

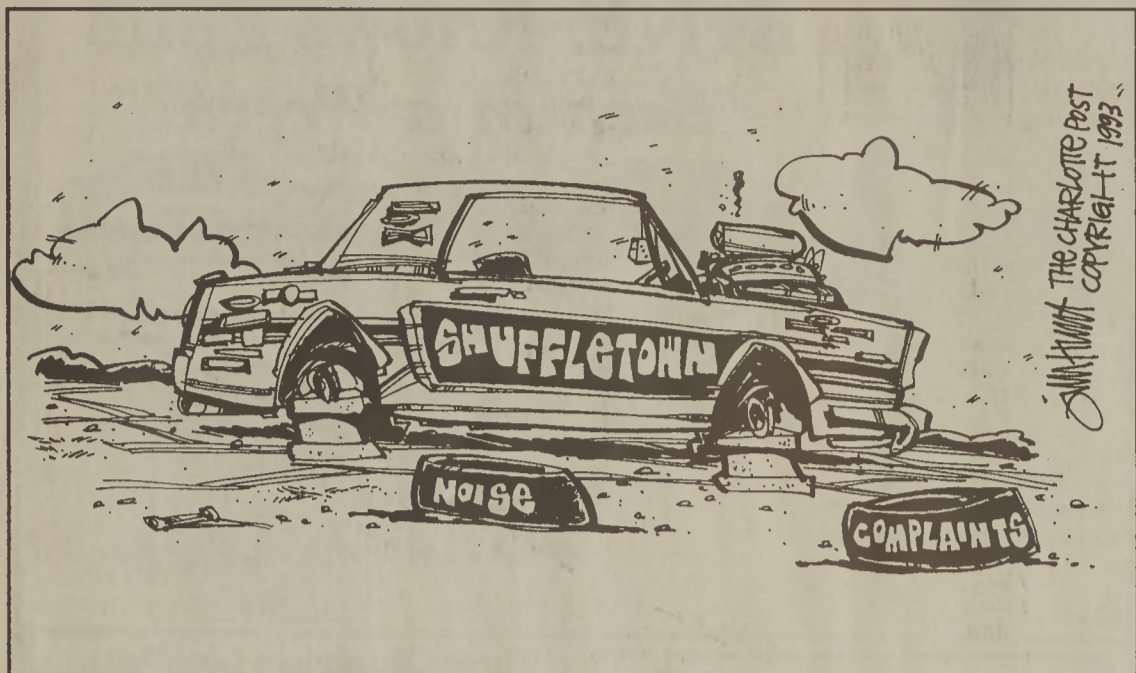
The Charlotte Post

The Voice Of The Black Community

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Great News For Children In U.S.

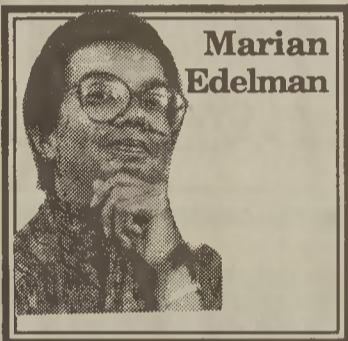
Young families of all races, on whom we count to raise healthy children for America's future, are facing very trying times: Poverty is skyrocketing, earnings are plummeting and the birth rate among unmarried women has nearly doubled. We have called for the leaders of this nation to help the millions of low-and moderate-income families fighting to hold together their households and to ensure that every child is given a Head Start, a Healthy Start, a Fair Start and a Safe Start. In an effort to save young families from poverty, the Earned Income Tax Credit has just been expanded by \$20.8 billion over the next five years, starting in 1994. This is the largest expansion in a low-income program in 20 years.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is designed to fulfill President Clinton's pledge that a family of four with a full-time minimum wage worker should not be poor. To receive the credit, low-income working parents need only do two things: 1) file a federal income tax return (Form 1040A or 1040), even if they do not owe any taxes for that year; and 2) fill out a Schedule EIC and attach it to their tax return. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reviews each return to determine eligibility, based on the family's income level and number of children. Those parents who are eligible will owe less in taxes, or the government will mail them a check. Eligible parents may also choose to receive an advance payment in their payroll checks from their employer, which is estimated from the parent's anticipated income for the year.

Since Black America has been hit hardest by the devastating effects of the Reagan and Bush years, black families stand to greatly benefit from this credit. Slightly more than half - approximately 2.9 million - of all black working families with children will qualify. Some will get a tax credit of nearly \$3,400 per year. Included among these black working families are over 125,000 black families with two or more children who were not eligible for the EITC under the previous law. In comparison, less than one in four of all white working families with children will qualify for the credit.

The EITC increases the work incentive for low-income parents who have considered using AFDC programs to support their families. Unlike welfare, this pro-family credit does not discriminate against two-parent households. Instead, it provides more choices for families with an employed head of household.

EITC helps parents like Clive Brown, a part-time custodian earning \$6,000 a year, who has been looking for full-time work since the birth of his daughter. His wife, Juliet, stays home and cares for their child since they



Marian Edelman

can't afford child care. The Browns will be entitled to an EITC of \$2,040 once the new law is fully phased in. Under the law, the Browns would have received a basic EITC of \$1,380. Clive and Juliet have chosen to collect their credit in a lump sum from the IRS, so they can buy a used car.

Michelle Joseph, a mother of three who earns \$17,000 a year as a bookkeeper, also will benefit from the credit. With a mortgage and child care costs, she often has to choose between paying the bills and feeding her family. Based on her income and family size, Michelle will receive an EITC of \$2,106 under the new law, boosting her income by 12 percent. Under the old law, parents like Michelle would have received a basic EITC of \$1,209. Michelle has asked her employer to include the credit in her paychecks, which will allow Michelle to pay all her monthly bills.

Under the old law, families like Kim and Tre Williams, who have two children, would have earned too much to be eligible for the EITC. With both of them working half-time last year, Kim as a receptionist and Tre at a gas station, they earned \$25,000. Once the expanded EITC is fully phased in, the Williamses will receive a tax credit of \$422, which will reduce the amount of taxes they will have to pay each year that they are eligible.

By making work more accessible and helping more of the working poor escape from poverty, the EITC is an essential piece of any strategy to strengthen America's families. Because the credit is not well-known or understood by many who could benefit from it, the EITC continues to be under-used.

Now that Congress has provided us with a humane initiative to help pull our families out of despair, we must educate and inform our community. Thousands of organizations and agencies across the nation are working with the Center on Budget Policy Priorities (CBPP) to educate the public about the Earned Income Tax Credit. To get an EITC public information kit from CBPP, call (202) 408-1080. For general information about the EITC, call 1-800-829-1040.

MARIAN EDELMAN is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

On Welfare Rolls? Ask For A Raise

By James Strong
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Reagan and Bush social policy helped increase the welfare rolls by maintaining stingy welfare budgets that kept the poor while supporting lucrative upper-middle-class tax breaks that kept the rich rich.

One of the paradoxes that have tortured the brains of many Americans about their homeland over the decades is how a country so steeped in wealth can have such a high poverty rate compared to other industrialized nations.

Perhaps a study conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research might provide a clue.

Published in the August issue of the Journal of Population Economics, the study found that low-income

American families are more likely to live in poverty and less likely to escape it than their counterparts in Canada and seven European nations.

The study showed that during the mid-1980s, the average family poverty rate in a single year was 20 percent in the U.S. compared to 3 percent in Finland, 4 percent France and 11 percent in Ireland.

The "persistent poverty rate" - that is, the poverty rate of families who were poor three years in a row - was 14 percent in the United States compared to 1 percent in Luxembourg, 2 percent in West Germany and 12 percent in Canada.

And the proportion of poor families whose income jumped 10 or more percentage points above their country's median income level in the following year was 22

percent in the U.S. compared to 32 percent in France, 45 percent in Sweden and 47 percent in Finland.

The study showed that most of the European families who escaped poverty did so by finding jobs or increasing their hours of work.

The study also attacked the theory that generous welfare benefits discouraged people from getting off welfare, a belief which has shaped U.S. welfare policy for decades.

"The belief that generous social assistance programs are a key impediment to economic mobility is not supported by these data," says Greg Duncan, the study's principal author.

Unfortunately, Clinton's welfare reform plan may have been constructed from the same shoddy materials.

JAMES STRONG is a syndicated columnist.

Four Columns For The Price Of One

It is one of those weeks again - one of those times when I have more than one column in my head. But the editor still says, "Just one each week. You're lucky we give you the space you've got. Don't push your luck."

Here are short versions of what you would have gotten, if the editor were more generous:

- Mom's 81st birthday: Last week she went to church for the first time since the illness that almost took her life last winter. We had to laugh just a little at each other when we admitted that - just a short while ago - we hadn't expected to get her back in church until her funeral. After worrying about her all spring and summer, I now just sit back and glow with admiration as she fights to enjoy life and continue to contribute in spite of the weaknesses and limitations of illness and age. Don't feel sorry about her. She even went back to work a couple of weeks ago. For a few hours under the hot lights posing for pictures as a model she earned a couple of hundred dollars. Her 81st birthday next month will be the happiest one ever for me.

- Cable TV, Free TV, and You and Me: Are you getting letters from your cable company trying to get you to hate one or more of the broadcast TV stations - because they want to charge for their programming? Are you reading ads from the TV stations trying to get you to hate your cable system for not being willing to pay a fair price for the right to use the station's signal?

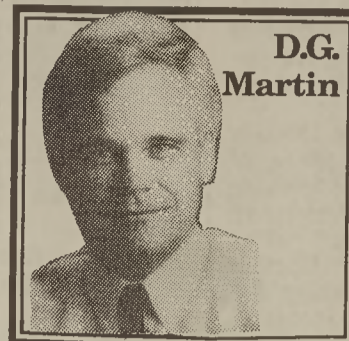
Do you have much sympathy for either one of them? Or do you, like me, have the feeling that, whoever wins this battle, you and I are going to have to pay more?

- Peace in the Middle East: Just a few years ago, who would have believed that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the leaders of Israel would be shaking hands and making promises to live in peace with each other? Not me, any more than I would have given any chance that the threat of an all out war with the Soviet Union would almost disappear.

What I would have said back then is this: "If we could remove the burden on our country of the confrontation with the Soviets, and if we could eliminate the risk of a war between the Arab states and Israel - if we could do all that, there would be no problem that our great country couldn't face up to - and solve."

How wrong I was.

- Walter Dellinger and the Supreme Court: Late last year, right after the election, I speculated about which North Carolinians Presi-



D.G. Martin

dent Clinton would call to Washington. I predicted that Duke Law Professor Walter Dellinger would be one of Clinton's first nominees to the Supreme Court.

Some of you told me you thought I was stretching.

Not that Dellinger isn't smart and experienced. But he was not that well known. And he is a white, male Southerner in an administration that is big on diversity. The President did call him to Washington to be head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, subject to Senate confirmation. Maybe you all were right. Maybe the Supreme Court was not in the cards.

But, thanks to the efforts of North Carolina's two senators, Dellinger's chances to get to the big court have been given a big boost. Not that senators Helms and Faircloth wanted to help Dellinger. In fact, they have done everything they can to delay a Senate vote to confirm him in his current job.

Helms and Faircloth think Dellinger is too liberal to be in a position of power. But their tactics in stretching out his confirmation process so long have given Dellinger a lot of attention. He has borne the extra scrutiny very well - and made a lot of friends who think our senators have been unfair to him. Most other senators find him smart, engaging, not all that liberal, and very open minded.

As a result of the efforts of Helms and Faircloth, Dellinger is now widely and favorably known - and on everybody's list of possible high court nominees. And President Clinton knows at least one qualified person who can stand the scrutiny of a hard nosed confirmation process.

So when Dellinger gets that appointment to the high court I will remind him to thank his two senators, who gave him his biggest (though inadvertent) boost.

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs with the University of North Carolina system.

Famed Flier Took Charge Of Her Life

By James Alsbrook
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Black people who wonder whether to take action on their seemingly impossible hopes and dreams should take inspiration and pride from the challenges and successes of Bessie Coleman, America's first black female airplane pilot.

Honoring her memory, the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., scheduled a special program dedicated to her on Sept. 23 in Washington. Features include a re-enactment of high-lights her life and a discussion of a new biography chronicling her achievements and commemorating her life.

Bessie Coleman's life was a series of problems and solutions - problems like those that trouble most blacks of today and solutions that would be found and used only by the most determined and creative persons. She was born Jan. 26, 1892, in Atlanta, Texas and died April 30, 1926 at Jacksonville, Fla., in a crash caused by the jammed controls of a plane piloted by her mechanic. But her life is the story of a real go-getter.

The 12th of 13 children born to illiterate, cotton-picking parents in Texas only 27 years after the Civil War ended, she did laundry and saved enough money to attend Langston Institute (now University) in Oklahoma for one semester, but returned home when her money was gone. She learned about good jobs in Chicago by reading copies of the Chicago Defender sold by train porters, and went there for better opportunities.

In Chicago, she worked as a manicurist and later as a chili parlor manager, but she

was not satisfied. She was a constant reader and became fascinated by newspaper and magazine accounts of the new, rapidly-expanding airplane industry and technology. She decided to "be somebody" by making aviation her career. She would be one of the few persons of either race to fly airplanes, and certainly she would be the first black female.

People needing inspiration should know about these problems and Bessie's solutions to them:

Problem: Bessie wanted to be an airplane pilot but no training school in the United States would accept her as a student, first because she was black and second because she was female.

Bessie's Solution: She talked with Chicago Defender owner and publisher Robert Abbott. He suggested that she learn French and go to France for training. French women were trained to fly airplanes, so Bessie took French lessons at a foreign language school in Chicago. She saved money and accepted financial aid from Abbott and Jesse Binga, the prominent black banker known for supporting worthy projects for black people. She went to France for pilot training in 1920 and returned with a pilot's license in 1921.

Abbott publicized her flamboyant personality and her news value as the first and only black woman airplane pilot in the world.

Problem: Bessie could fly airplanes very well, but her pinpoint landings and "figure eights" were not sensational enough to thrill big crowds and country fairs, circuses and other exhibitions.

Bessie's Solution: She returned to France in 1922 to learn more about air acrobatics, more parachute jumping, stunt flying and circus

tricks. She learned well and made headlines by flying over historic French and German landmarks and by displaying daring but very good piloting skills.

Bessie barnstormed and gave flying exhibitions and parachute jumps in Europe and America and became a celebrity and friend of contemporaries such as Ethel Waters, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Florence Mills and various black musicians in Paris, New York and Chicago. She met and associated with Harlem Renaissance writers, artists, entertainers and other notables including Claude McKay and Countee Cullen. She met Josephine Baker, but Baker was only 15 and had not blossomed.

Bessie refused to display her flying skills at her Texas hometown airport while it was segregated. A library and a street are named in her honor in Chicago.

She did her thing. What about your thing?

JAMES ALSBROOK is a syndicated columnist.

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