



Reagan and the Haitian Boat People

By Gerald C. Horne, Esquire

President Reagan's decision to ship Haitian (and some Cuban) refugees to Fort Drum, New York has been roundly denounced by the civil rights community as further evidence of his insensitivity toward blacks.

"It's the closest thing we have in the United States to Siberia," averred Ira Kurzban, an attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center, Inc., of Miami and the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.

Fort Drum is a huge 107,265 acre Army base with World War II barracks, thirty miles south of the Canadian border and eight miles northeast of Watertown, New York. Winter temperatures plunge to a frigid thirty degrees below zero and annual snowfalls reach a hefty twelve feet.

Originally, the Administration planned to ship these homeless blacks to an equally inhospitable former Air Force base near Glasgow, Montana.

Worse, President Reagan has issued an order for the Coast Guard to intercept and stop boats bringing Haitians fleeing from the cruel island and, fundamentally, send them back from whence they came.

Yet, the decision to ship Haitians to "Siberia," New York exceeds all levels of inhumanity. In the *New York Times*, Steven Forester, another attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center stated that the 290 Haitians he represented would be "without any legal representation whatsoever," if they were moved.

This is the intention, i.e., to deprive Haitians of attorneys so they can be more easily deported. Dr. Bill Perry, president of the Miami branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), has called this policy "absolutely inhumane and borders on being criminal."

What has upset many is the unalloyed, crass racism that Reagan's policy reveals. Mayor Maurice Ferré, recently re-elected in Miami as a result of a massive black vote, has said that the policy implies "we welcome whites and don't want blacks. . . . If you look at the number of Haitians in comparison with the number of Mexicans it's infinitesimal. If we took the same measures against the Mexicans it would be a major scandal and there would be an international incident. It's obviously a racist approach."

Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, executive director of the Haitian Refugee Center, agrees: "While Mr. Reagan is getting rid of and trying to destroy the boat people population, the United States is still welcoming close to 500 Indochinese every day, and will probably take 10,000 Poles before the end of the year. The matter is not that there is no room for refugees, but they don't want these boat people here."

Reverend Jean-Juste continues, "Mr. Reagan is talking about budget cuts, but he's wasting \$37 a day on each Haitian he's keeping in concentration camp life. Mr. Reagan could save a lot of taxpayers' money by releasing the Haitians to their relatives, to their friends, to their sponsors."

What causes Haitian blacks to risk life and limb, to go floating for miles on a desolate sea in flimsy boats, knowing full well they may wind up in freezing concentration camps in the U.S.?

Reverend Jean-Juste has also spoken to this question: "In Haiti, life is a problem. We could solve the problem by improving the situation at home. Right now fifty per cent of all children die before reaching four years of age. Ninety per cent of all people do not receive a regular supply of piped water. The illiteracy rate is 85 per cent. Forty per cent of the people have no lodging at all. There are 35 prisons for each high school in Haiti. For each teacher, there are 189 soldiers. We have a hellish situation in Haiti. How come Mr. Reagan wants to back up this government that has been there for 24 years and keeps getting worse?"

The right reverend here puts his finger on a crucial factor too often overlooked. For the fact is that — like it or not — but for the U.S. government and U.S. trans-national corporations, the brutal dictatorship of "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti would have been gone a long time ago.

One of the biggest businesses in this unhappy land is the selling of blood. Because of the despicable, atrocious conditions, the blood of surviving Haitians is among the richest in the world in antibodies. Hence the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with three U.S. pharmaceutical laboratories — Armour Pharmaceutical, Cutter Laboratories and Dow Chemical — has organized a booming business involving the selling of blood.

There is a permanent reserve of 6,000 donors who give blood every week for a monthly salary of \$12. Each month, five tons of blood are shipped to the U.S.

More macabre, another burgeoning enterprise in Haiti is the selling of corpses to U.S. universities and research institutes.

Many of the factories that have been shut down in the U.S. have moved on to the low-wage havens of Haiti where the minimum annual wage amounts to less than half of what a poorly paid U.S. worker would earn in a week. Much of the equipment used in that proto-typical "All-American" game — baseball — is manufactured in Haiti. Not surprisingly, the U.S. military has been talking lately of stepping up collaboration with their Haitian counterparts — and the U.S. business community, which profits handsomely from this sad state of affairs, concurs.

A number of U.S. businesses involved in the sugar industry are engaged in the unsavory matter of Haiti "lending" 14,000 workers to the Dominican Republic for the sugar-cane harvest. The agreement is that ten dollars for each worker is transferred to Haiti, together with five per cent of the workers' wages, which amount to only from twenty to fifty dollars for the entire season. This is no more than a thinly disguised form of slavery.

But one does not have to travel to the Dominican Republic to discover gross exploitation of Haitian sugarcane workers. Look no further than 359,000 acres of farmland, northwest of Miami.

For the last 37 years, thousands of Haitian and other black West Indian workers are brought in specifically to harvest Florida's million ton plus crop of raw sugar. In towns like Belle Glade, these blacks live six to seven in hot, cramped, filthy rooms, sharing a bathroom — when there is one — with scores of others.

This "reserve army of labor" has been brought in for years, despite the state's high unemployment rate. But recently, in the first work stoppage in twenty years, 38 Haitians who said they were represented by the Farmworkers Rights Organization walked off their jobs at the United States Sugar Corporation in Clewiston. They say they are striking for better wages and working conditions, contending that Afro-Americans, Mexicans and Haitians are being discriminated against in favor of hiring off-shore workers "who are captives and badly exploited."

Indeed, President Reagan's recent attack on Haitians is seen by many as a response to the bidding of the sugar barons who would like to see increasingly militant Haitians shipped out of town as soon as possible.

Thus, the tragedy of Haiti — the land of Roumain, Toussaint and other patriots — continues. Blacks in this country should not sit idly by as Haitians are washed up on shore like dead fish. President Reagan should be told directly to free all interned Haitians and end all support for the brutal Duvalier dictatorship that is turning a proud nation into "boat people."

To Be Equal

Civil Rights Endangered

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The network of civil rights laws and regulations that have helped bring most blacks out of the wilderness of segregation are now endangered by the Administration neglect and, in some instances, hostility.

The most obvious case in point of course, is the lukewarm endorsement given extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — an endorsement that suggests acceptance of extension at the price of impairing its protection of minority voting rights.

Another clear signal that the Administration considers civil rights unimportant is its nomination of an unqualified and unqualifiable person to head Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

The nominee, William Bell, has no credentials for this key post, except that he is black and has suffered from discrimination — credentials shared by over twenty million other black people.

His lack of administrative experience is so pronounced that even his chief backer in the Senate, Senator Orrin Hatch, suggests that if he gets the job he should have a strong deputy.

But since when are major appointments made on the basis of token figureheads holding the title while more qualified people back them up in staff jobs? Was that a criteria for the Cabinet? And isn't it an insult to black people to put unqualified blacks in visible jobs?

Surely and Administration that proclaims its opposition to affirmative action seems to be trying to distort the meaning of affirmative action by this appointment.

Affirmative action never meant appointing unqualified people to jobs. It means widening the pool of candidates to include qualified or qualifiable blacks and other minorities. It means granting temporary preference to qualified blacks in order to redress the effects of discrimination that left entire job categories dominated by white males whose credentials are arbitrarily set. It emphatically does not mean putting a black person into a job he or she cannot handle.

The Administration practiced the right kind of affirmative action when it named Judge Sandra O'Connor to the Supreme Court. There were hundreds of people qualified to sit on the Court. But for a variety of reasons the Administration decided it was time for this historically all-male Court to include women, so it found and appointed a woman who was qualified for the job.

Black opposition to Mr. Bell's appointment cannot be appeased on the grounds that he, too, is black. We were against President Nixon's Carswell nomination because he lacked qualifications for the job; we're against the Bell appointment on the same grounds.

Downgrading the EEOC is just the preliminary to an attempt at folding that agency and the Office of Federal Contract

Compliance into the Justice Department. That would put all of the government's civil rights enforcement operations in one basket, and a basket of demonstrable indifference to civil rights.

The Justice Department has backtracked badly on civil rights. It endorsed a state anti-busing law. It made a too-hasty compromise settlement with states whose higher education systems were out of compliance with desegregation laws. And it has been in the forefront of opposition to affirmative action, despite its role in the O'Connor appointment.

The attack on affirmative action is very serious. The Justice Department's partner in the drive is the Office of Management and Budget, which recently told the Federal Communications Commission to drop a questionnaire that measures broadcasters' compliance with equal employment hiring mandates.

Why OMB is involved in such a step is puzzling. Until now its activities have been confined to cutting the budget of programs that help provide opportunities for minorities. Now it appears to be extending its negative influence beyond budgetary considerations.

Taken together, the Administration's civil rights actions betray a clear intent to weaken enforcement and to dismantle the tools that have enabled the federal government to play a positive role in bringing minorities into the mainstream of American life.

Questioning The Administration's Economic Plan

By Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins

In a shattering blow to the already shaky credibility of the Reagan Administration's budget and tax policies, the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine article on Office of Management and Budget director David Stockman reveals that though he appeared to be the bellwether of President Reagan's economic policies, he privately harbored deep reservations that those economic policies were flawed. In Stockman's own words, "There was a certain dimension of our theory that was unrealistic. . . ."

It is truly mystifying that someone of such obvious stature within the upper echelons of the Reagan Administration would make such an admission in an article which would receive national distribution. The clue to the mystery lies in a sub-theme of the article which was the overwhelming desire on the part of the White House to win all battles at any cost. Such a mercenary attitude no doubt plays a large part in the Stockman scandal. According to Stockman, "They don't care over in the White House. They want to win." Operating in such an environment and with said goal in mind calls for enormous resourcefulness. Indeed, a resourcefulness of such magnitude that it would enable the Administration to admit mistakes without taking the heat for such admissions. In this context, David Stockman has been chosen as the sacrificial lamb who would deliver the bad news in a Machiavellian "news leak" thus taking the pressure off a President who already had one very large bitter pill to swallow in admitting that he would not be able to have a balanced budget by 1984. In politics, winning is important. But

winning at the expense of and as a result of misleading the American people is unconscionable.

The article is a chronicle of obfuscation and deception at the highest levels of American government. Computer models were adulterated at OMB in an effort to get numbers and statistics which would please the President. Stockman admits that deals were struck with Congressmen in order to get the President's economic package through Congress upon which Stockman knew he would have to renege during later negotiations. Many concessions were made to powerful interest groups in order to get the tax package through to passage. The result of which was not an equitable across-the-board tax cut but an enormous boon for the rich while the average working man receives a paltry few dollars as his tax cut. Perhaps, the most astonishing admission of deception on the part of Stockman was his admission that, "It's kind of hard to sell 'trickle down', so the supply-side formula was the only way to get a tax policy that was really 'trickle-down.' Supply-side is 'trickle-down' theory." Again, Stockman's "candor" takes the pressure off the President to admit what opponents have been saying from the first exposure to his economic plans. A Hoover era theory, trickle-down economics asserts that tax advantages given to the wealthy will trickle-down to the lowest strata of the society thus providing a greater economic well-being for all. Obviously, President Reagan has forgotten that Hoover was at the helm of State at the onset of the Great Depression. It is difficult to believe that policies

which were so obviously irrational and conflict-strewn as President Reagan's campaign promises to raise defense spending and cut income taxes, while simultaneously balancing the federal budget could ever have been accorded the slightest expectation of viability. Characterized during the early stages of the 1980 campaign by now Vice President George Bush as "voodoo economics", Reagan's policies have, as yet, been unable to shake this label and Stockman's admissions have only served to cast some light on Mr. Reagan's caldron.

Recently, President Reagan admitted that the country is now in a recession. Attention to the recession, of course, is the continuing problem of high unemployment rates. As of this writing, interest rates remain stiflingly high while the American auto industry is experiencing one of its worst sales slumps in history, home construction and real estate sales are practically at a dead standstill, and small businesses are experiencing a staggering rate of bankruptcy.

Whatever the outcome of the Stockman affair, it is clear that the Administration has embarked on a policy of less than total honesty with the American people. In addition, it is clear from Mr. Stockman's admissions that President Reagan is unalterably in favor of taking from the poor to give to the rich. As Stockman says, "Power is contingent. . . . The problem is, unorganized groups can't play this game." There is, however, still time for the affected groups to engage in a vigorous program of voter registration and voter education thereby enabling them to get into the game as full-fledged players.

American Labor Mobilizes

Bayard Rustin

A. Philip Randolph Institute

It had been billed as a centennial celebration. The American labor movement was to have gathered in New York's Sheraton Centre to look back proudly upon 100 years of organized trade unionism. Yet the 1981 AFL-CIO Convention, which had been planned as a celebration of labor's legacy, was transformed by the course of events into a convocation which is helping to set the agenda for those national forces committed to social justice.

There was little looking backward in the speeches and discussions which flowed from the speaker's rostrum. And while the portraits of George Meany, Samuel Gompers, Philip Murray, and Walter Reuther, which looked down upon the assembled delegates, were constant reminders of the labor movement's shining past, this Convention very much had its mind on the future and present.

Much media attention has justly been given to AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland's witty and sharp-edged dissection of the Reagan Administration's supply-side prescriptions. His attacks against the administration's "economic house of ill repute" and his biting sarcasm which declared that the President has "promised us a boom and brought us a bust" were quintessential Kirkland.

However, what was most significant about the Convention was that it signalled the emergence of the outlines of a political and economic program that can serve to revitalize the forces in this country which

are committed to social justice. Rejecting the Administration's blind reliance on the forces of the market-place, AFL-CIO delegates issued a call for an "anti-recession package" of public works and public jobs.

The AFL-CIO proposal calls for a massive reindustrialization and modernization effort centered around a government-supported Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The Corporation would target loans, loan guarantees, interest rate subsidies, and tax benefits to stimulate economic growth. Such aid would be primarily directed to high unemployment areas.

The AFL-CIO has also called for nationwide extended unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless, for temporary restrictions on imports which result in the loss of American jobs, and for the providing of funds for new low-income and middle-income housing.

Needless to say, such programs would cost money. Thus the AFL-CIO has joined in a call for funding these anti-recessionary programs by limiting the individual tax cuts for 1982 to a maximum of \$700 per taxpayer, in this way preventing the huge tax windfall that will benefit those who earn in excess of \$40,000 per year. The AFL-CIO also has called for trimming back the ten per cent investment tax credit to its original seven per cent level and has called upon Congress to revoke "the windfall tax exemption newly awarded to wealthy oil interest."

Labor, likewise, has renewed its commitment to a strong national defense but has asserted that defense increases should

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