

VIEWPOINTS editorials ● columns

Member North Carolina Black Publisher's Association



Cut Out The Food Tax

The most constructive step the General Assembly can take this year to bring equity to North Carolina's tax system is to repeal the sales tax on food.

There is a tendency not to notice the four percent extra which rings on the cash register. Few take the time to notice the tax before groaning at the overall total of their grocery bill.

However, the average North Carolina taxpayer is likely to spend more on the sales tax each year than on the state income tax, the tax which is more noticeable, appearing on one's paycheck.

Unlike the income tax, the sales tax is a regressive form of taxation. That means that it most severely affects the poor. U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that low-income families spend 25 per cent of their income on food, in comparison to the nine percent upper-income families spend.

Another analysis, compiled by the state Legal Aid office shows that a family surviving on a minimum-wage income will spend 41 per cent of its income on food, and pay \$92.16 per year on food sales taxes.

Senior citizens living on Social Security will spend 29 per cent of their income, according to the Legal Aid analysis, on food and pay almost \$50 per year in food sales taxes.

Relief from those extra few pennies or dollars on top of each week's grocery bill would be much more meaningful than the \$25 rebate idea that Gov. Hunt has floated.

Twenty-two of the 45 states levying sales taxes exempt food. The regressive nature of the tax is only part of the rationale behind the growing national movement against taxes on food and other necessities.

The sharp increase in food prices is another contributing factor. As the cost of food goes up, (60 per cent since 1973 with another 10 per cent predicted this year), the amount of sales tax collected goes up, taking an even bigger bite out of family budgets.

Food tax relief should be begun not as an isolated move. First, there is the question of where can the lost revenue (\$150 million for fiscal year 1978-79) be recouped. There is also the question of whether it should be recouped.

Part of any such recoupment could come from the sales tax itself. Most services are exempted from the tax. That aspect is one of the current tax's more regressive features. The poor spend a large portion of their income on non-exempt essential items, while the more wealthy spend more on exempt items.

What is needed is an overall look at the state's manner of raising its revenue, from the income tax to the sales tax to the taxes levied by localities, particularly the property tax to insure that the burden of taxation is fairly distributed and in line with the ability of the citizens to pay.

America's New Realities

From Iran to Mexico to China, we see evidence of new realities affecting the way America conducts its foreign policy.

No longer can American officials or businesses stamp their foot and dictate policies in other nations. No longer can American needs take precedence over the internal needs of other nations.

This shift in geopolitical relationships is deeply rooted in the liberation struggles of "Third World" nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia, dating back from the two World Wars.

The leaders we see today telling America to deal with Third World nations on equal terms are either first or second generation products of those liberation fights.

The task ahead for our leadership is to understand the nature of these "new realities" and to adjust American policies to fit within the new world order.

Such a change will be difficult. In the crises in Iran and Chinese border, the Carter administration has resisted the temptation to intervene massively as previous administrations might have done.

Instead, other nations were left alone to work out their own affairs. However, there is a conservative backlash which interprets the policy of non-interference as a sign of weakness.

Adherents to this theme say they're tired of seeing America pushed around. What they fail to see is the emergence of new power blocks which force an interdependent America to take other nations into account.

The choice America takes, honest dealing with all nations or "gunboat diplomacy" will likely determine whether the world begins to live in true peace or consumes itself in warfare.

Letters to the Chronicle

Student Discovers Need For History

Dear Editor:

I am writing to tell you about the lack of knowledge of our black history in the city/county schools. I am depressed to find that most of our young people do not know who some of our most important people are.

These young people who will face the future's challenges have hardly any knowledge of our heritage. It is necessary for us to

know where we really stand in the world at present and in the past.

I feel we have been rudely neglected by the public schools. Teachers need to know more of the heritage so they can teach the students and help them understand what struggles we've come through by exposing them to some of our most important speakers, poets, writers,

etc.

This is a need all of us share -- mostly the young. Students are the future leaders and citizens, and they must know what we've been through and how far we have to go to reach the full meaning of the word "equality."

Regarding the articles in your paper, I appreciate reading about Winston-

Salem's black history. I never knew about that information before.

The articles give me an idea of what it was like back in 1769. Your articles are very important to all of us. Many of us don't know about our beginnings here in Winston-Salem, and I'm pleased you brought these facts to your paper.

I'm sure all of us want to know more about our history in Winston-Salem. Thank you again for bringing these valuable facts of our past lives to your paper.

Sincerely yours,
Ronnie Conrad,
Student/Learning Center

Column Read

Dear Editor:

I've heard from attorneys from Raleigh, Durham, Georgia and other places about our articles in "EXPERT ADVICE." Apparently *The Chronicle* has wide circulation. Needless to say, I'm quite pleased and am writing more articles.

Evelyn Dove
Legal Aid Society

Relative Noted

Dear Editor:

Realizing that I would be interested, two very dear friends of mine (in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Dock A. Grier) sent me pages 13-16 of *The Chronicle*, dated February 3, 1979.

I was thrilled to read your report, "Roots of Black Winston-Salem." I recognized the picture labeled "The First Building at Winston-Salem State University" as the building where I attended Sunday School and Episcopal Church Services between 1913-1924.

Further, I was delighted to see my Grandfather's name, Bridgers, listed among the early black attorneys. I remember quite well Atty. John Fitts and Atty. J.L. Lanier. To complete your records, I am writing to say that my Grandfather's initials are A.R. (the late Atty. A.R. Bridgers). The initials stand for Aaron Reuben.

I am most grateful to my friends for sending me this portion of your paper. I don't know the cost per copy, however, I would really appreciate it if you would send me a complete

Write the Chronicle

at

P.O. Box 3154,

Winston - Salem,

N.C. 27102



Dr. James P. Comer

Getting Along



Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint

Problems Common To All

[Alvin F. Poussaint and James P. Comer are psychiatrists and the authors of the book "Black Child Care." Dr. Poussaint is associate professor of psychiatry and associate dean for student affairs at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Comer is professor of child psychiatry and associate dean for student affairs at Yale University School of Medicine.]

Dear Dr. Poussaint: I am a 23 year old black woman. Recently I was forced to remove my bumpersticker which stated "I'm Proud to Be Black" due to a number of incidents such as mysterious scratches on the hood of my car (no accident, I'm sure), sticky fluid poured on the windows, KKK stickers on the car door, and harassment by a police officer.

I had thought that racism was dying out, but needless to say, I'm having doubts about that now. Why don't white people want us to be proud? They've taken everything else, must they take our pride, too? Incidentally, my car is a new sports car and kind of flashy. Could that be a factor?

S.O. Houston, Texas

Dear S.O.: Racism is not dead in America. In fact, it is alive and well. Although this country has seen a great deal of progress in the area of race relations in the last several decades, much still remains to be accomplished.

Some whites, usually those who are uneducated, resent any sense of pride or achievement displayed by black people. The would like blacks to remain inferior. Many times, underachieving whites are jealous of successful blacks.

Consequently, these whites begin to experience of inferiority and self-doubt and then take out their frustrations on other racial groups who are supposed to be inferior to them. Some members of the white community are so downtrodden that they feel their only recourse is their whiteness and attitude of white supremacy.

Fortunately, it is a small minority who commits these acts of harassment like those you experienced. But these incidents create an unpleasant and sometimes threatening atmosphere. However, don't take unnecessary risks in neighborhoods you don't know well. Your flashy car will attract attention and some misguided people will feel you are trying to rub in your success.

Finally, tell the local police and community groups about the harassment you are experiencing. It is

important that local officials speak out against incidents before they escalate into major problems.

Dear Dr. Poussaint: I attended a predominantly white prestigious prep school which had a small black enrollment. Consequently, I became very good friends with many of the white students. Because of this experience I now feel very comfortable with whites.

I am now a freshman at college and my close friends are white. Most black students seem to resent this and ostracize me even though I have tried to become friends with some of them. Don't blacks believe in democracy and black/white brotherhood anymore? As for me, I have no choice but to stick with my white friends.

Dear L.M.J.: Your dilemma is not a simple one. You may indeed have had a unique experience, different from the bulk of black students. While you have learned to trust whites, many blacks who also believe in black/white brotherhood have not had similar positive experiences with whites and are more distrustful and suspicious of them.

Sometimes interracial friendships can be particularly trying. I know of many blacks who have had friends who drew the line on how far their friendship could go.

As your white friends leave college and enter the world of social pressures and racial prejudices, your liberalism may fade away. Thus, you may face rejection at some point when out of the protected confines of college. Black students in your situation have been quite bitter and disillusioned with this type of rejection.

There are other issues you might want to consider. Your own social, cultural speech and styles may be more akin to your white prep school friends than to your college associates who may see you as different and peculiar. They may even feel that you think you are better than them because of your associations with affluent whites. Since it is not unusual for blacks from predominantly white environment to feel superior to other blacks, you should be careful not to be condescending or arrogant to your black classmates.

Closely examine the relationships you have with your white friends. Are you trying too hard to be just like them and to be accepted? Are you their teddy bear part of their socially broadening experience but not perceived as an equal?

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Speaking Out

By Bayard Rustin

During the 1960's, many young militants complained that American democracy was nothing more than a sham, a mere facade to conceal the real workings of an oppressive system. In **Black Power**, for example, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton pointed to "the conflict between the so-called American Creed and American practice."

As they saw things, democracy's claims to equality and liberty "are simply words."

While some black people despaired of the democratic political process, others -- like Dr. King, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and many more -- grappled with its imperfections and transformed it into a dynamic agent for racial equality and constructive social change.

This transformation, of course, did not miraculously happen overnight. On the contrary, it was the culmination of a long series of painfully slow advances, some of them almost imperceptible and seemingly insignificant. We fought the hard and long sometimes against terrible odds; but, by and large, we succeeded in achieving many of our most important goals.

Without a doubt, then,

the old Carmichael-Hamilton critique of American democracy was proved erroneous. Yet as we topped one obstacle after another, by organizing a Congressional majority, we never succeeded in eliminating one particularly frustrating roadblock -- the Senate filibuster. Indeed, by establishing de facto minority rule, the filibuster serves as a perfect example of "a conflict between so-called American Creed and American practice," to use the words of Carmichael and Hamilton.

People with good memories will surely recall the 83-day talkathon aimed at defeating the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although the bill had President Johnson's support, and the backing of a clear majority in the Senate, a minority held it captive by coralling it with a filibuster. Eventually the filibuster ended and the bill became law, but many other key pieces of civil rights legislation were either defeated or delayed by minority veto in the Senate. Passage of the Anti-Poll Tax bill, for instance, was delayed for 22 years because of filibusters and threats of filibusters. And the Fair Employment Practices Act was held hos-

tage for 18 years.

Now, after fighting the undemocratic filibuster for so many years, we seem to be on the verge of a major breakthrough. Because of the untiring work of Senate Minority Leader Robert

Byrd, a man who has once used the filibuster truly masterful way, the Senate will soon consider a set of new rules designed to curb the veto power of

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