

Editorials and Comments

Down From 10.9 Percent

Black Unemployment Rate Drops To 8.9%

WASHINGTON - The unemployment rate for black workers edged down to 8.9 percent in January after averaging 10 percent during 1972, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports.

In December, the jobless rate for black workers stood at 9.6 percent. The rate for black workers registered 10.9 percent in January 1972.

The nation's overall employment situation in January showed little change from the previous month. The jobless rate was 5.0 percent and the December rate was 5.1 percent.

In January, the jobless rate was at its lowest point in 2 1/2 years and substantially below the rate of 5.9 percent one year ago.

The total number of persons employed, which has advanced strongly since mid-1971, edged down slightly in January to 82.6 million (after seasonal adjustment). Over the

year, total employment has risen by 1.9 million.

The number of nonagricultural payroll jobs (from the establishment survey) rose by 200,000 in January (seasonally adjusted) to a new high of 74.2 million. The pickup in payroll employment was concentrated largely in the service-producing industries.

Total joblessness rose about in line with usual December-January movements, and, after seasonal adjustment, both the number of persons unemployed and the unemployment rate, at 4.4 million and 5.0 percent, respectively, were essentially unchanged from their December levels. Over the past year, however, total unemployment has declined by nearly 800,000.

Jobless rates in January were also little changed or unchanged for most of the major demographic groups: adult men (3.3 percent), adult women (5.2 percent),

workers (4.6 percent), married men (2.4 percent), and household heads (2.9 percent). However, the jobless rate for teenagers declined significantly -- from 15.7 to 14.3 percent, its lowest point in nearly 3 years.

The jobless situation among most of the major occupational groups changed little except for a sharp drop in the unemployment rate for service workers. On an industry basis, the jobless rate for manufacturing workers rose from 4.4 percent in December to 5.0 percent in January but was still substantially below its year-ago level of 6.4 percent.

The average (mean) duration of joblessness fell to 10.9 weeks in January and was down a little over a full week compared with a year ago. The number of persons unemployed 15 weeks or more declined for the fifth consecutive month.

The Nation's civilian labor force declined more than it usually does between December and January and after seasonal adjustment was down by 350,000 to a level of 86.9 million. Total employment also edged down in January to a seasonally adjusted level of 82.6 million, primarily due to a drop in agricultural employment.

Compared with January a year ago, the labor force has grown by 1.2 million and the number of employed by 1.9 million. Adult men made up

over half of the employment advance; adult women accounted for another 550,000 of the gain, and teenagers rose by 300,000.

The employment situation for Vietnam Era veterans 20-to-29 years old was little changed in January, as both employment and unemployment, after seasonal adjustment, held at the improved levels of the last few months of 1972. The veterans' unemployment rate was 5.9 percent, seasonally adjusted, essentially the same as their

5.8 percent rate in December. January marked the fifth straight month that there was no material difference between the unemployment rates for veterans and nonveterans.

The average workweek for production or nonsupervisory personnel fell more than usual between December and January, according to preliminary figures from the payroll survey. After seasonal adjustment, the workweek dropped 0.5 hour to 40.2 hours, and overtime fell 0.2 hour to 3.6 hours.

The Welfare Program... Everybody's Whipping Boy

If the welfare client is female, we draw a horror picture of repeated illegitimate births for the sole purpose of increasing her welfare benefit. She's a loafer, too.

What are the facts? People wind up on welfare not because they are cheats, loafers or malingers, but because they are poor. They are not just poor in money, but in everything. They've had poor education, poor health care, poor chances at decent employment, and poor prospects for anything better.

We are advised that welfare provides such opulent living its clients would be crazy to give it all up and go to work. We hear repeatedly that welfare clients are cheats and welfare programs are rampant with fraud.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS? But even most of the poor are not on welfare. Some 15 million Americans receive some form of welfare benefits. There are more than 25 million officially below the poverty level of \$4,000 a year for a family of four. Another 30-to-50 million are just barely above it. And \$4,000 a year, as everyone knows, does not afford extravagance.

Of the 15 million receiving welfare, about eight million are children under 16 years of age. Anyone for "work-fare" for children more than half a century after child labor laws were enacted?

Less than one percent -- about 150,000 -- of welfare recipients are able-bodied employable males. Many of these are in their late middle year. Most are uneducated. All are required by law to sign up for work or work training. A government study shows more than 80 percent want to work, rather than draw welfare, and among the fathers in this group one in three is enrolled in work training.

Welfare mothers are not churning out illegitimate children. Nearly 70 percent of all children in welfare families are legitimate, according to the Social and Rehabilitation Service of HEW. Thirty percent of welfare families with any children have only one child; 25 percent have two; 18 percent have three. The remainder have four or more.

Economically, anyway, the myth is nonsense, since the average payment per additional child nationally is only \$35 a month, hardly an incentive toward mass production.

More than 48 percent of welfare families are

TO BE EQUAL

BY VERNON E. JORDAN, JR.

Lyndon Baines Johnson's Legacy



Lyndon Baines Johnson is gone, but we must be forever grateful that he walked among us. He was, beyond any shadow of doubt, the President who held the aspirations of black citizens closest to his heart.

It was Lyndon Johnson who stood in the well of Congress and proclaimed "We Shall Overcome," and he did his very best to overcome the bitter heritage of inequality and discrimination that holds all of us -- black and white -- chained to conflict and confrontation when our spirits should soar as eagles in a bright sky.

He sought to construct a "Great Society," but that society fell far short of greatness. It faltered in the mud of a war that was his single greatest failure, and it faltered in a backlash that still runs rampant.

He could not, in the short space of five years, construct a Great Society, he did take this country a long way into a Second Reconstruction. His policies helped shape the decade of the sixties; a period that saw black people merge as a moral force in the nation, a period that saw black people take giant steps toward equality.

By one of those queer, eerie strokes of chance I was writing a letter to him on the day he died. A letter thanking him for his hospitality during my participation in the Civil Rights Symposium at the LBJ

Library in Austin, Texas in December. That was the last time I saw him, and I am grateful that he had the opportunity to witness the outpouring of affection and admiration at that occasion.

People from all spectrums of the civil rights movement, his Administration, and the judiciary were there to help unveil the civil rights archives of the LBJ Library and to pay tribute to the accomplishments of the sixties.

It is fashionable today to downgrade the achievements of that decade. But we ought to take time out from our concern for what has been left undone and pay tribute to what had been achieved.

Packed into that decade, and especially during the Johnson Administration, was a series of federal actions that, taken together, broke the back of legal segregation, shifted some power to minorities, reordered the way people thought about domestic issues, and created a body of law and custom that will be, for the most part, irreversible. The result was to create myriad new opportunities for black people and to bring to minorities a sense of self-confidence that will continue far into the future.

The country entered the sixties wedded to racism and it left it with a whole new attitude toward equal rights and democratic values. And the Johnson Presidency was primarily responsible for that change.

Just to list the bills he fought for the programs he initiated would take more space than this column has. What other democratic country undertook in so short a period of time such social innovations as were contained in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which eliminated discrimination in public places and in employment; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which revolutionized southern politics and assured blacks the vote the Fair Housing Act, which barred discrimination in housing; medical aid for the aged, model cities programs, anti-poverty programs; and a host of other actions that helped millions of people.

It is ironic that Lyndon Johnson died on the very day that a cease-fire agreement for Vietnam was initiated in Paris. That war was his undoing, and the financial and moral demands it made effectively ended the social reforms he championed. That war was a tragedy, both for the man who wanted history to remember him for his domestic accomplishments, and for the nation, which desperately needed social reforms and domestic peace.

I am confident that, long after the sour taste of the Vietnam adventure vanishes, history will record with awe the domestic actions of the Johnson era, and will reserve a place of greatness for this bold, great man.

Blacks Gained 1,044 Elected Officials Since 1965

ATLANTA - The current number of 1,144 black elected officials in the South represents more than a ten-fold increase since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, according to the latest statistics of the Voter Education Project, Inc. (VEP).

Fewer than 100 black officials held offices in the 11 southern states in 1965. That number has steadily increased over the past eight years as a result of voter registration, citizenship education, an increasingly large field of black candidates, the continuing development of minority political sophistication, and the participation of whites in coalition efforts.

The annual increase in the number of southern black elected officials has been as follows: 1966 - 159; 1967 - no data available; 1968 - 248; 1969 - 388; 1970 - 565; 1971 - 711; 1972 - 873; and 1973 - 1,144. The 1973 figure represents a net gain of 271 officeholders in a one-year period -- the largest increase in a single year since Reconstruction.

"The rate of increase in the number of black elected officials in the South has been phenomenal," stated VEP President Harry Hogue, an attorney with the Washington based firm of Arnold and Porter. "It reflects the very basic fact that the momentum for change generated by the civil rights movement of the 1960's continues to shape the political, social, and economic climate of our region. The movement spirit is alive and well in the arena of Southern minority politics."

of black elected officials yields the following totals: Alabama, 144; Arkansas, 140; Florida, 51; Georgia, 104; Louisiana, 127; Mississippi, 145; North Carolina, 108; South Carolina, 98; Tennessee, 69; Texas, 98; and Virginia, 60.

Alabama led the Southern states by increasing its total number of black elected officials by 61 in a one-year period. Arkansas had the second largest gain since February 1972 -- an increase of 49 officeholders -- while Georgia, with an increase of 38, was third. The number of black officeholders increased in every Southern state except Florida, which also had a total of 51 black officials in 1972.

Explaining the significance of the recently-compiled data, John Lewis, VEP Director and an advocate of minority voting rights for more than a decade, stated, "We must see beyond the cold statistics, however impressive they may be, and understand the real meaning of having such a large number of blacks in public office. We must understand that the newly elected members of Congress, state legislators, county officials, municipal officeholders, and law enforcement officials are in positions of power which can bring about changes in the daily lives of blacks in the South."

A breakdown of offices held by blacks includes: U. S. Congress, 2; state senators, 6; state representatives, 55; county officials, 126; mayors, 38; vice mayors, 14; other municipal officials, 441; law enforcement officials, 198 including 9 judges; and 268 education officials including 1 superintendent and 8 school

board presidents. Officials hold two offices in the South by blacks.)

"In the past several years, Lewis observed, a tremendous increase in minority voter participation has brought corresponding increases in the number of black officials. The rate of increase has declined markedly since the mid-1960's, but continues through the decade of the Seventies. Given a new political sense of direction in the South, further progress in this area is inevitable."

"On the other hand," Lewis pointed out, "the fact that two and one-half million potential black voters in the South remain unregistered indicates that there is a serious flaw in the access system to the political arena. In fact, current voter registration systems in the South are unworkable. As long as they remain so, these antiquated and discriminatory systems will hamper black progress."

"A history of overt voting rights abuses is only partly responsible for the large number of unregistered black voters and the small percentage of blacks in the 79,251 state and local elected offices in the South," Lewis concluded. "The remaining barriers to the ballot are found in the composition of election boards, the inadequacy of centralized registration with limited hours of operation, and the persistence of the dangerous and erroneous attitude that voting is a privilege rather than a right belonging to all citizens over the age of 18."

1040 U.S. Individual Taxpayers Ask IRS

is provided by and answers on federal revenue Service and is published by taxpayers. The column answers questions asked by taxpayers.

Q) What are the rules for deducting finance charges on installment store revolving accounts?

A) You may deduct "finance charge" levied by retail stores on your revolving charge accounts if the charges are based on your unpaid balances and computed monthly. Also, in the case of bank credit card plans, you can deduct the finance charge if no part of this amount is for service charges, loan fees, credit investigation fees, etc.

However, if you buy items on the installment plan and the carrying charges are separately stated, but the interest charge cannot be ascertained, deduct the lower of (1) 6 percent of your average unpaid monthly balance or (2) the actual charge for the year. For more details, see IRS Publication 545, "Income Tax Deduction for Interest Expense." Use the order blank on the back of your tax forms package to obtain a free copy.

Q) I had no income tax liability for 1972, but I'm filing a return to recover income tax withheld from my pay. Can I still designate \$1 of the tax withheld towards the Presidential Election Campaign Fund?

A) No. You can only make the \$1 check-off if you had an income tax liability. This does not mean that because you are getting a refund, you can't use the \$1 check-off, but it does mean that you must be able to show tax on line 20 of your Form 1040 or line 21 of your short Form 1040A to use the check-off.

Q) Can you give me some tips on how to guard against dishonest tax preparers?

A) The IRS offers the following advice to taxpayers seeking assistance from commercial income tax return preparers: never sign a blank return; do not sign a tax return prepared in pencil because it can be changed later; do not allow your refund check to be mailed to the preparer; avoid the advisor who "guarantees" refunds, wants a percentage of the refund, or supposedly knows all the angles; and avoid the preparer who advises a taxpayer to overstate deductions, claim fictitious dependents or omit income.

In addition, taxpayers should insist that the tax preparer sign the return he prepares and enter his tax identifying number. Finally, be sure to keep a copy of your return.

Q) Does every taxpayer have to give his state, county, locality and township in answering the revenue sharing question on place of residence?

A) All of this information may not be required. Only certain states have townships and these are specified in your tax form instructions. If your state is not listed there, you can leave this column of your tax return blank. Secondly, there are a few places, such as Baltimore City, Md. and St. Louis, Mo., that are not within a county. Once again, these areas are listed in your instructions.

Unless you lived outside the U.S. on Dec. 31, 1972, you must enter the abbreviation for your state in the column provided. In addition, if you lived inside an incorporated city, town, or village, print the name of the municipality in the "locality" column. If you did not live inside the boundaries of such a location, check the box in this column.

Q) Yes. Your 1972 Form 1040 and short Form 1040A ask two questions related to the sharing of Federal money with state and local governments. One question asks the location of your principal place of residence (state, county, locality & town-ship); the second question asks for the number of your dependents who are filing a return of their own or who did not live at your principal place of residence at the end of 1972.

You must supply the correct information in your answers to these questions to ensure that your state, county and local community receive their rightful share of revenue sharing funds.

Q) All of this information may not be required. Only certain states have townships and these are specified in your tax form instructions. If your state is not listed there, you can leave this column of your tax return blank. Secondly, there are a few places, such as Baltimore City, Md. and St. Louis, Mo., that are not within a county. Once again, these areas are listed in your instructions.

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