

Editorials & Comments

Reality And Social Security

A Congressional committee on aging issued a report earlier this month that says an increasing percentage of older people have annual incomes below the official poverty line of \$5,700 a year for a household of two people. Specifically, the report notes that 15.1 percent of 65-year-olds and over in the U.S. population are living under the poverty line based upon 1979 data.

Older Americans, the report adds, make up 10.7 percent of the total population but 13.2 percent of those below the poverty line. Furthermore, people 65 and over also represents disproportionate share of those "stacked slightly above" the poverty line "to a degree unparalleled by any socioeconomic group in the U.S."

Finally, the report, appropriately entitled "Retirement, The Broken Promise," takes a pessimistic view of the over economic status of people 65 and over. It finds that the elderly receive inadequate support overall from Social Security, welfare and private pension plans and they have difficulty supplementing their income in the job market.

Alarm over the report has lead committee chairman Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), to introduce a series of bills designed to make retirement easier financially by strengthening both private and public pension programs.

Ironically, in spite of this depressing report President Ronald Reagan's budget cutting ax was aimed at the Social Security system last week. Fortunately, and for the first time since the budget cutting reign began 4 months ago, Congressional opposition has begun to surface among both Democrats and Republicans.

While both Parties agree that there is a need to save the Social Security System from its excesses, opposition to Reagan's plan arises from the viewpoint that its intent is too severe with more focus on getting a tax cut program than on reforming the retirement system.

In real terms, the Reagan administration proposes to reduce social security payments in four major categories:

Discourage workers from the option to retire at age 62. Workers retiring at this age at lower

incomes would receive monthly payments of only \$163.90 under Reagan's plan as opposed to \$247.60 under current law. Those with higher or maximum yearly incomes who now receive \$469.60 would be reduced to \$310.50 per month. If you retire at age 65 the existing Social Security payment plan would remain unchanged.

— Restrict cost of living benefits to future retirees but not current pensioners.

— Restrict disability benefits by basing eligibility on medical criteria only.

— To restrict overpayments by ending "double-dipping" — getting retirement from two federal sources.

While President Reagan should be given credit for forcing the American people and the Congress to get the Social Security system under control, his heavy handed methods and proposed policy changes have resulted in his first budget battle defeat. In fact, recent reports indicate that he may have begun to retreat on his proposals.

Yet, while Democrats and Republicans alike have referred to Reagan's plan as "heartlessness," they are planning their own program for saving the Social Security system from bankruptcy. Again, if Reagan had not initiated his somewhat excessively strict plan, lawmakers might be facing up now to the task that is long past due.

It is important to note too that as people react negatively to the Reagan plan they don't lose sight of the greater need to reform the system. For example, it seems unbelievable that action on this important matter has been delayed so long that it has been estimated that if some kind of change is not instituted by the end of the calendar year 1982 the Social Security fund will be totally exhausted for everyone.

This means too that some sacrifices will have to be made beginning very soon by all present and future retirees if sanity is to be restored to the system. Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker put the issue in clear perspective when he said, "The fund is going broke. We're trying to stop the old lady from having no check at all."

Cedric Maxwell, Superstar!

It seems ironic that before the just completed NBA season and championship playoffs the Boston Celtics had refused Cedric Maxwell a deserving increase in salary and discouraged all attempts to accommodate him through a trade to a team willing to pay him more.

Maxwell, the former UNCC star and the only member of the Celtics who played on the club's two worst teams in 1977 and 1979,

Maxwell again distinguished himself and proved he's more than "just the other guard" (along with Larry Byrd) by winning the MVP award in the championship series. He averaged 17.7 points per game and played superior defense against Houston's best.

Maybe now the Boston Celtics management will see the merit in offering Maxwell a new contract with more money.

CRIME IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY SHOULD BE EVERYBODY'S CONCERN.



BLACK BUSINESS IS SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF CRIME ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE, IT IS STRUGGLING TO MEET THE HIGH COST OF DEATH INSURANCE, VANDALISM, SHOP LIFTING AND ROBBERY. THE PROBLEM CENTERS AROUND NARCOTICS AND DRUG RELATED CRIMES.

Thousands Die Each Year From Terminal Illnesses

Special To The Post WINSTON-SALEM — Thousands of young children die each year from terminal illness, and the depth of grief suffered by the parents of those children is enormous.

Robert and Mary Randolph of Emeryville, California, have experienced that grief and learned to cope with it with the help of an organization called Life Force.

The Randolphs' experience is perhaps typical. They watched their two-year-old son, Matthew, painfully wither away in a hospital because of an incurable neurological birth defect.

Following Matthew's death last October, the Randolphs became frustrated, depressed and angry — sometimes at each other, sometimes at themselves, and sometimes even at Matthew.

All this didn't make life any easier for their elder son, Mike, age 4.

Such traumas often rip families apart. But the Randolphs sought help from those who probably could best understand — other parents whose children had died or were dying from terminal illnesses.

Robert and Mary joined Life Force, a group of San Francisco-area parents who meet once a month to share problems, and receive guidance from professionals who voluntarily conduct the meetings. The parents also offer each other a special companionship that frequently extends beyond the sessions.

Life Force was so successful in helping the Randolphs cope with their son's death that Robert has become one of the group's

most active members. He started a fathers' group which also meets once a month.

Robert is a 29-year-old process supervisor at the Emeryville plant of Del Monte Corporation, a subsidiary of R. J. Reynolds Industries, Inc. He is one of more than 15,000 people employed by RJR's growing California operations (food, energy and transportation). Like many of his fellow employees, Robert gives his time and skills to contribute to the well-being of others.

"By helping others, we can help make Matt's life more meaningful," Randolph says. "His life was meaningful in itself, but it lives on because we can help other people."

Life Force was formed last September by two mothers who had met at the University of California Medical Center, where their incurably ill children were hospitalized. The two women contacted other parents they had heard about through doctors, employees of a crisis intervention center and other sources.

The growing group now consists of five families who meet the first Saturday of each month at a church in Walnut Creek, a suburb of San Francisco. After a buffet dinner, the children gather in a separate room and the parents gather in a semi-circle to share their feelings about subjects as death, marriage, hospitals, and depression.

The discussions are often lead by professionals — psychologists, pediatricians, social workers or ministers.

The group members treat each other with raw

honesty. Randolph recalls telling the group how he felt watching Matthew die: "All of his fatty tissue had deteriorated until the nerve endings were on the surface of his skin. . . I think he weighed six pounds when he died. I was happy for him when he passed."

Relief for Matthew was but one of a confusing mix of emotions churning inside of Randolph and his wife after their son died. The couple needed people who could truly empathize with them. "The most important thing to know is that there is somebody with you who has gone through the same thing," says Randolph.

Husbands and wives don't go through exactly the same thing, he says. Most men suppress their feelings, especially in front of their families. He says husbands are more likely to show their true feelings in an all-male group. That's why he formed a fathers' group.

Randolph recalls how a member of the group was hesitant to tell how he felt about his daughter dying of cancer. Robert then described how he felt watching Matthew "disintegrate." After that, the new member cried. Then Randolph cried. Then both men talked and laughed freely.

Because of such exchanges, many Life Force parents have become close friends. They call each other often and gather informally at members' homes and other places. They've organized events such as garage sales to raise funds for social activities.

Randolph says he has just about recovered from his son's death.

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From Capitol Hill

Dichotomy Exists Between Black Caucus And Haig?

Alfreda L. Madison Recently, Representative Walter Fauntroy, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus was accompanied to a meeting with Secretary of State Haig, by four Caucus members who have designated areas in which they take the leadership in foreign affairs. These members were: Representatives Bill Gray, whom the Caucus designates as its Secretary of State, since Mr. Gray is a member of the House African Affairs Foreign Relations Committee, Shirley Chisholm, the Caucus member for Haiti, Mervyn Dymally on Caribbean matters and George Leland, who handles the Latin American affairs.



Alfreda L. Madison

The meeting which was scheduled for forty-five minutes lasted more than an hour and a half, and it appeared one of a hard dichotomy. Mr. Fauntroy expressed the Black Caucus' opposition to President Reagan's 1982 budget request of \$68 billion for security assistance, which is for the military and only \$1.9 billion

for economic development. While Mr. Haig views the defense policy greatly with such as policy. He feels very strongly that the Third World problems are social, political and economic. The Administration has cut the \$2 billion from the African Development Foundation and has not chosen a Director to the Foundation's Board. The Caucus strongly requested the restoration of the funds and selection of a Director of the Board.

Mr. Gray strongly echoed that the military assistance does not address the needs of the majority of

Africans. He disagreed with Haig that the Third World problem is an East-West problem — U.S.-Soviet. Their problem is one of freedom from oppression, poverty and one of self-determination. Haig was told that it is in the United States' best interest to recognize Angola; that any attempt to support the Savimbi faction and repeal of the Clark amendment, was considered a United States' tilt to South Africa.

The Caucus members let Mr. Haig know in no uncertain terms that they favor United Nations resolution 435 for settling majority rule in Namibia. The U.N. resolution calls for specific requirements of U.N. supervised elections, U.N. ceasefire supervision with a constitution framed after the election. These terms have been in the negotiating process for more than two years, with the United States, England, France, Canada and West Germany attempting to get an agreement between SWAPO and South Africa. SWAPO has agreed to the settlement but South Africa

has not. Secretary Haig emphasized the Reagan Administration's plan of getting a constitution agreed upon, which certainly will guarantee white Africans special rights, before the elections. This is contrary to U.N. resolution 435. Mr. Haig was told that the Administration's Namibia settlement policy sounded like the Iran Smith Rhodesian policy. The Black Caucus informed the Secretary that the Administration's leanings to South Africa are a slap in the face to black Americans and Black Africans.

Haig told the members that Mr. Reagan's African policy is evolving. The Secretary was also told that U.N. Secretary Jeanne Kirkpatrick's action of meeting with high South African military officials was insulting to all blacks.

Representative Shirley Chisholm stated that human rights violations cannot and should not be tolerated by this Administration regardless of whether such violations are perpetrated by an authoritarian or a totalitarian regime.

Black Health In America

How Healthy Are Blacks

By Dr. George I. Lythcott

How healthy are America's 24 million black people?

We'll try to answer that question and suggest ways you can improve your health in this five-part series. Meanwhile, the evidence from national health surveys is encouraging. It shows that while the health of blacks still lags behind that of whites, blacks may be slowly but steadily closing the gap.

Death, disease and infant mortality rates for blacks are all considerably higher than those for whites. But the good news is that, with some exceptions, these rates are headed generally downward for blacks.

Surveys show blacks with an advantage in several areas. Black children, for example, had fewer days of limited activity and days spent sick in bed than white children, an advantage that held up even among the children of poor black families.

Blacks come out ahead in dental health, too. They have fewer decayed, missing and filled teeth than whites. However, blacks have more gum disease and don't care for their teeth as well.

High blood pressure — a risk factor in heart disease — is nearly twice as prevalent among black adults as white adults. But significantly fewer blacks have undetected cases than a decade ago. This is encouraging because high blood pressure can be controlled nowadays, if those who have it stick to their medicine and diet and keep in touch with their doctor or other health professional.

Surveys found little difference in black-white measurements of height and weight, though more black women were overweight, a condition that increases the risk of suffering heart and circulatory disorders.

Smoking is another risk factor for heart disease and cancer and the surveys show that more black men than white men smoke — 46 percent versus 38 percent. But the surveys also show that blacks who do smoke, smoke less.

Both blacks and whites show a 27-year decline in the death rate for cardiovascular diseases, especially during recent years when blacks closed the gap more.

More recently, both races had higher death rates for cancer, and the increase for blacks was greater over the survey period of 1950 to 1977. Respiratory cancers were up markedly for both races, but especially among blacks.

In estimates of their own health, 11 percent of whites said they felt "fair" or "poor" compared to 19 percent of blacks. Black men and white women rank close together in the "feeling fine" category — 54 percent and 58 percent respectively.

Dr. George I. Lythcott is an Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service, and the Administrator of the Health Services Administration Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If you would like further information concerning this column please write and ask for Health Package No. 1. It's free, all you have to do is ask. Send your letters to: Dr. G. I. Lythcott, 5600 Fishers Ln., Rickville, Md. 20857.

She said that Congress recognized the importance of human rights by making changes in the 1980 Refugee Act. Mrs. Chisholm reiterated forcefully that Haitian refugees met the United States Refugee Act requirements and while much documented evidence proved these facts the Carter Administration violated the due process rights of Haitians seeking asylum in this country. She asked, "Mr. Secretary, can we expect that this Administration will indicate to the Haitian government, in the strongest possible terms, that it cannot continue to use the flight of refugees to Florida's shores, as a solution to its internal problems?" To this question the Secretary gave no definitive response. He said, "We had a man down there and there is no happy solution. We're doing the best we can."

The development and economic needs of Grenada are ignored because Cuba is aiding the island in building a much needed airport.

Representative Leland explained to Mr. Haig that the United States-Cuban policy is self-defeating. He stated that since the United States has lifted the grain embargo against Russia it certainly should lift the Cuban embargo, the shipment of medicine is embargoed against Cuba, the Cuban embargo is immoral Mr. Haig stated that the Cubans are in Angola and all over the world and that if the Cubans continue their actions, it will be very dangerous.

The bottom line to this entire conversation was, that the Reagan Administration has no clearly defined foreign policy and that in its evolution South African cannot be isolated.

Representative Dymally, questioned Mr. Haig about the Caribbean Islands policy, especially Grenada. "There, the United States," said Dymally, "is pursuing a punitive rela-

