

Point of View

To Be Equal

THE MEAN YEAR

By John E. Jacob

1983 began in Depression and — we are told — is ending with an economic recovery that looks and feels just like a Depression to the many millions still jobless.

All in all, it was a mean year; a year of rising international tensions and continued indifference to poverty and equal opportunities.

Perhaps the best metaphor for the record of 1983 comes from New York City, where the South Bronx has become a national metaphor for urban blight.

It seems that the City is disturbed by the rows of empty, abandoned apartment houses, especially those lining a major highway through which commuter traffic flows.

Those empty buildings stand as an indictment of a society that throws away homes and the people who used to live in them. It's a monument to poverty and to urban disintegration.

A sound, sensible, and humane solution would be to renovate those homes and revitalize the neighborhoods. But the City doesn't have the money to do that and the federal government is slashing its housing programs to the bone. So the buildings stand there, monuments to society's callousness.

But they also leave a bad taste in the mouths of the commuters who have to see them every day as they travel from their suburban homes to downtown offices. In the eyes of many, these buildings are less of a human problem than they are an image problem — giving the city a bad name.

So the solution officials have come up with is to put large plastic decals up in place of the broken windows and empty window-holes. Decals with shutters, plants and window shades would give the illusion that those buildings are occupied and that some semblance of

normal life is going on in what really is an urban landscape resembling the far side of the moon.

The decal program amounts to camouflaging reality. As such it is a symbol of national policies that retreat from warring on poverty, and national attitudes that deny the extent of poverty.

It is similar to the widely-trumpeted economic recovery that is described in cosmetic terms implying our urban and poverty problems are going to be relieved by themselves.

They won't, just as those Bronx buildings are not going to be made habitable again by pasting cosmetic decals on their fronts. The destruction of jobs and the persistence of long term structural problems in our economy will continue without new policies that solve them instead of just papering them over.

Above all that means policies that draw neglected minorities into the mainstream. But events in 1983 indicate such policies are not on the drawing boards.

Instead of extending civil rights, the year saw an ugly brawl over the future of the U.S. Com-

mission on Civil Rights. Only a last-minute compromise avoided the death of a valuable force for civil rights progress.

Instead of creative jobs programs and a thrust to equal opportunity, we got cuts in job training funds and attacks on affirmative action.

Instead of helping hungry people to eat, we got cuts in food stamps and the appointment of a commission to find out why there's so much hunger in the land.

All of this — and lots more — amount to sweeping problems under the rug in the hope they'll go away. They won't. Our problems won't be solved by neglect any more than buildings will be restored by disguising them with decals.

But if 1983 was another year of social indifference, it wasn't unique. It's been a long time since society's institutions mobilized to make our nation more fair and more just.

The passing of another such year is another signal that we're on the wrong track; that time is running out, that we're sowing a bitter harvest.

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



The Christmas Holiday is over. I guess we can look forward to the New Year.

For the coming year, it is strongly rumored that Mr. Reagan will seek another term. If Mr. Reagan is as sharp now as he was when he was elected, my guess is that he will not run.

There is an economical disaster awaiting Mr. Reagan in 1984 and I don't think that he will face it. At present, Reaganomics is working in the eyes of many. Inflation is down, employment is on a decline. Interest rates are holding steady. There are predictions afloat that come 1984 the bottom will drop out.

In the budget which will be presented to Congress, we can expect Mr. Reagan to ask Congress to cut social spending again about 14 percent. Reagan will ask that defense spending be increased approximately the same amount as cuts in social spending. All of this will mean an increase in interest rates and less government responsibility socially for the nation.

The hue and cry which will be heard next year will not bother Mr. Reagan, because if he decides not to run, he would be immune from such with a full year to go in office.

The cutting of social programs, of which unemployment compensation is a part, will certainly cause the unemployed to move more forcefully in seeking jobs which may be offered by companies during strikes. We have seen a recent example of this in the Greyhound Bus strike, where many unemployed showed up to apply for those jobs without fear of what may have happened to them.

The urge which motivated these unemployed to apply for strike jobs at Greyhound can best be explained by one of the applicants, who said, "I need a job to take care of my family." What this gentleman unwittingly was stating was the condition which the Reagan Administration wants to achieve and that is the "survival of the fittest."

If we listen to certain administration spokesmen, the Reagan administration's desire is to lower inflation and thereby make jobs available for everyone. This would have been a noble ideal in the early 1900s, but today, with advanced technology and corporate greed, this ideal will not work. Workers are being replaced with machines which are cutting costs and saving time, but the price to the consumer has not been lowered. My power bill was more in 1983 than it was in 1982 and it will be more in 1984 than in 1983.

The danger of creating a movement of the "survival of the fittest" is that it is built on a foundation of less resources. Jobs are fewer, among other things. Under these conditions a movement of the "survival of the fittest" can quickly reach the ultimate of that of two dogs fighting over a bone.

1984 will not be a good year for Mr. Reagan. I think he should run another term.

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Editorial

The year 1983 has been a very exciting year. The economy, which had been severely depressed for about two years, began a slow and definite recovery. The speed of the recovery was disastrous to many families. Many of the workers in families were laid off. Families lost their homes, cars, furniture, and in some cases, everything they had worked for for many years.

At the present time the recovery from the recession seems to be speeding up a little. The unemployment rates seem to be dropping in every category, and more people are being employed. Whether or not all of the upswing in the economy is sincere or is politically motivated is anybody's guess. Our guess is that it is politically motivated, and will reverse itself if and when the present federal administration succeeds itself. We hope our guess is erroneous.

The attack on the Marines in Lebanon seemed to have caused the nation to rally around a common cause at a most critical time in our nation's history. This was followed by our invasion of the small country of Grenada. Some may call this invasion an act of cowardice on the part of the United States because of the size of Grenada as compared to that of the United States, and also because of the enormous resources at the disposal of the United States. We are not in any position to sustain or refute these accusations.

As we look forward to 1984, we sincerely hope that it will be a year of peace and prosperity for each of our readers.

