

# EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily Reflect Or Represent The Views Of The Portland Observer

Who says crime doesn't pay? the Cook County prison system is a \$200 million booming business.

It spends \$169,000 every six days on food it purchases and cleans over 11,000 inmate uniforms, and doctors and dentists provide prisoners with medical and dental care. The new jail costs \$130 million, including \$1.3 million to the architect and \$13 million to the general contractor. Furthermore, never in its history has a person of color been the general contractor for a prison building project.

The Cook County prison system is part of a national trend of prison expansion. The U.S. prison population is at 1.4 million, firmly securing "the land of the free" as the industrialized world's leader in incarcerations. Politicians have jumped on the "tough on crime" bandwagon, and they have made crime-baiting the red-baiting of the '90s. This led to a \$14 billion increase in annual expenditures for corrections between 1982 and 1992. Many believe that the prison industry's growth has as much to do with local economics as a desire

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Crime Pays (For Some) "Crying All The Way to The Bank"

to fight crime. As "three strikes you're out" legislation was established in California and Washington, and parole was abolished in Virginia and North Carolina, the \$31 billion incarceration business flourished.

Rural areas, which once fought to keep prisons out of their towns, are now competing to bring them in, often by offering the state free land. Why? Because, in addition to bringing inmates, prisons bring hundreds of thousands of jobs. In fact, USA

Today reported that in 1992 more than 523,000 full-time employees worked in corrections—more than in any Fortune 500 company except General Motors—up from 169,000 in 1972. This kind of job growth ensures that the prison system will continue to grow—even if the crime rate does not. In fact, entire firms have been established to broker prisoners between systems that are faced with overcrowding and those which have empty cells.

Furthermore, private companies such as AT&T, American Express and GE are also seeking to cash in by investing in the prison industrial complex, and entire companies, such as Corrections Corporation of America, have sprung up to run prisons.

The demand is high partially because of government policies which hold that selling one marijuana cigarette or a single gram of cocaine—or just introducing a drug user to a dealer—can result in a sentence of 10 years or longer, with no chance of parole.

Prisoners have become a valuable commodity, and the government is doing all it can to get more. It's our urban policy!

Morris Thigpen, Director of the National Institute of Corrections told USA Today, "People joke (that) we seem to be heading toward the day when you're either going to be in prison or working in some sort of way with corrections." This is nothing to joke about. Massive prison growth, coupled with cuts in social services and welfare, is a substantial step toward fascism.

### The Civil Rights Journal Environmental Injustice At Its Worst

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

One of the biggest problems facing the power industry in the United States today is how to dispose of the radioactive waste generated by its nuclear power plants.

The solution to that problem which many of the industry giants seem to be proposing is to place the "spent" fuel in low income communities, many of which are communities of color and many of which are native American tribal lands. Such decisions are called environmental racism and have devastating health and economic impact on communities of color.

One of the industry giants, Northern States Power in Minnesota, seems to be leading the way in this environmental racism. Northern states is now embroiled in a tribal dispute on the Mescalero Apache territory in New Mexico, where it leads the effort to site a nuclear waste storage facility which would receive used nuclear fuel from power plants across the nation. Many of these plants are running out of space to store the spent

fuel and don't have anywhere to ship it until the year 2010, when a national disposal for the waste may become available.

Political intrigue and alleged intimidation have characterized the debate about the storage of the used nuclear fuel within the Mescalero Apache tribe. In January of this year the Mescalero Apache tribe voted to reject their Tribal Council's negotiations with a consortium of 33 utility companies to receive their used nuclear fuel. Soon thereafter tribal officials circulated a petition to have the vote reconsidered and in March the tribal members approved the negotiations. But opponents of the plan argued that the second election was "contaminated" and that people had been promised \$2,000 and housing improvements if they voted in favor of the contract. One vocal opponent was informed in May that her day care agency's funding had been cut off by the tribal administration.

At the end of June Northern States Power and the Mescalero Apache tribal council announced plans to proceed with their project, including a list of 23 nuclear utilities

which had signed on to the agreement. Several of these utilities later denied that they had signed an agreement, although voicing support for the project. This announcement followed a tumultuous week on the reservation, in which the tribal chief supposedly announced his resignation and ten recanted it and an anti-nuclear rally of 2,000 people was held nearby, in which actor Steven Seagal spoke.

Interestingly, Northern States Power Company is already involved in another dispute with native American people on Prairie Island, Minnesota, where it is storing used nuclear fuel rods above ground, again on native American land. In that case the company did not seek the permission of the people, but went directly to the state legislature. In yet a third environmental racism case, Louisiana Energy Services (LES), a consortium of three U.S. power companies including Northern States Power, is trying to place a uranium enrichment plant in an area in rural Louisiana which is 98 percent African American and mostly poor.

The following companies were

listed by Northern States Power as participants in the Mescalero Apache waste plan: American Electric Power Service, Baltimore Gas and Electric Co., Centerior Energy Corp., Commonwealth Edison Co., Consolidated Edison Co., Dairyland Power Cooperative, Florida Light and Power Co., Florida Power Corp., GPU Nuclear Corp., Illinois Power Co., Niagara Mohawk Power Co., Northeast Utilities, Northern States Power Co., Pacific Gas and Electric Co., PECO Energy Co., Public Service Electric and Gas Co., Southern California Edison Co., Southern Nuclear Operating Co., Union Electric Co., Wisconsin Electric Power Co., Wisconsin Public Service Corp., Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corp. and Yankee Atomic Electric Co. If you see your utility on this list, you can write or call them and ask if they are participating in the Mescalero waste storage plan.

Then let them know you don't support environmental racism and you don't believe they should either. Let us know how you make out. (700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115)

## perspectives

"The End Of Work!" Serious Business Folks!

That heading for this week's article is taken from the title of a new best-seller by Jeremy Rifkin, a keen observer of the American economic way of life and who has excellent credentials. And those of you who may not have taken me too seriously the past few months listen now as an 'expert' systematically details the traumatic changes we face.

World-wide unemployment is now at the highest level since the great depression of the 1930s. The number of people underemployed or without work is rising sharply as million of new entrants into the workforce find themselves victims of an extraordinary high-technology revolution. Sophisticated computers, robotics, telecommunications, and other cutting-edge technologies are fast replacing human beings in virtually every sector and industry—from manufacturing, retail, and financial services, to transportation, agriculture, and government.



By Professor Mckinley Burt

"Many jobs are never coming back. Blue collar workers, secretaries, receptionists, clerical workers sales clerks, bank tellers, telephone operators, librarians, wholesalers, and middle managers are just a few of the many occupations destined for virtual extinction. While some new jobs are being created, they are, for the most part, low paying and generally temporary employment. More than fifteen percent of the American people are currently living below the poverty line."

The president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, D.C., Rifkin says the world is fast polarizing into two irreconcilable forces: on one side, an information elite

and manages the high-tech global economy; and on the other, the growing numbers of permanently displaced workers, who have few prospects and little hope for meaningful full employment in an increasingly automated world.

Since this advisory is a warning addressed to 'all' Americans without exception, what particular message may we infer to be intended for those already at the bottom of

the heap -- like, say, African Americans? Certainly, we consistently have taken to task that element of our leadership which has not had a new idea since the discovery of fire; still maddening enthralled with marches, seminars, retreats, chicken wing galas and thousand-dollar-a-plate dinners as meaningful economic vehicles for the year 2000.

And, speaking of marches, we see an increasing controversy surrounding the "Million Man March" on Washington projected by Minister Louis Farrakhan and ex-NAACP chief Ben Chavis. I find the criticism irrelevant, always returning to my perennial observation: "that surely it would eventually occur to intelligent people to devise an economic structure which would finance basic manufacturing, merchandising and agricultural enterprises, using the hundreds of millions now spent on marches, conventions and other conventions ad infinitum (Buy the airlines and inns we make rich?)."

And if, indeed, "the End of work" is at hand, why shouldn't the principal activity of African Americans be that of creating 'new work' and opportunities, using the obvious -- the tens of billions of purchasing power they bring to the marketplace (somebody elses).

## NNPA Special Feature Business In The Black

BY CHARLES E. BELLE

A hidden contract is out for black county officials.

"Assessor's Office Falter - S.F. losing millions," read the headline in the San Francisco Chronicle, as soon as the 11th Annual National Economic Development Conference of the National Organization of Black County Officials, Inc. (NOBCO) left town.

The major white daily took two shots at former San Francisco County Supervisor and current County Assessor Doris Ward. Ward was a co-host for the "Vision and leadership for Community Empowerment" group.

Greetings had been sent from the California Republican governor on down to the conference attendees. A marvelous and informative time had been had by all including Doris Ward and her co-hostess San Francisco County Supervisor Willie B. Kennedy. But no sooner had the delegates turned their backs, than did the white press begin its slanderous and negative propaganda campaign against the local black county official.

One example of the need for sensitive county supervisors is at the England Industrial Airport and Community Authority in Alexandria, LA. Bridgett Brown, a local board member tells how local officials turned a closed AirForce base into a thriving business park with a hospital and golf course, increasing the number of jobs and tax revenue for the local area.

A positive attitude like that can aid local citizens in counties like San Francisco, as well as Louisiana. "[I] hope this will serve as a wake up call," says Kennedy. Of course, some say the shots at Ward were really meant to

hit another African American as he considers entering the San Francisco mayoralty race. Either way there is some back-stabbing going on.

Since the NOBCO's prime purpose is to "provide project structure for the black county officials to respond to issues affecting their constituencies and county government" for 2,000 black county officials in 47 states, the white media is targeting them as the pillar of African-American political power.

The NOBCO was formed in 1975 to provide an organizational structure for addressing black issues. During its conference in San Francisco, members chose to give their Chairman's Award for Outstanding County Officials to Doris Ward, Ph.D., because of her "commitment to service and her determination to get the job done."

The attack on local black officials like the attack on affirmative action is a trial not unlike police brutality. John L. Burris, associated trial lawyer for Rodney King and noted legal TV analyst for the O.J. Simpson trial was a guest speaker at the National Economic Development Conference. The one thing that sticks in his mind when he attends the funeral of victims of police killings, he says, is the lack of remorse by white police officers who commit the crime. To the white police officer, an African American or Hispanic American is not a human being.

While the white press pretends to be concerned about the problems of poverty and race, it is busy killing off their protectors, the local black public official.

"They smile in your face, but all the while they want to take your place," one official said.

## Ben Chavis Leader Of Black Men March - We Jest?—Surely?

BY CHESTER A. HIGGINS, SR.

They are touting a proposed 'Million Black Man' march in Washington, D.C., Oct. 16.

For many of us these are exciting times! There will be some who resent it or even hate it—black and white. And there are some whites who feel that any assertion on the part of black men demanding respect or redress for some of the countless wrongs inflicted over the centuries, should be met with a strong police force and/or an increased number of jail cells. But that is another subject. For those of us who are warmed by the thought of black men getting off their 'duffs' and finally acting in unison positively, on something, it is a heartfelt thing.

However, I have one big problem and that is with Benjamin Chavis being one of the principal leaders of this gathering. I say this with some regret, for the Rev. Dr. Chavis had long been one of my revered figures, dating back to the days when he was thrust into the 'pokey' on that phony charge in North Carolina and forced to spend 10 weary years before he was cleared.

I'm a long-time NAAPer, a life member, in fact, and once proudly served for several years as editor of its Crisis magazine. So when Chavis was selected to succeed Benjamin Lawson Hooks, for whom I had toiled both at the NAACP and at the Federal Communications Commission, I felt we were getting a worthy successor to Dr. Hooks. The latter served for 15 years, often with distinction and always with the highest degree of integrity, probity and honor, as executive secretary of that venerable or-

ganization.

Chavis came in with a positive thrust -- he would reach out to the unwashed, to the black Muslims! to the gang-bangers, the socially written-off, the unreachable, the stone dead, empty little creeps, devoid of self-respect, caring for little and believing in less other than offing one another in fierce bloody gang battles or drug programs -- and bring them all into the NAACP fold. Hallelujah! I cried. He's not superior to Hooks in anyway, I cautioned, but he is extending the NAACP reach into hitherto overlooked places. New leadership demands new duties!

But then Chavis was caught right off the bat with his hand in the NAACP cookie jar. He desperately needed hush money, it was alleged, to pay off a lady who was bringing sexual harassment and job discrimination charges against him. So without the NAACP say so, he helped himself but swears (in a 60 Minutes TV show segment) that the then Chairman William Gibson was privy at all times to the hoist.

Now, this gentleman -- this is the same Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr., isn't it? -- wants to, no, has already ensconced himself as one of prime leaders of the 'Million Black Man' march this fall.

Is this the kind of black male role model we want?

Forgive me, but shouldn't we demand a period of respite, a pause to reflect, and since his previous act was so gross a violation of the public trust, request a measure of public contrition before extending redemption?

For now, he should be back in the pack, not out front.

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