

EDITORIAL

by Paul C. Smith

Is Black Power Good For The People?

The word "Black Power" has been in the forefront for a few years, other expressions of supposed Black Unity are also prevalent. The strong trend to unity has some possible pitfalls. A close examination of some little publicized facts indicate a disturbing trend.

(A) While voter registration has increased all over and in the South in particular, in the North Black voters have been losing interest in the polls. Black voter turnout has dropped between the 1960 - 1968 period. In some major cities Black turnout fell as much as 35%. Such a decline can but lessen the impact of the Black vote power.

Secondly, the Black vote is being broken up into rival factions - The Black Caucus - The Black Political Convention - and third but by no means least, is the emergence of a class of Black political power brokers, who hope to be able to deliver Black votes to white candidates for whatever - there have been rumors of big payoff.

The big question - How much good can be accomplished to help the man in the streets? We know that their white counterparts - white political power brokers, retain all the cream and allows only a few drops of skim to get down to the poor - unemployed, and underemployed.

We would be naive to believe that our Black power brokers will perform in a totally unselfish way. We may be winning some of the battles, but we are losing the war, because we are losing a single political voice and the decisive impact we once had.

NEW PRISONER PROGRAM

In Boston's Suffolk County a new program is being launched that could possibly be the answer to the problem of prisoners landing back in institutions after release.

The amount of money given prisoners when they are released is so small, it is a wonder that 95% of them are not back in prison immediately.

Society expects ex-convicts to start feeding, housing and clothing themselves, and to stay out of trouble in the traditional new suit - shoes - shirt etc., with the little handout given them.

A half-way house program such as Washington State and now the city of Boston have, could save many tax dollars and at the same time help prisoners to go straight. It would do well to get such a program started here in Nevada.

We call upon interested persons to explore this possibility. Anyone interested in studying such a program call - Paul C. Smith - 648-2615 or write c/o Las Vegas Voice, P. O. Box 4038, Las Vegas, Nevada 89106

Black Women And Women's Liberation

By Bayard Rustin

Contrary to popular impression the woman most discriminated against is not the white suburban housewife but the mother of a ghetto household.

People have argued that the relatively affluent suburbanite would be more vulnerable to the disaffection caused by her sexual role and more likely to embrace the issues raised by the modern feminist movement.

It is hardly difficult to reach such a conclusion, particularly if one's judgement is influenced by the conventional wisdom served by journalists and other opinion molders. For it was the same sort of simplistic analysis, myth making and stereotyping which convinced many people that working people are the most conservative force in society, when in fact, conservative and reactionary attitudes are far more prevalent among the wealthy.

Black women, in reality, hear the drumroll of the movement for female equality much more loudly than do whites. And, contrary to pop-

ular myth, poor women respond to a majority of the issues of the feminist movement more fervently and in greater numbers than do the middle class housewives and professionals who comprise the core of strength of women's activist groups.

But while endorsing the broad aims of feminists, black women differ sharply over which issues they consider most fundamental to equality. While white women find it difficult to define and quantify equality, black women see equality as a less elusive ideal. For black women believe that equality to a large degree can still be measured by more jobs, more and better quality low and moderate income housing, improved public education, quality health care and programs to help the poor and elderly.

I do not mean to infer that feminism's psychological implications do not concern black women. Black women are in fact more dissatisfied with their social roles. More deeply than whites they are distressed that their sexual role may have limited their chances for self fulfillment, are convinced that doors to success which are open to men are shut for women, and often consider their years of schooling wasted.

These are not subjective evaluations; they are the innermost sentiments of black women as expressed in polls and studies. Yet to accept their validity is to raise significant questions about the course of the women's liberation movement.

When women's liberation rose to prominence several years ago there were those who warned that should it fail to alter the essentially middle class nature of its appeal it would be unable to win support of Negroes and white working class women.

And while some feminist leaders have acknowledged this weakness we still find that black women, poor women and working women, discriminated against and alienated as they are, remain unenthusiastic and occasionally antagonistic to women's liberation.

Too often they find that women's liberation is concerned with rhetoric and consciousness raising to the neglect of social change. Sometimes Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan and other leaders of women's rights groups focus on issues so irrelevant to the personal lives of working people as to appear dilettantish.

But there is a more basic reason for black disenchantment. Black people, because they

BUT WHEN THE QUOTA FOR BLACKS IS zero



have lived with discrimination and struggled to overcome built in prejudice, cannot relate to a cause which separates and isolates social problems on the basis of sex. They understand from personal experience that discrimination, poverty, and the miseries they bring are not sexually exclusive.

Thus while black women have remained conscious of the special problems they encountered as women, they are also cognizant that discrimination is essentially a matter of class and race.

This is reflected in their choice of social activism. In past years black women played important roles in the civil rights movement. They were the first to respond to Dr. King when he organized the Montgomery bus boycott and assumed leadership positions in this and many other campaigns.

More recently blacks have branched into other areas organizing domestic workers, hospital workers and school paraprofessionals, long the most impoverished and exploited of the female work force.

Thus in the most important areas of social activism--civil rights campaigns, labor organization, tenant rights groups and the like--black women have carved remarkable records of accomplishment. Their leadership has been constructive and responsible; their militancy indisputable. And they bear with them the conviction that what they are doing is important not only in itself but also within the context of the larger movements for human dignity and sexual, racial, and social equality.

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