OPINION

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BY DEDRICK MUHAMMAD

Administration jeopardizes Civil Rights gains

The Bush administration is pushing a dangerous agenda that will set back the gains of the Civil Rights movement for generations. It has been taken over by an extremist ideology referred to as neo-conservatism or for short, neo-con.

The name neo-con is misleading because there is nothing new or neo about this con.

Neo-cons put forth an agenda of less government to protect us (the average American) and more government to enrich themselves (the economic elite). Less government means dismantling laws that protect public health and more government means passing laws to help corporations and enacting massive tax cuts for the rich. These tax cuts have already taken over $3 trillion away from serving the American people.

The Conning of Black America

Military spending also is a masterful way of taking public funds, collected in taxes from the general population and funneled to multinational corporations.

The current effort to make Iraq into a U.S. gas station is a great case in point. Congress has approved $87 billion to rebuild Iraq. This is in addition to the $79 billion spent to date on the war. Politically well-connected companies are war profiteering off military contracts. CEO pay at defense contractors rose 79 percent from 2001 to 2002, compared with 6 percent raises at the average company. Their $5.4 million average pay was 577 times as much as the pay of Army privates in Iraq.

> *The American public has other ideas about how their money should be spent.*

When Americans think of defense spending, they think of money to ensure the safety of the general public. Now the question must be raised, have the billions of dollars spent on Iraq for national defense protected America?

The answer is clearly no. American soldiers are dying almost every day in Iraq. It has become clear that Iraq was never an imminent threat to the United States. The imminent threat is that the half-trillion dollar deficit will drain funds for basic social service programs. The imminent threat is Bush under-funding his No Child Left Behind Act, so that children will be left behind to the tune of $11 billion.

The imminent threat is that hundreds of thousands of students will receive less government help to go to college. The imminent threat is that 2 million jobs have been lost since 2001 and that Black unemployment is rising faster than at any time since the mid-1970s.

For the neo-cons, the suffering of the American people is irrelevant. They see subsidized healthcare, education, and Social Security as nothing but wasteful big government, obstacles to making bigger profits. Neo-cons want to con the American public out of these programs and limit government aid to only wealthy people and corporations.

The American public has other ideas about how their money should be spent. Seventy-six percent of Americans support overturning Bush's tax cuts for the rich in order to pay off the cost of the ill-advised war with Iraq.

Seventy-two percent oppose increasing the deficit to pay for this war, and 82 percent oppose cutting domestic programs. Yet Bush is ignoring the will of the American people in order to stay true to the con of the Neo-Conservatives, just as he ignored the will of the world in deciding to go to war with Iraq.

We AfricanAmericans are the constituency with the most to lose from this conning of America. We must be at the forefront of making America live up to its ideals. From the Homestead Act to the GI Bill, America has invested billions in making sure its citizens have the opportunity to attain a middle-class lifestyle. Just as America began to acknowledge Blacks as citizens, it is now pulling up the economic ladder that had been so readily available previously to white Americans.

Pouring funds into national defense and tax cuts for the rich will institutionalize the racial wealth gap for generations to come. If we follow the neo-conservative agenda, the U.S. will not be able to leave the legacy of racism behind. Black America must not fall victim to this con.

Dedrick Muhammad is the coordinator of the Racial Wealth Gap project at United for a Fair Economy, a group that raises awareness of the damaging consequences of concentrated wealth and power.

A Card to a Solider

BY BONNY P. LEE

One day Karen took the time
To make a card, she was only nine.
It was beautiful and she was glad.
It was going to the front line, to her dad.
On the envelope, this is what it read,
To My Dad, is all that it said.
Her mother was going to address it real soon.
But it got mixed up with other mail and was mailed at noon.
The postman said, "It must be for a soldier,"
He put it with the rest that he had sorted over.
Into a bag, then on a plane headed far, far from home,
The plane suddenly had to land because of a terrible storm.
Christmas was but one day away, what else could go wrong.
The mail crew followed a moaning sound,
And removed a soldier off of the ground.
The soldiers on the front line could sure use a good lift,
Along with this mail came a very special gift.
A card with a ribbon, addressed, To My Dad
On the front of the envelope, is all that it had.
The card was protected, on the inside it said,
Merry Christmas, I Love You Dad, is what it read.
Also, "I love you and miss you too" signed by "your darling wife Sue."
Hey! said the crew, let's just give it to him.
He has a little girl and her name is Karen.
When the soldier got the letter, all he could do was cry.
"Please for me," he said. "Tell my family good bye.
The rescue came too late for this one man?
And his card, he held tightly in his hand.
The reporter told this touching story.
All the mail was delivered and they gave God the glory.
In the dead soldier's pocket was a picture of two,
"We love you." it said, "from Karen and Sue."

Bonny P. Lee is a resident of northeast Portland.

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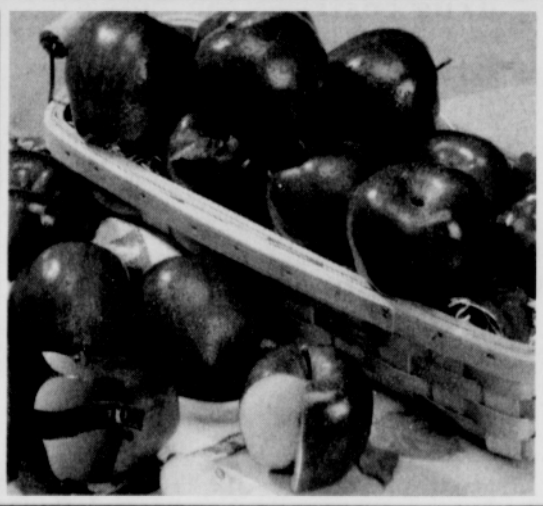

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