

# Editorials

## The Charlotte Post

Bill Johnson, Publisher Emeritus  
 Gerald Johnson, Publisher Bob Johnson, Co-Publisher  
 Jalyne Strong, Managing Editor

### An American Dilemma

For nearly the first half of the 20th century, historian Ulrich B. Phillips set the pattern for the study of slavery in America. In his book *American Negro Slavery* (1918), Phillips depicts slavery as a benign institution more beneficial to blacks than to their white masters. The white racist mentality that Phillips' writings encouraged was shattered in 1944 with the publishing of Gunnar Myrdal's classic book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. This 1,000 plus page book was the result of a five-year study by a number of scholars working under Myrdal's leadership. The book was one of the first to expose the hypocrisy between the American idea of freedom and justice and the harsh reality of segregation, discrimination and total injustice for black people.

The landmark quality of *An American Dilemma* is evidenced by the fact that over 24 re-issued editions of the book have been published since its initial printing in 1944. Significantly, too, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Earl Warren cited the book in the 1954 Court decision outlawing school segregation.

Ironically, Gunnar Myrdal, a Nobel Prize winning economist in 1974, is Swedish, not American. Again, because of his *Dilemma* work, he was considered to be one of the most influential foreign observers of events on the American scene.

This week, at the age of 88, Gunnar Myrdal died. Mr. Myrdal was truly "a man for all seasons" and one for whom 20th century man can thank God that he, Gunnar Myrdal, lived among us in our time.

### "Black Men In Crisis"

The Post's feature story headline last week read, "Black Men In Crisis Stage." The story that followed began with these words: "By the year 2000, it is estimated that 70% of all black men will be in jail, on drugs or in the throes of alcoholism," according to an article from the African Scientific Institute of Oakland, California. The article reported discussions how more black people are slipping into poverty while the black man is being destroyed.

The depressing report which appears to have little hard data to support its conclusions is another chapter in a number of similar reports on the plight of black Americans. Bill Moyers' television documentary early last year, "The Vanishing Family - Crisis in Black America," the National Urban League's "State of Black America - 1986," the 1984 Black Family Summit and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 25-year-old study on the same basic issue, all appear to have painted a negative picture of American blacks.

Obviously, some newspaper columnists and anti-black organizations have taken parts of these reports out of context in order to support some negative viewpoints that they seek to convey about black people.

Even with this kind of negativism, the plight of black Americans can only begin to be improved if we as black people are willing to publicly discuss the issues and challenges we face. Such discussion is the first step toward finding lasting solutions. Nevertheless, there is also a need to remind some of us and to inform others of us that all of black America is not caught in the web and grip of poverty, joblessness, out-of-wedlock parenthood, and repeated generations of welfare dependency.

While we must all continue to be our less fortunate brother's keeper, we must announce to the nation and be committed to the belief and action that poverty, joblessness, and welfare are not within the social fabric, lifestyle and culture of all black Americans. It is important for blacks to know this as a motivation force for the hope and for the self-esteem of too many who have little hope. White people

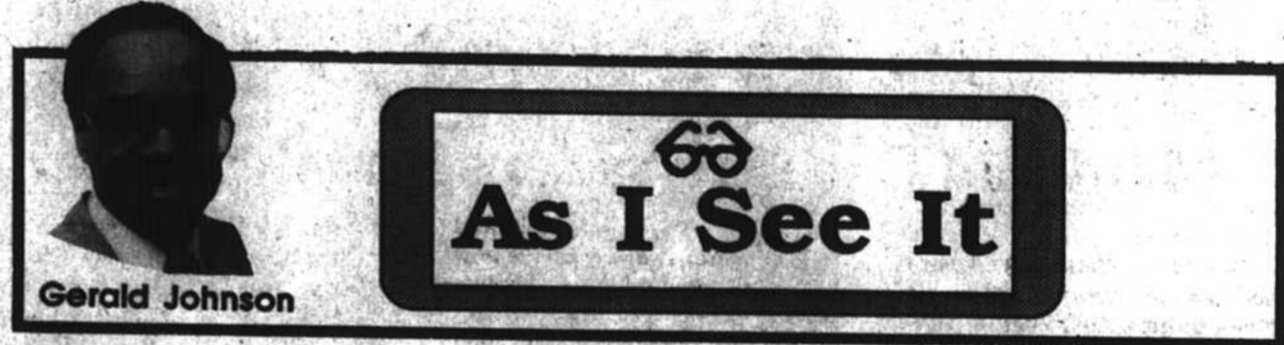
need to have this awareness too in order for them to develop new and more positive attitudes toward black people.

Most significantly, black Americans must begin to have more positive attitudes toward themselves. Jesse Jackson has told thousands of children across the nation to believe that "I am somebody," a thought that many black adults may need to think more about. What Jesse Jackson is saying is that progress for black Americans both collectively and individually, must begin in the minds of people who, no matter what the odds, believe in themselves and have a "I can do anything" attitude.

Richard Knight Jr. recently appointed black City Manager of Dallas, Texas, was quoted in *The Dallas Morning News* (5/3/87) in these words, "I try to remember who and what I am, that I have a mission, that I feel good about myself and that I can get the job done. I totally discount what I hear about black males feeling insecure...I can discount it because I have accepted the premise that all men are created equal and that, once a problem has been defined, the next step is to find the best solution to it."

Therefore, if we can put the past 40 years in historic perspective, we should be able to see signs of real progress even within the context of our current dilemmas. The fact is, since the end of World War II in 1945, black Americans have been emerging from the psychological chains of a "racist caste system," Alvin F. Pousaint and other social scientists have said.

Thus, as we approach the doorway to the 21st century, black people must think more positively, act more courageously, study more diligently, work much harder, strive for greater family unity, respect themselves and each other more sincerely and, last but not least, pray to God more often. If each of us does these things your life, our lives, and all of black Americans will be lifted up by God Almighty to a new level of dignity, self-respect and progress.



### Minimum Wage Bill Threatens Blacks

The minimum wage rate is about to get on the way in the United States Congress. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Representative Augustus Hawkins (D-Calif) are sponsoring the legislation that would push the minimum wage from its current \$3.35 an hour amount to \$4.65 by 1990. The legislation proposes to tie the minimum wage figure to 50 percent of non-supervisory, private-industry wages after 1990.

The current \$3.35 minimum wage figure took effect in 1981. Sponsors of the legislation feel that inflation has eroded the purchasing power of the \$3.35 figure. Moreover, the sponsors contend that without an increase, entry level workers are condemned to poverty.

Unfortunately, the whole story is not conveyed by this portrayal. I am afraid that the sponsors have viewed this issue politically, instead of economically.

Economically, an increase in minimum wages is a disincentive to hiring unskilled laborers. Moreover, it is an incentive to reduce existing workforce for those industries that rely on unskilled laborers. In addition it has inflationary consequences.

An example may help bring home the point. Suppose you owned a janitorial service that utilized minimum wage employees. For the sake of this argument we will say you

hired 10 to work 30 hours per week to clean an office building. Your annual payroll cost will be \$52260 at the current minimum wage figure (excluding your payroll tax obligations and other payroll business expenses). By 1990 your payroll for the same scenario would escalate to \$72540 with higher tax obligations and business expenses. This represents nearly a 40 percent increase in your payroll excluding tax obligations.

Any business desiring to stay in business can only respond in one of two ways to an increase of this magnitude. 1) Cut services and staff to keep payroll levels where they are, or 2) Increase the cost of the service.

If (1) is chosen, then this is clearly a dis-incentive to hiring and an incentive for reducing staff. If (2) is chosen, then an inflationary spiral will begin.

When you multiply this scenario by hundreds of thousands of businesses having to take one of the two options, the economy will take a temporary tailspin in search of equilibrium.

Take our Janitorial firm, again. Let's assume that the owners opted to raise the price of the service. The company receiving the service has to make a decision. (1) Do we stop the service, (2) do we cut back on some of the service, or (3) do we continue the ser-

vice at the higher price. Their answers will not only effect the Janitorial service, but may lead to questions about the products or services they offer to their customers. Each decision has a ripple on the economy.

Of course the Janitorial service could opt to lay off some of its staff. This would put people out of work, as well as, cut back on the service being offered. Here again, a ripple effect will be felt in the economy.

The minimum wage legislation hurts the very individuals it is trying to help. Raising the minimum wage in 1981 did not spur on more jobs. On the contrary it did just the opposite, it reduced the number of jobs requiring unskilled laborers. The Federal Minimum Wage Study Commission reports that for each 10 percent increase in the minimum wage results in a 80,000 to 240,000 job losses among teenagers and 2.7 million job losses for adults.

A quick look at the Black unemployment figures would indicate to me that a raise in the minimum wage correlates directly with a raise in Black unemployment. I think the sponsors of this bill are trying to be helpful. But, it is time that we send these "do-gooders" a message that says, "The next time you see me fighting a bear, you help the bear".

### Are You Rich And Don't Know It?

It is not uncommon to hear Americans say, "I'm going to be rich someday." But will they know when they achieve their goal?

On a trip from Denver, Colorado, to North Platte, Nebraska, a large landowner taught me a lesson on wealth. I asked him if he was rich. He replied, "I don't know if I am rich."

I was befuddled since he had just told me he owned approximately 10,000 acres of land. He responded to my perplexity by offering me 1,200 acres of farmland in Colorado. My initial inclination was to say, "Who are you kidding?"

Nevertheless, this chap had my attention and I felt compelled to find out his hidden agenda. I encouraged him to repeat his offer to be sure I had heard it correctly. I had once enjoyed raising pedigree hogs as a gentleman farmer, so I called his hand.

He revealed that the land had come into his possession by a bankrupt farmer merely signing it over to rid himself of its debt burden. The current debt on the prop-



erty is \$1 million. We both laughed when I said, "I can hear my wife when I tell her I just got us into \$1 million debt."

After his revelation, our conversation focused on how this farm had become debt laden and what financial opportunities existed in the current farm crisis. This landowner argued that high farm prices became an opiate which drove farmers on a buying binge. Thus the collapse of farm prices caught the liberal spenders over-extended.

He pointed out further that his

deal was not very sweet if my Colorado farming knowledge was limited. This landowner alluded to the importance of being accepted by the local "Good Ol' Boy" network. Yet he revealed how he had spent days in Colorado sorting out the farm's debts so as to devise a scheme to clear its title.

In recounting this landowner's comments, it is clear that there are some great opportunities for groups with the wherewithal to turn debt-ridden farms back into sound businesses. But I shudder at the thought of the dawn of the age of the "mega-farm." It portends a rapid escalation in food prices if a few large agri-businesses corner the market.

I have heard minorities complaining about heirloom land loss from back taxes or sold well below market value to settle inheritance with family members who have migrated to distant cities. Black investment clubs can reverse this trend if they start to seek out bankrupt abandoned farms.

