

Point of View

BLACK FAMILIES AND THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



I had the privilege of watching the Holmes and Cooney fight last week. Before someone gets the idea that I was at Caesars Palace, I want to say that I was not. I saw the fight on the Westside along with about six hundred brothers and sisters.

We all were elated when Cooney's manager stepped into the ring and stopped the fight. We all knew that Holmes had won. There was no doubt in our minds that if Cooney had gone the distance, Holmes would have still been the winner. We thought.

After hearing and reading of the judges' scoring, it became obvious to many of us that a fight steal was in the making. Two judges had Holmes winning by a margin of 111-113 and one judge had Holmes winning by a margin of 109-115. You might tend to say, 'What is wrong with those numbers if Holmes was the winner?' The thing which many of us saw as wrong was the fact that Cooney had points taken away from him because of low blows. If those points had not been taken away, it is possible that Cooney could have been the winner by a margin of 114-115. This would have given him a split decision. As faith would have it, it did not turn out that way. Too many ghetto prayers were said against Cooney.

Even if Cooney had been able to overcome the defenses of Holmes and stayed the fifteen rounds to win the Heavyweight Championship, the nation would have been the loser. A Cooney win would
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By Norman Hill

It is widely accepted by both liberals and conservatives that no institution plays a more critical role in shaping the developing personality than the family. Sociological analysis conclusively has demonstrated that stable family units create the most auspicious conditions for the realization of a child's potential. In part this stems from parental supervision and the importance of family figures as role models for a young child.

Economic well-being is an important factor in maintaining the stability and cohesiveness of the family unit. Of equal significance is the fact that stable families frequently enjoy the benefits of two incomes and therefore are able to provide for children a better standard of living.

Thus the state of the family is a crucial indicator of the well-being of a society. But families do not exist in a vacuum. They are pro-

foundly affected by economic and social trends and by government policy. From this point of view it is important to take a look at the effects of the Reagan Administration's policies upon the family unit.

According to a recent symposium organized by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, an umbrella group of over 150 civil rights,

stances, the effect of the Reagan across-the-board tax cuts has been to increase incomes twice as much for white families as for their black counterparts.

The Leadership Conference's discussion of the consequences of the administration's budget cutbacks indicates that they disproportionately place burdens on areas with high

backs, are occurring at a time when in the last decade the median income for black families has declined in real terms by 6.3 percent. White families have also experienced a decline, but it has amounted to considerably less — 3.7%. The end result of the last decade's economic trends has been to open even wider the gap between black and white families. We have reached the point where black family income is less than 58 percent that of white families.

A substantial factor in this decline has been highlighted in the writings and research of University of Chicago Sociologist William Julius Wilson. Professor Wilson has pointed out two divergent trends which in recent years have manifested themselves in the black community: the growth of a black middle class and the simultaneous growth of an "underclass" of black poor.

Significantly, Pro- See BLACK, Page 14

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labor and community organizations, the effect of the President's tax cuts and budget austerities has been to further exacerbate the economic and social inequities between black and white families.

The researchers and scholars who participated in the Leadership Conference symposium point out that today 41% of black families are in the bottom fifth of the income scale, while white families make up 95% of the highest fifth. Under such circum-

concentrations of urban poor black families. To a large extent such areas have few taxable resources and face heavy burdens of government services which cannot be met without transferring payments from the federal government. Families of poor blacks therefore have been hit hardest by the cuts in funds for social services, public education, vocational training, and low-income housing.

Moreover, the Leadership Conference points out that these new set-

To Be Equal

FAMILY PLANNING MAKES SENSE

By John E. Jacob

The Supreme Court says it is constitutional. The public supports it by overwhelming majorities. But legal abortion is still a hot issue, with lawmakers subjected to pressures from a highly vocal minority that wants to outlaw abortions.

As a result Congress has passed limitations on the use of federal funds for abortions, something that affects only poor women since others can pay private doctors to do what public clinics and federally subsidized services can't do.

And the regulators

are also trying to rewrite the rules to satisfy not only the principled opponents of abortion but also those who regard sexual activity as an evil the government should suppress.

It is ironic that some

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of the same people who carry on about the dangers of big government see no contradiction in favoring government activities to regulate private conduct. Some who see food stamps as an evil intrusion of the government into the economy see nothing

wrong with putting federal cops in bedrooms and doctors' offices to enforce their own narrow views of morality.

One of the more curious outcroppings of this view was the Department of Health and

Human Resources' decision to amend regulations for family planning services.

Under the proposed new rules, most people under the age of 18 coming to family planning clinics for birth control prescriptions or devices would continue to be

served only after their parents are notified.

Aside from the obvious violation of the



John E. Jacob

doctor-patient relationship by the federal government, and the warped practice of turning public health providers into government informants, the rule would

achieve the opposite of its intentions.

Presumably the intention is to discourage teenage pregnancy by discouraging proliferation of birth control devices. If a young person knows her parents will be informed, she presumably would not go to the clinic for birth control devices and would refrain from sexual activity. At least that seems to be the thinking. Note too, that it only applies to women.

But is that what is actually likely to hap-

pen? Surely we know enough about human nature and needs and See SENSE, Page 14



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