



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.

Human Rights Activist

THE "BOTTOM LINE"

We, as black Americans, come from a culture of wage earners. We "punch the clock," and some among us "wait for pay" in a variety of productive and non-productive-oriented ways.

Those for whom we have worked have paid our wages or provided our crumbs. We comprise upwards of 15 percent of the nation's population. But we own less than one percent of the nation's other than self-employed businesses.

Among business persons there is a perpetual need to figure out, and to reckon with, what is known as the "bottom line." The "bottom line" is the figure at the end of the financial columns which tell whether or not every part of a process and every hour expended has paid off.

If the "bottom line" has a minus sign on it, then revisions are called for. Only if the process it represents is accompanied by a plus sign might it continue. But only then may it continue if optimum profits are to be made.

As black Americans, we do not come from a culture of the "bottom line" in the conventional business world's sense of the term. Those who are financially the most successful—whether through business production or business finance—live not

on wages but on what is called a "margin." A "margin of profit" is whatever is beside the plus sign in every business operation. It is represented by the "bottom line."

Those of us who come from a wage-earning culture or way of life get our pay whether or not what we do pays off or creates a "profit margin." We live from week-to-week regardless of the "bottom line." We tend to develop a mind-set more nearly related to guaranteed wages, to guaranteed pension and to guaranteed hours and other guaranteed conditions of work.

Some among us may not even imagine any other kind of way of life where every penny at the "bottom line" must be watched. "A penny saved is a penny earned" in a profoundly significant sense to the wealthy and to those in business. The success of what they do is based upon counting up, and holding as tight as possible onto, every penny which comes out at every "bottom line."

The major significance to black people of what is said here rests in the recognition that there is a vastly different approach from that which we have known to the "time clock" and to "working hours" among those who would be financially affluent

or well off. Hence, if black Americans want to be successful in business and to be among those of the highest incomes, we shall need to take a somewhat different attitude toward how we spend our time in an effort to make the most money which is only to be found at the "bottom line."

We are not production-oriented. Wage earners (especially under the influence of labor unions) are much like neuters. They want to get back as much as possible while putting out as little as possible. The concept of investment is not a central concern. There is a limited self-giving with a guaranteed—and implicitly limited—return. This does not make for the creation of substantial wealth.

Nor does the attitude of posturing as though we were affluent make for wealth. Many older blacks today who have been hired at large salaries by major concerns to give an image of integration in non-production-oriented jobs have come to find that, when forced into new positions, they cannot produce. They were not hired to produce, only to posture.

This same general picture holds true for many middle or lower income younger blacks who have lived on government grants or have

worked for some federal agencies. When the grants run out, or a living is to be made in the production-oriented world, prospective employers want to know what you can produce and how oriented you are toward the crucial "bottom line." This is the only experience that really matters.

Black Americans must move out of a wage-earner's mentality and into a lively awareness of and respect for the "bottom line." Only thus will our communities close the apparent gulf between black Americans as the "have nots" and white Americans as those who are the "haves."

Among the ancient Roman philosophers there is an expression which read, "Ignoscere est cognare," signifying that to recognize one's deficiencies or ignorances is the very first step in overcoming them.

We need to recognize that our cultural conditioning tends to keep us thinking and acting in ways which do not make the best business sense. When this recognition sinks in, then we may begin to close the hitherto "unclosing economic gap" and realistically look to the day when the "bottom line" adds up to substantial affluence, influence or both.



LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

MITCHELL CRITICAL OF NEW NATIONAL POLICIES

In a recent speech at Augusta College, Augusta, Georgia, Congressman Parren J. Mitchell (D-7th-Md.) warned against the precipitous, capricious implementation of new government policies, holding that such actions may exacerbate the nation's economic and social woes.

While expressing a willingness to try some new approaches to solve the nation's economic ills, Mitchell argued that new approaches should operate in tandem with existing social programs funded by the federal government.

"A new approach, such as the Urban Enterprise Zones, should operate in tandem with existing programs such as CETA," he said. "If private sector jobs are created by the Urban Enterprise Zones, we may then be able to reduce CETA jobs proportionately."

The Maryland Lawmaker criticized tax cut proposals by pointing out that they will have no immediate impact on reducing either inflation or unemployment, and the loss of federal revenues may force the elimination of federal efforts on which the poor, the working poor, senior citizens, and the unemployed

depend for their survival.

His criticism of the proposed ten percent reduction of personal income taxes for three years was that the affluent would benefit far more significantly than would lower and middle class families. "Under this tax approach," he argued, "benefits to the affluent would off-set the inflation rate four fold, but benefits to lower and middle class families would not even off-set the damage to such families by double digit inflation."

The six-term Representative stated, "We must not and cannot formulate and implement national economic policies which will force the lower class to bear the burden of economic pain for the greater good of the American society."

Have you written to one of your elected officials this week?

You may write to your Congressmen and Senators at: Congressional Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515 or Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Please congratulate them for their important work, and let them know where Black America stands on crucial issues.

Things You Should Know

Osborn Perry
ANDERSON...



... ONE OF JOHN BROWN'S ARMED

BAND IN THE FAMOUS RAID ON HARPER'S

FERRY, W. VA., IN 1859! MANY DIED IN THE

FIGHT, SOME WERE CAPTURED, AND 7 (INCLUDING

JOHN BROWN, ON DEC. 2), DIED ON THE GALLOWES! ANDERSON ES-

CAPED TO WRITE "A VOICE FROM HARPER'S FERRY" & LATER TO

FIGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR! AT A COMMEMORATION OF BROWN'S EX-

ECUTION IN DEC, 1860, A WHITE MOB RIOTED & THREW FREDERICK

DOUGLASS DOWNSTAIRS AT BOSTON'S TREMONT TEMPLE!

INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR ARTICLES PUBLISHED?

The Vegas Voice is looking for good local writers who have something to say and would like to be published.

For more information

Call 382-6123

BLACKS MUST CONTROL THEIR OWN COMMUNITY