

## Rustin Visits Black Hebrews

By Bayard Rustin

Last week, an unofficial delegation which I headed returned from Israel, where we investigated the status of the Black Hebrews.

The Black Hebrew Community came to Israel via Liberia in 1968. At first, they were welcomed by the Israeli government, given temporary legal status and helped to find employment. However, when later it was perceived that the tenets which this group of American blacks espoused could not be defined as Jewish, when the Black Hebrews began to claim that the land of Israel rightfully belonged to them, and when illegal immigrants began to increase their numbers substantially, relations between the Black Hebrews and the Israeli authorities began to deteriorate rapidly.

This led some individuals, who seek to worsen black-Jewish relations, to charge racial bias by Israel.

Our group consisted of a number of

American civil rights activists, including Alexander J. Allen, V.P. of the National Urban League; Lewis J. Carter, III, National Labor Director of the NAACP; Mrs. Arthur C. Logan of the National Council of Negro Women;



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The delegation's trip to Israel had a two-fold purpose: we sought to ascertain the truth and also to help secure the human rights of the Black Hebrews.

After eleven days of investigation and extensive meetings with representatives of the Israeli government, the Black Hebrews, other blacks living in Israel, including former members of the Black Hebrew

Community, various residents and groups in Dimona and Arad, and U.S. Embassy people, our group issued its report. In our investigation, we painstakingly inquired into whether there was official Israeli racism, spending considerable time with non-whites, we

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## LEADERS

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during and immediately after slavery, no matter what their skin color. How else could anyone have dealt with the white ruling class? Then and now, we must have some intelligent leaders trained in law, politics, national and international diplomacy, as well as ability to utilize the media. Just being black does not endow one with expertise in any field.

There are many people, white, black and light skinned, who have joined the fight to bring first class citizenship and human dignity to oppressed people and let us be forever grateful to all of them.

## HILL

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beyond the means of most young people. Aid to education and support of vocational training is not only a legitimate purpose of government it is one which enjoys a great deal of public support.

The President's obsession with budget cutting will even damage America's foreign relations. While calling for a huge increase in defense spending, the President recommends a two billion dollar cut in foreign aid from the figure recommended by President Carter. Foreign aid is an important instrument in improving America's relations with the developing world. Indeed, what has made America different from the Soviet Union in the eyes of many has been our willingness not only to provide weaponry but legitimate economic aid, as well. The Reagan cutback in foreign aid is shortsighted, will weaken

American influence in the Third World and will — in the final analysis — serve to undermine our country's national interest.

The real tragedy of the Reagan spending cuts is not only in the increased suffering that will result for the truly needy. Part of the tragedy of the proposal is that it represents a tremendous gamble. President Reagan is risking the well-being of millions upon millions of people, to test a theory of "supply-side economics" that even its originator, Prof. Arthur Laffer, concedes may not work. In fact, the Reagan proposal to cut federal taxes by 30 percent over a three year period will serve to further fuel inflation and will primarily benefit those who are in high-income tax brackets. It is therefore not surprising that a February survey undertaken by pollster Louis Harris found that by 67 to 28 percent, Americans reject making "cuts in both spending and taxes at

the same time." In his State of the Union message, the President asserted that the "taxing power of the government must be used to provide revenues for legitimate Government purposes. It must not be used to regulate the economy or bring about social change." If the President believes this, then he is in for a rude awakening. The legitimate function of government is to protect the interests of the people and to defend the safety of all Americans. Moreover, the function of the government is to reflect the interests and will of all the people and not merely of the corporations. In the past, the people have supported government in its attempt to redress social inequities and they continue to do so today. Let us all, therefore, mark the President's words, for they will come back to haunt him and the Republican Party he heads in 1982 and beyond.

## FOOD

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\$40 a month, which works out to pennies per meal per family member. In fact, benefit scales are based on a food plan that the government admits does not provide an adequate diet.

Charges of waste have been made since the program started. As a consequence, it has been one of the most closely examined programs on the books. And those examinations have failed to reveal the waste and fraud so commonly — and irresponsibly — made.

In fact, there is no doubt at all that the strict eligibility requirements serve to discourage many people from claiming benefits, although the stamps are needed. And the Urban League's Black Pulse survey last year revealed that large numbers of eligible families, including welfare families, do not receive food stamps.

Of those receiving the stamps, almost all have incomes well below the poverty level. An exhaustive investigation made by government investigators in 1979 found few instances of abuse

and nine out of ten recipients below the poverty level, which itself is set far too low to reflect current prices.

Of course, Congress should be concerned that about one out of ten Americans needs food stamps to survive. The fact that over twenty million people get the stamps and millions more are eligible for them says something about inequality and unjust hardships that afflict our economy.

But the very breadth of the program is a major reason why it must be continued and strengthened. Too many families depend on food stamps for the program to be weakened. Ideas now being floated, such as reducing the stamps given the elderly, or cutting eligibility requirements, are unconscionable at a time of high unemployment and rampaging inflation.

The stamp-slashers need to be reminded that a 1967 Field Foundation report found widespread hunger and malnutrition in America, affecting perhaps 10 to 15 million people. A followup study ten years later — after use of food stamps became widespread — found far less hunger, thanks to food stamps and other federal nutrition programs.

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