

EDITORIALS

'You're A Part Of The Solution, Or You're A Part Of The Problem'

THE VIEWS OF THE WRITER'S ARE NOT ALWAYS THOSE OF THE PAPER'S

The Last Black Congressman

This is the farewell speech to the U.S. Congress from Congressman George H. White in 1901. White was the last Negro to serve in the House until Oscar De Priest was elected from Illinois in 1928.

Continued From Last Week

This evil peculiar to America, yes, to the United States, must be met somehow, some day.

The other bill to which I wish to call attention is one introduced by me to appropriate \$1,000,000 to reimburse depositors of the late Freedman's Savings and Trust Company.

A bill making appropriation for a similar purpose passed the Senate in the first session of the Fiftieth Congress. It was recommended by President Cleveland, and was urged by the Comptroller of the Currency, Mr. Trenholm in 1886. I can not press home to your minds this matter more strongly than by reproducing the report of the Committee on Banking and Currency, made by Mr. Wilkins on the Senate Bill above referred to, as follows:

In March, 1865, the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was incorporated by the Congress of the United States to meet the economic and commercial necessities of 7,000,000 of colored people recently emancipated.

Its incorporators, 50 in number, were named in the act authorizing its erection, and embraced the names of leading philanthropic citizens of the United States, whose names, as was intended, commended the institution to those inexperienced, simple-minded people, who are today its principal creditors.

The Freedman's Bank, as it is popularly called, was designed originally to perform for this trustful people the functions, as its name implies, of a savings bank, and none other than those hitherto held in slavery or their descendants were to become its depositors.

Its purpose was (to quote the paragraph in the original law) -

To receive on deposit such sums of money as may from time to time be offered therefor, by or in behalf of persons hitherto held in slavery in the United States, or their descendants, and investing the same in the stocks, bonds, and Treasury notes, or other securities of the United States.

The distinction provided in the bill in favor of the payment of "such persons in whole or in part of African descent" rests upon the foregoing paragraph of the original law, and no persons other than those named have the right to make use of this institution in any manner; neither have they the right to acquire by any means any interest in its assets.

For four years after the organization of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company the laws seemed to have been honestly observed by its officers and the provisions in its charter faithfully recognized. Congress itself, however, seems to have been derelict in its duty. One section of the original grant provided that the books of the institution were to be open at all times to inspection and examination of officers appointed by Congress to conduct the same, yet it does not appear that Congress ever appointed an officer for this purpose, nor has an examination of the character contemplated by Congress ever been made. The officers of the bank were to give bonds. There is nothing in the records to show that any bond was ever executed. Any proper examination would have developed this fact, and probably great loss would have been prevented thereby. In 1870 Congress changed or amended the charter without the knowledge or consent of those who had entrusted their savings to its custody.

This amendment embodied a radical change in the investment of these deposits by providing that instead of the safe, conservative, and prudent provision in the original charter "that two-thirds of all the deposits should be invested exclusively in Government securities," the dangerous privilege of allowing the irresponsible officers to loan one-half of its assets in bonds and mortgages and other securities, invest in and improve real estate without inspection, without examination, or responsibility on the part of its officers. The institution could only go on to a certain bankruptcy. In May 1870, Congress amended the charter, and from that date began the speculative, dishonest transactions upon the part of those controlling the institution until resulting in ultimate suspension and failure, with consequent disastrous loss to this innocent and trustful people.

It is contended by your committee that there was a moral responsibility, at least, if not an equitable responsibility, assumed by the Government when Congress changed the original charter of the company as to the nature of its loans and investments, when it failed to have the consent of the depositors, because of which change most of its losses were incurred. This ought to be regarded a very strong argument in favor of this bill.

Continued Next Week

BLACK COMMUNITY CONTROL...BY WHOM?



Many Minority Businessmen Lack Sufficient Motivation to Succeed

Too many minority businessmen lack sufficient motivation to succeed and are too easily discouraged if the going gets tough, says John H. Johnson, editor and publisher of the Johnson Publishing Co., which issued Ebony, Jet, Ebony Jr! and other black magazines.

"I don't see, never did see, failure as an option," Johnson said in an interview published in the March-April issue of "Harvard Business Review" magazine.

"I meet so many men who want to go into business and they can't because the SBA (Small Business Administration) won't give them a loan. Now, if you truly want to go into business and you try all the banks and they say no, and you try all the SBAs and governmental agencies and they say no, then you have to talk individual people into buying stock and making investments," he said.

"If blacks had the motivation, we would do some of these things. We would not give up our dream of going into business simply because a particular agency would not let us have the money to do it.... "Most people don't believe success is possible. So they get discouraged before they start. They think that all the cards are stacked against them; and many blacks think the white man's not going to let him succeed....

"Many of these things are within our own power to do, and so we can't blame the system for everything. Anger and fear and failure get in the way."

Johnson, one of the country's most successful black entrepreneurs (he also heads the Supreme Life Insurance Company and Fashion Fair cosmetics, as well as serving on the boards of such corporate giants as Twentieth Century Fox, Greyhound, Bell & Howell and others), declared in the interview that he did not

believe in black capitalism. "Black people ought to have the right to become capitalists, but black capitalism presupposes that you're only going to sell to black people. If I sold only to black people, I wouldn't have a very successful company. Most of my subscriptions and newsstand sales are made to blacks, but 90% of my advertising is made to whites.

"So I don't believe that we ought to limit our sales to the black community. I think a black businessman ought to strive to be a businessman and to sell to any customers that will buy from him."

The role of Ebony magazine, he said is to "apply the American culture to the black experience, to bring them together. If we learned anything during the 1960s it was that perhaps we can make the system a little more responsive. We really can't change it, even if we wanted to. And the only way to succeed in the system is to learn the rules and to try as nearly as possible to play by those rules."

He said that many young blacks are stymied because they don't know how to behave in a business situation.

"All of us would like to lash out sometimes," he said. "I think you always have to keep in mind what your goal is, though; and lashing out will not achieve it. You see, one disadvantage blacks have with anger and dealing with it is not knowing how to behave in a business situation. Most don't know, so they may respond inappropriately and get very frustrated."

Johnson said he personally always tries not to let anger and emotions interfere with logical decisions.

"I learned the rules of the game," he said. "It wasn't always easy, but I learned them."

He conceded, however, that his own organization, like other black enterprises, was

"more sentimental, more emotional and less businesslike than white organizations...We work with people we like a little bit more than we should."

For young blacks in large corporations, Johnson said they should "find ways to get their bosses to help them without admitting guilt, without feeling uncomfortable. The boss is not going to promote you if in the process he has to admit that he was wrong all the years that he didn't move you up. He's got to somehow feel that you did something that came to his attention and that justifies the promotion in the present."

He said that young blacks "are obligated to try to make each system work and to try to persuade the people who could make the system more responsive. Failing that, if they still want to work for a large company, then I think they need to try another one. I don't think we ought to say that all big business is bad simply because a particular company has not treated somebody fairly."

For white companies, he suggested forming an "equal opportunity auditing committee" so that top management committed to equal opportunity employment can monitor how that policy is carried out on lower echelons.

Johnson said that if he were a young businessman just starting out he would go "into some phase of the franchise food business. Fortunes are being made every day because people have to eat....Not only have whites taken over fried chicken, which black people cook better, but they've also now taken over ribs, which we cook better too. I say, when they take ribs, they're going too far!"



TO BE EQUAL

by Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

Executive Director of the National Urban League

Do Prisons Have A Future?

The federal government is planning to spend almost \$50 million next year to build new prisons. Add to this the expected push for new state prisons to relieve overcrowding and it looks like prison-building will be the new growth industry in the '70's.

Instead of stumbling blindly into a massive new prison-building program, this ought to be the time when the nation re-examines the whole concept of prisons and of sentencing convicted offenders.

After two hundred years of prison-building we still don't know what prisons are for. Are they to separate from the general public dangerous criminals? Are they supposed to be instruments of rehabilitation? Are they effective tools in fighting crime?

The evidence seems contradictory. While some dangerous persons are kept off the streets, prisons house many more persons no more dangerous than you and I, people unlikely to commit further crimes whether they are locked up or not.

And the prison as an institution of rehabilitation is a big bust. The kind of counseling and training necessary to convert prisons into rehabilitation centers is almost never available.

Even their effectiveness as a crime deterrent is a myth; it's commonly agreed that prisons often serve as crime schools that make it more difficult for young offenders to break with their past.

The need for some basic decisions about the future of prisons have been made more urgent by the revelation that so many of these institutions are modern-day snake pits -- overcrowded, dirty, and themselves crime-ridden centers that brutalize prisoners and staff alike.

A federal judge in Alabama termed that state's prison life "cruel and unusual punishment" that violates the Constitution and ordered minimum standards of living space, linen changes, food, exercise and medical treatment.

The judge was immediately set upon by hard liners, including the Governor who charged him with wanting to create "a hotel atmosphere". But what hotel has 4 foot by 8 foot cells in which six grown

men are crammed without running water or toilet facilities. What hotel throws together violent men with the weak and the sick in dormitories so crowded with mattresses that you can't cross from one end of the room to the other?

These conditions are not only shameful, they're unconstitutional and if not corrected may lead to the closing of the prisons. And Alabama is not unique; similar conditions and overcrowding are leading prison authorities to re-examine the role of their institutions.

Along with court actions challenging the constitutionality of such conditions, the hard-line push for minimum sentences and longer sentences means either a massive national investment in new prisons or changed thinking about prisons.

Illustrating the dilemma prison officials find themselves in is the action of a recent meeting of southern correctional authorities that backed more efficient parole, release of non-dangerous inmates and decriminalization of some offenses.

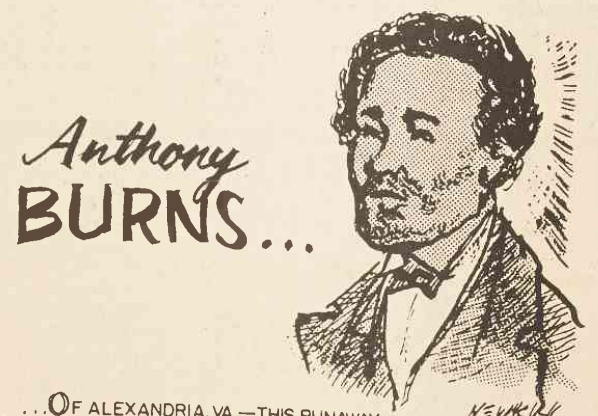
None of this may sit well with a public that's been deceived into thinking that crime can be stopped by locking up a significant portion of the population, but taxpayers are going to have to make the choice of paying higher taxes to build and staff new prisons or putting a much smaller amount of money into community-based programs aimed at rehabilitating offenders.

It's finally beginning to dawn on people that the financial and social costs of the prison system are too much for society to bear. If it stopped crime many would find it acceptable but it doesn't, so the search for alternative means of dealing with offenders must be accelerated.

There will always be violent and dangerous persons whom society will have to lock away. But these are a small minority of those already suffering not merely the loss of their freedom, but a daily process of brutalization.

So before sinking hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, into a failed system, let's experiment with new approaches that are both more effective and more humane.

Things You Should Know



Anthony BURNS...

...OF ALEXANDRIA, VA.—THIS RUNAWAY SLAVE WAS ARRESTED IN BOSTON ON MAY 24, 1854. THAT WEEK THE U.S. ATT'Y. REFUSED AN ABOLITIONIST OFFER TO BUY HIS FREEDOM; TO UPHOLD THE "FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW". BURNS WAS TRIED,—AND LOST,—ON MAY 27 & PRES. PIERCE CALLED UP 22 MILITARY, 5th REG. OF ARTILLERY, 1500 DRAGOONS, MARINES, BOSTON POLICE, ETC., TO GUARD HIM. HIS "SLAVE PRICE" WAS ONLY \$1200, BUT THE GOVERNMENT SPENT OVER \$40,000. TO RETURN HIM TO SLAVERY!

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Supreme Court Continues To Help

The U.S. Supreme Court decided this week that employees seeking jobs or upgrading may gain seniority by such application even though they may be turned down by the employer.

This ruling recognizes security rights, but insists that it must not be used as a blockage against sex and race.

No doubt this may penalize some employers who have been powerless to do otherwise; it makes some employers who have collaborated in maintaining this system which the court has held unconstitutional, change their policy.

Maybe some rough spots will be encountered as time goes on, but they will eventually, like all just pronouncements, people will have learned to live with.

No doubt there would be those who contend that this opinion violates a person's rights but, if it does, it balances the denial of opportunity of a person for reasons not his fault.