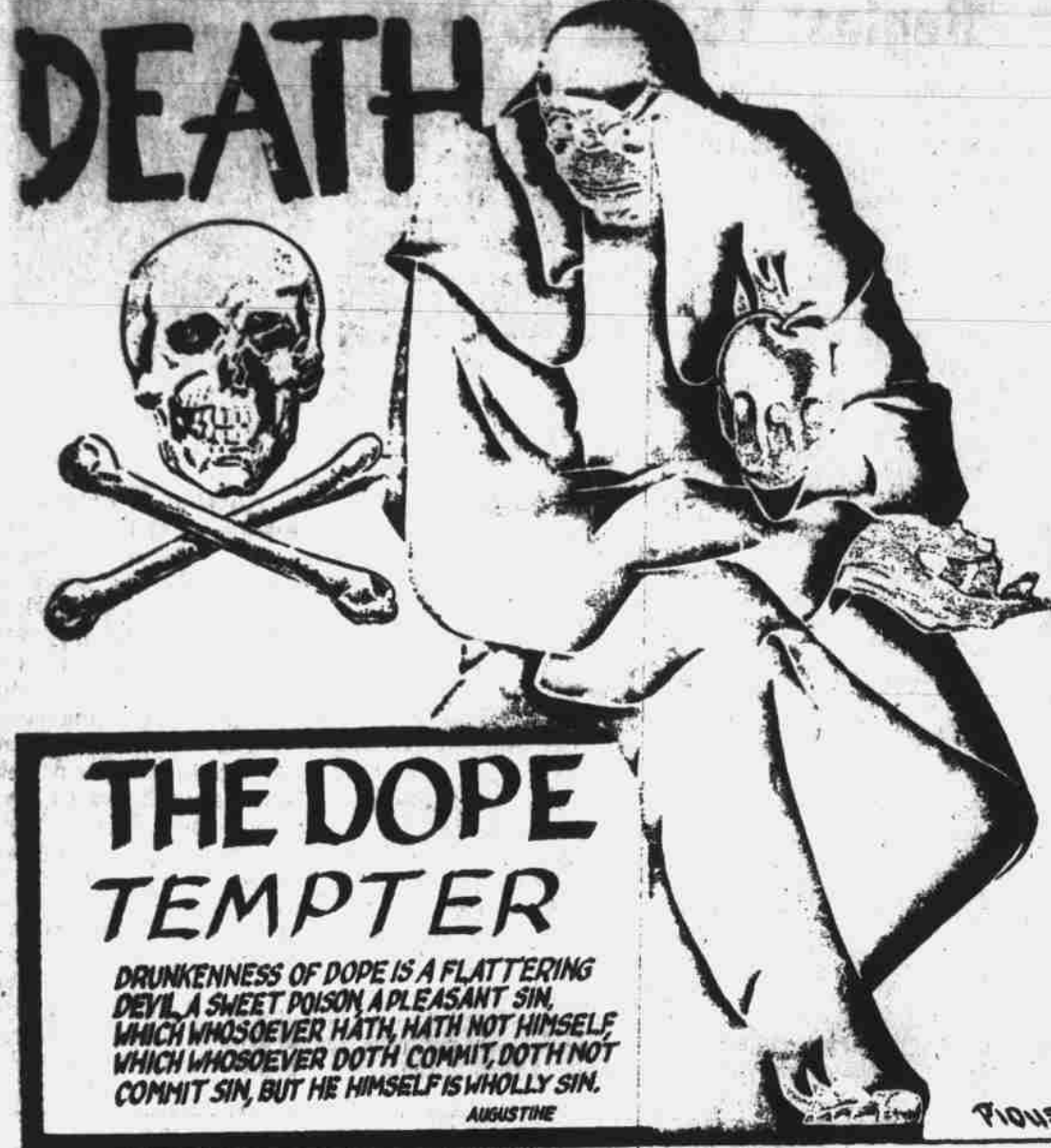


Needed Now . . . An Aroused Black Community



EDITORIALS

Pursuit of Excellence Should Be Our Continuing Goal

In a speech to a special awards day assembly at the 1,800 member student body of Washington, D. C.'s Cardozo High School, honoring 52 students who earned As and Bs during the first semester, "Roots" author Alex Haley said, "I believe that we as black people must become excited about the pursuit of excellence. You must decide that you are going to be the best there is."

We believe this is sound advice for young blacks today in America. More than any other single group, young blacks today in America are the most subject to unemployment, under-employment, and less than quality education. Yet, they must be encouraged by family, friends, teachers and peers to be motivated to achieve in school and in their young lives. When doors are opened today, young people must be ready to walk through them, and have not only the best preparation, but the desire and self-motivation to be achievers.

As major American institutions are managing social change, to whatever degree, there is the need for black people to be ready to take advantage of what being the best can mean and be prepared to take advantage of every opportunity for upward mobility. For example, the National Guard, a

reserve component of the U. S. Army and Air Force, stands as an example of an institution that has changed. From being an "admitted white man's club" in the early 1970s, with only 5,000 blacks, the National Guard instituted a program that has changed that institution, and today there are over 55,000 blacks in the Guard.

However, the young black men and women in the Guard are in the lower ranks, and must be encouraged to follow the "pursuit of excellence" into the senior non-commissioned and commissioned officer ranks. Restrictions today are those an individual puts on his or herself and not always the "system".

Because Guardsmen and women serve only part time, the National Guard offers a unique opportunity for blacks to gain management and leadership skills, often in military occupations similar to their civilian jobs.

When doors are opened, the institutions cannot motivate young blacks to achieve, it's up to them, and its up to us to encourage them to strive for the best.

We've go to encourage our young people to make "pursuit of excellence" our continuing goal.

School Boards Can Play Bolder Roles

The recent National School Board Association meeting in Houston has reported that it envisioned a new and bolder role for school board members. It is noted that they proposed new committees to investigate specific educational concerns such as financing of schools, accountability and competence of teachers and administrators, evaluation of these professionals and bilingual education.

It was noted in its press release that NSBA did not indicate that they were seeking to continue to develop the optimum educational potential of all children. Instead, they proposed to counter the "so called intrusion of the courts and federally regulated agencies into school operations."

It must be remembered that some school boards, just like some individuals,

have had to be placed under a court order to make them carry out the law of the land in regard to all children securing an education. There are even those board members who are still seeking ways and means to evade the laws.

Local control may be good for some, but it appears that only Federal Guidelines and Funds in this day and time will make many school boards do what is proper toward all children.

School boards can play bolder roles in planning and developing the best possible education for all children. However, until that philosophy - for the optimum development of all children . . . is put into action they can expect continued Federal scrutiny and followup of guidelines.

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who propose to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the oceans majestic waves without the awful roar of its waters."

- Frederick Douglass

To Be Equal

Save The Electoral College

President Carter has proposed some sweeping changes in the electoral process designed to make American politics more democratic.

Some of his proposals would do just that, but one could cause more problems than it solves.

That is the plan to abolish the electoral college and replace it with the direct election of the President.

At present voters cast their ballots for slates of candidates pledged to support one of the contenders for the Presidency. The slate that gets the majority of votes in a state gets all that state's votes in the electoral college. It's an unwieldy process, but it has served us well in its almost 200 years of operation and it should not be cast aside lightly.

The major flaw in the process - that electors might vote for candidates other than the one they're pledged to - can be corrected by simply doing away with the electors and crediting each state with the appropriate number of electoral votes.

Do away with the indirect election of the President through the electoral college mechanism, and you open the door to the end of the two-party system. It could also lead to election of a president by a minority of voters unless a run-off election takes place, and a run - off would be in itself an incitement for minor parties which could bargain away their endorse-

ments to the highest bidder. Remember George Wallace?

For blacks, abolition of the electoral college would severely limit our political leverage in national elections.

The larger states have the most electoral votes. No one can become President without taking at least some states from among California, New York, Illinois, Texas, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio.

Take another look at that list. All of those states have significant black and minority populations. Black support in some of those states is essential for victory in the Presidential race. Take away the electoral college, and the importance of that black vote melts away.

Blacks, instead of being crucial to victory in major states, simply become ten per cent of the total electorate, with reduced impact. The same is true for other minorities and for city-dwellers. The one national arena where large groups of people deprived of influence in the Congress and in local governments can make their interests felt would be stripped away.

Inevitably, direct election of the President would ultimately mean formation of black parties, voting along racial lines and increasingly separated from the main parties, themselves weakened and dependent upon coalitions with splinter groups. The result would be less democratic in the real sense than the present system. The rest of the Administration program is

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just fine. It consists of plans for finally ending the patchwork of local election registration laws that operate to exclude people from the electoral process.

States unreasonably require advance registration and make the process difficult, with registration periods and facilities often arranged to discourage potential voters. In part, that's why U. S. voter turnout is so shockingly low - down to only 53 per cent of eligible citizens last fall.

Substituting a system of universal registration for Presidential and Congressional elections makes sense. All it takes is allowing anyone to vote if he or she shows up at the polls on Election Day with proper identification.

States with such simplified procedures have voting rates far higher than the rest of the country. Universal registration would bring into the system people effectively excluded because of red tape. And that exclusion has been deliberate. Elaborate registration procedures were formulated around the turn of the century as devices designed to exclude immigrants and blacks from voting.

So reforming the registration process is an important step toward democratizing our society. It should be adopted and states should be encouraged to use Election Day registrations for state and local elections as well.

But the electoral college has to be saved. Scrapping it will take us into unknown, and probably, unhealthy, regions.

Benjamin L. Hooks

A Tribute to Fannie Lou Hamer

In mid-March of this year, Fannie Lou Hamer, granddaughter of a slave, youngest of 20 children of sharecropping parents, an activist in the civil rights movement for more than a decade and a half, a citizen of the state of Mississippi, mother of two, herself and husband sharecroppers, and a true child of God, died after a long illness.

I did not know Mrs. Hamer, personally, although I had the good fortune to meet her several times. Her name during the turbulent 60s and 70s was an inspiration to all in the movement even though there was not always total agreement on how to tackle each and every issue of the moment.

She was legendary even in life, a martyr in her own times. In death she assumes a mystical aura, the status of sainthood shrouds her. She shines like nearly minted money in the treasury.

Her death came at a time when national and world events are rapidly converging to a state of crisis: the rapidly escalating incidences of desperate men snatching hostages and using the media to air their grievances are triggering increasing clamor by incensed citizens to curb morbidly excessive press coverage of such events;

The ominous build up of tensions in South Africa (Rhodesia, South West Africa, as well as in South Africa itself), that is threatening to explode into a bloody widespread racial war engulfing the entire lower half of that huge continent and ultimately engaging in the world's super powers in that dread holocaust; the rolling back of educational opportunities for blacks and

other minorities in this country by those who mask their bigotry by screaming "reverse discrimination" and citing hated quotas to bolster their racist arguments.

The busing issue, smouldering in places like Boston and Louisville, but remaining a volatile issue yet to be resolved; the House Assassinations Committee fighting for its natural life and turning up some troubling information and incidents surrounding persons and events in the assassinations of King and Kennedy;

and in her own state, once the symbol of die-hard-murderous racism, the NAACP is still fighting for its very life under the determined hammer blows of oppressors common to both the organization and Mrs. Hamer.

Mrs. Hamer's story is a familiar one; of being born black in dirt poor poverty, ignorance - in an atmosphere crackling with hatred and fear where a black's life was not worth a plugged nickel if he stood up for his rights.

Here is a tale of working from "kin to can't" (dawn to dust) in hot, humid cotton fields on plantations around Rayville, in Sunflower County, for starvation pay.

Her potential flared late in life. She was 45 years old with only a Mississippi version of a sixth grade education when the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee infused her with revolutionary life.

Her transfiguration began several years earlier however, in 1961 when she was sterilized in a hospital without her knowledge. She symbolized the lost potential of "many thousands of blacks gone" who never had a chance to flower

FCC
Commissioner



and become citizens who would enrich their society and times.

She was jailed, beaten, chased off the land for attempting to exercise the right to vote, a privilege she did not know she had until SNCC came along. She was the driving spirit behind the formation in 1964 of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party which ultimately won all of its state's delegates seat to the 1972 Convention.

Her experience with some southern whites who had contempt for black worth never caused her to hate anyone. She once said she could not hate anyone and expect to see God's face. Hers was a life of deeply entrenched religious beliefs.

Her songs of militance were those of an enduring and overcoming spirit. When she sang, "I Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round" the determination stood out, unnumbered by bitterness or hate.

Unlettered, poverty stricken, she nevertheless overcame this crippling background (she was also partially crippled by polio, aggravated by jailhouse beatings). Her impact on the civil rights movement and on this nation has put her in the enviable league of the other great black women of this nation: Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Rosa Parks among others.

U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, eulogized at her funeral: "If there had been no Ruleville," he said, "there could have been no Plains." Amen.

Congressman Hawkins' Column

By Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins

American Jobs Going Overseas

It may be kind of unfair to say that American jobs are going overseas, but it depends on where you stand on the free trade issue.

If you are for free trade between nations, minus all artificial barriers, then you might suggest that American labor must be more competitive with foreign labor.

On the other hand if you are an American worker who sees that foreign imports make up 52 per cent of the American market of the very product you are producing - then you may want America to provide more protection for your product. (More protection usually means placing a tariff or a quota on imported goods).

The 52 per cent figure I quoted, pertains to the size of the American market currently captured by foreign shoe manufacturers: Taiwan, Italy, Spain, Brazil, and South Korea, and Mexico.

This penetration of the domestic shoe industry has caused 300 American shoe factories to shut down since 1968, and has thrown some 70,000 Americans out of their jobs. In fact our importation of foreign made shoes has increased 788 per cent since 1966. (That's right 788 per cent!!)

And the situation since 1966 is as grim in some of our important industries, as suggested by the following import increases of foreign produced goods: clothing - a 500 per cent increase; textiles - 80 per cent; autos - 622 per cent; sugar - 130 per cent; T. V. sets - 614 per cent; stainless and alloy steel - 208 per cent.

These industries presently employ 3.4 million workers, and they are in direct competition with foreign workers, who average between 47 cents and 52 cents per hour, as against the average American manufacturing worker's wage of \$5.45 per hour.

These industries have also seen job losses of some 150,000 workers in textiles, 13,000 in tele-

vision, 50,000 to 90,000 in steel, and the already mentioned 70,000 workers in the shoe industry.

How long can we stand such dollar and job losses? This is exactly the question that American labor is asking the President. And at this point there are no easy answers.

In the case of the footwear industry, the President, decided against tariffs or quotas. And this may be a key to how the President will handle other related import matters, since the President is supposed to be a "free-trader". What the President wants to negotiate are voluntary agreements - with exporting countries; agreements which will limit imports to the United States.

However, the so-called "protectionists", backing up the United States International Trade Commission's recommendation of increased foreign shoe tariffs, intend to take this battle to the Congress.

The protectionists are in agreement with the I. T. C. view that certain American industries are in a survival struggle against foreign imports, and therefore need protection. For example the I. T. C. recommended that the current 10 per cent tariff on foreign made shoes remain, providing no more than 265.5 million pairs of foreign shoes entered the country. Any importation over this level would undergo a 40 per cent tariff increase.

What can the Congress do?

Under the Trade Act of 1974, the Congress has the power to set quotas and tariffs on foreign made products which adversely affect American industries. But the Congress will probably move slowly in this area in order to see the degree to which the President can negotiate a change in the foreign import climate.

Traditionally the United States has been committed to a free trade philosophy. And over a period of time this philosophy has paid off; since

the massive exporting ability of this country, has raised our living standards totally out of proportion to others on this globe.

Currently, the previous receivers - of our goods, are now massively exporting their goods to our shores. Can we cut this flow off, without doing further damage to our economy?

The free traders say that raising tariffs and quotas on foreign goods will raise domestic prices. They also claim that the foreign countries will retaliate in kind, by raising their tariffs and quotas on American goods, and further, these countries will stop buying American products.

Maybe the President is right; working out agreements so that the importers and exporters can mutually benefit, is the only way. We'll see.

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