

## Editorials

## Minority Business Enterprise Programs

Efforts to encourage more blacks and women in business to get a slice of local government business is an admirable intention.

One cannot deny that these small, struggling businesses often need considerable assistance. But these so-called MBE, or MWBE (when women are included) programs raise serious questions, not to mention controversy.

Controversy is stirred, often by the predominantly white business sector because it believes that such programs are preferential, and force social concerns upon the marketplace that have no business there.

Blacks, on the other hand, particularly those who own some of these small, struggling businesses, seem to believe that the "edge" these programs give them is the only way they are going to have any access to some of the big money local government spends.

And while there is some truth in both of these positions, we believe that the programs as presently constituted around the country create far more problems than they solve.

For example, these MBE programs, be they "set-asides" which means put some of the money in a separate kitty for blacks and women, or goals, which means keep the money in the same pot, but award it only to those general contractors who come up with minority sub-contractors, short circuit the market place's natural filtering capability.

There are some people who go into business, but who should not stay in business because they provide poor services and are not competitively priced. Under normal conditions, the marketplace would drive these businesses out.

These programs also create an atmosphere for fraud and deceit, because if a certain businessman sees the difference between a number one market share and a number two market share being siphoned off by the government for a minority business enterprise project, some have proved that they will lie and cheat rather than willingly give up that money.

We believe that attitude transcends race. We believe this could happen even if the set-asides or goals were aimed at lefthanded white businesses.

But, by far, the more devastating problem created by these programs is the "crutch" mentality it develops among some black and women business owners.

It seems that these programs block black businesses from the mainstream, rather than propel them toward it. The result is that a small group of black and women owned concerns find themselves competing for from ten per cent to twenty per cent of any given contract, never even imagining the possibility of going after the whole contract.

With the discussion heating up locally on how blacks will participate financially in the proposed downtown development project, we hope that local government leaders and others can approach this question more creatively.

We do not see the wisdom in merely replicating mistakes that have apparently happened in other places around the country, where no one that we know of can prove that black-owned or women-owned firms have benefitted substantially from these programs.

Therefore, we urge our leaders to break the mental shackles that seem to bind us all sometimes into ruts of frustration, and let's approach this question of mainstreaming black businesses creatively and in a way that will be mutually rewarding, and will have long term benefits.

## On Black History Month

February is Black History Month, and while we are notably proud of the recognition this signifies, we would love to see the time when the tremendous contributions that blacks have made to this country are recognized year-round and included in the total history of America's development.

The major irony of this entire issue of Black History is that in most instances, the contributions of blacks were not just for black people, but served America. A good example is Dr. Charles Drew's efforts with blood plasma. There are thousands of others.

So while a month is good, let's aim for the time when Black History is a daily recognition of all that we've done for America — side by side with all others.

## Spectacles: A Closer Look

## Historical Perspectives

By Ada M. Fisher

If black Americans are to continue to grow and succeed, we must be willing to critically analyze our history, letting it be our guide away from paths which have led us astray. There must be a concerted effort to record facts and events as they are and were, not as we would like them to be. Credit must be given where credit is due so that all who have lifted our banner high are noted on the historical roll. And, we must continue to appreciate those "little people" who daily make their mark and are frequently overlooked.

Now that we have sung Happy Birthday to Martin Luther King, Jr., could we move on to others who have helped to bring us thus far? Too many of us have forgotten the children who dared take those first steps to integrate the eating facilities and those who subjected themselves to the harassment of their peers in opening schools for us all. The sight of the bombed churches, homes, and buses of those who bravely ventured into equality should remain vivid in our minds in this month designated for Afro-American history. For those blacks who feel no loyalty to black Americans and the struggles wrought in surviving, they would do well to remember that their jobs in the public schools systems, on the boards of various organizations, in the Research Triangle Park, in the entertainment media, and in other sectors of the corporate establishment came at the expense of these lives.

In all of our struggles to get our people and their achievements recorded, we desperately need to deal with the struggles within. Though we don't like to publicly discuss it, our preoccupation with color and status is as bad now as it was at times in the past. It's distressing to listen to discussions by blacks who "have made it" about those who are less fortunate. Even some of us are saying that blacks aren't ready and that is sad. We are developing clubs and organizations to exclude other blacks. We too often are guilty of strolling blindly down the street ignoring those that we know with our noses tilted in the air behind some job which puts us in a white shirt and tie. We too often look to

social relationships based on skin color and artificial markers of where we work, live, what car we drive, who are parents are, etc. and we fail to appreciate that in each of the least of these our brothers goes us, by the grace of God.

The recording of history can often mislead if one does not try to gain a historical perspective to look not only at action but impact.

Thurgood Marshall's ascendancy to the Supreme Court is significant. Yet, too often, in his brilliant minority opinions which have been written, he is the lone voice saying this is not fair. As a Supreme Court justice, he is one voice in nine. As an attorney for the NAACP, Marshall reportedly argued 52 cases before the Supreme Court relating to our civil rights and civil liberties, winning his argument in fifty of these. A historical perspective says, if you're only given one choice, would be better served having Marshall argue our cause or judging it?

Another man hidden in history died in obscurity, deserted by much of his constituency who looked at the superficial and misjudged the significance of his work. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., was a hero for blacks who has yet to be given his due. As a preacher, Powell's flamboyant style with beautiful women and his enjoyment of the good life were roundly criticized. But whatever he was, the man was no hypocrite and left his life open for all to judge. As a legislator, few men, black or white, have wielded the power that Adam Powell did. Powell headed the Congressional Education Committees which gave birth to the student loan programs, rulings on non-discrimination in institutions receiving federal funds and all of the other programs now threatened by dismantling procedures. Though many have jumped forth to take credit for much that has occurred in getting blacks into the various institutions and jobs, a review of the record will show that Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.'s legislative skills and legislation was the enabling factor. Powell helped to change the laws which opened doors with legal protections available. A historical perspective asks was he dealt

with so harshly by his congressional peers to prevent him from instituting further equality into the laws?

Booker T. Washington has been judged by many of this generation as a "Tom" because he encouraged the development of one's brawn. By virtue of his efforts at Tuskegee Institute, he didn't forget the brain. Were blacks now to be found in significant numbers in trade unions and jobs of skilled labor, many of which pay in excess of \$15 per hour, would we be better off?

Thomas Sowell has been harshly criticized for his book, *Ethnic America*. Some of his commentary was indeed a rehash of old stereotypes and trite phrases. But how many read his notes about economically upper and middle class blacks having less children than any other group, black, white, Spanish, etc. — "Much of the struggle that brought some blacks up from poverty has had to be repeated in successive generations because successful blacks did not have enough children to reproduce themselves." He pointed out that a central feature of any slave system was "keeping the slave ignorant, dependent and in fear." Examining the literacy level for the black population and the numbers of our children who drop out of school, historically can we be shown to be regressing though no longer in chains? In this same vein, the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, talked about the talented tenth. Many saw this as an elitist outlook rather than ask how often it is that ten per cent of a group will be the doers and the other ninety per cent inactive.

There are less than 1000 slots yearly available in the major competitive sports, yet so many of our children have visions of fame and glory while history goes unrecorded, unanalyzed and too often unappreciated. This generation of blacks needs to explore its roots to lend some historical perspective. The month after Roy Wilkins died, Diana Ross made the cover of *Ebony* magazine. One can only wonder where does our historical perspective lie?

## To Be Equal

## Turning the Clock Back

By John E. Jacob

Executive Director, National Urban League

New Federalism is such a nice sounding phrase it is a shame to point out that it is just a public relations term for the old, long discredited idea of states' rights.

The President, in his State of the Union address, went whole hog for his "new Federalism," stopping just short of making it seem a panacea for what ails America.

It is nothing of the sort. Rather, the New Federalism is a prescription for inflicting further misery on the poor and for splintering what ought to be a national concern with national issues.

It all reminds me of the tale of the emperor who had no clothes. All his sage advisors nodded their heads and agreed with the emperor that his new suit of clothes was beautiful. But when the emperor ventured outdoors, it was a small boy, who had no illusions and no need to curry favor with power, who shouted that the emperor had no clothes on.

So it is with the New Federalism, a plan that strips the clothes of decency from national life. The seductive idea of transferring programs and powers to the states is a non-starter. Those programs and powers came to Washington because of state abuses and turning them back to the states is bound to lead to new abuses.

The New Federalism was a mistake

when it was limited to packaging various federal health and social welfare programs into block grants to be administered by the states. The new plan to turn basic survival programs like welfare and food stamps to the states promises nothing less than a disaster.

Logic is missing from the plan: why does the Administration acknowledge that care for the elderly is a federal responsibility, while care for younger people is a state one? What makes Medicaid, a health plan for the poor, a federal responsibility while welfare and food stamps become a state responsibility?

The conceptual flaw behind the New Federalism is the idea that local governments can best deal with local problems. But poverty is not a local problem; it is national.

Fully federalizing welfare would acknowledge that. It would recognize that national problems require national solutions; that hunger in Michigan is the same as hunger as in Mississippi and that fairness demands poor people receive the same treatment wherever they reside.

Making welfare a state responsibility means that poor people will be treated differently depending on where they live, the strength of their state's finances, and the willingness of state legislatures and local

power blocks to deal fairly with the poor.

Experience shows the states are likely to deal callously with their poor. Welfare benefits are down sharply due to inflation as state governments refuse to raise those benefits to keep pace with lost purchasing power. There is a tremendous disparity among the states on a range of benefits poor people are entitled to.

The President has often said that if people don't like the way state governments treat them, they are free to move elsewhere. That's an extraordinarily insensitive way of looking at things. The mass black exodus northward exemplified people voting with their feet to escape oppressive local segregation and imposed poverty. But think of the tremendous cost to individuals and the nation of that kind of human and social disruption.

The new state's rights practically invites states to export their poverty by making conditions so tough for their poor that they'll want to move elsewhere. I can't see our national government adopting the sort of caveman ethics that allow this.

Federal assumption of full costs of social welfare coupled with uniform national entitlement and benefits would relieve states of fiscal strains, rationalize the inefficient and wasteful hodgepodge of current programs, and deal fairly with poor people.

## A View From Capitol Hill:

## The President's Performance

By Gus Savage

Member of Congress

While listening to President Reagan's State of the Union address, this impression came immediately into my mind: He is ignoring the sad state of the economy, while revealing the hypocrisy in his heart, the backwardness of his beliefs, and displaying his ability to act.

Later, I was to tell myself, I have never before seen a man appear so cocksure who at the same time is so wrong.

However, the President's cocksureness might enable him to do something no President has been able to do since Lyndon Johnson. It now seems certain that Reagan's New Federalism will join Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, Harry Truman's Fair Deal, John Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society as a household phrase which represents the essence of an administration.

This confidence in himself, in my opinion, also was the primary reason why he rejected the advice of his advisors, both in the White House and the Congress, and stuck by his four-point program for economic recovery: 1) less government spending, 2) lower taxes for the wealthy and larger corporations, 3) weaker public restraint of corporate greed and concentration of ownership, and 4) a tight monetary policy.

Within these guidelines, the President in his address took credit for a lower rate

of inflation, but evaded blame for higher unemployment. He correctly noted that the Democrats have offered no new alternative, but did not point out that the failure of one party to discover the right road does not justify the other party continuing down the wrong one.

Surprisingly, he even promised to support equal rights laws, generally, and a ten-year extension of the Voting Rights Act, specifically. This position, however, seems hypocritical in light of his recent decisions regarding cutting back affirmative action requirements and permitting tax exemption for private schools that admittedly discriminate against blacks.

The President was just plain wrong in claiming that by increasing our capacity to wage nuclear war, we have regained the respect of our allies. I know that the opposite is true, because I just returned from an on-the-scene study of attitudes towards American foreign policy in the NATO nations in Europe.

Finally, as the heart of his New Federalism, Reagan plans to dump onto the already financially overburdened states \$47 billion a year in needed though less popular federal programs, immediately and permanently — but promises to contribute only \$28 billion a year

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## Things You Should Know

Henry Highland

GARNET

d. 1882



EDUCATED AT ONEIDA INSTITUTE, HE BECAME A CELEBRATED PRESBYTERIAN, PREACHER AND LECTURER. HE MADE A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN ANTI-SLAVERY SPEECH IN 1843 TO THE CONVENTION OF COLORED AMERICANS, BUFFALO, N.Y. HE TOURED ENGLAND THEN SERVED AS A MISSIONARY IN JAMAICA, B.W.I. BY THE 1880'S HE WAS U.S. MINISTER TO LIBERIA.

— CONTINENTAL PICTURES

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