

EDITORIAL

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

At last, a corporate downsizing we can celebrate! After 25 years of demeaning and degrading African Americans and Latinos, WABC-AM talk radio host Bob Grant "has been terminated by mutual agreement," according to the official release by Capital Cities/ABC.

Yeah, right. Translation: he was fired, by mutual agreement among 99% of the human race.

Those of us in the JaxFax world know that the National Rainbow Coalition has been a leading critic of Bob Grant's hate talk for years. Using the research of the media watchdog group FAIR, the NRC highlighted a complete series of Grant's most malicious radio comments in the 11/17/94 JaxFax. Reverend Jackson led picket lines at WABC, and the NRC organized a protest of the corporate sponsors of Grant's show, which led to numerous withdrawals.

Then last week, in the wake of Grant's despicable comments about the death of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, the NRC launched a new campaign calling for Grant's dismissal.

Step one--In last week's JaxFax (4/11), we strongly criticized Grant's ugly remarks about Ron Brown. Step two--The next day, Reverend Jackson wrote a letter to Michael Ovitz, President of the Walt Disney Com-

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

The Thrill Of Victory... The Agony Of Defeat

pany, parent corporation to ABC, calling Grant's comments a "disgrace," and urging Disney to "take action...immediately." Step three--The NRC organized and announced a picket line for ABC. Step four--The NRC began planning for another corporate sponsorship boycott.

Step five--Victory! ABC's patience was exhausted, the heat was on, and a moral judgement was demanded. Result: Bob Grant is history. Thanks to all the Rainbow family who fought his mean spirit over the years.

Sad to say, we can't win 'em all--and what the Voting Rights Act giveth, the black-robed crowd taketh away. The courts struck down yet another majority-minority district, Florida's 3rd, currently held by Congresswoman Corrine Brown.

Apparently it's a "judge thing"--we certainly don't understand. A court system which sat by complacently for centuries while every single district and voting rule in America was gerrymandered to insure white domination, now seems determined to guarantee that "geography" and "compactness" of districts take full precedence over "race" and "ethnicity" in political redistricting.

The court's logic is fraudulent. It is based on a wish, a world that never was--a world where race is supposed to play no role in politics. These judges apparently believe, centuries of evidence to the contrary, that African American candidates have an equal chance to win majority white districts. They imagine a color-blind world, pretend that the severe hang-over effects of slavery have been

erased, and then issue court rulings based on that fantasy.

We have an alternate fantasy for them--try to imagine Newt Gingrich winning election in any majority-minority district in America!

The Florida Courts' own language makes their guilty feelings crystal clear: "the decision should not be interpreted as 'turning back the clock' on gains made by African American voters, and other racial and ethnic minorities. Nor should the decision be interpreted as cutting back on the continued viability of the Voting Rights Act as a means to remedy discriminatory voting practices."

Today we expect the court to issue an opinion that longer days, warmer weather, budding flowers, and spring rain should not be interpreted as turning back the clock on winter.

What do these court rulings really mean? That every African American and Latino candidate--for city council, state legislature, county commission, or U.S. Congress--will face a stacked deck for the foreseeable future.

To pretend otherwise is a farce, a travesty. Unfortunately, this is the third time the courts have weakened the Voting Rights Act in recent months, in Louisiana, in Georgia, and now in Florida. The end is not in sight, and America is a weaker, diminished democracy as a result.

perspectives

Which Road To An Effective Structure For School Funding, II

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT
Last week's promise to "examine particular remedies" served to elicit some rather impassioned responses from the citizenry, generally, we could say the range was from the zealous to the ole "sublime to the ridiculous."

I thought it best to step back from the highly emotional onslaughts and take refuge in a strictly analytic posture. That was at first, but then I realized that this has become a widely-practiced intellectual game--and constitutes most of the problem. On the other hand, neither is our cause to be advanced by virtue of snappy one-liners from our governor, "Not a case of how much, but for what?" Now, he knew that was a 'tautology'.

In respect to my reference to the "often-demonized sales tax", let me make one thing perfectly clear as a

former president would preface statements (before being demonized himself) -- it would seem that there is no other proposition more likely to enrage Oregonians, poor or rich, labor or business community, native or foreign-born, right-winger or liberal, educated or illiterate. 'But-let-me-say-this' (in the manner of politicians who are quick to hedge their bets after making a particularly forthright statement), in all probability it will be the concept of a state-wide sales tax dedicated to education which will win out over all the other proposals being thrown in the hopper.

As regressive and unfair a burden to the poor as it is said to be, nevertheless this proposition probably will pass muster because in the experience of most states the process soon becomes ignored if not painless to most tax-payers; more of a nuisance than anything to customer and vendor alike (sort of like bridge tolls -- one year becomes decades.)

The question of an over-burdened taxpayer has prompted a related

comment from several readers. And it is a concept to which I have given considerable thought over the years. That is, "the only person who actually pays any taxes is the wage earner, the shopper and those who own their places of residence. All others the store owner, the processors, the manufacturers and the landlords treat their taxes as part of the cost of doing business and pass them on to the consumer. They pay only when consumers themselves. This consideration quite often arises when people are discussing school funding and someone advances a new proposition for taxing business and industry. Cries of frustration are evoked when it becomes obvious that there are definite constraints to be taken into account here. "In the end 'we' will pay, or, horrors, we may drive firms out of the state."

At this time there are spirited discussions going on concerning a possible increase in the Oregon State Income Tax with a dedicated percentage "reserved" for education. This brings up an interesting question; just how do you go about "dedicating" or reserving monies for a particular purpose. We all are aware of the constantly expanding definition of "Economic Development"-- sheer genius involved in these politicized semantics.

One reader (I think serious) suggests that the licenses for casino gambling by the Indians be revoked and that this lucrative revenue be exclusively funneled into a "State Education Fund". Others loudly resent the "short-term", multi million dollar school bail out by the Mayor of Portland. And there are those who object to putting a "short-term bite" on local industry.

The many seem unwilling to accept less than region-wide, long-term solutions -- and call for more studies, more focus groups, more think tanks. Perhaps we can get "Pogo" to educate our kids. Or industry, itself.



By Professor McKinley Burt

Vantage Point: The People's Lawyer

The first two weeks of April have been difficult times for Black America.

Within a span of ten days the Black Nation was rocked by the loss of three of its finest sons: Ronald H. Brown, Carl B. Stokes, and W. Haywood Burns, perhaps, the least well known of these outstanding figures, but a man who made and incredible mark within the civil rights/human rights and progressive movement in this country and the world.

I first became aware of Haywood Burns in the late 60's. I kept hearing about these bad attorney brothers named Lennox Hinds, Haywood Burns and Victor Goode who were at

the service of the Black liberation movement, counseling brothers and sisters on how to use the law as a weapon in the struggle for social change and defending Black freedom fighters and political prisoners against the intimidation and repression of the U.S. government. I subsequently learned that these brothers were a part of an organization that viewed itself as the "legal arm of the Black Revolution," the National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL). These brothers, and there were many sisters among them too, had chosen to use their legal skills and talents to serve the people.

On April 2, 1996 W. Haywood

Burns was killed in a tragic accident in his beloved South Africa along with Shinara Gilbert another NCBL stalwart. They were attending a conference on democracy and the law in South Africa. On April 8, thousands gathered at the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church to mourn the passing of a man that Dr. Calvin O. Butts, pastor of Abyssinian, eulogized as the "people's lawyer." The outpouring of people, their tributes, love and affection was a living testimony to the legacy of a human being, a son of Africa who had made his mark with and on behalf of African people and oppressed humanity.

As a young up and coming lawyer who graduated with honors from Harvard College and earned a law degree from Yale, Haywood Burns could easily have chosen to simply be a "successful" member of the Black bourgeoisie. True to the teachings of one of his African heroes, Amilcar Cabral, however, Haywood made a conscious decision to "return to the source," to immerse himself in the struggles of a battered and oppressed people, to be an instrument of human

liberation.

Quickly recognized as a young man with an agile legal mind and exceptional commitment to the struggle for social justice and social change, he was called upon to serve as the Assistant Counsel to the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and he later went on to become general counsel to Martin Luther King's Poor People's Campaign. Convinced that the Black Freedom Struggle urgently needed cadres of committed Black Freedom Struggle Black attorneys to develop offensive and defensive legal strategies to advance the civil rights/human rights movement, Haywood Burns was one of the founders of the National Conference of Black Lawyers in 1969, and served as its first Director. He later became the first African American President of the National Lawyers Guild, an organization of radical, progressive lawyers and activists who mobilized hundreds of lawyers to go to Mississippi as a part of the Freedom Summer in 1964 to challenge southern apartheid.

Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

Affirmative Action Update

BY FREDERICK E. JORDAN, CHAIR, CALIFORNIA BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Affirmative action supporters "waiting to exhale", had been warned not to wait as the anti-affirmative action California Civil Rights Initiative signature drive brought in an astounding 1.1 million signatures, more than enough to put the issue on the ballot. Then on March 7, 1996, President Clinton gave supporters a "heart flutter" by announcing a 3 year moratorium on the Federal set-aside program that brought the Congressional Black Caucus immediately to the White House. "That was a mischaracterization" according to White House Public Liaison Director, Alexis Herman, an African American, attesting to the President's commitment to affirmative action. The President was in the Middle East. The SBA has approximately 634 firms on the set-aside program in California in an attempt to provide entry in business areas that minorities and women have been excluded from in the past.

Meanwhile, in California, Assemblywoman Marilyn Brewer (R, Irvine) introduced AB-3307 (293 pages) which abolishes Affirmative Action in state procurement for minorities and women (not disabled vets) under the guise of State Procurement Reform Revisions. Assembly Committee hearing was set for April 23, 1996 at 9:00 a.m., State Capital, Room #447, Sacramento, CA. The California Business Council

for Equal Opportunity (CBCEO) has indicated concern over the popularity of reform revisions among Republicans and Democrats alike as it prepares to testify against the bill. However, Senator Richard Polanco, Senate Minority Leader, on the other hand has introduced SB286, California Procurement Act, which will retain affirmative action and small business provisions currently in place, but make other changes.

CBCEO is also preparing to testify against the Senate confirmation of Peter Stamison, who has been nominated as Director of the California Department of General Services. The hearing on Stamison, who is considered the mastermind of AB-3307, was set for April 15, 1996 at 1:30 p.m., in Room #113 of the State Capital. Recently, Senator Ray Haynes, (R, Chico) and ACA10, Kopp, (I, San Francisco) deleting affirmative action from contracting, employment and education. A hearing date has not been set.

Governor Pete Wilson also became outraged when asked by the media if his appointment to the State Supreme court of Appellate Court Judge Janice Rogers Brown, an African American, was an example of affirmative action. Those who know Justice Brown say the Governor may be surprised that he will get a bright, fair and competent judge with a sense of personal integrity and not the likes of a Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas or U.C. Regent Ward Connerly.

If you have "sugar" you have diabetes.



Phylcia Rashad, Honorary Spokesperson African American Program

I want you to know that diabetes is serious and life threatening. If left unchecked, diabetes can cause blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, foot and leg amputations...even early death.

But there's hope. By eating smart, exercising and taking the right medicine, you can control this serious disease.

Take charge of your diabetes. Call the American Diabetes Association today.

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