

# Ruby Says

by Ruby Duncan

During the past two months, I have been spending most of my weeks in Carson City, at the Legislature, working for bills that will help poor people. My columns have been a little irregular, but happenings of the past few weeks are really worth writing about.

Clark County Welfare Rights Organization and supporters testified before the Senate Finance Committee a little over a week ago, to ask for increased welfare grants. With me were Maya Miller of Carson City, who ran for the U. S. Senate last year, and Diana Axley of Legal Services. I was really impressed with the concern of the Senators on the Finance Committee. They have a great deal of influence on what ADC grants will be. Most of the Senators on the committee seemed very supportive and understanding and asked compassionate questions. Sen. Floyd Lamb of Las Vegas, who is chairman of the Finance Committee, said he didn't see how families could possibly live at current grant levels, and several senators agreed that the grants must be raised. Senator Brown of Las Vegas, also made statements which showed a people priority rather than an interest in building new buildings.

This is quite a change from last session. We had some support then, but not as much as this

year. The economic crunch is affecting everyone, and people are finally realizing that it hurts the poor the most. It was so beautiful to see legislators listening to poor people and expressing honest concern, and most of all indicating that they want to raise the grants. Watch your newspapers to see what legislators do on this---we must support our responsive legislators.

The other difference at this hearing was the agreement between the Welfare Division and advocates for the poor. For the first time I can remember, George Miller publicly supported our request, agreed with our figures, and was "on our side." He even complimented us on our presentation. So this time we are complimenting George Miller for his support and his reasonable comments.

That was the scene---no confrontations, no arguments, and no distorted facts. Just a group of poor people, welfare administrators, and some honestly concerned legislators who were all talking about making life better for Nevada's needy families. It was good to see.

This week we are making a similar presentation before the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and we truly hope that members of that committee have as much understanding and wisdom as the good Senators of the Finance Committee.

# V \* A FACTS

Q -- How many Spanish-American War veterans are there, and what is their average age?

A -- There are about 1,200 living Spanish-American War veterans out of 392,000 participants in the conflict that ended in 1902. Their average age is 94.4 years, according to the Veterans Administration.

Q -- As a veteran's widow, I was drawing Veterans Administration pension until I remarried. Since my second husband died recently, can I get back on the pension rolls?

A -- Yes. Under the current law, a formerly eligible widow may regain her pension if the subsequent remarriage ends in death or divorce -- provided her income and net do not exceed income limitations.

Q -- I am an 18 year old son of a veteran who has a 60 per cent service-connected disability. Am I eligible for Veterans Administration education benefits?

A -- No. Only children of veterans who suffered permanent, total disabilities or deaths from service-connected causes, or children of military service personnel missing in action or prisoners of war for more than 90 days are eligible for education benefits.

The maximum interest rate on GI home loans was reduced from 8.5 to 8 percent effective March 3, the Veterans

Administration announced recently.

Administrator of Veterans Affairs Richard L. Roudebush said an increased supply of mortgage money made possible the latest reduction, which was agreed upon jointly with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The new rate also applies to FHA home loans.

Roudebush noted the half-per cent decrease could mean mortgage payment savings of over \$10 monthly, amounting to \$3,800 over the 30 year life of a loan to a veteran buying a home with a \$30,000 GI loan.

Interest rates on loans guaranteed by VA began a steady rise from 6 per cent in 1966, and peaked at 9.5 per cent last August. They then declined to 9 per cent last November, 8.5 per cent on January 21 and finally to the current 8 per cent rate.

VA guarantees 60 per cent up to a maximum of \$17,500, whichever is less, of loans private lenders make to eligible military service personnel, veterans and widows of World War II and later periods.

Roudebush noted the agency's home loan program was liberalized under Veterans Housing Act of 1974 (December 31). The law increased the amount of loan guaranty from \$12,500 to \$17,500 authorized loans for mobile home lots, increased the amount of mobile home loan and broadened possibilities for guaranteeing loans on one-family condominiums.

# THIS WEEK IN BLACK HISTORY

## March 1975

THURS. **20** Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852.

FRI. **21** Rev. Andrew Young (Atlanta) and Barbara Jordan (Houston), first Southern Blacks in Congress since Reconstruction. 1972

SAT. **22** Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. begins. 1965

SUN. **23** First Black poetry anthology, *Les Ceneilles*, appears in 1846.

MON. **24** Canada gave the vote to Blacks in 1837.

TUES. **25** Scottsboro Boys arrested at Paint Rock, Ala. Their case becomes worldwide civil rights cause. 1931

WED. **26** William Hastie confirmed as first Black federal judge. 1937

# CONTRIBUTIONS IN AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON--Throughout the history of this country, blacks have made a significant contribution to American Agriculture, a U.S. Department of Agriculture historian noted in a recent television program.

Dr. Joel Schor of USDA's Economic Research Service, said:

"The very same ship's that brought blacks to these shores in the early colonial period, brought the seeds from which sorghum, watermelon and peanuts were grown. The African came as a skilled farmer in cotton agriculture and employed his skills with the hoe in both garden and commercial farming."

In addition to their work in the South, blacks also helped advance agriculture on large farms in New England prior to the American Revolution, Dr. Schor said.

"They bred the Naragansett Pacer, the best riding horse in colonial America; produced large quantities of cheese, bred livestock, grew wheat, rye, cotton and garden vegetables. The story is much the same in the middle colonies, except for the Pacer which was unique to New England; blacks were also involved in lumbering and clearing lands for farming," Schor said.

After citing the well known contributions of Dr. George Washington Carver, Dr. Schor pointed to the creation of the predominantly black land grant colleges as "perhaps the most important development" for blacks during the period of Dr. Carver's creative activity. (The predominantly black land grant system was created by Congress in 1890, some 20 years after similar colleges were established for whites. There are 16 predominantly black land grant institutions. They have developed experiment stations to test the validity of results obtained in the laboratory, and send extension service agents into the field to bring new knowledge to farmers.)



Dr. Schor continued: "Although Tuskegee Institute is not, strictly speaking, a land grant institution, it was the first of the group to begin agricultural extension work, which was initiated by Mr. Thomas M. Campbell during the early years of the 20th century. Extension work among blacks was of great value in increasing productivity and improving the quality of farm life."

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