

# EDITORIAL

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

### Health Care In America Part III

"Pot Of Gold" At End Of Clinton's Health Plan"; Even That Plan Is In Serious Trouble

**W**hat is the difference between a national health care system, national health insurance (private or government run) and a national health service?

The U.S. and South Africa are the only two industrialized nations in the world that do not have a national health care system--though even South Africa had one for its white citizens. South Africa is now working such a plan for All of its citizens. If Clinton's health proposal succeeds--after failed attempts by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Johnson and Nixon--we too will have a national system for the first time in our history. However, prospects seem to get dimmer with every passing day. What are the broad health care options?

**1. National health insurance, run by the private insurance companies,** is a national health care system designed to benefit the insurance and health industries where economic competition and profit is the driving force. It treats health care like peanuts, soybeans, beer and cars--as a commodity to be produced,

distributed and sold privately for profit. It is government regulated like the FTC regulates other forms of commerce. It is private profit driven! This was Clinton's original plan. Even it has gone downhill from its strong start.

**2. National health insurance, run by the government** (e.g., single payer, Canadian-style), is a national health care system which provides health insurance for all Americans on an equal basis; establishes the fees of health care providers, with the states' help; controls price increases; but still allows the health care system to stay entirely in private hands, with unrestricted free choice of provider.

**3. National health service** is a national health care system designed to benefit consumers by meeting their comprehensive health needs--i.e., of actively promoting a healthy life-style, health education, prevention, treatment, care and cure. Such a system would not eliminate completely market competition--competition within the framework of a national health service system would help to keep prices down, quality up and improve efficiency. Market forces would influence the system, but not drive it. A

national health care service would view health care as a human right and be driven by social need, not by private greed.

The Rainbow believes that as civilization and economies develop, certain basics of the material life--e.g., health care and education--should not be turned over completely to market forces (i.e., "survival of the fittest"). In such a system, the few always wind up on top with the best and most everything, while the many end up on the bottom with the least and worst of everything--in this case, health care.

**Bottom Line:** Clinton's original restructuring plan was a step forward in the sense that it was universal and was more comprehensive for more people than the current system, but still protected and was primarily driven by the market--i.e., the special (economic) interests of the insurance industry, for-profit hospitals, doctors and dentists--not human health needs. It would have rationalized and increased government regulation of the health insurance industry--e.g., 1,500 insurance companies was too unwieldy and socially inefficient--but it still would have fundamentally treated

health care as a commodity alongside other commodities. While the Rainbow saw Clinton's plan as better than the current system, it supports a Canadian-style single payer plan. Clinton's plan would have been regulated by: a 7-member National Health Board, appointed by the President, which would have monitored state compliance and the functioning of health alliances; interpreted the standard benefit package and made recommendations about new benefits to reflect changing technology and needs; and would have set regional medical spending ceilings. It would have developed indicators of the quality of service and care offered by health plans and publicized the results to promote informed consumer choices. A committee would have monitored drug prices and raised questions to the pharmaceutical companies about those drugs it deemed unreasonably expensive.

Even under Clinton's best plan the "gold" at the end of his health care rainbow is primarily for the health care industry, with a little health care "gold dust" thrown in for the people.

## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

### New Age Reconstruction

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON  
**S**omeone once said those who don't know their history are destined to repeat it.

And the baseball philosopher Yogi Berra was once quoted as saying, "it's deja vu all over again." Whichever way you look at it, what is happening now has happened before as legal challenges in five Southern states attempt to erase newly-drawn majority African American congressional districts.

It happened after the Civil War, when the South sent 22 Blacks to Congress and dozens to state legislatures and county courthouses. It was called Reconstruction. But with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes and the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, blacks had been totally disenfranchised and all the black members of Congress were gone by 1901. Indeed, George White, the last black congressman of this Reconstruction period predicted in his final Congressional address that blacks would rise again some day, phoenix-like. He warned, "These parting words are in behalf of an outraged, heartbroken, bruised and bleeding, but God-fearing people, faithful, industrious, loyal, rising people -- full of potential force."

George White was right -- blacks did return to Congress from the South. He probably had no idea it would take nearly a century to do so. 71 years to be exact -- when Barbara Jordan was elected in Texas and Andrew Young in Georgia.

And he probably had no idea that no more African-Americans would be elected for two decades until a new strengthened Voting Rights Act in 1990 required redistricting to maximize Black voters influence. As a result, in 1992 five Southern states which had no African American representation since Reconstruction each elected at least one African American member -- Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama and Florida.

But all of that can now change. "We began this century with no Black representation in Congress and the prospect is we could end it that way," said Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia in a recent *Encore* magazine interview.

Why does McKinney make such a dire prediction? In 1993 the Supreme Court's *Shaw vs Reno* decision disregarded this century's voting record when it came to black representation from the South in Congress. Ironically, it used the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, which were designed to confer full citizenship and equal rights upon freed slaves to try to end the voting

rights districts which finally had given African Americans from the South representation in Congress. This decision established a dangerous precedent by recognizing the right of white voters to challenge majority African American congressional districts in North Carolina.

Now five lawsuits have been filed, asking federal judges to end these districts because they amount to unconstitutional segregation of voters, despite the fact that 47 percent of the voters in the North Carolina district in question are white. The Supreme Court labeled these new districts as examples of "political apartheid." The reality is that what black Southern voters had for nearly a century is apartheid and that these districts are less segregated than any Southern congressional district previously drawn. For example, in Louisiana, the most racially diverse districts are these so-called majority-minority districts.

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law contends that the Supreme Court decision was based on myths about the redistricting process, myths which are unsupported by empirical evidence or record. These include the myth that the election of Douglas Wilder in Virginia proves that African Americans can get elected in Southern states. But the reality is that only one African American has been elected governor in any state in the history of the country and no Hispanic has yet been elected.

Another myth on the Lawyers Committee list is that the courts have always disapproved of odd-looking districts. The reality is that there have been many odd-looking districts which were designed to keep one party or one powerful politician in power. The Lawyers Committee argues that until this recent Supreme Court decision, it had never recognized any federal right to challenge a district solely on the grounds that it was unusually shaped.

It is likely that the Supreme Court will rule on voting rights districts again. Its *Shaw vs Reno* decision was one with a 5-4 split, with Clarence Thomas, a native Georgian, voting with the majority. With such a split and with a new justice on the Court this fall, some African American politicians are unsure of their future.

Congresspersons are not the only ones whose futures are in jeopardy. The hundreds of African American state, county and city legislators and judges elected as a result of the redistricting are also threatened. Ultimately, so is justice and so is democracy. Not only does the African American community lose, all Americans lose without fair and representative government.

## THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

### Zaire: Next On The List For Democracy In Africa

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

**On April 18 the democratic opposition to the Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko officially designated their leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, to be the prime minister of Zaire's transitional government once again. Tshisekedi received 89% of the vote.**

Tshisekedi, who I am proud to have known and supported for the last five years, was first elected prime minister in August 1992 by Zaire's Sovereign National Conference, a democratic assembly of over 2,800 delegates which created interim institutions -- a constitution, a parliament, and a government -- charged with leading Zaire to democracy within two years. However, the dictator Mobutu -- originally installed by the CIA after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba -- has refused to cede power to the democratic government, and has used his control over the armed forces and the country's wealth to sabotage the democratic transition. The United States, while giving lip ser-

vice to support for the legitimate transition government, has continued to give political and diplomatic support to its longtime ally Mobutu.

Starting last September, the United States along with France, Belgium and a special UN representative pressured the opposition to sit down and "negotiate" changes to Zaire's transitional constitution -- changes which drastically undermine the democratic gains of the Sovereign National Conference and increase the formal powers of President Mobutu. The opposition reluctantly agreed to "enlarge" the High Council of the Republic (the transitional parliament) to include all the deputies from the former one-party National Assembly, a Mobutuist institution that had been abolished by the Sovereign National Conference. This "enlargement" gave Mobutu a majority of the High Council of the Republic.

The thinly-veiled objective of these U.S.-brokered negotiations is to dislodge Tshisekedi -- the most popular Zairean political leader since Patrice Lumumba -- from the post of prime minister, and replace him with

a "neutral technocrat" more acceptable to international financial institutions. American embassy personnel travel around Kinshasa openly promoting the candidacy of Kengo wa Dondo, a former prime minister under the Mobutu regime who is enormously unpopular with the Zairean people.

Despite enormous pressure, the opposition refused to give up Tshisekedi. The terms of the deal finally concluded between Mobutu and the opposition specified that the new prime minister had to come from the ranks of the opposition, and Tshisekedi was once again the choice. Since then, the Mobutuists have renewed their campaign of sabotage. Celestin Anzuluni, the acting head of the transitional parliament and a Mobutuist, held up Tshisekedi's appointment, while 13 Mobutuists who had infiltrated the opposition declared their own candidacies. The Mobutu-controlled radio and TV reported on these candidacies, and broadcast the false information that no opposition candidate had received a majority of the vote.

The Clinton administration, which has come under fire from the Congressional Black Caucus for its Zaire policy, blames the continuing impasses in Zaire on the inability of the "political class" to rise above its petty ambitions. "There are no George Washington's there," a Defense Department staff member told Nancy Ross and Deborah Green, partners in the DC lobbying firm of Ross & Green, which advocated for the Zairean democratic transition.

On the contrary, American foreign policy toward Zaire must bear the lion's share of blame for the tragic delay in Zaire's democratization. The Clinton administration has adopted the policy of President Bush in its entirety: hang on to Mobutu, and use him to interfere with Zairean sovereignty and the Zairean people's right to self-determination. Now that democracy has finally come to South Africa, we must turn our attention to the struggle for democratization in all of Africa. Zaire must be at the top of the list.

## It Doesn't Have To Be Bogus

BY JAMES L. POSEY

**A recent article in the Skanner newspaper questioned whether the NE Economic Development Alliance was valid and truly representative of the economic development interest in NE Portland.**

This issue is centered around the attempt by Portland Development Commission (PDC) to qualify NE Portland for some ghetto bucks from the Feds. By having NE Portland federally-designated as an Empowerment Zone, PDC and the Alliance are going after some of the 1993 L.A. riot hush money.

After much controversy over the effectiveness of these type of programs, the Clinton administration and the Congress have finally set aside a few dollars. Regardless of whether or not the programs are effective, politically at least, they give the appearance of helping to keep the natives from becoming too restless any time soon.

Never mind that because of competition from cities in dire straits such as East St. Louis, Newark and De-

troit, Portland has about a snowball's chance in hell of getting the designation. The real story is more about the posture of PDC and the makeup of this Alliance. The empowerment zone thing is only one situation in which these two organizations have collaborated to push an economic development agenda in NE Portland. But one has only to glance at the Alliance's board of directors to realize there is questionable representation and a lack of viable Black business interest.

Immediately, one can see that most of the individuals representing the NE Alliance come from backgrounds other than business and economic development. Even the few who have some business expertise come from large corporate settings or are recognized as non-profit business junkies and not entrepreneurs in the true sense. Others on the board can broadly be categorized as socialworker/activist types who have a narrow focus of jobs as the only way to economic salvation. That is not to say that these good people don't know anything about economic development or that they can't contribute to

discussions on these issues. But to have them design and orchestrate an economic development agenda for NE residents is sheer madness.

In Portland, white and Black public officials perpetuate this craziness by patronizing these kinds of activities. They know this is a clear case of the tail wagging the dog and bares no resemblance to how white people operate for themselves in ensuring their own economic progress. Only in Portland, Oregon, would the governor call the (then) director of the Urban League and ask him to act as the chief economic spokesman for the Black community, and he accepts. Only here would the owners of a large sports complex under construction call upon a community leader, skilled in early childhood development, to appease and cover up concerns raised by Black contractors. And, he does it. As the kids would say, "Something is really 'ailing' here."

This Alliance/PDC thing is a real "drama dilemma." On the one hand, progress is being made because finally attention is being paid to some long-neglected economic problems. On the other hand, organizations like PDC are

demonstrating that old habits are hard to break. They are still trying to run organizations like the Alliance up the flag pole and wave them off as representing the economic development interest of NE Portland residents when they really don't even come close.

Invariably somebody is gonna ask if Bernie Foster from the *Skanner* and Joyce Washington at the *Portland Observer* are participating? Is Mr. Booker from the only Black bank in town involved, and what about Ora Hart and the others at Albina-Progressive Realty? Where is Paul Knauls and Willie Harris on this stuff? What does Jeff Parks and the club owners have to say? If not Wave's Hair Design, what about Ja-belle's input? Coast Industries, Inc. is awful quiet. Hey, what about this group called the Black Dollar Days Task Force, not to mention those struggling Black contractors, NAMCO?

This is just a short list. But let's face it. Unless a significant number of these folks, at least half, and others are at the table, it's a bogus thing.

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