

Editorials & Comments

Randolph - A 20th Century Giant

by Hoyle H. Martin, Sr.
Post Editorial Writer

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic decision that outlawed segregation in the nation's public schools, A. Philip Randolph, a man who laid much of the foundation for that decision, died at the age of 90. Mr. Randolph, the elder statesman of the 20th century civil rights movement and a labor leader, spent over 70 years fighting for the rights of the poor and working classes.

At the young age of 28, Randolph attacked the nation's Jim Crow policies and was jailed for advocating that blacks not participate in World War I. This led the U.S. Justice Department to label Randolph "the most dangerous Negro in America".

Recognizing that black Americans could never achieve social and political freedom without economic opportunities, Randolph organized, in 1925, and then led the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in a 12-year struggle to win a collective bargaining contract agreement with the Pullman Company. This was historically the first black union to sign a labor-management contract with a white employer.

However, it was in 1941 that Mr. Randolph's national civil rights eminence began to be apparent. In that year, he conceived of the idea of a massive march on the nation's capital to protest the exclusion of black workers from jobs in the World War II defense industries. Randolph canceled the proposed march only after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination in defense plants and thus established the nation's first Fair Employment Practice Commission. Then, in 1947, Mr. Randolph reappeared as the moving force behind President Harry Truman's signing of Executive Order 9801, ending segregation in the armed forces.

Desegregation: Legacy Of Uncertainty

It has been a quarter of a century since the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown vs. the Board of Education historic desegregation decision. Yet, as we look back and ask from whence we come or what have we achieved, if anything, during the 25 years, we are hard pressed to find firm, factual, positive changes.

After 25 years the quality of education of black children holds many unanswered questions; busing is deplored by many, both black and white; housing is still largely segregated; and the federal courts appear to be retreating from their former positions - witness Bakke, Brian Weber and other attacks upon so-called "reverse discrimination" and affirmative action programs.

What it all means is that while some progress has been made, while some minorities - particularly

Mr. Randolph had his third encounter with a national President in the mid-1950's when he was one of four black leaders who met with President Eisenhower to urge more rapid implementation of the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation ruling.

Always seeking new injustices to do battle with, Randolph was instrumental in getting the AFL-CIO to outlaw racial discrimination when the AFL and CIO were merged in 1955. In 1957 Randolph was elected as vice president of the AFL-CIO.

Not satisfied with these accomplishments, Randolph was the primary architect behind the famous March on Washington, August 28, 1963. While Martin Luther King's speech was without question a memorable event, the dignified eloquent 20th century giant, A. Philip Randolph, told the multitude of over 250,000 people, "We are not a pressure group... We are not a mob. We are the advance guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom."

As if determined to assure continued concern for the less fortunate even after his death, Randolph established in 1965 the A. Philip Randolph Institute with two grants totaling \$55,000. The Institute enlists community leaders in a study of conditions that perpetuate poverty.

These accomplishments by Mr. Randolph which span more than 70 years tell us that he was truly the civil rights giant of this century. For this, A. Philip Randolph, we are proud and privileged to salute you for your contributions to the betterment of mankind.

Bayard Rustin, a close associate of Randolph's, summed up eloquently the true greatness of our 20th century giant when he said, "No other living American has done more to seek justice for all the poor, the working classes and the minorities in our society and around the world than has A. Philip Randolph."

middle class minorities - have benefited from the Court's big school decision, the equal opportunity legislation and voting rights laws, the advancement and opportunities for the masses of blacks and other minorities have not occurred to a substantial degree. This is evident by the continued disproportionate high unemployment rate among blacks, discrimination against women and the abuse in minority business "set-aside" contract programs.

White America, you need to realize that we have - in spite of 25 years - only just begun to bind the wounds of social, economic and political injustices. If our nation is to survive, and be true to its aims, more substantial progress must be made in the next 25 years than in the past 25.

RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE THERE WILL BE MORE THAN 100 NATIONAL BLACK CONVENTIONS THIS YEAR, REPRESENTED BY UPWARDS TO 500,000 DELEGATES AND MEMBERS. EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT IS THE ESTIMATED AGGREGATE MEMBERSHIP OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS APPROXIMATELY 14 MILLION!

A LATTER FIGURE REPRESENTS MORE THAN 50% OF THE BLACK POPULATION, OR ROUGHLY 90% OF THE BLACK ADULT POPULACE.



The Flight Of Black Capital From The Black Communities.....By Blacks

Inflation - Running Out Of Options

by Dr. Berkeley G. Burwell
President
National Business League
Special to the Post

Some time ago in this space, we suggested that current inflationary trends were severe enough to warrant imposing mandatory wage and price controls. When we first discussed the latest round of inflation, and its impact on the minority business community, the national rate of inflation was hovering around 7.2 percent. Today, as more recent figures now confirm, we are confronting double-digit inflation with no immediate decline in sight. So in effect, the inflation picture has worsened. That spells trouble for the entire small business community and particularly trouble for minority entrepreneurs.

To understand why, we must remember that businesses generally cope with inflation by passing on higher costs to consumers. Minority firms don't have that luxury. In the first place, many of our firms are in marginal market areas, which means that their inventories are fairly limited. Therefore, their prices are higher, and in most cases have already reached the saturation point. Hence, we can't afford to raise prices any further without pricing ourselves out of the market. So when the price of doing business increases, our firms have to absorb the increase. As a result, we flirt with bankruptcy.

Several things are happening. First, the cost of doing business is increasing. Second, real disposable income for consumers is shrinking. So consumers have less money to spend on essentials. Third, the concentration of our firms is another problem.



Dr. Burwell

Nearly 75 percent of minority firms are involved in retail trade and selected services. When disposable incomes are high, consumers may consider our services essential. When disposable incomes are low, those services are among the first consumers choose to drop.

Finally, while the national rate of unemployment is declining, the rate of unemployment in the inner cities has not benefited from this national reduction. That's important to remember because most of our firms are located in areas where the rate of unemployment remains high - considerably higher than the national average. So we must contend with both inflation and unemployment.

Placing everything in context, government must take strong actions to stabilize prices. Jaw-boning and voluntary controls continue to fail.

There's an old political adage that says: when you run out of alternatives, you no longer have a problem. With respect to inflation, we are clearly running out of alternatives to mandatory wage and price controls. It is instructive to note that liberal economist

Galbraith has called for mandatory controls; while the conservative Chairman of the Federal Reserve, William Miller, has called on business and labor to voluntarily impose wage and price "guidelines". So there is a feeling from liberals and conservatives that some form of controls is desirable. People seem to have more of a problem with the phrase "wage and price controls" than with its impact.

But perhaps of greater importance is the result of a recently released Gallop poll which shows that a majority of the American people now favor wage and price controls as the only way to curb our inflationary pattern. The Gallop survey was taken two months ago, before double-digit inflation was confirmed. Yet surprisingly, it reveals that virtually every segment of the population (by race, sex, education, income, region, political and labor union affiliation) supports mandatory controls. While we do not suggest that government should run on the basis of public opinion polls, we are aware that the sentiment of the people cannot long be ignored. Our government inflation fighters MUST GET DOWN TO THE BUSINESS OF ASKING: have we already run out of options to wage and price controls?

JL Wearhouse

The Junior League Wearhouse in Charlotte will feature a Spring and Summer clothing sale May 25-31.

All items will be sold for half-price during the traditional closing for summer sale. School clothes will be displayed when the store reopens on July 17.

TO BE EQUAL



Senate Considers Direct Elections

The U.S. Senate will soon vote on a proposed constitutional amendment that would change the way we elect our President. Instead of the present Electoral College system, in which the candidate with the most votes in a state gets all of that state's electoral votes, it would mandate a direct election, in which the candidate who gets the most votes nationwide becomes the winner.

On the surface, the change seems democratic. But the result would actually be less democratic, in that blacks and other minorities would have their already limited influence diluted.

The impact on black voting power would be considerable. The bulk of the black population is concentrated in nine states - California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

Those states also have the largest number of Electoral College votes. Taken together, they have 245 electors, just 25 short of the number needed to elect a President.

This means no major presidential candidate can ignore those states. Even if he has strong support elsewhere, he can't be elected without winning at least some of them. And that means the black vote in those states takes on special importance.

The bottom line is that the importance of the black vote in key "swing" states is an effective barrier to candidates running a blatantly anti-black campaign, and it is a positive inducement to them to take vital black interests into account.

Now what happens if you end the Electoral College? All votes go into one pot. Black votes, instead of being crucial to winning several states just become ten percent of the national total, easy to ignore.

Candidates wouldn't need to pledge action on civil rights enforcement or on jobs or other issues of basic importance to black voters. They could afford to ignore a small minority of the total vote in their pursuit of winning a majority of white voters nationally.

The Electoral College system acts as a brake to extremism. It forces candidates not only to appeal to the widest consensus among voters and regions, but it forces them to appeal to minority interests as well.

Direct election of the President would likely lead to fractured national politics, a decline in the role of the parties, and an erosion of even the limited political influence blacks have gained.

No one really knows though, because we've never had any other electoral system. But a leap into the unknown requires more justification than supporters of direct election have given us. They claim that a situation could arise in which a president was elected with fewer votes than the loser. But that's happened only once in our history. And even that instance took place a hundred years ago. So why change?

Such clouded presidencies are just as likely in a direct election system. Let's say a candidate wins because he has a few more votes than his opponent. Can you imagine the difficulties that would cause? Just try conducting a national recount. It's tough enough on a local basis.

In an election involving over 80 million votes a small plurality for the winner would cast doubt on the legitimacy of his electoral mandate. At least the Electoral College, by magnifying the extent of the victor's success and by mandating he win a majority, avoids that problem.

Background On Why Sears Should Be Supported

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.
Human Rights Activist
Special to the Post

Special note from the Publisher: This is Part I of a three-part series on the subject of "Why Black Americans and Others Should Support Sears." Part II will deal with the details and merits of the actual Sears suit in relation to black Americans. Part III will show why Sears' action should be the springboard for our black leadership divorcing itself from the thought of so-called "white liberals." These important and enlightening articles were researched and written by a noted black Harvard-trained scholar. Our readers should know not only is he our nation's leading advocate of new forms of equitable empowerment for black Americans as a benefit to Americans as a whole, but also is considered by many as America's foremost urban thinker.

Since there has been so much controversy publicized, pro and con, about the "Sears suit," we felt it imperative that our readers be enabled to see what's in it for us by looking carefully and thoughtfully "behind the facts" with the aid of this unique perspective. Dr. Wright's thesis, based upon what he presents

clearly as long-standing principles of justice and equity, is that Sears definitely should be supported by all right-thinking Americans.

A new, historic and extremely positive shift in the thinking or "logic" of affirmative action and for the civil rights movement may have been made possible in January of this year when Sears, Roebuck and Company instituted what is known as a "class action" suit. It was against various agencies and individuals in our federal government. It is called "class action" because their case was drawn on behalf of the entire category of general merchandising retailers with 15 or more employees. Sears' suit charged the defendants with both actions and policies that restrict the equitable employment of all Americans.

POSSIBLE BLESSING This can become a blessing for black Americans - particularly those in the huge lower and "middle-income" masses - for two reasons. First, the "Sears suit" forces the review of a wide range of laws and policies, initiated by the thinking of so-called "white liberals," that adversely affect millions of black Americans. Second,

this now-mandated review of the logic and procedures of the present affirmative action endeavors may enable our traditional-thinking black civil rights leaders to divorce themselves from that present thinking about what many others feel is good for us. A precious and crucial third factor for the good of the nation as a whole is that Sears' action may enable everyone in White America to begin thinking anew about the need for reasonable black participation in every aspect of American life. This Sears suit, in substantial part, requests that Sears be allowed to proceed with numerical goals for hiring black males and other under-represented classes in a deserved compensatory way. This may help all Americans realize that if all black Americans are not empowered with skills, and enabled by equitable laws, to produce at least equal to their consumption, it will be all of us - not simply Corporate America - that will pay heavily in the forms of joblessness, crime and widespread urban decay that now plague our entire nation here and contributes to eroding the value of the dollar abroad.

SEARS BACKGROUND Before looking at the specific charges and making an

assessment of the "Sears suit" overall (which is done in Part II), it is helpful to take a brief look at the historic and present actions of Sears regarding black Americans. Here are some items of interest:

From a historical perspective, Sears, understandably, is proud of its social record. Prior to the mid-1930's, as an example, funds for construction of approximately one-half of all the "public" schools for black children in America had come from Sears' chief executive. No one in America had ever approached such black empowerment.

Sears has spent nearly \$100 million in trying to shape the racial and sexual composition of its work force to comply with statistical standards set by governmental bureaucracies under the name of what many feel is too casually called "equal employment opportunity."

According to several black federal officials associated with compliance, no major corporation in America has a better overall goal achievement record than does Sears, despite the fact that a small number of its approximately 2,500 facilities do have serious problems. They cite the fact that, during a period of seven

years when a fine company like AT&T was under a consent decree to achieve certain goals, Sears voluntarily far exceeded these goals.

When it comes to aiding minority businesses, these same black federal officials cite Sears as being possibly only behind General Motors, Standard Oil of Indiana and Western Electric in promoting business relations with minority suppliers. This is a critical and major area for economic equity for black Americans that is almost completely bypassed by most major corporations.

A careful examination of Sears' affirmative action plan instituted in early 1974 is credited by other professionals as being one of the strongest in industry. It is entitled the "Mandatory Achievement of Goals (MAG) Plan. The Prestigious Committee for Economic Development in its 1978 report on Training and Jobs Programs in Action, which was an independent study of a number of major corporate Affirmative Action Programs including Sears, stated that "Sears, Roebuck is the nation's largest retail employers. Its Affirmative Action (AA) program is unique in the country: it is a voluntary compliance pro-

gram that matches any court-imposed AA plan in its sweeping long-range goals; its mandatory requirements wherever groups are under-represented in its work force; its comprehensive implementation system; and its rapid proportional gains for women and minorities in most job categories in the last few years."

Sears' Present Plan Under its present "Mandatory Achievement of Goals" (MAG) Plan, Sears requires stores to hire one under-represented group member for every white male hired, until the presence of the under-represented group in a particular job grouping equals or exceeds its presence in the local trade-hiring area. Sears says this title is intended as a means of commanding line

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