

EDITORIAL

SAVE THE CHILDREN

By Paul Dawkins

"It's not even safe for your children to go to the neighborhood school anymore" was the feeling of an irate mother of the West Las Vegas area. The unsafe school crossing at the Kermit R. Booker Elementary School on Highland between Balzar and Blankenship surely supported the mother's statement. Another case of an unsafe school crossing is on "H" Street in front of the El Rio Club.

Unlike the majority of the Clark County schools, Booker Elementary is not fortunate to have proper caution lights to warn the traffic to slow down to the 15 or 25 MPH that is required while school is in session. Instead there are painted road signs warning traffic to slow down; unfortunately, they are not seen until you are practically on top of them. There is also the help of a crossing guard at the school, but is that enough to assure the safety of our children?

The thoroughfares on Highland Avenue and "H" Street are main traffic arteries on the West Side and the utmost consideration for safety and caution should be sought for our children. The people and leaders of tomorrow are the children of today. SAVE THE CHILDREN.

BAYARD RUSTIN

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Black people have a vital stake in the direction which the current movement for political reform takes. Political reform is, by definition, a civil rights issue, since any measure which extends and strengthens democracy enables more blacks to vote and helps more blacks win elected office.

Speaking more broadly, campaign spending reform will curb one of the most outrageous inequities of the democratic system--the widespread and seemingly ingrained power of the dollar to determine who will be our political representatives and what their program will be. During the last presidential campaign, President Nixon practically mortgaged the government to the wealthiest and most powerful of the corporate elite. He was not the first politician to benefit from corporate largesse; but no other president ever tied the nation's future to its monied interest as openly, arrogantly, and to the degree that Nixon did.

Political reform, then, is in the interest of the vast majority of decent-thinking Americans. The problem, however, is not every proposal billed as reform can legitimately be a true agent for democratization.

If the undue influence of wealth and privilege is curtailed; if working people can seek office on an equal footing with the affluent; if cumbersome and discriminatory registration procedures are abolished--then the reform impulse can be said to have accomplished a remarkable transformation of the political process at a time when many Americans are questioning the basic traditions of democracy.

Money Made In The Black Community Has To Be Put Back Into That Community



But if legislation for political change enhances the power of those social forces who, by dint of wealth and education, have already achieved strong representation--corporations, the rich, the activist middle class--the reform drive will not merely have failed; it will have aggravated the worst features of the political process.

Thus it is with an air of disbelief that one reads of proposals, advanced in the name of reform, which seek to limit the political role of the labor movement. The argument that the blame for political corruption rest equally with business and labor may sound eminently reasonable on the surface. But one need ponder but briefly to recognize the absurdity of this proposition.

Labor unions did not pour millions upon millions of dollars into the presidential campaign in 1972; nor have their financial contributions been excessive in previous years. Union presidents have not been convicted of breaking federal spending laws; unions did not seek special concessions from the president in return for financial support. Those who were guilty of the most flagrant violations were the largest corporations, a fact borne out by innumerable investigations.

There is another, broader reason to oppose the campaign against the unions, Labor is not, as many contend, just another "vested interest". Trade unions are the organizational vehicle of millions of working people; they represent people, not profits. And by imbuing the worker with a sense of dignity, and giving workers the strength that comes from organization, unions have encouraged many of their member to seek elected office. Many of the best-known black officials, for example, received their initial political inspiration by participating in the life of their union.

The most vocal proponents of anti-union political reform are, not suprisingly, those who have always opposed the aspiration of working people and were most intransigently hostile to civil rights legislation.

To their ranks, unfortunately, have been added the voices of a few liberals--individuals who can usually be counted on to support the cause of social progress. They view themselves, not merely as reformers, but as the only people with sufficient vision and detachment to represent the interest of ordinary people. Thus Common Cause the best known reform organization,

has pressed many state legislatures to adopt curbs on union political, legislative, and education programs.

If faith in the political process is to be renewed, two fundamental changes are necessary. The first, and most obvious, is that the influence of money must be curbed. There is only one way to accomplish this, and that is for the federal government to finance the cost of political campaigns.

Second, and equally as important, is to change the political structure so as to enable more working people to win office. Removing the influence of private political investments through federal assumption of campaign costs will help achieve this goal; this is not, however, sufficient in itself.

Working people need something around which to organize; a proving ground where they can acquire the skills and encouragements necessary for political participation. At one time the political machines provided this. With their demise, the only force capable of filling this role is the labor movement. This is an important lesson for those who profess a commitment to reforming the political system.

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900 West Bonanza Road, Lobby Suite (Moulin Rouge Hotel)-Las Vegas, Nevada 89106 Telephone 648-2615

ADVERTISING RATES FURNISHED UPON REQUEST.

Price per copy - 15¢ * One year \$7.50

(Application for 2nd Class Mailing Permit pending at Las Vegas, Nevada).