Like the bald eagle and others on the government's list, we, too, face extinction. It is the most frightening nightmare of any people -- the annihilation of a race.

Yet, today, at a time when our country is at "peace," young African American men living in our cities are more likely to die of gunshot wounds than a U.S. soldier was to be killed on a tour of duty during the Vietnam War, according to Essence Magazine. Every six hours a young African American male is killed. Every six hours. In 1990 alone 45 children under 10 were killed -- the numbers in the years since are probably higher.

The Surgeon General of the U.S. estimates that some 135,000 children carry guns to school every day. Another estimate is that one in every five high school students carries a gun to school.

Two months ago the Washington Post reported on eleven and twelve year olds who were planning their funerals instead of their proms. These young people have seen so much random violence in their brief lives that they

had no expectation of living into adulthood. It's not just Washington, D.C. where our children are dying -- it's every city and even in small towns and rural areas. We are becoming an endangered species.

As African American people we have a rich legacy of our mothers and fathers who did not let fear stop them. They did not let racism or sexism or the KKK stop them. Harriet Tubman and Nat Turner did not wait for the Emancipation Proclamation to do something about slavery. Ida Wells-Barnett did not wait for anti-lynching laws to do something about the lynching of thousands of black men in the south.

Our children -- our future -- are dying. We are an endangered species and we must not wait for others to do something about the violence in our communities, to do something about the death of our future. We can take control of our own destiny. That's got to be each of ours New Year's resolution if it is to succeed.

Churches can do something. Our churches historically have been the centers of our communities and they must become that once again. They must be safe havens for our children, they must offer tutoring and recreation and

a place for a supportive community to nurture our children. They must once again offer our children hope and a future.

Fraternal organizations were all founded on the premise of helping others. Many of them already have programs for youth and these can be expanded to provide young people with role models and mentors -- real, live persons who look like them who are succeeding and care if our young people succeed.

Schools can do something. More schools need to find ways to stay open in the evenings to provide recreational activities for children. Too often our youth have no where to go and nothing positive to do. And schools must find ways of helping parents learn how to be parents, through adult education programs which are desperately needed.

Our celebrities -- the entertainers and sports figures can do something. For many of our young people celebrities are the only positive role models they have. We need every single entertainer and sports figure to be involved -- to be giving of themselves and their dollars to help our youth.

Individuals can do something.

After Lynn Anderson Carter's son was killed in the Bronx she founded Families Against Drugs. Barbara Lowe founded Mothers Against Violence. You don't have to start an organization, though, you can just reach out to one young person -- maybe someone in your church, in your apartment building. Be that child's friend and mentor.

Our government can do something. It's too easy just to point the finger of blame at the victims -- at the African American community -- for the violence that is engulfing us. We as African Americans must shoulder our part of the blame, but the larger society must also take responsibility and must do something as well. Our young people need jobs. They need adequate training for the jobs of tomorrow. Our children need good, affordable housing and the guarantee that they will be treated fairly in the world as they grow up.

That's got to be our New Year's Resolution. In 1994 each and every one of us must do something to save our young people. We must each find a way to reach one. We must each say ENOUGH and then do something about it.

We can survive - and flourish.

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