

editorials & comments

Wanted: A National Agenda!

As each of the past few years have approached their end, there has been much talk about a Black agenda for the year to follow as if to give Black Americans some real hope that some kind of a consensus agenda was about to be developed.

The presumed idea behind all this was that a conscious-raising consensus agenda might be an intellectual guide for Blacks generally to guide their political thinking and their economic behavior in such a manner that Black economic and political influence or power would force politicians and economic institutions to respond in a more positive way to the needs of Black Americans.

Sad to say, no such Black agenda has really been developed. However, as little as it may be recognized, the absence of such an agenda is increasingly being shown to be the collective fault of the Black intelligencia. For example, too many Blacks have been led to being preoccupied with the color of the presidential candidate with too little thought being given to the competency, primary issues, and platform of the candidate or candidates regardless of their race or color.

Turning to economic issues, we can see even more clearly why we have put the finger on the Black intelligencia for clouding the minds and misdirecting the thinking of Black Americans.

Sam Fulwood III of The Charlotte Observer noted recently that relatively few black news reporters at the NAACP convention held in New Orleans last week were interested in news conference announcements by major corporations about business and job opportunities for Black firms or workers.

Little Disturbing

Significantly, there was little interest by the Black press in "Fair Share" economic programs but considerable interest in "gossipy quotes on the NAACP's internal problems of tracking the six Democratic presidential hopefuls "who appeared and spoke before the convention. Ben Hooks said "Black people just don't seem as willing to be involved with anything."

It is more than a little disturbing to observe this kind of apathy when Black unemployment is at 20 percent, nearly 50 percent for jobless Black youth, and even when economic conditions are good these jobless figures for Blacks don't change.

Another interesting economic fact to affect Black people is in the recent announcement that the Social Security retirement age will rise from 65 to 67 by the year 2027 to help the system remain solvent. That does not sound so startling until it is revealed by a report that the higher retirement age will directly affect Blacks.

Black Economics

In effect, raising the Social Security retirement age will mean Black workers, who have a lower life expectancy, will end up being shortchanged on benefits. Thus, with the average Black workers having a life expectancy of only 65 years, fewer Blacks will live long enough to receive retirement benefits under the new rules.

This issue, Black unemployment, limited Black economic business opportunities and the eroding of Black civil rights progress are the key issues facing Black Americans in 1983. Thus, black voters, churchmen, parents, students, small business people, neighborhood leaders and other civic minded folk need to begin to let the so-called Black leadership know that Blacks are concerned about substantive issues of jobs, general economic progress, housing, urban decay and service to the needy.

That is, the grassroots Black American, Hispanics, women, the elderly and other generally overlooked groups need to clearly advise, remind and threaten with the power of their vote all candidates, Black, White, Demo-

crat, Republican or Independent, that they the workers, taxpayers and backbone of this nation will no longer be naively led by the empty rhetoric or forgotten promises.

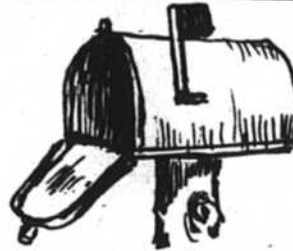
Mr. John Q. American is saying stop spouting political rhetoric to get my vote and start talking about the real issues facing the American people. A national agenda for Black Americans will undoubtedly be an agenda addressing all Americans' needs in 1984.

"BLACKS' RETICENCE TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE TO ORGANIZE THEIR COMMUNITIES" SAID DOUGLAS G. GLASGOW, DEAN OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, IS A MAJOR FACTOR AND AN IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO OUR COMMUNITIES' UNDEVELOPED STATUS"

- POLITICAN
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- INSTITUTION ADMINISTRATION
- ENGINEERING
- PLANNING
- ARCHITECTURE
- BLACK PRESS



Letters To The Editor:



Voucher System A Must For Quality Education

Dear Sir:

Black communities across North Carolina are concerned with quality education. School closings in Black neighborhoods and few options other than the public school system have been very frustrating. The promise of quality education through integration has slowly faded as Black parents became aware that busing, for the most part, has meant busing Black kids to white schools.

The Black community in Winston-Salem is currently debating the merits of a bond referendum that reorganizes the Forsyth County School System. In exchange for supporting a plan which disproportionately closes Black schools, the community may see several Blacks promoted to senior high school principals. These hard choices have been faced before by Black communities elsewhere.

Unfortunately, quality education is not a function of which color the administrator happens to be. If this was the case, majority Black school systems with Black school boards and Black administrators would be islands of educational excellence in a national sea of mediocrity. More Black principals will not appreciably impact on the problems with primary

and secondary education.

The problems with education facing the Black community are three fold. Low quality as indicated by test scores and other measures of performance. Lack of control exemplified by school closings absorbed by Black communities across the state. Finally, lack of choice in a system which decides where you will attend school based on where you live. It may surprise some readers that the above problems basically are the same ones faced by white parents.

What would you do if I told you that a monopoly existed whose service continued to decline, whose rates continued to go up and if you refused to pay this high price, you would be sent to jail. The monopoly I am describing is the government's monopoly of public education. The problems discussed above are a result of this monopoly. A few Black educators in the current system cannot improve on the system's inherent failures.

The government monopoly on primary and secondary education hurts your kids in several ways. The system inefficiently allocates resources. Have you ever wondered why the total cost of education goes up while the number of

students and teachers have gone down? The total cost has gone up because the number of supervisors and support personnel has substantially increased. Every dollar spent here cannot be spent on books, lab equipment and teachers' salaries.

The monopoly has created a system that forces good teachers to either become administrators, to remain in the classroom at substandard salary or leave education altogether. Once becoming an administrator, oftentimes for the wrong reasons, our former stellar teacher is rewarded with higher salaries for pushing papers and for not "rocking the boat" instead of managing inept teachers out of the profession.

This monopoly also controls most of the teaching positions in education and can arbitrarily set teachers' salaries lower than market value. However, the assertion that teachers are underpaid is only half true. Many good teachers are grossly underpaid, while many poor teachers are grossly overpaid. The monopoly establishes a perverse average salary based on seniority which kills initiative and assures that most bright educators will, of necessity, leave the profession.

V. L. Robinson

From Capitol Hill

Reagan's Education Campaign Issue

Alfreda L. Madison Special To The Post In spite of the heralded economic recovery, the average citizen is finding no reduced prices for food, shelter, clothes and utilities. This coupled with record-breaking overall unemployment; Black unemployment twice as high as whites, Hispanics only slightly lower than Blacks, over all youth around 20 percent and Black youth more than 50 percent, add also the nuclear freeze cry increasing, it is highly probable that President Reagan is using education as a campaign smoke screen to get the other issues off the front page. It could certainly be a scheme for placating the conservatives whom he promised that he could cut out the Education Department.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education states, "America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer."

Blacks have been telling the country's leaders for several decades, that it could not continue to provide them inferior education and remain a leading world power. The whites are late in talking about excellence in education, Jesse Jackson has set up



Alfreda L. Madison

and has been advocating an education-excel program for over six years. This is just another example of how whites, being so filled with racism, are causing the country to fall behind, some of the other industrialized nations.

The President's Educational Task Force recommends higher pay for meritorious teachers longer school days and a longer school year, limited class size. It also calls for expanded opportunities for students who are unserved and underserved. This include women and minority students, particularly in math and science, the gifted, handicapped children, the underserved students tend to be concentrated in schools with limited resources.

The education report on excellence says high school graduation requirements should be strengthened. There must be stricter

course requirements in math, science, English, social studies and computer science. The NEA agrees with these, but says, "a well-educated person needs more than core courses; music and art are also important."

The commission suggests that foreign language should be taught in the elementary grades. It also states that institutions of higher learning must raise admission standards, with standardized achievement tests, and an updating and upgrading of textbooks are recommended. The NEA endorses upgraded textbooks, but takes issue with the recommended college admissions. It objects to a nationwide standardized test for entrance, instead of variety of diagnostic measures should be used.

The report says teachers should be paid higher salaries; made professionally comparable to those employed in accounting, and that teachers should be evaluated by peers. The NEA believes that educators should do the evaluating and it also urges evaluation of all educators and governing boards.

The commission's recommendations if implemented will greatly increase the present education cost. The textbook cost which is approximately \$700 million at present, will

increase to \$5 billion. Instructional cost for school year 1979-80 was \$53.2 billion. The commission objectives will cost an additional \$8.6 billion.

The President is campaigning for implementation of the commission report, while cutting federal support to education.

If states adopt the commission plan, it will require their revenues for schools to increase from \$58 billion to \$85.1 billion.

The states' school finance comes from personal and corporate income tax and sales tax. Their taxes will increase by around 12 percent.

President Reagan stated that federal funds for education have increased, while test scores have declined. He seems confused over Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. Test scores for elementary school children have risen. Title I funded programs show that Black scores in reading and math improved greatly. These gains had the positive effects of closing the educational gap between whites and blacks.

The President infers that the solution of putting more money in high schools has failed. He ignores the fact that the bulk of federal funds have gone into elementary and higher education.

WITH SABRINA JOHNSON



Sabrina

No Big Bucks; No Oscars

Summer is here and what better way to spend a hot afternoon than in a cool movie theater spellbound by the images on the big screen. However this summer's films have proved to be disappointing at the box office and for audience approval.

"Return of the Jedi" - The third and final sequel in the "Star Wars" adventure is the only true blockbuster coming in first at \$165 million. "Flash Dance" has assumed the number two position with \$57 million, "Superman III" follows with \$47 million and "Trading Places" occupies the fourth spot with \$46 million. "Octopussy," "War Games," "Blue Thunder," "Psycho II," "Porkey's II" and "Twilight Zone" occupy the fifth through tenth positions, respectively.

The problem in the industry is the lack of 'breakout' films such as last summer's "An Officer and a Gentleman," "Rocky III" and "Star Trek II." These were the films with staying power which appears to be lacking in this year's forum. The warm side of films is missing this year. For films such as "Blue Thunder" budgeted at \$20 million and "Superman III", budgeted at \$35 million to prove profitable, both must do well at the box office week after week to show marginal profits. This is unlikely to happen at this point since the warm, sensitive element is not to be found in either of these movies.

This year's hit, "Return of the Jedi" (20th Century-Fox) may not surpass "E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial" because it does not possess the crossover element—a film that appeals to all audiences, young and old. Opening week "Jedi" earned \$41 million, almost doubling "E.T.'s" \$21 million. However, since then its weekly figures are dropping more rapidly than "E.T.'s."

"Superman III" has not proved to be the smash hit that one and two were. Its opening week went well but has gone down hill since. The 'bad news' films are "The Twilight Zone" and "The Man With Two Brains" - both doing poorly at the box office with no reasonable amount of salvage in sight.

Launching a film in today's industry is very expensive even if the film is pulled out of the theatre quickly. "Strocker Ace" was once such movie. Most films premiere in approximately 700-800 theaters and each print of the film costs \$1,200. This is just to release the film. Parallel with the film's release, major advertising campaigns must come, thus commanding huge advertising budgets.

Good marketing strategy may not save a bad film but can make a good film perform better in the industry. For example, "War Games" was originally scheduled to open in July, however the release date was moved up to early June. This change in plans allowed MGM-VA to build a positive word-of-mouth reaction about the film.

Paramount used good marketing strategy by revamping the ad campaign from "High Tech" commercials to softer mood spots which appeal to older, mature audiences. "Trading Places" is proving to be a surprise hit for Paramount because its commercials show both the funny and serious sides of the film. The film to watch out for may be "Staying Alive" - another Paramount release.

The unpredictable swing in the film industry may reflect the idealism to come; possibly a return to times when life in the movies was precious and looked upon with adornment. Hits such as "An Officer and a Gentleman", "E.T.", and "Trading Places" are films that carry a great deal of meaning and redefine words such as friendship, love and money. There is a trend towards the emotion or mood a film leaves instead of the action it brings. Will film producers realize this fact and capitalize upon it or will cold angular movies continue to surface and bomb?

Heubleins Promotes Harper

Farmington, Conn. - Michelle A. Harper has been promoted to the position of director, human resources, for the Heublein Spirits & Wine Company.

Harper joined the company in 1982 as manager, management staffing. She most recently held the position of manager, human resources.

In her new position, Harper will be responsible for affirmative action activities within the Heublein Spirits & Wine Company, and human resources activities related to the company's units including Heublein Spirits, Heublein Wines, Heublein International, Beaulieu Vineyard

and International Vintage Wines.

A native of Washington, D.C. Harper graduated from Yale University with a degree in sociology and Afro-American Studies.

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2400 S. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Ill. 60616
 45 W. 45th St., Suite 1403 New York, New York 10036
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