

Point of View

To Be Equal The Shrinking Black Middle Class

By John E. Jacob

It seems only yesterday that the media was selling the myth of the black middle class, which it redefined in such a way as to include the majority of all



John E. Jacob

black people.

Without denying the growth of that class in the sixties and seventies, and without questioning its importance, an observer would still have to conclude that it represented not some emerging new majority but rather an oasis in a desert of poverty.

One reason why we don't hear that much about the growing black middle class these days may be because it is no longer growing. While the white middle class too, faces difficulties in an age of recessions, the erosion in its living

standards is far less serious.

That is not meant to be callous or to reflect indifference. Rather it is to simply indicate the truth of a situation in which the white middle class has the resources to sustain even a prolonged period of hard times while the black

worked for the government. In the past ten years some of them began to achieve the administrative and supervisory positions we think of as being "middle class."

But the federal program cuts have had their greatest impact on those minority ad-

John E. Jacob is President Of
The National Urban League

middle class is composed of families whose middle class incomes have only recently been attained. They have had little chance to build an earnings and savings cushion against hard times.

And let us not forget that the current Depression impacts blacks much more than whites, if only because the last-hired, first-fired tradition means the loss of newly won jobs for blacks. The federal government layoff patterns fully reflect this.

Because government agencies were often willing to hire blacks when many private sector businesses were not, disproportionate numbers of blacks

administrative employees. they have lost their jobs at twice the rate of non-minority administrative workers in the current round of federal layoffs.

Overall, in all positions — administrative and otherwise — for every two non-minorities that lost their jobs through the federal staff reductions, there were three minorities laid off.

A similar pattern holds for state and local governments that are also tightening their belts. And it holds too, for the private sector jobs where minorities and women are relative newcomers.

Other signs of pressure on the black mid- See JACOB, Page 4

THE VIBRANCY OF ISRAEL'S DEMOCRACY

By Bayard Rustin

The viciousness and inhumanity of the massacre of Palestinian refugees in West Beirut has resulted in a worldwide outcry. Yet nowhere has that protest been stronger or the public demonstrations larger than in Israel, where the people have been outspoken and unequivocal in their condemnation of the murder of hundreds of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militiamen.

Israeli writers and ar-

Minister Begin himself to resign.

On Saturday, Sept. 25 some 400,000 demonstrators gathered in a huge protest in Tel Aviv demanding an open investigation to determine the extent of the Israeli leadership's involvement in the Beirut massacre. As someone who spent half a year coordinating and laying the groundwork for the 1963 March on Washington, in which 250,000 demon-

strated, I can only independent judicial commission of inquiry into the massacres in the Sabra and Shalhat refugee camps. This inquiry should and must resolve all questions concerning the guilt or innocence of Israel's government and military leaders. On the basis of the facts uncovered in that inquiry, the Israeli people and their elected represen-



Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin is President Emeritus of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and one of the founders of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

artists, trade unionists and religious leaders, as well as prominent spokesmen across the entire Israeli political spectrum, have joined in the denunciation of the heinous crime in Beirut. Members of Prime Minister Begin's cabinet have resigned to protest his reluctance to launch an independent inquiry. A massive chorus of voices has called for the resignation of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Many Israelis have called upon Prime

ministers to marvel at the magnificence of this spontaneous expression of Israel's conscience, in which over 10% of her people participated.

The public expression of Israeli outrage over their government's mishandling of its voluntarily assumed responsibilities in West Beirut is a testament to the vibrancy and vitality of Israeli democracy, and its fundamental commitment to humane values.

At first, Prime Minister Begin resisted calls for an independent inquiry into the extent of Israeli complicity in the Beirut massacre. But that enormous domestic public outcry pressured the Prime Minister and his cabinet into a startling reversal of policy.

There now will be an

tatives will be able, through the democratic process, to determine the fate of those found culpable. In the words of Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres, "The question arises whether these statesmen who made the terrible mistakes can remain in office."

That indeed is the heart of the question that all Israelis will have to confront in the weeks ahead. Yet the very fact that Israelis have the freedom to answer this question is a testament to the strength of their democracy. Just as in our own country, the impeachment process led

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PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



Who is Dr. William Pearson? This is a question which has been often asked this past week. And to answer that question, Dr. Pearson is a resident of West Las Vegas, and has been the past seventeen years. He is a registered voter who meets the qualifications for appointment to the Las Vegas City Commission and he is a democrat.

Dr. Pearson's appointment to the Las Vegas City Commission is the culmination of a process which was started some twelve years ago. Twelve years ago, some of us saw the value of districts and wards as a means of black political empowerment. It was this ward system which has allowed black people of West Las Vegas to concentrate their vot-

ing strength in order to be represented on a government body such as the City Commission of Las Vegas.

It is not a matter of who Dr. Pearson is. It is a matter that we continue to see and make government work for our enlightened self interest. We must be aware that the Commission did not have to appoint Dr. Pearson or any other black person to fill Woolfer's vacancy. But being aware as they were, it would have been difficult to prevent the election of a black to this office.

The Las Vegas City Commission is empowered by state law to fill vacancies on that body. They had the authority to do what they did. Those of us who had individuals whom we would have preferred to be appointed instead of Dr. Pearson, should be thankful that the appointment did come from our community.

To those who felt slighted by Pearson's appointment, there will be a time in the very near future when this office will be available for the people to decide who will continue for another four years. But in the meantime, let's support Dr. Pearson in this appointment.

Let's try to be there for the swearing in ceremony for our new Commissioner of Las Vegas.