

Editorials & Comments

Equality In Housing, When?

by Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Editorial Writer

On November 20, 1962, John F. Kennedy signed a President's Executive Order 11063 Equal Opportunity in Housing. The Order's opening paragraph says, "Whereas the granting of Federal assistance for the provision, rehabilitation, or operation of housing and related facilities from which Americans are excluded because of their race, color, creed, or national origin is unfair, unjust, and inconsistent with the public policy of the United States as manifested in its Constitution and laws..."

As little as it may be known, this Order was a significant break with the past—especially between 1912 and 1947—when many cities moved housing segregation from being a landlord's right to public policy and many federally supported housing programs had racism clearly written into their policies.

Furthermore, in spite of Order 11063, Black Americans today have a 75 percent chance of facing discrimination in seeking a rental unit and a 62 percent chance if looking for a house to purchase. These facts are the end result of major study recently released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

These findings should not be too surprising if we heed the words of Martin Mayer, who has written in his book *The Builders*, "For housing is the element in American life where race prejudice bites most deep. Blacks in America have never had a square shake in access to land or housing."

In commenting on the HUD study, frail Executive Orders and comments like that of Mr. Mayer, HUD Secretary Patricia Harris reportedly said the study "shed harsh, but illuminating light on the state of housing discrimination today... We have since seen successive executive orders proclaiming equality, but we

have seen no diminution of inequality." Mrs. Harris added that "greater emphasis" will be given to break the discrimination practices.

We share Mrs. Harris' concern and wish her well in greater efforts to alleviate the problem; however we are compelled to point out that housing discrimination is much greater and more deeply rooted than the casual observer may realize.

For example, even with the progress that has been made, blacks have only half as much chance as do whites to purchase their own homes. Furthermore, blacks usually can only afford to buy old houses, and often in neighborhoods already in a state of decline. Accompanying this decline, Mayer tells us, is "the deterioration of schools, police protection, street maintenance, and garbage collection."

As if that is not enough, blacks often pay more for housing comparable to that of whites, then too they get a disproportionate share of the public housing units in their neighborhoods. Finally, while analysts debate the merits and ability of President Carter's recently announced urban policy to improve housing and housing opportunities for blacks, the problem nevertheless remain critical.

Where the individual lives reflects the environment that people are reared in, their personalities are molded, and their values toward and about education, the work ethic, self-reliance and integrity are developed.

Thus, let's stop kidding ourselves, as long as housing discrimination continues the problems of crime, educational drop-outs, welfare, tax burdens, and urban blight will continue. Let us all-policy makers, real estate agents, homeowners and tenants—leave the past where it is and seek a new housing commitment. Such a commitment means a better quality of life for all of us. Don't you agree?

The Impact Of Inflation

All Americans should have a real interest in inflation. People pay high prices and the middle-income and lower-income people primarily suffer from high prices, that is, poor people spend a higher percentage of their income for food, clothing and shelter. Since most blacks are poor, they suffer greatly from the impact of inflation.

A National Urban League study on the impact of inflation on blacks revealed that (1) while white purchasing power kept pace with inflation in 1973, black purchasing power fell by 2 percent; (2) the 1973-74 inflation and energy crisis widened the gap between black and white family incomes; (3) the failure of welfare and food stamp benefits to

keep pace with inflation reduced the buying power of the poor; (4) blacks were affected by public transportation cost more so than whites—they own fewer autos and (5) higher child care costs have forced many black females to withdraw from the labor force thus reducing black family incomes.

These facts have, since the early 1970's, worsened. Thus, we encourage organized labor and the corporate community to temper their demands for higher wage and higher prices. We further encourage them to work closely with the Carter Administration to curb this cancer on our standard of living. Do your part too by shopping wisely.



Blacks Destiny In Own Hands

Flight Of Capital. The Making Of Ghettos

WASHINGTON REFLECTIONS

CONGRESSMAN
JIM MARTIN



The Tax System-Who Gets A Break

There's nothing like April 15th to raise the level of consciousness of Members of Congress toward tax reform and tax relief. From the increased volume of mail received on the subject, it's easy to see that rate taxpayers are tired of being gouged by higher taxes every time they get an increase in salary or a cost-of-living adjustment.

My committee on Ways and Means is currently debating a variety of tax proposals. It will take another two months because of all the "reforms" "tinkering" with our tax system. Whatever you call it, just remember that everytime Congress "reforms" the tax code, it means it's going to cost somebody; and that usually means the taxpayer.

This legislation includes some modest tax cuts. However, Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee and in Congress generally favor providing substantial tax cuts. We believe the current tax structure is oppressive and discouraging to that broad section of middle-income America who carries the tax burdens of the country.

We believe a larger decrease in tax rates will stimulate the economy and as it did in 1962, provide more real jobs; and

consequently more tax revenues on a lower rate.

A test of wills and economic philosophies is at work in these tax discussions. President Carter and some of his supporters in the Committee have been pushing to eliminate various tax deductions. This includes the deductions allowed for sales taxes, real estate taxes, gasoline taxes and even medical expenses. Fortunately, most of these ideas have been beaten back, because what the President is attempting would be the same as having you pay federal taxes on taxes you have to pay to state and local governments. This would not be fair to people who itemize their deductions. Of course, a proposed tax rate reduction would offset part of the loss, but that combination would hurt those who actually have expenses to deduct and benefit those who do not have the deductions.

Some of my colleagues who support the President want to scuttle the entire tax cut proposal, because they cannot do it his way. It is vital that we provide the taxpayers with a substantial, dependable and permanent reduction in the tax rate. This money will eventually work its way back

into the economy through investments for business expansion, which means more jobs for the unemployed and more productive output for the economy. The middle and upper middle-income taxpayers will come out behind if the President's tax proposals are passed. Only those with no deductible expenses will gain. The currently enacted Social Security "strings" have already raised future taxes for a large segment of the upper middle-income wage earners and their employers. They are the ones who deserve a break, but instead will bear the brunt of the Social Security changes, and will lose even more with the President's new tax plan.

Our economy needs a stimulus. Taking more money out of the pockets of more productive Americans, those who provide the essential investment dollars for expanding our economy and jobs, is compounding our problems. If we are serious about halting inflation and providing jobs, the best way to do both is to stimulate business investments and restore confidence in the dollar. The worst way is the current policy of spending more dollars that we do not have, while "tinkering" a gain with the tax code.

TO BE EQUAL



Urban Aid Endangered

A major Administration effort to assist low and moderate income families and to tackle the problems of urban decay has been seriously endangered by the equivalent of an urban "Pearl Harbor attack" in the House of Representatives.

The issue is still unresolved, but an examination of what happened and why illuminates the hidden barriers to urban revitalization.

The battleground is the Community Development Block Grant program, a Nixon-era plan to shovel money to local governments in place of the previous federal practice of assigning money to specific, approved projects.

The bloc grants marked a shift in federal aid, from helping cities to improve low-income neighborhoods to other purposes. Naturally, mayors liked the program. They got a maximum of aid and encountered a minimum of red tape.

The purpose of the law creating bloc grants for community development was clearly stated—"the development of viable urban communities, by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income."

Because that mandate was consistently ignored, the new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Patricia Harris, implemented policies to increase the amount of federal funds going to poorer areas under the bloc grant program. HUD drew up regulations requiring that three-fourths of the grants would have to be used for the benefit of low and moderate income families, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the law.

Announcement of the new regulations was met by opposition from those who oppose federal aid to poor people, and by some mayors who wanted a continuation of the no-strings system. The latter charged their flexibility in use of federal aid would be taken from them, but in fact the new regulations still give local officials ample discretion in the use of the funds. The only "strings" are those in the law itself—that funds had to be used to benefit low and moderate income families.

Enter, the sneak attack. Embedded in some amendments to the original Act was a sleeper—an amendment that would effectively change the purpose of the Act. Where the original Act clearly stated the primary purpose was to aid low and moderate income families, the new language of the amendment, by adding "and co-equal" right after "primary", would give other purposes, including historic restoration projects and land use aims, the same priority now given the needs of low income families.

The intent was two-fold. The prime purpose of the amendment is clearly to subvert HUD's new regulations. The changed language of the purpose of the Act would remove aid targeted at low-income families as the sole purpose of the law, and thus make HUD's regulations inoperative.

A second intention was to sneak this major change through in a way that no one would notice it. The amendment was placed in the hopper at the last moment before anyone could realize it was a delayed time bomb. It routinely passed the House Subcommittee on Housing, along with the other purely technical amendments.

as i see it

The Seed Of Reverse Discrimination

By Gerald O. Johnson

The Seed of Reverse discrimination is beginning to blossom and soon will flower.

A great number of white people, particularly males are filing suits against various affirmative action program participants. The gist of the complaints is based on qualified whites being ignored for the sake of minorities. It appears that blacks are given preferential treatment when it comes to college entrance, job promotions, employment and etc. White's feel they were not directly responsible for past discrimination, and should not have to pay the price for it today.

Though I am against discriminations of any kind, I feel that the issue is getting out of hand. It is getting out of hand because lower courts are making irrational decisions due to outside pressure. Let us journey back in time to gain a better perspective of this situation.

Black people never asked to come to this country, they were forced. Suffering from a language barrier in a land which was completely different, black people were abused and exploited. As a people, Blacks were denied

the privilege of participating in the American way of life.

The home of the free and the land of the brave denied blacks all the freedoms that it stood for. The rationale behind this inhuman treatment was that black people were not citizens.

Black people were killed for attempting to become educated. Whites found to be helping black people get educated were killed.

Unemployment was no problem for black's in those days because all black people had jobs. They worked for the "Massa". Unfortunately the massa was not paying minimum wages. In fact he was not paying any wages.

I brought all this up because it is important to realize that the scales of justice were heavily tilted in favor of white Americans. This tilt has caused black people to be behind whites in many aspects of life. The lag is not due to any innate inferiority caused by race, but is due to 200 years suppression which forced blacks to be less exposed to the American way of life.

It would be asinine to think that such exploitation and suppression does not affect how Blacks behave today. It is



Gerald Johnson

because of the white forefathers of this country that the majority of Black people are still so far behind.

Consequently, so the scales of justice can come into balance, it is necessary that the scales of justice be tilted unjustly in the opposite direction. If not Black people will never be exposed to certain type of situations.

Let's take an example to demonstrate the point here. The Belks', the Waldensians', the Bosts', the Burlington's, and the Reynolds', all are wealthy families today due to the ideas of their forefathers. Their grandfathers, and

great-grandfathers had ideas about business and were allowed to participate in the American Way of life to get started. Even though those men probably died poor their ideas lived on and were passed

down from generation to generation. Each generation had less work to do because the idea had nurtured into a business. Each generation got exposed to practical experience of how business operate.

Today's generations of these companies are on easy street because of the blood, sweat, and tears of their forefathers.

Black people never had this opportunity. It is impossible to believe that people with this type of exposure would not be more qualified for school, work, or what have you.

Hence, if Black people are not given preferential treatment, then Black people cannot expect to achieve equality.

Reverse discrimination is wrong, but there is no right to give Black's a chance to participate in the American Way of Life without anyone getting hurt. It is unfortunate but true.

To those people who feel they aren't responsible for their forefathers' discrimina-

tion, you must remember that you would not be in the position you are in now if not for your forefathers. Moreover, there were never any complaints about being given preferential because of your color in the past. You must, also, remember that the only reason that you are more qualified for the particular position is due to your forefathers.

The lower courts have given hope to those individuals crying discrimination. Within the next few months the Supreme Court will decide on the issue. It is hoped that the men of the court realize that in order to achieve equality for all it will be necessary to deny justice to a few until the scales reach an equilibrium. After all it is the American Way.

Carter To Receive EEO Award

President Jimmy Carter will receive the Equal Employment Opportunity Award from the National Association of Black Women Attorneys (NABWA) for appointing

Black female lawyers to key positions in his Administration. The presentation will be made at NABWA's Fifth Annual Convention May 18-21, at the Capital Hilton Hotel, in Washington, D.C.

In announcing the award, Wilhelmina Jackson Rolark, NABWA founding president, commented Mr. Carter for "recognizing the myriad of skills and talents that Black female attorneys in his Administration bring to bear in their respective positions."

Most notable among these appointments, Attorney Ro-

lark added, are Housing and Urban Development Secretary Patricia Roberts Harris and Eleanor Holmes Norton, chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, who will be NABWA's luncheon speaker on May 20. "We hope that President Carter will continue to take positive steps to seek out and appoint other equally talented Black female attorneys for positions in his Administration," concluded the NABWA President.



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