

EDITORIAL

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Reflect Or Represent The Views Of
The Portland Observer

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Reform or repeal?

Letter to the Editor:

The Congressional Welfare "Reform" Bill signed into law by President Clinton is really Welfare repeal. The bill wipes out the 61 year old safety net of federal aid to adults and children left behind by the capitalist system. The feds will now send a few dollars, with no mandate that they be used for welfare benefits, to financially strapped states that may or may not use the money fairly and wisely. Meanwhile the real welfare queens, multi-national corporations, make off with billions of tax dollars through loopholes, subsidies and giveaways.

The bill pushes millions of women with small children into subsidized minimum wage jobs so far below the poverty level that they'd still qualify for food stamps if the bill didn't cut them off after three months. In Oregon, for example, the "Jobs Plus" Program will pick up the tab for minimum wages, social security, unemployment insurance, and Workers' Compensation premiums for six months. The employer gets free labor and is not obligated to move the person to an unsubsidized job when the six

months ends. He could simply replace that person with another free worker.

This appalling creation of an unskilled, subsidized work force has nothing to do with "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity" as the bill's title states. It is union-busting, intended to undercut organized labor. Welfare recipients are temporarily unemployed workers who seldom need assistance for more than a couple of years. Unions should join them in demanding an end to the corporate welfare state and to protest this sham. Welfare funding should be used for genuine job training, education programs and childcare, so welfare recipients can apply for living wage jobs when they re-enter the workforce.

Add the Welfare Bill to the list of anti-worker legislation brought to us by the Democrats and Republicans, who already gave us NAFTA and GATT. It's time for all workers and our unions to join the newly formed Labor Party and fight back against the twin parties of big business.

Sincerely, Marjorie Sandoz

Oregon Athletic Club

Letter to the Editor:

Hope all is going well for you; I can definitely see your touch in the Observer! Though I'm sure you're not a bit short of news or features, I've come across something that may be of interest, particularly to East Portland.

Oregon Athletic Club, virtually across the street from Madison High School has a very interesting background as well as being extremely

valuable to young athletes today. It is home to Cobra Wrestling and draws hopefuls to its annual camp from all over the U.S. It also has one of the three largest indoor swimming pools in Oregon and is often used by local youth swim teams for practice and coaching.

The owner, Marc Sprague (ph: 254-5546) is very accessible and has had the club for about 25 years.

On January 7, 1995, Reverend Jesse Jackson and the National Rainbow Coalition struck the first blow of resistance to the brand-new Gingrich Congress.

Think back to those heady days for the right-wing extremists: President Clinton was in retreat; the media was in the thrall of the new leader of the House, Newt Gingrich, who had ridden a supposed tidal wave of right-wing support into power. Progressives were despondent, Democrats were depressed, and the Contract On America was Newt's blueprint for a conservative counter-revolution.

Jesse Jackson at that point did what he always does--he fought back. The Rainbow called a meeting of our progressive allies to plan our resistance--NOW, labor, students, the NEA, environmentalists, church leaders, Latino activists, gay and lesbian groups, Asian and Native American Leaders.

In the midst of progressive despair, the Rainbow released a state-

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Part-way home

ment which expressed our refusal to go quietly into that dark night:

"This season of hostility and retreat from American values... will be short-lived and resisted. We've come together this weekend, we've gathered, we've caucused, we've listened to each other... We've discussed legislative, legal, grassroots, electoral, public education and media strategies.

"We have analyzed the Republican contract. At its core, it is a statement to Americans that--in the new global economy--they are on their own.

"At a time when corporations are tearing up the old contract to pro-

vide secure jobs, with decent wages, health care and pensions; at a time when American workers need a level playing field, and watch as corporations ship jobs rather than goods abroad; at a time when the economy is growing, but wages are declining, and poverty and hunger are spreading--radical conservatives say government can do little but give more tax breaks to the corporations and the wealthiest Americans.

"This is not acceptable, and will be resisted... Let us begin by targeting 50 Congressional districts--and organize to register people to vote, educate them on what their vote means, and mobilize them to vote. If

each of us act in a coordinated fashion, we can make certain that radical conservatives experience the term limits they promised but will not pass...

"There was no tidal wave; it was that our walls were low."

Fast forward to 11/96. Thanks to the work of all our allies, president Clinton has been re-elected, the first Democrat since FDR to win the honor.

The Contract On America has been torn up by the voters, and the chief contractor spent the last 3 months of the election in hiding.

And though Newt Gingrich did manage to cling to his majority by a very slim vote in 10 toss-up districts, his margin of control has been cut in half, his mandate has been repealed, and the voters have told the right-wing extremists to behave like adults.

While we did not get all the way home on Tuesday, we did fight back hard enough to get part-way there. Let us never forget that. Partial victories count, too.

perspective

More steps beyond the net

As we wind up this "NET and Cyberspace" series (for now), I am gratified to see that a number of parents and students remember that I was out there early on with some valuable information which others are only now revealing.

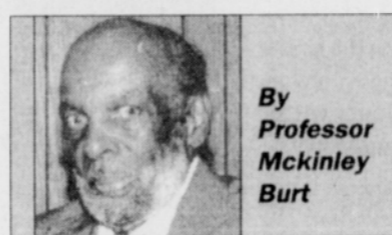
In the same vein, a reader remembers that "about 12 years ago you did a program on channel 12 featuring the 'Empire Style of Furniture' described in last week's article - Jackie Kennedy installed it in the Red Room at the White House.

And you displayed an 'Empire Style' chair that had been sent over by the furniture department of the Meier and Frank store. We were fortunate enough to get a copy of the tape from the station and now show it to our grandchildren (and neighbors)."

This African style of furniture and dress that Napoleon's Egyptian expedition brought back to Europe was paralleled in its impact on the world by the Scientific and mathematical knowledge recovered--A second 'renaissance': projective geometry, the "golden section", Fibonacci series, geometric city planning, astronomy, etc. (see Tompkins, "Secrets of the Great Pyramids", Harper & Row).

In the particular case of the "empire Style" furniture (the same as later found in King Tut's Tomb), Napoleon's expedition crew (looters) which included scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, artists and surveyors, also brought back

4000 year-old examples of African tools and technology--specifically, the wood-turning lathe and the mortise and tenon joint. Illustrations of the Egyptian technology may be seen in editions of, Furniture In The Mod-



By
Professor
McKinley
Burt

ern world."

I am taking more space than planned for this segment but had a much larger response than expected--especially from the Bend and Ashland areas where I have had loyal readers since the 1970's when I did Black History workshops there as part of the U.S. Forest Service multicultural programs. Some of the schools and curriculums in these areas are further advanced than Portland's--to the surprise of many.

Let me give several other citations for general interest or for those preparing lesson plans, "The New Encyclopedia of Furniture", Joseph Aronson, Crown, 1967; "The Art of Furniture: 5000 years of Furniture and Interiors," Ole Wanscher, Reinhold, 1988. This latter book has photographs of the advanced African designs we call "modern"--folding chairs, chaise lounges, intricate cabinetry, woven seats, gold leaf overlay, ivory inlay, etc., most 5000 years old (Tut Exhibit).

And we find this relevant comment on page 7 of, *Egypt the Black Land*, Paul Jordan, E.P. Dutton, 1976: "In encumbering his forces with this body of serious scholars, Napoleon was harnessing the aims of the late eighteenth century philosophers and scientists... who wanted to rationalize all human knowledge" (and expand the new Louvre Museum).

It would be appropriate at this point to comment on what I referred to several weeks ago as "problem area" in my attempts to get an advanced technology into the Portland system. In this case Benson High School, and then later OMSI.

I still could shed tears of exasperation as I examine here my files from an 8/22/85 presentation to a Benson staff of a principal, two vice principals and a 'Desegregation Specialist'.

This project was different from my 15 year-old computer/terminals on line system I still was trying to get the superintendent's or curriculum offices to try. Since Benson was a vocational or technical high school it occurred to me that the alleged "lack of motivation and other learning problems of black students" might well be addressed by introducing learning models structured around documented evidence of black contribution to technology from day one (e.g. the African manufacture).

In addition I had gotten the local manufacturer of flood gauges and other stream measuring devices to furnish such devices for demonstra-

tion to students--along with company manuals and illustrations to the effect that these instruments such as the nilometer were "invented by Africans along the Nile River thousands of years ago... some, almost in original form, used today by the U.S. Corp. of Engineers, Bonneville Power, and operators of dams, canals and waterworks around the world."

Several of the devices lent themselves to modeling in a high school shop, according to the manufacturer and I had persuaded the U.S. Forest Service to purchase some of any production. Well, every one grinned and congratulated me on a "masterful presentation" and advised, "sounds good, we'll get back to you" (is it racism or fear?).

Let us see. That was at 10:00 A.M., 8/22/85. It is now 1:30 P.M., 11/8/96. Have you heard from these, people. I haven't. However, I later got two African American Benson students involved in a summer intern, health technology program that I designed and implemented at Providence Medical Center.

I ran out of money and time before I got a full-blown program going as with the medical program I brought to Portland State University in 1974, but that was H.E.W. funded. I've got a good learning curve going now with some alternatives to broad-based community support for my designs in education and technology.

This is a tough community, perhaps concentrating more on other cultures will help. Ideas?

Texaco, racism and affirmative action

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

The recent revelations about Texaco Oil Company employees make the case for the continuing need for affirmative action.

Although that was far from the intent of those involved. It seems that a secretly taped conversation revealed racist language and illegal behavior regarding a Federal lawsuit brought by minority employees of Texaco. Like the Rodney King videotape, these tapes show racism in America during those unguarded moments that prove for people of color what we had known all along.

As California voters went to the polls and voted for Proposition 209, to end affirmative action programs in the state of California, they were faced with the news story which showed Texaco upper echelon employees shredding documents which would have implicated their company in the suit brought by some 1,500

minority employees of that company.

These employees charge that Texaco systematically discriminates against its minority employees and that the company fosters an atmosphere of racial hostility. In tapes which they did not realize were being made, the former treasurer of the company, along with other high-level employees, call African Americans "black jelly beans" and "niggers," proving that behind many closed doors of corporate America, racism is still acceptable behavior.

The suit by minority employees of Texaco contends that they were systematically passed over for promotions in favor of less experienced whites. In the secret tapes, one official says, "This diversity thing, you know, how all the black jelly beans agree." Another official agrees, adding, "that's funny. All the black jelly beans seem to be glued to the bottom of the bag."

The suit also charges that Texaco fostered a racially hostile environment, saying that they were called "uppity" for asking questions and charging that black employees were called "orangutans" and "porch monkeys." At least one African American Texaco employee, upon hearing the tapes, said, "It sounds like a Klan meeting, and nobody seemed to object to what everybody was saying."

That may be one of the most troubling aspects of this case -- that no one else in the room objected to such racist language and to racist and illegal behavior. But it is important to note that Texaco is not alone in allowing such language and attitudes to exist in the workplace. While other corporations might not have gotten caught, there are many minority employees who have had similar experiences in other companies.

Which is exactly the reason why affirmative action is still needed. Despite arguments to the contrary,

people of color and women are still underrepresented in corporate board rooms and work rooms. Women and people of color still hit that imaginary glass ceiling in every industry and still find it difficult to start and operate their own businesses.

Unfortunately, too many Americans have fallen for the line that we don't need affirmative action any longer. Too many have believed that quick fixes have cured 500 years of discrimination and racism. Too many have been willing to listen to the stories of white men who have claim to have lost contracts or jobs without listening to the thousands of people of color who have been and continue to be discriminated against in the workplace.

Maybe these Texaco tapes will be a wake-up call for us all. Because those of us in states other than California can expect that attacks on affirmative action will soon be playing in our own communities.

United ways makes progress through media

Letter to the Editor

The goal this year for your local United Way is to raise more than the \$19.2 million we raised last year. With the assistance of donors and volunteers, I believe we can achieve this goal.

Thanks to the efforts of Portland Observer, United Way is getting its message out into the community. Be-

cause of your involvement, your readers are more familiar with us than they may have been before. We've been able to show the community how its donations can make a difference in many lives. When everyone gives through United Way, more individuals and families can be helped.

The dollars raised support 170 programs, including Mainstream

Youth Program, Inc., which provides treatment and education for alcohol- and drug-related problems; Bradley-Angle House's Emergency Shelter Program, offering women and children short-term shelter from abuse, support, and a 24-hour crisis line; The Salvation Army Rose Center for Seniors, which encourages senior adults to be active in the com-

munity; and many more.

Thank you for your continued support and for all you have done to help change people's lives. As always, we'll do our very best to make sure every dollar you give counts and goes where it's needed most.

Sincerely, Richard L. Woolworth,
1996 United Way Campaign
Chairman