

EDITORIAL

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Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
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To the editor:

I read with interest today's Oregonian story about the Port of Portland dumping de-icing chemicals in to the Columbia slough. The fact is, there are over 72,000 chemicals on the market today and citizens only have the right to information on less than one percent of those chemicals.

"The Community Right to Know Act" is the best source of publicly available information on the release of toxic chemicals into the environment. Unfortunately, it is the woefully inadequate. Right now the EPA has opened a public comment period for citizens to urge their support for expanding the public's right to know. Citizens have the right to know about toxins--encourage the EPA to strengthen these laws by writing to: U.S. EPA, 401 M St. SW, Washington, D.C. 20460 RE: Proposed Rule (OPPTS docket #400106).

We pause to give thanks for the many ways in which we have been blessed. Much has happened since last Thanksgiving for which we are thankful:

- Jesse Jackson, Jr., won his Democratic primary election almost exactly one year ago, just after Thanksgiving in 1995. Two weeks later, he won his seat in congress by a landslide, a pattern he duplicated earlier this month, when he received the 5th-highest vote of any Congressional Democrat.

- The National Rainbow Coalition and PUSH agreed to merge into one organization, the Rainbow/PUSH Action Network. The new Rainbow/PUSH will continue the economic and political struggles of its two parent organizations, in the civil rights/social justice tradition. It will be headquartered at Dr. King's

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION Giving Thanks

workshop in Chicago, with a bureau in Washington, D.C.

- President Clinton defeated Bob Dole, preventing a complete right-wing takeover of the Federal government. The President won in 1996 the same way he did in 1992--with the votes of women, African Americans, and Latino/Hispanics. 1/4 of Bill Clinton's vote came from African

Americans and Latino/Hispanics.

- Though overall voter turnout was down in 1996, Black & Brown turnout share was up substantially, from 1/9 to 1/7 of the electorate! The African American share of the vote increased by 25%, from 8% in 1992 to 10% this year, while Latino/Hispanics increased their share of the electorate from 3% to 4%. Our voter

mobilization efforts in the fall season made a difference.

- House Speaker Newt Gingrich lost half his margin of control, barely hanging onto his power by only 20,000 votes. In addition, the voters clearly rejected the spirit of the Contract on America, and repudiated the right wing's "government shutdown" agenda.

- In response to our boycott, employee lawsuits, and public outrage, Texaco was forced to settle its suit with 1,500 African American employees who had faced corporate discrimination.

- In response to the pickets of NOW and the Rainbow/Push Action Network, Mitsubishi was forced to hire former Labor Secretary Lynn Martin to begin the process of diversifying its workforce and opening up the corporation.

per se

The more things change the more they stay the same

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study has been concluded and some things have not changed.

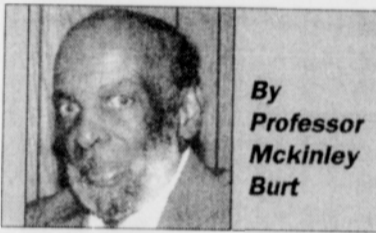
In average scores for students who have eight years of schooling, the United States ranks 18th in mathematics and 11th in science. The result was neither surprising nor unexpected by many educators.

This study was the most rigorous and comprehensive ever conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. What was surprising to many was that among the many higher-ranking nations, Japanese children watch as much television as American children and that American eighth-graders get more homework and spend more time in class than students in Germany and Japan.

It has been some time, now, since that highly-publicized "National Governor's Conference on Education". And in the interim there have been any number of high-profile gatherings with the announced goal of attaining international parity for America's education systems--and then moving on to various "Year 2000" versions of world leadership

in mathematics and the sciences.

None of these optimistic and laudable objectives have been attained, nor is there any indication of change in the near future. The present situation is highlighted by opinions voiced by officials like Norma Paulus, Oregon's State Superintendent of Education: "The business leaders understand that the greatest threat to this country is that we do not have a skilled, literate work force."



By Professor McKinley Burt

What else is new? How many decades has it been since that Catholic priest shocked our complacency with "Why Johnny Can't Read?"... to be followed on over ten years later with "Why Johnny Still Can't Read." And it was 25 years ago in 1971 when Charles E. Silberman hit us with his "Crisis in the Classroom: the Remaking of American Education." I found the latter book most notable for its attempt to reform the reformers [of education].

Silberman seems at his best when

he assesses the Madison Avenue Kind of hyperbole that heralded the introduction of C.A.I., the magic wand, Computer-Assisted-Instruction, guaranteed to make both teaching and learning effortless (keep in mind that this was over 25 years ago). Dr. Stolorow of Harvard said, "CAI is comparable to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in terms of the 'potential' effect it will have upon education."

Professor Patrick Suppes of Stanford was not to be surpassed in this rhetorical contest "one can predict that in a few years millions of school children will have access to what Phillip of Macedonia's son Alexander enjoyed as a royal prerogative: the personal services of a tutor as well-informed and responsive as Aristotle." So help me, readers, that's what the man said. "Computer Assisted Instruction was likened to a 'second coming'.

I bet I know what you're thinking, that there is something very familiar about all this rhetoric and hype. And for some, that light bulb will suddenly flash on as in the comic strips.

Apercu! I've got it, The net, of course! All the world, heaven and earth, man and beast, science and society will flow through the copper

strands of the web and into our schools, our homes and our children's brains.

And this inspired vision of the MIT Communications Lab is expected to do what computer Assisted Instruction did not, what thousands of beleaguered school systems could not, and what hundreds of thousands of harried teachers could not do.... substitute and electronic information systems for effective teaching and curriculum design, and make it work.

I wouldn't anticipate any reforms of the reforms in the near future. A classroom teacher of long acquaintance has just faxed me a copy of an article in the Oregonian this past Nov. 12; "Oregon's Future Teachers Will Teach A Variety of Subjects At One Level" The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission says "The goal for next century is to have classes taught by teachers from various backgrounds... team teaching, instead of being endorsed to teach a particular subject, teachers will be endorsed to teach at a certain level, ranging from early childhood to high school."

My friend wonders how this process will mesh with the new Academic Standards, Year 2000 plan. We all do. Everything seems to get up and walk away.

In memory of the children

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Two heart-wrenching stories, 500 miles apart. Different stories, but the same outcome. Different mothers and children and the same pathos. It's hard, really, to find words to convey the sadness which attends both these stories, however little we will ever know of them.

In October, the color picture of the family was on front page of the Cleveland Plain Dealer. A handsome African American family: the mother, her five and two year-old sons and twin 14-month old daughters. The mother and all but the five year-old were found dead in their rented house in Lorain, outside of Cleveland. All of those who were found dead had been shot and the five year-old was in critical condition from smoke inhalation. The family had been found when firefighters responded to the fire which was raging in the front of

the house.

At first it seemed unclear what had happened to that family. Why was the five year-old not shot? Had someone come into their home, even though all the doors and windows were locked? How had the fire started and was it to cover up the deaths?

It seems now that the mother, 31 year-old Tina Jackson, shot her own children, then set fire to the house and then, finally, shot herself with a stolen semi-automatic handgun. The gun powder found on the mother's hand and the testimony of the recovering child was that no one else was in the house to make the unthinkable seem thinkable.

What happened to force the mother whom others say was devoted to her children kill them? Tina Jackson and her family were scheduled to be evicted from their home that day, but they had secured other housing nearby. She was a single mother and her

children all had different fathers, but at least one father had supervised visits with his son and carried him on his health insurance policy. He was the son who survived this horrible ideal and who is now living with his father. And why didn't Trina Jackson shoot him as well?

The firefighters who found the family, most of whom are fathers themselves, had to undergo counseling. They brought presents to the hospital to the recovering child. They will carry with them always the vision of a family destroyed for reasons we'll probably never know.

And now, the story of a mother in the Bronx who threw her three children, seven year-old twins and a two year-old, off a 14-story building and then jumped herself. The 23 year-old mother, Chicqua Roveal, and one twin are dead. The other children are in very critical condition.

Another mystery of why a mother

would be so desperate that she would try to kill her children and then end her own life. Her friends say she was a good mother, who did not use drugs and who dressed her children carefully for school.

A single mother and a foster child herself, she has recently allowed her own mother, just released from prison, to come and live with her family. This new arrangement did not seem to be working out well. But was murder and suicide the only solution she thought possible?

Laurence Bates, Sr., the father of surviving son in Ohio said he hoped for a normal childhood for his son now, one of falling off bikes and going to school like all the rest of the children. I pray for that future for Laurence, Jr. as well. And for the Roveal children in New York. And I weep for those mothers who felt they had no where to turn and, thus, turned on themselves and their families.

Along the color line: Beyond Liberalism

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

residential Politics, Race and the 1996 Election: Beyond Liberalism.

The 1996 electoral campaign which reelected both incumbent President Bill Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress was, by all estimates, the most boring contest in recent memory. Millions of voters stayed home on election day. Public opinion polls indicated a deep distrust of both Clinton and Dole, and a strong desire for a real alternative in politics. Television ratings for the two presidential debates were the lowest ever recorded.

Clinton's reelection was greatly assisted by a relatively strong domestic economy. Since January, 1993, 10.7 million new jobs were created in the U.S.--although millions of them were located in the service sector or at low to minimum

wages. Corporate profits and the stock market soared under Clinton, so business was not dissatisfied with the political stalemate between a Democratic President and a Republican Congress.

The failure of the Democrats to win majorities in the Senate and House was also not surprising. In most of the major presidential land-slides since World War II, usually the winning candidate's party achieves modest legislative gains, if at all.

The major reason that the Republicans performed below expectations was the reality of the gender and racial gap between the two major parties. White males generally split their votes evenly between Dole and Clinton. White women, by contrast, voted for Clinton by at least a 15 percent margin. Dole's rejection of reproductive rights, family leave,

affirmative action and other conservative policies alienated millions of working women. African Americans in record numbers also rejected the Dole-Kemp ticket. At the beginning of the campaign, Republican officials believed that they might win at least 15 percent of the total black vote. Colin Powell remains a popular figure among many African Americans, and his decision to become a Republican was viewed as a hopeful sign.

Jack Kemp's selection as the Vice Presidential candidate was also widely praised, due to his reputation as a defender of affirmative action and his advocacy of a more racially inclusive Republican Party. Back in 1992, even George Bush was able to take 10 percent of the national black vote: there seemed no where to go but up.

There were several problems with

the GOP's black strategy. First, Dole and Kemp opportunistically repudiated their own moderate records on civil rights and affirmative action in the campaign. The Republicans' "Contract for America," the ultra right blueprint of congressional conservatives led by Newt Gingrich, was widely opposed by African Americans, Latinos, labor and other liberal constituencies.

The Dole-Gingrich philosophy of smaller government, reductions in education and health care, and no support for urban policy and employment initiatives, directly contradicted blacks' interests.

Although Kemp scheduled public appearances in Harlem and other black communities, the Republican ticket placed virtually no advertisements in black media, such as Black Entertainment Television.

Conversely, Clinton was able to

emphasize his close and cordial relationships with African-American voters. His roots in Arkansas were readily apparent whenever he visited a black church, or when he addressed the Congressional Black Caucus weekend in September.

Clinton understands the language and culture of African Americans, and appears personally comfortable around black people. Despite their disappointment with many of his policies, African Americans made the realistic judgment that Clinton and the Democrats were clearly the best of the available alternatives.

Finally, Clinton won the overwhelming support of the black economic and political establishment: the Congressional Black Caucus, NAACP, black elected officials, executives and public administrators, and the growing African-American professional and managerial class.

Ideologically, much of this group interpreted Clinton's policies as being in harmony with its own moderately liberal agenda: working for reforms within the political system, liberalizing capitalism by increasing black business sub-contracts and by expanding the percentages of blacks in management, cultural integration into the mainstream of white America.

The essential contradiction for the black elite is that neither Clinton nor the Republicans really favor a change in the racial status quo. Under Clinton's administration, blacks will undoubtedly have representatives at the table. But on a range of substantive issues affecting the lives of millions of working class and impoverished African Americans--on welfare, health care, urban renewal, etc.--Clinton's victory changes little to nothing.