

BLACK HISTORY

"A RACE IS LIKE A MAN UNTIL IT USES ITS OWN TALENTS, TAKES PRIDE IN ITS OWN HISTORY, AND LOVES ITS OWN MEMORIES, IT CAN NEVER FULFILL ITSELF COMPLETELY."

JOHN W. VANDERCOOK



To Be Equal

The New Regionalism

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The ongoing war between the states — the Sunbelt vs. the Snowbelt — got a boost several weeks ago when a draft report of a Presidential Commission leaked to the press with some controversial suggestions about shifting urban policies.

The report suggested that instead of trying to stem the decline of older industrial cities, the government ought to assist people to leave them and look for jobs and opportunities in the Sunbelt.

Cities grow and decline, the report implies, and you can't alter the process. But the drafters of that report overlook the reasons why cities grow and decline, and a major reason is federal policy.

After World War II the government embarked on a number of vast programs ranging from road building to subsidized home mortgages, that encouraged the flow of people and jobs out of central cities.

So it is absurd to simply assume that the decline of major industrial cities is the unhampered result of market forces alone. Nor can we accept the assumption that because some of the industries that are economically important to older cities are in decline, other industries cannot take their place.

In a dynamic economy there ought to be enough economic growth and new job creation to satisfy the needs of people in all

regions. Growth in one region should not mean decline in another. The new regionalism pits one region against the other, when we all should be pulling together for our mutual good.

It would be economically disastrous to abandon our older cities. Aside from the human misery such a policy would engender, cities in the old industrial belt represent a massive investment in productive facilities and in an economic infrastructure that no society can afford to write off.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with policies that grant assistance to people to help them get a new start in regions where jobs may be more plentiful, such policies do not constitute an urban policy, and we need an urban policy a lot more than we need a migration policy.

If we start with some basics — that existing industrial cities represent many hundreds of billions of dollars of fixed investment; that they continue to house millions of people who constitute a skilled and willing workforce, and that their decline is temporary — we can go a long way toward developing rational policies.

Cities can be recycled and economic decline can be replaced by fresh growth. Policies that are carefully designed and sharply targeted can result in balanced growth for all regions, and a more ra-

tional use of national resources.

But it would be simplistic to assume that the Sunbelt's growth benefits all its inhabitants. The region's new growth has largely bypassed southern blacks, as unguided potential future growth may bypass northern minorities.

A Southern Regional Council study of racial economic differences in the South recently found that little has changed in the past thirty years. In 1950, black men in the region had an income only 58 per cent of that for white men. But in 1975, the black median income figure had dropped to 57 per cent of the white male income figure.

The study found that although black family income rose — from 56 per cent to 62 per cent of white family income — that gain amounts to less than a fourth of a percentage point each year.

So those "rich" states are still marked by black — and white — poverty. Meanwhile, declining industrial states are marked by mass joblessness among minorities and growing numbers of urban poor.

Blacks and poor people are getting the lion's share of economic decline and are frozen out of new economic growth. Continuation of unbalanced development and untargeted national resources will just make that situation worse.

John M. LANGSTON



From 1868 to 1895, some twenty-three Negroes served in Congress! From Virginia, John M. Langston had one term. As a result of pressure by enemies of political equality, most Negroes served short terms!

—Continental Features

Black Children Becoming An Endangered Species

By Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins

Black children in this nation are becoming an endangered species.

Their chances of surviving to productive adulthood was slim next to none as described by then President John F. Kennedy in a televised speech June 11, 1963:

"The Negro baby born in America today... has about one-half as much chance of completing high school as a white baby born in the same place on the same day, one-third as much chance of completing college, one-third as much chance of becoming a professional man, twice as much chance of becoming unemployed, about one-seventh as much chance of earning \$10,000 a year, a life expectancy which is seven years shorter, and the prospects of earning only half as much."

The situation today is not much better, and in fact in some instances an element of great crisis exists.

We've heard often enough about the deplorable state of unemployment for black youth. However, the major factors leading to a lifetime of unemployment are more dangerous than we have any notion of and require immediate resolve now. Picture in your mind an average black youth who may be lucky enough to graduate from high school next June. Picture also the pitfalls facing these youth who try to remain in school where in terms of schools suspensions — they will be suspended at twice the rate of white children.

School programs for the mentally retarded are more likely to be over-represented by black students than white. In some states the rate for blacks is more than three times the rate for whites, because of the inappropriate labeling of blacks as being "mentally retarded."

Even in the instance of high school

graduation — those blacks that graduate have vivid memories of some thirty to fifty per cent of their classmates who dropped out, thereby removing themselves from any potential possibility of becoming productive citizens.

Of equal magnitude in the fight to compete is the abysmal factor that a black youth who has attended college, has the same unemployment rate as a white high school dropout.

Attempting to look at a less disquieting side, it may be that those that somehow make it to, and through, high school are relatively lucky after all.

Those that experience less luck are clearly pushed up against the wall for survival.

If, for example, a black baby can live to be a year old, he or she may live to enter elementary school. If not, then he or she may become part of the statistic that says that black babies are twice as likely to die than are white babies — within the first year of their lives.

Essentially, health care for black children is dimly inadequate and is likely to remain so.

Then there is the most evil of all the forces rallied against the black child's survival — Poverty!

Most black children live in families that can barely eke out an existence. To be more exact, 42 per cent of all black children live in families with total incomes below the poverty line. Living in such families, black children become innocent victims of all of the inadequacies of bad housing, bad education, and bad health care delivery.

They are also victimized by the tremendous economic deprivation that keeps their family members continually unemployed or

underemployed.

What I've painted is quite a bleak picture. But it is a realistic one. It must be viewed realistically, in light of the announced intention of some members of the incoming Administration and some members of Congress to cut heavily into social programs, in order to increase defense appropriations, and to balance the Federal budget.

On their projected chopping block will be many programs which I deem to be essential to the future lives of poor black children: programs dealing with elementary and secondary education, vocational education, headstart, early-childhood education efforts, child health care and maternal care projects, and food and child nutrition programs.

But there are also those of us in the Federal legislature, and in organized group-thoughtout: the country that have placed the welfare of black children as a top priority on our collective agendas. We intend to keep that agenda and its priorities well-focused, and will do severe battle with anyone who has determined that issues will only be concerned with guns — and not butter this time around.

In President Johnson's tenure of office, the policy was guns (for the Vietnam War), and butter.

Times have changed; economic circumstances are desperate for far too many people. With this in mind, the issue today is butter! Which requires that those of us that can influence government policy, make this issue programmatically realistic in terms of more jobs, more and better housing, more effective health care, and better educational programs. In other words, we need to put the butter back on the table.

Affirmative Action:

Reagan, Plant Closings, and Blacks

By Gerald C. Horne, Esquire

As the reign of Ronald Reagan begins, it becomes increasingly clear that the cry for "Jobs" must be heightened by the black community.

This is so because those who propelled the former host of "Death Valley Days" to power have no interest in alleviating the economic crisis dogging the black community.

In fact, Reagan's backers — despite their rhetoric about "putting America to work" — have been shutting down plants at a record rate.

In Reagan's home state of California, whose corporate big-wigs have bank-rolled his political efforts, 72,000 workers in 251 plants permanently lost their jobs through plant closings in 1980.

There is a clear affirmative action angle to this, as study after study has shown that plant closings disproportionately affect black workers. For example, the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, detailed how many of the closings affected highly unionized industries — e.g., auto and steel — where the black labor force was significant. Indeed, this study demonstrated how some plants close to avoid equal employment opportunity laws.

This study also exploded the myth that plants are closed because they are no longer profitable. To the contrary, because of the perverse operations of tax laws, corporations make financial killings by padlocking the gate and throwing thousands out of work. Professor Harry Brill of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, in a seminal article in the journal *Progressive*, demonstrated how U.S. Steel, Bethlehem Steel and other behemoths have enjoyed record breaking years for profits at the same time they were closing down plants right and left. The so-called "abandonment loss deduction" allows these monopolies to write-off from its taxable income various accounting losses, which involve no cash outlay, e.g., the entire cost of land, equipment and plant, "good will" and "reputation" of the business, etc. Such deductions are usually stretched out over an extended time period but a sudden plant closing allows a deduction in full as a one-time charge against income. Such a deduction can completely eliminate a firm's current federal tax liabilities for that year and can lead to substantial tax refunds to the company involved! For example, after throwing thousands out of work in 1973, Bethlehem Steel through "creative" manipulation of the tax laws received a tax refund of \$134 million. Moreover, by shutting down plants, corporations save millions as a result of vested workers (those with pension rights) receiving smaller retirement benefits because of their shorter terms of service.

For the corporate giants, going out of business can be a profit-making orgy. And when these plants are closed down and families are thrust on to welfare, that is not the end of the story. Frequently, shop is then set up in Taiwan, South Africa and other low-wage havens. Increasingly, these plants are retreating to the so-called "Sun-belt." This mass exodus is also receiving impetus from the federal government. The Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties, appointed by President Carter, has stated unequivocally that instead of trying to stem this move to the "Sun-belt," it should be encouraged.

What this Commission did not emphasize was that plants are fleeing South for the same reason they are fleeing to South Africa — low wages and no unions. Take Texas, for example, the proto-typical Sun-belt state. According to the United States Census Bureau's ranking of median family income, Texas ranked 34th in the bureau's 1979 tally,

exactly where it had been in 1959. Similarly, Mississippi remained mired in last place. Florida slipped a notch to 38th, while North Carolina moved up one place to 44th.

One reason why income is so low in these states is that unions are so few. North Carolina, with just 6.5% of its work force unionized is the least unionized state and representative, in that respect, of the entire, so-called "Sun-belt." New York, a state that has been shell-shocked by numerous plant closings, not surprisingly has the highest percentage of union labor, 39.9%.

Thus, as can be seen, there are powerful economic forces propelling these plant closings, e.g. the shutdown of the shipyards in Chester, Pa., which has just thrown 3,000 workers — many of them black — into the streets.

The record of the incoming Secretary of Labor, Raymond J. Donovan, is not comforting. The company of which he is executive vice president, Schiavone Construction Company of Secaucus, N.J., has been cited for violations 135 times over the last six years by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), with 57 of these being for "serious" violations. During the 1960's his company was cited for failure to comply with the Davis-Bacon Law, a federal statute requiring that "prevailing" wage rates — i.e. union rates — be paid to workers on federally financed construction projects.

Presently, the Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Programs — the federal agency that oversees the government's only mandated affirmative action effort — is currently investigating Donovan's firm for numerous alleged discriminatory employment practices.

Such facts are not reassuring to a black community that has suffered from plant closings and benefited from strong unions with backbone enough to stand up to arbitrary management decisions. The three million plus blacks in the trade unions — heavily concentrated in the northeastern and midwestern states that corporations are attempting to flee — and the millions of other blacks who work for a wage will be on the cutting edge of efforts to resist the "Reaganaut" steamroller.

One of the early battles will no doubt involve an effort to sabotage the minimum wage law by way of a so-called "sub-minimum wage." Enacting a lower minimum wage for youth, according to one study, would at best reduce teenage joblessness by a mere three percentage points. Further, those hired as a result would cause displacement of older workers. In any event, as U.S. Department of Labor economist Willis Nordlund has averred, "The problem is an absence of jobs. A sub-minimum wage will not create jobs." He went on to say that it would mean pay differentials for "two people working in the same place doing the same job. It boils down to legal pay discrimination."

Legal pay discrimination. Plant closings. No unions. This is the grim fate for black workers designed by Reagan and Company. But like so many other designs of mice and men, these plans too can go awry. Though black workers would be well-advised not to expect much help from labor bosses like Lane Kirkland, the right-wing, anti-Communist southerner who heads the AFL-CIO and appears to be interested more in what goes on in Warsaw than Watts.

Victories can be won. Just ask the minority employees of the *New York Times*, who just won a \$1.5 million suit where discrimination in pay, hiring and promotion had been charged; or the minority and women employees of Ford Motor Company

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Letter To The Editor

As I looked on the faces of the families of the freed hostages as they were leaving Iran and deplaning in Algeria, I could only thank God for such a wise president as the Honorable President Jimmy Carter, who acted wisely in handling this crisis situation.

I know that there was much pressure on him to act in the usual American way. However, he chose the Christian approach, and our friends are home safe and with their families and friends. I do hope that our leaders, and all of us, will remember that God is still on the throne and that all men are brothers, whether we like it or not. "WE" not "THEY" are our brothers keeper. The words of wisdom of the Sage of Old are still true: "He who lives by the sword..." and "As you sow, so shall you reap."

As the freed hostages were leaving the foreign land, I listened to the slurs hurled at them by the captors, and I was forced to reflect and remember, along with many of my fellow Black American citizens, time after time when we have faced similar situations in our own home land. Such slurs as:

"We don't serve Niggers here."
"Niggers, go back to Africa."
"No promotions." "No housing."
"No jobs." "No first class citizenship."
But, I am an American, born of American parents, who were born of American parents. I served honorably in World War II. And, yet, my heart goes out to the freed hostages and to their families, and to all the sympathizing Americans, for I know how they feel, for I, too, have felt the pain.

Let all Americans know that "the wages of sin is death."

— Alexander D. Mosely
Pastor,
Mount Gilead Baptist Church

The Carolina Times
(USPS 091-380)

L.E. AUSTIN
Editor-Publisher 1927-1971

Published every Thursday (dated Saturday) at Durham, N.C. by United Publishers, Incorporated. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3825, Durham, N.C. 27702. Office located at 923 Fayetteville Street, Durham, N.C. 27701. Second Class Postage paid at Durham North Carolina, 27702. POSTMASTER: Send address change to THE CAROLINA TIMES, P.O. Box 3825, Durham, N.C. 27702.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$12.00 (plus \$0.48 sales tax for North Carolina residents). Single copy \$.30. Postal regulations REQUIRE advanced payment on subscriptions. Address all communications and make all checks and money orders payable to: THE CAROLINA TIMES.

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE: Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., 45 West 45th Street, New York, New York 10066.

Member United Press International Photo Service, National Newspaper Publishers Association, North Carolina Black Publishers Association.

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