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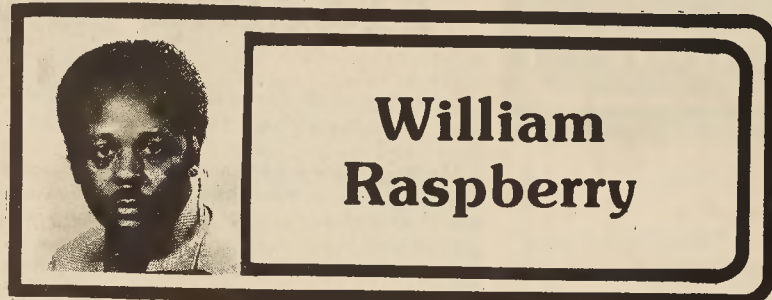
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Economics Of Discrimination

Washington--It was billed as a debate on the "economics of discrimination." But as soon as I saw that one of the debaters was Prof. Walter Williams, I knew it would be less a debate than an entertainment.



William Raspberry

I wasn't disappointed. Dr. Williams, who along with Thomas Sowell, has been outraging black America with his consecutive economics, went first and spent nearly all of his allotted time questioning the very implication of the debate's title. Discrimination? What discrimination? And even if it exists, what's wrong with it?

"When I married my wife, I discriminated against other women; that is, I didn't give all women equal opportunity. I didn't give white women a chance,

Chinese women a chance, fat women a chance, ugly women a chance. Women that don't bathe regularly, I didn't give them a chance."

Well, if the Temple University professor (now at George Mason University in Virginia) doesn't object to discrimination, perhaps he'll accept that prejudice might not be a good thing.

Don't kid yourself. Prejudice is nothing more than resort to stereotypes, and

"stereotypes, many times, turn out to be very useful because they allow us to economize on information... Suppose as you are leaving the Capitol Hill Club (where the debate was held late last month) you saw a great big tiger standing there? What would most of you do? Well the fairly safe prediction would be that you would leave the area in great dispatch. Is the reason

that you would run or seek safety based on any detailed information about that particular tiger, or are you saying, 'All I need to know is that it is a tiger and it probably acts like other tigers?'"

Okay, so marriage partners are personal decisions, not societal ones, and your reaction to uncaged tigers is not exactly crucial to the economics of discrimination. Surely the clever pro-

essor would have no problem with the judgment that damages the life of a qualified individual to listen to him:

"Suppose you are an employer and you are looking for an employee. You might want to know the job training and so you want to know who will probably score maybe 700 or 800 on the SAT test. Now, if you have a thousand potential employees, you send your resume to the highest scorers (the ghetto)?" He says you wouldn't, and you find your answer sensible.

And so it went. Leon Keyserling, the economist, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, came to the debate. He was clearly perplexed. He came here with the idea of a discussion on discrimination would not be whether there was discrimination, but what to do about it. There would be discussion of the pros and cons of various practical approaches to dealing with discrimination.

It never got to the point because Williams described himself as a product of the ghetto. He never brought himself to admit, even for the sake of argument, that any part of the problem of the conflicting black Americans did acknowledge that there are unfair and unequal disparities in the situation of black and white. But the disparities, he insisted, almost entirely the result of governmental programs that have "cut the rungs off the ladder."

Williams might have made some sense (among the nonconservatives in the mostly conservative audience gathered at the Heritage Foundation) for his contention that government policies create opportunities for blacks. For example, the regulation of the Interstate Commerce Commission that made it difficult for newcomers to break the interstate trucking business. But he had no chance by refusing to acknowledge that nongovernmental racism were any part of the problem.

Perhaps Williams' line was the zinger he wanted at me. He said I had edged him and Sowell for failure to put forward positive programs to replace the existing actual ones designed to create black opportunity. He said such political minimum wage and living requirements create an economic cancer.

"If a doctor looks at a patient with cancer, the doctor says to the doctor, 'after you take the cancer out, what are you going to put in its place?'"

The trouble with analogy is that it seems to postulate some cancerous state to which black America could return if the government got out of the way.

Unfortunately, to get out all governmental effort on behalf of blacks is to return to those clear days of full employment called slavery.

Minorities Cut Out-Off

While President Ronald Reagan is recuperating from an assassination attempt last week, his cabinet members and advisors are busy cutting blacks and other minorities to the quick with their budget proposals.

Every single program that benefits blacks, minorities and women is being either eliminated totally or cut so that they most certainly could not survive from one fiscal year to the next and would perish from lack of funding.

Reagan and his Director of the Office of Management and Budget, David Stockman, want the elimination of 300,000 to 400,000 public service employment jobs; elimination of over 400,000 employment and training slots in the elimination of the YETP/YCCIP and the consolidation of youth programs with Title IIBC training programs.

They are calling for the elimination of over 12,000 employment and training slots in the Welfare Reform Demonstration Programs; the elimination of over 45,000 employment and training slots in the Young Adult Conservation Corps and the Youth Conservation Corps, and the reduction of Title III discretionary and support funds.

Other cuts proposed by Stockman for fiscal years 81-82 include the termination of the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG); termination of Section 312 Rehabilitation Loan Fund; termination of Economic Development Administration programs and major reductions in Urban Mass Transportation Grants and elimination of all Title II and Title VI public service jobs.

No funding for the EPA water treatment projects. A \$2.2 billion cut in funds

for unemployment benefits the elimination of two to three million poor people from food stamps; a cut of \$1.2 million in child nutrition programs and the elimination of grants for state and local energy conservation programs.

Stockman's proposals, which many feel will pass through congress and the house on the tide of conservatism that its members were elected in, are just the beginning.

The reduction of funding to agencies is fairly acceptable, but the elimination of programs that provide jobs, housing and assistance in buying groceries for children, poor people and others who are deprived in some way is inexcusable.

Perhaps more startling than the direction our country is headed is that someone forgot to ask the American people what "they" wanted.

Although Reagan and Stockman have made many recommendations about how to put people out of work, they haven't decided how to let people feed their families, pay their bills and maintain a scant existence without taking to the streets in desperation because they have no hope of work.

Perhaps one way to save this country would be for its elected officials to take a cut in pay, cabinet members included. That ought to be good for a billion or so. Another way that might bring in quite a cash flow would be the elimination of tax shelters for millionaires.

President Reagan must realize that he represents us all, not just the few who could afford to live regardless of what happens to the economy.

He must also realize that the economy didn't just get bad, it took time, as will the solution. Butchering is not the answer.

Clifton Graves

Attack On Lawyers

Last week in Philadelphia, this writer attended the annual Basic Skills Training workshop sponsored by the Reginald Heber Smith Legal Fellowship Program. The "Reggie" program, presently based at Howard University, was founded in 1967 by its namesake out of a sincere desire to provide more lawyers to serve the poor communities of this land; in effect, to train advocates for the poor...

The honor of being selected as a "Reggie" is partly determined by one's academic performance in law school. But, given the nature of the program, more emphasis is correctly placed on the applicant's demonstrated commitment to make the heretofore elusive phrase, "equal justice for all," a concrete reality. Once chosen, the "Reggie" is assigned to a legal services office (e.g. the Legal Aid society of Winston-Salem) to serve out his/her fellowship. Since its inception 14 years ago, the "Reggie" program has trained over 1,000 lawyers dedicated to representing the interests of residents of the various ghettos, barrios, reservations and farmlands of this country...

While the primary purpose of the Philly gathering was to hone up on legal skills (e.g. techniques, etc.), many of the participants had another agenda; an agenda whose thrust centered around the survival of legal services and to wit, the "Reggie" program.

For, as you all know by now, the Ronald (Robin Hood for the Rich) Reagan administration has targeted the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) for extinction. LSC - created by congress in 1974 is an outgrowth of the "Great Society's" office of Economic Opportunity program. A target of conservative forces since its inception, LSC currently provides grants to 325 legal services programs operating 1400 offices across the country serving some 3 million poor folk of all races. The "Reggie" program is among that number of LSC-funded programs.

But let me be clear on this, the "Reggie" fellows in Philly were not so much concerned about our jobs, or the mere survival of our program. Rather, there was anger expressed over the conservative forces' determination to go for the "jugular"; anger that the attack on legal services for the poor is an integral part of the right-wing master plan to cutback

vitaly needed social programs such as medicaid, food stamps, CETA, etc. For clearly, the conservatives' plan is simple, if not demonic: first, severely cut programs like food stamps, then, eliminate the lawyers. Thus, those hurt by these cutbacks have no legal recourse to challenge the system. Real cute, Reagan...

But, this plan, if executed, may well backfire. For despite its inherent biases and inequities, America's legal system represents the only forum where alleged wrongs can be righted by one's own peers; a forum where at least poor folk have a shot at some justice. Thus, I concur with F. William McCalpin, corporate lawyer and chairman of the LSC Board of Directors, who testified before Congress that Reagan's budget cuts affecting the poor will "raise feelings of alienation and frustration to a level we have not seen in 15 years...we need equal access to justice to keep the controversies in balance, within the system. That's what legal services is all about..."

Though a major lobbying effort to save LSC is underway, spearheaded by the American Bar Association, as well as a non-partisan group called the Coalition to Save Legal Services, much more support

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To Be Equal

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

While public attention is diverted to the heavy budget cuts in social programs, the next stage of the current counter-revolution in domestic policy is quietly proceeding.

That is the packaging of existing federal social programs into block grants which the states would administer with a minimum of federal supervision; in effect, turning over key social functions like health care and welfare to the states.

This new policy of shifting federal dollars, federal responsibilities, and federal powers to the fifty states amounts to a resurrection of the discredited concept of "states' rights."

Black people could teach the nation a bit about states' rights. We know states' rights meant separate drinking fountains, separate schools, separate and unequal lives.

We know that today, state administration of federal programs such as welfare, Medicaid, and others is inefficient and often discriminatory. We know that state and local administration is a large part of the reason why eligibility rules are ignored to the extent that nearly half of black welfare families are excluded from Medicaid.

Federal aid to education monies are often spent in violation of federal regulations by local school districts

States To Administer Social Programs?



that use funds targeted for schools in poor neighborhoods for other purposes. Many school districts have had to return such misspent federal funds after they've been caught.

Yet, even with this record of inefficiency and misallocation of funds, lawmakers now propose removing federal restrictions from federal tax dollars and turning money over to state and local governments to do what they have proven many times over they are incapable of doing -- targeting money and programs for the benefit of the disadvantaged.

So while we must oppose budget cuts in programs that do work, we must prepare for the even tougher battle against block grants and the surrender of federal programs to the states.

Some states can be relied upon to institute and administer programs for the benefit of the disadvantaged. But the historical record, and the record of the current urban block grant programs, clearly demonstrates that many would abuse the rights of the poor.

Some state and local authorities make a persuasive argument for putting control of programs closer to the people they serve. But local authorities are far more vulnerable to local power structures and voting blocs that would end those programs.

Many states would treat the poor equitably. But rights embedded by law in federal entitlement programs would go by the boards. Twenty years of federal court decisions protecting the basic civil and human rights of program recipients would be wiped out by changing the ground rules of those programs.

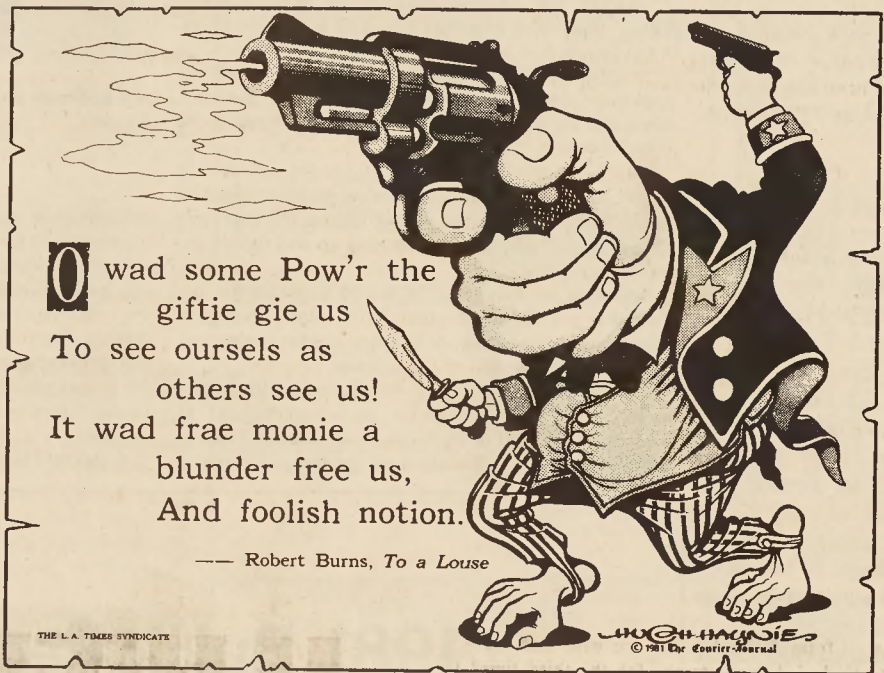
The search for local solutions to social problems must be encouraged. But localizing solutions to national problems tends to compound those problems.

Federal social programs should meet clear criteria: They should be national in scope, accountable, efficient, and equitable. The block grant system violates every one of those criteria.

It would make about as much sense to turn national defense into a block grant program and rely on state National Guards for our security. Absurd, isn't it? Yet that is what we propose to do with programs essential for our domestic national security and well-being.

Those of us who have a vision of an open, pluralistic, integrated society, have the duty to resist an increase in the misery inflicted on poor people and the increase in the ranks of America's deprived.

We must question not only specific budget cuts, but the revival of states' rights doctrines that would push the poor deeper into the pit of poverty.

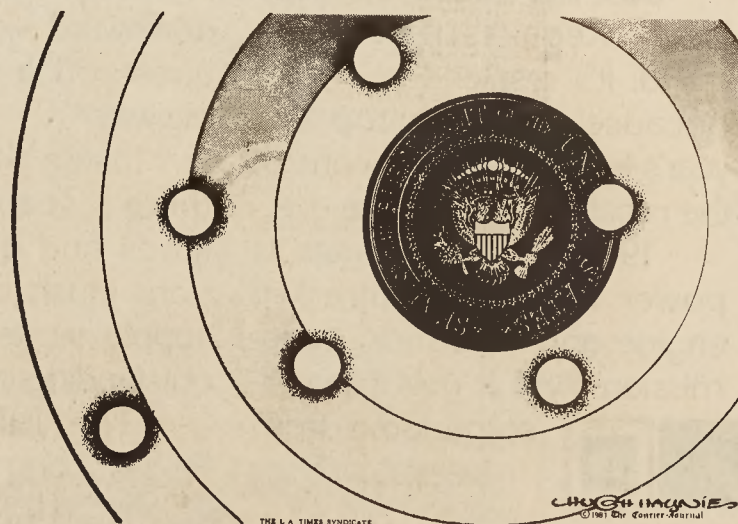


O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
 To see oursels as others see us!
 It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
 And foolish notion.

— Robert Burns, To a Louse

THE L.A. TIMES SYNDICATE

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THE GREAT AMERICAN MINDLESS GAME