

editorials

& comments

Excuse-Makers At End Of Road!

By E. Elizabeth F. Hood
Rewritten from
The Michigan Chronicle

About 50 percent of Americans vote in Presidential elections and even less bother to go the polls in other political races. Makers of public policy have puzzled over this voter apathy for many years.

Last July, the ABC news network decided to ask 2,530 adults if changes in voting procedures might increase the number voting. Results of the ABC poll, conducted from June 29 to July 13 and published in the New York Times on September 25, indicated that neither time nor simplicity in voting had much to do with the number of ballots cast.

The ABC poll challenged many of the standard excuses for failure to vote: difficulty in getting registered; polls aren't open long enough; more people would vote if polls were open Sundays and holidays. It found that 41 percent of the non-voters admitted to "not getting around to it." In short, regardless of the registration process and the time set for voting, non-voters were not sufficiently moved to put forth any type of effort. They had written themselves out as persons who believed in their own power to make a difference in government.

Depressing as they are, the results of the ABC poll might be useful in planning ways to increase voter turnout. Amount of education beyond high school emerged as a strong, determining factor in voting behavior. Only 19 percent of those least likely to vote had been to college. Among the 10 percent most likely to vote, 49 percent had some college education. Whatever their occupation, then, persons who had attended college were more likely to vote than make excuses for not voting.

Voter Turnout

Family influence also make a difference in voting habits. Among the most likely to vote, 60 percent said their parents voted in every Presidential election. Thirty-two percent of the least likely to vote recalled their parents as faithful voters.

Attitudes toward the political system was also a factor in the choice of voting over non-voting. The most-likely-to-vote group expressed beliefs in voting as a means of strengthening democracy. On the contrary, the least likely to vote tended to view

themselves as insignificant and made such statements as, "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think."

Whether or not more people made a real difference in the thinking of those most likely to vote. Eighty percent agreed strongly with statements about the importance of voting to this country. The majority of this group also had more faith in their abilities to sway the thinking of politicians. They believed that what they thought counted. Persons least likely to vote were more inclined to doubt the value of voting to the country. Further, more members of this group persisted in thinking that politicians had little or no respect for their opinions and attitudes.

Worth And Power

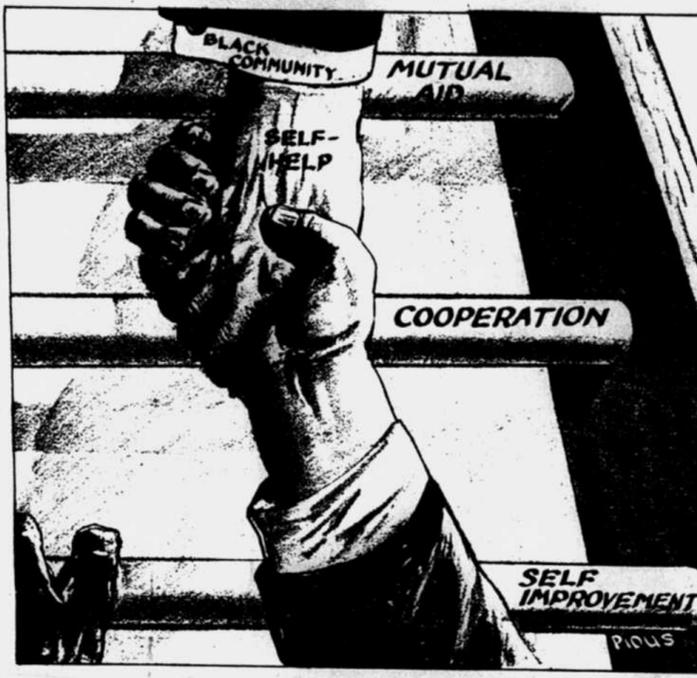
Since the ABC poll identifies the conditions favorable to increasing voter participation, it offers long-range solutions to low turnouts at the polls by blacks and other minorities. Being born into families with strong voting traditions is, at best, a chance benefit. Going to college is another change, highly determined by family income and the characteristics of relatives and friends. Possessing a sense of personal worth and power is related to the chance of growing up among those who encourage thinking about oneself in these terms: "I am somebody, I do count, people have to listen to what I am saying."

The present economic crisis in which two million American men, women and children roam the streets and roads without homes, and another ten and one-half million are looking for jobs, allows no time to wait for favorable voting conditions. No excuses are acceptable. Every eligible voter must register and vote to end the "extremism" of the present rulers in Washington. The face of the unfairness in government must motivate the apathetic voter to action.

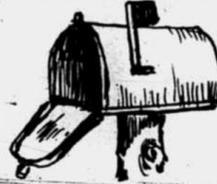
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LEADERSHIP IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



Letters To The Editor:



Blacks Should Have Boycotted March

To The Editor: One question, before I begin: Can food stamps mail a post card? Just as food stamps are inadequate in utilizing our postal system, so are over-utilized, self-defeating tactics, such as the recent March on Washington, inadequate in solving problems in Black America.

The focus of black politics has shifted from circus-type protest events, reckless rhetoric, symbolic politics, and demagoguery, to electoral politics. Clearly, the civil rights leadership has made another political blunder; based on their ignorance of political realities. Will the civil rights leadership ever become politically mature?

The 1983 March on Washington did more for the promotion of SCLC and PUSH-like groups than it will for the black underclass. I had to laugh at the hypocrisy prevalent throughout the entire 1983 March on Washington. One example sticks in my mind: the civil rights leaders who so articulately advocate the concerns of the poor, drove onto the Howard University campus, the day before the March, in chauffeur-driven limousines to participate in the SCLC convention. If these so-called black leaders

were so "grass-roots," why the limousines?

They advocate positions in order to maintain their positions in the civil rights leadership. These civil rights leaders have continually advocated public policy options which only increase the dependency of the black underclass on government.

Why isn't the energy, time and effort which was wasted, on the 1983 March on Washington, channeled into achieving obtainable solutions to problems in black America? The organizing efforts spent on this March could be better used organizing economic initiatives that will provide long-term financial stability in black America.

It seems irresponsible for civil rights leaders to advocate that our people support a Democratic agenda which calls for public policy measures that severely penalize two-parent families with children, consequently having a devastating impact on the black family structure.

It seems irresponsible for civil rights leaders to try to make us believe welfare and other social programs actually help our community, when these liberal orthodox programs have created a perpetual black American under-

class. It seems irresponsible for the civil rights leadership to mindlessly bad-mouth President Reagan's policies while the facts indicate that the current economic recovery, according to Charles McKee in the Washington Times, "has produced increased auto sales and lower interest rates, not only allowing unemployed black auto workers and employees of subsidiary industries to return to work, but also has allowed lower and middle income blacks to purchase automobiles and other basic needs."

Most of all, it seems irresponsible to initiate chants of "Run, Jesse, Run," when all logic and reason indicates the chants ought to be: "Think, Civil Rights Leaders, Think!"

Gordon W. Knox

Letters to the editor must include your signature and address, both of which may or may not be used per request. For purposes of identification only, writers should include their telephone numbers.

All letters are subject to editing for grammar, libelous content and, when necessary, brevity. Please limit letters to 500 words. Letters should be addressed:

From Capitol Hill

Jesse Helms Can't Find Any Peace?

Alfreda L. Madison Special To The Post "I'm not going to get any black votes," said Jesse Helms, realizing that he is just plain mean to blacks. So he spewed out all the venom he could muster up against Dr. Martin Luther King and the black movement for justice and equality, in his opposition to the King holiday.

Senator Helms talked hours on the Senate floor emphasizing that Dr. King was really an advocate of Soviet principles, and that he wanted to start a revolution in this country. He stated that Dr. King's program was conceived and aided by men and women who were not loyal to the United States, who were striving for violent overthrow of the United States Constitution.

Helms complained vigorously and vehemently that the holiday should have been discussed in the Senate Judiciary Committee, so he wanted the bill re-committed to the Judiciary. He also stated that the holiday would be very expensive - somewhere between \$4 and \$14 billion.

Jesse said from the beginning of King's civil rights activities until his death he was influenced by Communists. Helms said, "King's patterns of associations and activities show that, at least, he had no strong objection to Communism, that he appears to



Alfreda L. Madison

have welcomed collaboration with Communists and that his principal vehicle, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was subject to influence and manipulation by Communists." He insisted that King spoke out against the Vietnam War because he was told to do so by Levenson, a man whom FBI investigations never found that he was a Communist. He even stated that Levenson wrote some of King's speeches. If Levenson wrote some of Dr. King's speeches, all one can say is that he was "a heck of a speech writer." The "I Have a Dream" speech has had all America ever since talking about the American dream, even Nixon and Reagan.

Jesse stated that King's stand against the Vietnam War was against the national security of this country and that it favored Vietnam Communists. Someone needs to remind the North Carolina Senator

that such an overwhelming number of Americans was against this war which left 50,000 American boys dead, thousands maimed and handicapped, besides innocent Vietnamese dead, their homelands devastated, that Johnson refused to run again for President and Nixon had to pull Americans out of Vietnam; not forgetting the guilt we feel over the deplorable Vietnamese conditions, so we are accepting large numbers of them in this country.

Helms said King disturbed the peace of the states. The North Carolina senator has absolutely no respect for the intelligence of blacks. He evidences that blacks would not have known they were suffering from the most hideous forms of blatant discrimination if the Communists had not told them so.

Senator Kennedy arose on the floor and took on old Jesse. He said that all illusions, suggestions, charges of Dr. King's involvement with Communist Party members were disturbing and distressful, "those charges were first and most vigorously raised by the arch-segregationists bent on retaining racism. It is their heirs in the last ditch stand against equal justice who week to divert us today on this legislation." He stated that Helms' statements were not worthy of reply, so he

strongly extolled King's contributions to America, and the necessity of commemorating his birthday.

Senator Kennedy lashed out strongly against President Reagan for not having been heard from on this bill; that there has been ample time for him to have made a decision. Having been flushed out by Ted, the next day the newspaper reported that the President will sign the bill if it's passed.

Senator Strom Thurmond stated that he feels it is appropriate to have a day memorializing King because of the many contributions blacks have made to this country and that he will vote for the holiday.

Of course Senator East, Helms' protege, objected strongly to the King holiday, because it would put him on par with George Washington, and it ignores having a holiday for other various ethnic, religious and many other groups.

Senator Bob Dole is responding to Helms' accusations that King wanted a revolution saying, "In America the home of the brave land of the free, it was segregation that was radical, denial of opportunity - that was revolutionary." Dole admitted that Republicans may not get many black votes, but commemorating King's birthday should not be ham-

WITH SABRINA JOHNSON



SCOPE



Sabrina

Dream Versus Dreams

Republican Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina made a complete turn around last week on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday issue. Initially Helms had planned a one-week, one-man filibuster against the bill; however, Senate Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. reminded Helms that such a filibuster would delay the vote on the tobacco bill.

The tobacco bill, if passed, would freeze tobacco price supports and in time end the lease and transfer of tobacco acreage. This is a particular pressure point for Helms. Baker met with Helms and bargained with him to drop the filibuster, and in return, he (Baker) would present the tobacco bill to the Senate after debate on the King holiday legislation on October 18 and vote on October 19.

Technically speaking no deal had been made between Baker and Helms. But Helms did want the tobacco issue to be brought up before the 10-day Columbus day recess.

Tom Griscom, Baker's press secretary, stated that the delay by Helms would not block the passage of the holiday legislation, which Helms knew.

Whatever tactics Helms tried or may try to shoot down the King holiday - he cannot - the votes are there to pass the bill. Helms contests the bill because he believes Dr. King practiced "action-oriented marxism." Democratic Rep. Robin Britt said to the press that Helms does not speak for North Carolina. He went on to say that Helms' comments on Dr. King "were not made in good faith, but represented charged rhetoric calculated to divide not reconcile...."

Sen. Helms does realize that by opposing the King legislation he has lost all hope of acquiring black votes if he runs for reelection next year. Helms believes that he faces reality in saying that blacks vote Democratic down the line, so the black vote does not matter to him.

Sen. Helms' filibustering warned that even in death, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. deserves no honor. The Senate is on the verge of passing the bill dedicating the third Monday of January a new national holiday - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day - and Jesse Helms opposes the issue. Helms views Dr. King as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Nonsense!

Dr. King was a man who believed in nonviolence and civil rights. Jesse Helms believes in mint juleps, white linen suits - the old white South - full of "Christian values" and state-mandated prayers.

Helms contends that federal holidays are occasions for "shared values." But are not Dr. King's idealisms shared values? Mr. Helms' values include militaristic foreign policy and self righteous stands against women's issues. Thank goodness Helms' values are losing ground and Dr. King's gaining. Jesse Helms' name has become synonymous with racism and a divided society. In fact Jesse Helms manages to re-define racism everytime he opens his mouth!

Many senators view Helms and his comrades' plots against a holiday honoring Dr. King as dead weight. This vindictive, narrow-minded bunch needs to be brought into the 20th century through rebuttal, symbolic and tangible. Now is the time to celebrate those ideas that embrace a large number - majority - of Americans whose sincerity has been tested, time to celebrate reconciliation and the efficacy of nonviolence. With adversaries like Jesse Helms it is time to pay tribute to the courage and dreams of men and women who have learned to live together in peace and harmony. Those men and women - black, white, Hispanic or Oriental - who have taken Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" and "A Long Way To Go" speeches to heart and have made conscious efforts towards equality and humanity.

While Jesse Helms' dreams are stuck in a point in time long passed, Dr. King's dreams will endure and persevere. However, unfortunately, the Jesse Helms of the world will always be and will never learn nor change but progressive intelligent minds can make them inanimate objects.

Volunteers Needed

Central Piedmont Community College needs volunteer instructor assistants for its Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) center in Freedom Mall.

The center provides an opportunity for volunteers to learn about computer-assisted instruction and to gain experience in working with adults using the Laubach tutoring method. Volunteer training sessions will be from 1-5 p.m. Saturday, October 29, at the center, located beside the N.C. License Plate Bureau.

To volunteer, call Jocelyn Dieston, 373-6715.



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