

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By Lawrence Albert

This life holds many perils, for both the careful and uncared-for--but some people go out of their way to make an almost impossible struggle unbearable. They are the talebearers. They take the minutest thing, stretch, weave, mold and shape it until it becomes a two-headed monster, devouring everyone in its path.

"Gossip has always been well defined as, putting two and two together, and making five. I hold it to be a fact, that if all persons knew what each said of the other, there would not be four friends in the world," Blaise Pascal, French philosopher, said.

People are not to be discussed as the weather. Their privacy should be respected and protected as a mean dog watches over the property of its master. Although black people have many faults, as all people do, they spout gossip, as a machine gun does bullets.

"Narrow-minded and ignorant persons talk about persons and not things; hence gossip is the bane and disgrace of so large a portion of society," George Eliot, the English novelist, said.

Petty jealousy is one of the primary reasons that black people cannot bind themselves into unity and snatch their share of the American apple pie.

But this has always been true. The house "nigger" kept "masser" informed about the activities of the field hands, and the field hands hated the house workers, because they had the easier jobs and the softer life.

Black people could not have been divided better if a genius had set down and planned the whole institution of slavery and its later repercussions. But it is time to stop this back-biting and move toward a future that will hold something better for our children than we have had.

This is why "Black History Week" is such an occasion for Blacks. It is a time for looking back; it is a time to reach into the past and pull it into the future and say, "we too have something to be proud of." We can prove our strength by the accomplishments of our ancestors. They survived the cramped ship trips from Africa; they survived the whip; they survived unbelievable treatment. We can use these actions on which to build our future, because it's a foundation hewn of granite. No black person should be ashamed of his color, because, our ancestors carried more than their share of the loan in the building of this great nation.

This is what should be burned into the souls of our youth, because, they are the hope of the black race tomorrow.

FORDS GRAND ILLUSION AND LABORS RESPONSE



BAYARD RUSTIN

Recent events have demonstrated how thoroughly confused our national leadership is. In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, President Ford has asked for additional sacrifices from those who have sacrificed enough already--workers, the poor, the unemployed.

We are told that unemployment, which stands at nearly 13 per cent in the black community, will climb even higher before the year's end. And according to the President's grand strategy, we are not to expect a significant decrease in joblessness FOR THREE YEARS. Indeed, we are assured that the President will vigorously oppose those measures--such as massive public employment programs--which represent the only way of getting the country back to work.

But that is not all. There is to be no new spending for social services, and, in some areas, social programs are to be cut out. Thus federal spending for welfare is to be cut out at the very time that economic collapse is forcing more and more persons to the relief roles. As more people are unemployed, and thus without the protection of medical insurance, we are told that National Health Insurance must wait. With the housing industry deeply in depression, with construction workers out of work and the cities rotting away, we are told that housing programs must also be postponed.

Truly, the Ford program is not a grand strategy, but a grand illusion.

It is clear that black people can expect nothing more from the Ford Administration than the most superficial gesture: the President has shown himself most open and accessible to all viewpoints. But when push comes to shove, when hard decisions of economic policy must be made, the Ford prescription has proven no easier to swallow than that of Richard Nixon.

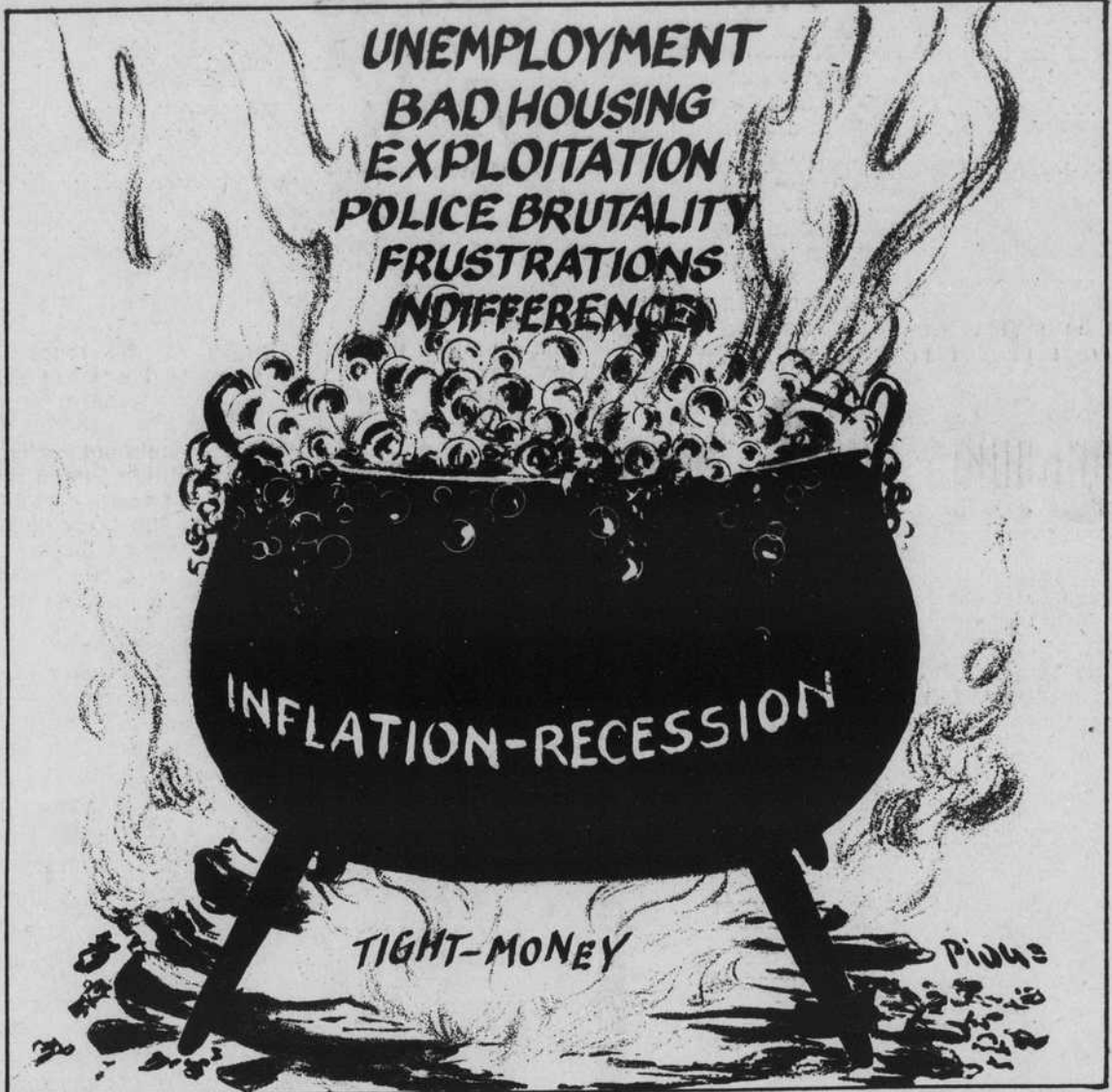
What the Administration is saying is that nothing can be done--hardship will be a fact of American life for the rest of the decade. This is the assumption that underlies all the policy decisions Mr. Ford has made, and it is an assumption which must be resisted by all people of good will.

But what is the alternative? Does anyone have a program to deal with depression, raging unemployment, and the collapse of our cities?

The answer is, quite simply, that of all the forces in society, only the labor movement is addressing the problems of inequality and injustice in a comprehensive and systematic way. Only labor has a program to put people to work, ensure a measure of justice for the unemployed worker and the family on welfare, regenerate the housing industry, and overhaul the health care system.

The details of labor's program were pieced together by the AFL-CIO's General Board, which consists of each of the presidents of the federation's affiliated unions. The significance of the program for black people is that the issues which are of most vital concern to blacks and other minorities.

First and foremost is the issue of unemployment. The AFL-CIO calls for immediate, massive federal efforts to create jobs for the unemployed." Among the specific demands are a public service program which would provide one million additional public service jobs in 1976, a doubling of the youth summer job program, and heavy federal investment in public works as a means of stimulating jobs.



The AFL-CIO also proposes tax cuts which go well beyond the level proposed by President Ford, and which would provide the most benefit to poor and middle income workers. The revitalization of the federal housing effort, a federal program to ensure that health care is provided to workers who have lost their jobs and the medical insurance that goes with them and the extension and improvement of unemployment compensation programs are demanded.

In addition, there is strong opposition to the increase in the price of food stamps.

Labor has proposed a program designed, in the AFL-CIO's words "to put Americans back to work," a program, in other words, to deal with the most dangerous situation America has faced in the post-war period.

It is no coincidence that the program spelled out by organized labor parallels the agenda of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, an organization responsible for pressing the needs of minority Americans in Congress. For if the goals and needs of the black community have historically mirrored those of labor, this is more true today than ever before.

The choice of allies is not something that is made for abstract reasons: it is determined by common goals and common needs and the commitment of an ally to join with you in struggle to achieve them. At a time when so much of society is confused, when loss of will and purpose are prevalent, it is encouraging to know that at least one force has the clear vision and the strength of conviction to fight for its needs, and the needs of black Americans.

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