

## KEPT COMMITMENTS TO CIVIL RIGHTS



## BE NOT DECEIVED

During the recent Republican National Convention in Detroit, a reporter asked an unemployed auto worker about his voting intentions in the November election. The man answered, in essence, that when something burns one hand, you shift it over to the other hand, and though he had voted for President Carter in the last election, he would be forced to make another choice this next election.

In Durham, a usually concerned voter, commenting on the subject said that he would write the names of the three major candidates on three pieces of paper, throw them up the air, and the one he caught on the way down would be the one he would vote for in November.

In the case of the presidential elections this year, it may appear that 17 million black potential voters have nobody to vote for who offers a glimmer of hope for a better life. Betrayed by Jimmy Carter, doubtful of Ronald Reagan and wondering about John Anderson, many black voters are talking about not even bothering to vote. They could, of course, investigate some of the other candidates running.

Be not deceived! Somebody is going to run this country. Somebody is going to be president. Black folk cannot lie down and let somebody else's steamroller run over us, which is what will surely happen if we don't exert our political muscle.

Seventeen million potential votes can swing the election and, in so doing, get some commitments and hold somebody accountable for them. We will never

get all we need or want out of a candidate, but we can influence one enough to get more than we have. Some influence is better than none at all.

The political arena cares naught for sentiment. It responds only to power. Just because we have always voted a particular political party, is no justification for always doing so. That's like saying 'I'm in the pocket, treat me any way you like, but I'll stay in the pocket-grin and bear it.' We must think politically. We must think and wield our voting power in such a way that we use the political system, rather than having it mis-use us.

The survival of black folks is at stake. We've seen what happened in Miami, Florida this summer when police brutes were freed after killing a black man. We've seen what happened this week in Chattanooga, Tennessee when klansmen were freed after killing blacks. Right-wing forces have declared war against black folk. Its a war we can win with the painless casting of 17 million ballots in November. Not one drop of blood need be wasted.

Seventeen million potential black voters must mobilize for the November 4 offensive. The gains of the sixties are swiftly being eroded. Miami and Chattanooga were tests of just how much injustice black folks are going to swallow. We've got to go the polls in droves come November — not only for the White House, but for Court House and everything between as well. And our vote cannot be for sale!

Be not deceived. Its now or never.

## BEGRUDGED CRUMBS

The pathetic wailings of the 'haves' over ten per cent of all federal public-works contracts going to 'have nots' would be ludicrous if that ten per cent was not so essential to the survival of many minority firms.

Edwin Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing, Washington-based public policy research organization, in a July 17 column entitled "Affirmative Action Fallout", decries the July 3 Supreme Court decision to uphold the 1977 set-aside law for minorities. He objects to those who have had no chance at all — because of the fat cat's greed, selfishness, bigotry, et cetera — getting even an opportunity at the ten per cent crumbs.

It is somewhat amusing to listen to foes of affirmative action justifying their objections to opportunity for a segment of the

population for whom opportunity and justice were denied (and still are) for over three hundred years.

Feulner and other affirmative action opponents talk about the "American way," the ideal of "American equality" and other such high-sounding phrases. We hope they know in their heart of hearts that their tongues are in their cheeks and that those phrases signify nothing for minorities. Until they have suffered three hundred years in an effort to balance the books in this country, they ought to shut their mouths about what is 'just' and what is 'unjust'.

Everybody has to pay for his/her sins sooner or later — its been that way since the beginning of time. So, opponents of affirmative action, you created the shoe that pinches, so wear it with grace until you make a better one.

## Tax Cut Talk — More Politics Than Economics

By Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins

By now American voters ought to be wise to election-year tax cutting talk. They ought to be, but they aren't! So the result is that once again we are facing the usual hot-air rhetoric about lowering taxes.

And as the presidential campaign heats up, the tax-cut yack will get fiercer and fiercer.

The truth of the matter is that no real tax cut is likely now anyhow. And even if a tax cut was adopted by the Congress today, it would be drawn in too much haste to adequately respond to the deep-seated economic ills of the nation.

In any event, what we are currently being deluged with is the Ronald Reagan tax-cut proposal. (Ronald Reagan, you know, is running for President of the United States!) Reagan proposes an across-the-board ten per cent tax cut for the individual tax-payer.

Is the Reagan plan a true tax cut?

Well, it may be if you are making \$100,000 per year, because it will save you about \$2,200. But if you are a middle-income person earning around \$18,000, you're likely to have an on-paper tax saving of a meager \$150 per year. In other words, the more you earn, the greater the tax relief, and conversely the less you earn, the smaller

the tax cut.

Another way of looking at the Reagan Plan is to see where most of the tax cut is going to go. Those persons earning \$30,000 or more will get 73 per cent of the cut; those in the \$15,000 to \$30,000 bracket will receive about 37 per cent. If you are in the working-poor category, your group will receive about thirteen per cent of the cut.

It's a simple equation: no matter what the tax cut looks like, the tax burden for most households will remain the same — thanks to inflation — and in fact in many instances, the tax bite will even experience an increase.

But even if the proposed tax cut was modestly reasonable, it would be drastically off-set by the coming increase in Social Security taxes in 1981.

Those most hard hit by the increasing Social Security tax will be in the \$29,700 and below category; they will see the maximum rate jump from \$1,587.67 to \$1,975.05 this year.

Thus, under the Reagan Plan, low and middle income wage earners would actually see no relief in their living costs at all — and they should therefore recognize such tax-cut talk as election-year gimmickry. Essentially, the Reagan Plan would not appreciably

change the average federal tax burden of 17.5 per cent of income paid by most tax payers. In any event, that burden is probably going to rise — whatever the eventual tax relief law looks like which means that most of us will then be paying about eighteen per cent of our income in federal taxes.

There are other reasons why the Reagan tax cut plan is bad: it will promote greater inflation; it will increase budget deficits; it will cause an escalation in interest rates leading to credit restrictions; and it will increase chances for deepening the current recession.

I'm not opposed to tax cuts. But I believe they must be made selectively and they must promote an economy that is moving toward full employment.

Any tax cut, in my view, must be tailored to increase employment, to increase the production of goods and services, to stabilize and eventually lower living costs, and to promote the ability of American products to be competitive in the domestic market-place and in the foreign market-place.

This is the only kind of tax-cut talk I will be involved in, since my interest lies in a tax structure plan which will increase employment and which will ensure that the nation's economic growth will be balanced and stable.

By Ada M. Fisher

## Spectacles: A Closer Look

## Revitalizing The Draft — Expanding Our Options

I do not decry the return of the draft; I'm for it if it is done right. If all sexes, all colors, and economic strata are included without exception, each with equal opportunities available for training and advancement, the draft could be a good thing. In fact, the draft could be expanded to a National Service Corps where all citizens 18-40 must serve two years.

Why this idea? Too many people in our society can't afford a lawyer, can't find a doctor, or must suffer for lack of adequate nursing and dental care. But suppose we required two years of service of all professionals in underserved areas. This would mean access to professional services hopefully at reasonable costs. It would guarantee experience for professionals in the "real world" where poverty and illiteracy are all too real while caring for those in need. And most importantly, it would mean service to America.

Having done two years of service in rural America, I'd heartily recommend it for anyone. Since the costs of all professional education are underwritten by taxpayers, it is reasonable that they should be served by those they have paid to educate.

For non-professionals we could expand roles in forestry, the environment, construc-

tion, recreation, education, etc. We could put our money where our mouth is and start improving America by having the people serve their country. I'm not advocating government take-over. I'm advocating people participation. Imagine a small town without water, sewage treatment, a backwards school system, a plummeting economy and no money. Lend them the resource people through the draft to help train their citizens or improve their community. Watch the change. Watch them grow. Reasonable legal aid, medical care, social services, etc., could be had with a little imagination, thought, planning and less bureaucracy.

If we do have a draft for the military, both sexes should be selected to serve. There are many jobs from clerks, nurses, physicians, teachers, mechanics, engineers, pilots, etc., to combat troops which must be filled. There is a place for women as well as men in today's military.

Having come through the 60's and 70's; lived through many war protestations; witnessed the death of hundreds who gave their lives for this country only to have their family and friends denied entrance to restaurants, restrooms, etc.; seen people fight for freedom of the press and free

speech to have these very freedoms infringed upon; now again watching as those who exercise their right to protest in America, a democratic country, being photographed and having dossiers compiled on them; having done and experienced all of this, many Americans are not sure which side is right. We cannot fight wars for the profits of business; yet we cannot sit back and let democracy get trounced. We cannot fight for human rights abroad while denying these and civil rights at home. We cannot be a government by, of, and for the people unless we are willing to be with our people — to feel our hurt, to listen to our woes of anguish, and to deal upfront honestly and truthfully with our problems. We cannot be a people without creativity and vision. We must not live a lie.

America needs a service force reflective of Her people — its good and bad, strong and weak; but mainly of Her compassionate. If we do not serve Her, then we cripple Her; possibly leaving Her to be run by those who do not have the best interest of Her Democracy at heart.

Black People Wake Up! Either we choose the direction we will go or we will be chosen and told where to go. Don't delay, register to vote and let your sentiments be known.

By Norman Hill

## The Black Middle Class — No Silent Minority

*Black Enterprise Magazine* recently polled its readership on a wide range of social, economic, and political topics. The results of this poll, the first such comprehensive study of the attitudes of middle-class, college-educated blacks, are sometimes surprising and always illuminating.

Most importantly, the *Black Enterprise* poll's results belie the claims of pundits who have suggested that the black middle class is becoming increasingly conservative, complacent, and content, and that its interests are somehow at odds with the interests of working class blacks and poor.

More than nine out of ten of the poll's respondents indicated that they felt a moral obligation to help those blacks who are educationally and/or economically disadvantaged. Moreover, middle-class blacks are aware of the debt they owe to the civil rights movement. Ninety-one per cent of them agree that the gains they have made are a product of the movement of the 1960s.

This is not, however, to suggest that all is well or that the war has been won. Seventy-two per cent of the respondents in fact felt that racism is no less prevalent today than it was a decade ago. In addition, virtually all of the respondents (95.6%) felt that whites harbor some form of racism toward blacks. And 78% admitted to having some

negative feelings toward whites.

The poll likewise revealed a deep sense of frustration with the political progress of blacks. Over 31 per cent of those polled felt that blacks should form their own political party. Such a prescription, however, is not only unworkable but would spell disaster for blacks who today are already woefully under-represented in government.

The discontents of the black middle class have not made it indifferent to political differences between the parties. And this is a healthy sign which flies in the face of the substantial sentiment the poll revealed for a black political party. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents believe there is a difference between the policies of the Democrats and Republicans.

Moreover, a similar two-thirds feel that black mayors — elected without benefit of a black party — have produced better government. In addition, nearly 50% of those polled stated that blacks would be unable to attain equality without forging an alliance with whites. A healthy political sense was also revealed in the poll's finding that middle class blacks rank the labor movement and white liberals number one and two, respectively, in a list of the most loyal allies of the black community.

These results appear to suggest that middle-class

blacks will continue to take part in the coalitions which are today so vitally necessary. Yet this should not blind us to the poll's alarming indication that a number of misperceptions exist, concerning economic reality. Over two-thirds of the black middle class may feel that blacks as a group are better off or as well off economically as they were ten years ago. But, alas, this sentiment is not supported by the facts. Clearly those blacks who entered the middle class in the 1960s and 70s are reflecting their own economic progress rather than that of blacks as a whole. According to recent statistics, since 1970 median black incomes have dropped from 64% of white incomes to 59%. Moreover, this erosion has occurred at a time when the purchasing power of the take-home pay of all workers has been steadily declining. It is precisely this decline in the standard of living of all working people, black and white, which needs to be addressed.

And the goal of educating middle class blacks about certain economic realities remains a critical task. Indeed, it is one of the central tasks of an effective black leadership. Needless to say, blacks usually do not find a frank discussion of their economic status in the mass media. Many of the uncomfortable statistics remain poorly analyzed and under-reported. We

can only hope that when the next *Black Enterprise* survey is held on that magazine's 20th Anniversary, the sentiment that blacks as a group are better off than they were ten years ago will be borne out by the facts. But this will only happen if an effective coalition is built for economic democracy and justice.

In the final analysis, the poll's results are largely encouraging. They indicate that middle-class blacks are not prepared to abandon their service to the black community or to jettison a strategy of working in coalition with white liberals and labor. These are the healthy signs which point the way to victory.

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