

# Point of View

EDITORIAL

## City Fathers Must Clean Up

"What a crucial time to be talking about getting something done in West Las Vegas! The nerve of 'those people' bothering us when we're in the midst of starting a political campaign. Who do 'they' think we are?"

These are the provocative thoughts that may be running through some of the City Fathers' minds at this point...but what are they going to do "now" to cleanup the unsightly mess in certain areas on the Westside?

There's an old adage that says if you carry a "big stick" you'll get something done. That's just about the size of it when something pressing is needed.

Several years ago, the Westside community was badly in need of a cleanup. There were a number of old wrecked cars strewn everywhere, trash scattered in every nook and corner, dead trees hanging dangerously and fire-gutted buildings beckoning for real disaster...a real unsightly mess.

Something had to be done...and fast.

A small group of ministers and concerned citizens called on city hall to file a complaint. The NAACP and other organizations pushed for support. They all wanted immediate action...to get the mess cleaned-up and for the city to do something about sidewalks and street lights. Well, it wasn't long before the city started work in that direction.

To see the street cleaning crews out there daily was a sight to behold. The street excavation teams moved in. Things were happening. The unfortunate thing was that it did not last long. They moved out just about as fast as they moved in. The job was not complete. It appeared to be an attempt to appease... "to keep them off our backs."

Now the area is getting back to the old condition. There's still much work to be done, particularly the need for sidewalks and street lights.

A couple months ago, there was a cleanup and beautification effort developed by the Las Vegas Beautification Committee and others for a small designated area within the Westside. It was a contest with prizes given to those who made the greatest improvements on their property. It was very effective but certainly not broad enough.

Recently, City Commissioner Ron Lurie said he had directed the city manager to form a committee to study how to cleanup downtown Las Vegas, which he described as being in "deplorable condition."

"Paper and other litter line streets, gutters and alley-ways downtown," Lurie had said.

Asked if residents or tourists were more responsible for the litter, Lurie replied, "I don't want to put the finger on any one group."

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CARL ROWAN

## NAACP Speaks, But Who's Listening?

MIAMI BEACH, FLA. — As this most-publicized of all NAACP conventions drew to a close, one of the organization's members from Chicago leaned over from his breakfast table and said: "I can't wait for the column in which you tell me what all this means."

"Don't hold your breath," I said, admitting that I did not know whether the parade past these predominantly black delegates by President Carter, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, Rep. John Anderson and various civil rights leaders really means anything.

"I'm about to go home, and I don't have any new sense of direction for black people," the Chicagoan said. "I don't see any reason to believe that anything is going to change because of this convention."

In a way, he spoke the underlying, unannounced theme of this 71st annual convention of the nation's oldest black civil rights group: Leaders of minority groups from the nation's great cities have sent up SOS's and five-alarm signals, but nothing much comes back to say that anyone who can change things is listening.

Kennedy came here with a beautifully eloquent speech which included just about all the

right rhetoric that current-day blacks are demanding, but sophisticated delegates dismissed it with the cynical assertion: "It's easy for him to make those promises because he's not going to get the Democratic nomination and will never have to admit that, as Carter discovered, the powerful forces arrayed against minorities will never let him keep his promises."

A black civil rights leader and a white labor union official said virtually the same thing — that they ultimately are going to have to sell themselves to Carter because they cannot accept Reagan. "But Carter is trying to buy us awfully cheap," one said.

They know that Carter can buy them "cheap" because no Republican customers are bidding — and John Anderson simply did not convince delegates that, as he claimed, he is "the only thing standing between Ronald Reagan and the White House."

This dilemma of blacks, organized labor and others were reflected in a survey in which 116 delegates gave their views on several questions to the Miami News.

If the election were held now, 53 percent of these delegates would vote for Carter, 14 percent for

Kennedy, 12 percent for Anderson, 6 percent for Reagan — with the rest rejecting all of the above.

Fifty-three percent is not a rousing vote of approval for Carter, even with Kennedy taking votes away. The Miami News survey, admittedly not based on a "scientific" sample, indicates that nothing much has changed in this society, either among blacks or whites. And it suggests that politicians don't tremble over the black vote because the evidence is strong that blacks, like whites, are strongly divided on most issues — except which political party they will admit to belonging to.

In this survey 73 percent said they were Democrats, 9 percent Republicans, 14 percent independents & 4 percent listed no political affiliation.

The sharpest division of opinion showed up on the issue of whether blacks have made any economic progress in the last decade. Respondents were evenly split, with 41 percent saying that the economic position of blacks had improved and 41 percent saying it had gotten worse. The rest felt there had been no change.

Asked to rate leadership in the black community on a national

basis, 45 percent thought it was not very strong, while 41 percent rated it "strong" and 12 percent said "very strong."

Benjamin Hooks, executive director of NAACP, was named most often as one of the top black leaders today. Next in line were the Rev. Jesse Jackson, director of Operation PUSH; Urban League President Vernon Jordan; former UN Ambassador Andrew Young and Georgia State Sen. Julian Bond.

While most of those who took part in the survey thought that white attitudes toward blacks had improved during the past decade, this convention definitely did not produce any widespread sense of optimism about the future of America's urban areas.

★★★

Shortly after NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hooks blasted Republican presidential aspirant Ronald Reagan for declining to speak at the NAACP convention here, Reagan sent Hooks an incredible explanation:

"I simply was not aware of the invitation to speak before the convention until just a half-hour ago," Reagan said in a telegram.

That raises serious questions about what, if

## The Question For Blacks Is: Guns Or Butter

The Administration's programs, and other sources, budget projects large increases in military spending over the next five years. It says defense spending will be \$100 billion higher than "would be needed simply to maintain the 1980 level in real terms."

That's a lot of money. It will come from foregone tax cuts, domestic

magnitude reflects a change in national priorities. Yet it has not

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military spending would be in the neighborhood of one trillion dollars, double the preceding five years.

A change of that

been accompanied by the kind of debate one might expect to precede such a drastic decision.

The easy assumption is

that the military budget's jump is a response to the brutal Russian aggression in Afghanistan and to the irrational Iranian holding of American hostages.

Not so. The budget was locked in place by the time the Russians started marching, and most of it was agreed on before the hostages were taken. The jump in military spending



Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

was largely the result of promises made to secure the SALT Treaty's passage, when it was still alive.

But the reaction of candidates and public alike seems to be favorable to the hike. The assumption is that the Russians have been building up their forces and we've got to play

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