



Opinion

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Federal Compassion Equals Common Sense

By HUGH B. PRICE, PRESIDENT NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

Seeking to reshape the federal government according to the dictates of his "compassionate conservatism," President Bush presented his first budget to the American people during his unofficial State of the Union address.

He sought to convince the public that federal compassion can be achieved through his plans for fiscal conservatism. But the numbers don't add up.

The President's demeanor and tone was soothing, sometimes even jocular, and not strident. That in itself is a welcome relief from the virulent partisanship and "gotcha politics" of the 1990s.

I was encouraged when he reiterated his determination to improve the achievement levels of children who have been lagging behind academically.

I was glad that he recognized the need to extend health coverage to families that lack it. And I look forward to considering the plans he instructed Attorney General John Ashcroft to devise to combat the racial profiling of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans by police.

I trust that means that the two-year-long efforts of a board coalition including civil right and civil liberties group, and law enforcement organizations to help the Justice De-

partment devise police reforms will continue.

But President Bush's conservatism shone through as well and that quality is even more apparent in his budget plan.



Hugh B. Price

For one thing, he hasn't backed off proposing school vouchers, which would exacerbate, not resolve, the problems of the millions of school children most in need of educational help; and his budget proposes a smaller increase for education than even Congress envisioned.

For another, the President's health plan relies on private insurers to serve low-income families. That reliance gives it a very low chance of succeeding since private insurers have never shown any eagerness to serve low-income families.

There are several other areas of Mr. Bush's budget that are problematic. The most dramatic is his proposed \$1.6 trillion tax cut. This is a conser-

vative idea that's not going to work, and to try to make it work would be patently unfair at an individual and at a board scale; its mammoth size would sabotage efforts to improve conditions in impoverished communities for years to come.

The president's plan would benefit the wealthiest one percent of Americans who would snag 45 percent of the tax cut. Their average reduction would amount to \$50,000 annually, according to the Center for Tax Justice, a liberal research group.

The majority of Americans, that is, taxpayers in the lowest 60 percent of the income scale, would get between 12 and 13 percent of tax cuts and average an annual reduction of \$256, the organization said.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, another liberal think tank, says that, contrary to the Administration's claim that people with the smallest incomes will get the highest percentage of the reductions, 12 million families with 24 million children, one of every three children in the United States, would receive no tax reduction. About 75 percent of these are working families.

Not surprisingly, this unfairness would fall most heavily on people of color: about 55 percent of African-American children and 56 percent of Hispanic children live in families that would receive nothing from the proposed tax cut.

in families that would receive nothing from the proposed tax cut. A program that would produce those consequences must

be charged. The President should revise his tax plans to ensure that low-income working families benefit significantly.

Letter to the Editor: Black President Doubtful

Your recent article on a book by L.C. Oddie that claims that John Hanson, the first President of the U.S. Assembled was of Swedish and black descent! It would be wonderful if that were true, but a brief amount of re-

search on the Internet casts serious doubt to the claim. This claim has been made before. There are no photographs or daguerreotypes of President John Hanson: the process had not been invented by the time of his

death! The photo you show in your paper is from a painting.

I'm very anxious to read Mr. Oddie's book to see on what basis he constructs his argument.

Thank-you for your good work at the Portland Observer!

Kevin Kindschuh
Northeast Portland

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