

Point of View

Editorial

The United States Senate has put an end to the public school pray-aloud bill for the time being. By a 56-44 vote, this august body defeated an attempt by the current federal administration to push through a constitutional amendment.

School prayer itself involves the issue of the separation of church and state. Does the mandated saying of a prayer in school conflict with one's freedom of religion under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution? Many think so. Any mandated religious ceremony could conflict with one's freedom of religion in that many may not feel in the right mood for the particular religious ceremony at the particular time.

A Constitutional amendment calling for prayer in public schools has been drawing opposition.

Our freedom to worship without any interference from government on any level is a precious freedom that we must be willing to protect. Unless we as individuals are willing to replace our apathy with active concern on this and other issues that impact our lives we will have little to complain about when our freedoms are eroded to the point of civil religion.

The attacks on the First Amendment freedoms are real. They will not disappear nor fade away if we ignore them. May we all become actively concerned prior to the day when our freedoms and our rights are taken away from us and our churches are bound by governmental interference. It is our choice; apathy or freedom.

To Be Equal

POVERTY ON THE RISE

By John E. Jacob

Any way you look at the numbers, poverty is on the rise.

Just a few years ago, in 1979, there were 26 million poor Americans. By 1982, the poor had increased to 34.4 million. Current estimates of the poor place the number well over 35 million.

Why the jump? Simple. Two recessions in that three-year period between 1979 and 1982, one of them deep enough to qualify for Depression status if there were a fair economic labelling law in effect.

Still, there are those who argue the numbers of the poor are inflated. That's the view of leading officials in the Administration who claim that the poverty figures include only people whose cash incomes fall below the poverty level.

They say that the value of federal non-cash benefits should be added to cash income in

defining poverty. Put a dollar figure on a family's subsidized housing, its food stamps and its Medicaid benefits, and the numbers of the poor would be much smaller.

To me, that's just playing with numbers. It bears no relation to reality, and none to determining who is poor.



John E. Jacob

Most of those benefits — medical assistance, for example — flow directly to doctors and hospitals, not to poor people. It is just ridiculous to say that a poor person is no longer poor because a

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PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



The Democratic precinct caucuses were held last Tuesday, a week ago. In some precincts in the Black community, a certain fat lady attempted to demonstrate her strength by attempting a take over of North Las Vegas precinct 32, where yours truly resides. She failed. She had sent in a few people who were not knowledgeable of the political process of majority rule or who were not registered in the precinct. One such person, who as not registered in precinct 32 of North Las Vegas, was the fat lady's daughter.

It is not that we object to the fat lady flexing her muscles in any precinct. Our objection comes when the flexing of the political muscles are done without a purpose to help the Black community, but instead to enhance white people's political bidding in the community.

The political bidding in the Black community by white politicians is often in the form of Black surrogates, which reduces us to client participants in the democratic process. It is this very thing that Jesse Jackson is campaigning so hard against, so that Black people will be accepted as equal partners of the democratic process and not a clients. The Black surrogates of white politicians could care less about Black participation as long as they get a pat on the head or a "yank" on the breast, and are told that they are better than anybody else who is Black.

Whenever this attitude has to be met by those who are concerned about the progress of Black people, it directs our concentration away from the more pressing issues of keeping up with what Ronald Reagan is doing to us. It is difficult when you have to deal with

SOCIAL JUSTICE, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND PRESIDENT REAGAN

By Norman Hill

In recent weeks we have been witness to the true intentions of the Reagan Administration in two arenas which deeply concern black Americans: the arenas of hunger and civil rights. In each case, we must be troubled by the Administration's indifference and failings.

For three years President Reagan has sought to erode a number of effective programs and initiatives which have helped diminish the plight of the hungry, whether black or white. Today, the Administration seeks to wish away the harmful consequences caused by the disruption, weakening,

or elimination of these needed programs. In its first three years the Administration gutted the food stamps and school lunch programs. Now, the President's Task Force on Food Assistance seeks to explain away the hunger that exists.

In the area of civil rights, the Administration has had a dismal record of enforcement. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, a national umbrella group to which over 160 civil rights organizations belong, charges the Reagan Justice Department with repudiating the thrust and intent of *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* by ignor-

ing existing laws and switching sides on specific issues regarding equal education while cases were pending before the Supreme Court. The Justice De-

partment has been guilty, as well, of non-enforcement of provisions of the Voting Rights Act, an Act the President sought to weaken. In the last three years, President Reagan's poli-

surrogates of white politicians, who don't know where the fight is. We should have been able to discuss the consequences of the Justice Department's joining a construction group in challenging the right of a city or county to set aside construction contracts for Black-owned businesses. Yes, the Reagan Justice Department filed a suit in the Appeals Court of Atlanta attacking a program established by Dade County, Fla., to boost contracting by Black businesses in the wake of the Liberty City race riots in 1980.

The Justice Department contended that the local government lacks the authority to resolve contracts for any racial groups, as that action would put other groups at a disadvantage. It was further the contention of the Justice Department that only the Federal Government may do this and only when authorized by Congress. And even that power can properly be used only to benefit actual victims of discrimination. Well, the Dade County program was started in the wake of the Liberty City riots after a finding that less than 1 percent of its contracts were going to Black-owned businesses. The Dade County program was aimed at awarding a portion of the County projects to Black-owned businesses until they reached a point comparable to the Black population, which is about 17 percent in the county.

We would have loved discussing what the Reagan people are doing with the changes in the small business regulations. These changes are designed to eliminate small business in this country, especially the growth of minority businesses.

We couldn't talk about these things in the precinct meeting because we had to be concerned about some white politicians wanting to work their will in our community through their Black overseers.

It is about time that someone told the fat lady that she cannot run this side of town and that she has no powers other than the money given to her by white politicians to hire people for the polls. Anybody can do that. So the fat lady better watch herself before somebody starts asking questions about all of that federal money deposited in interest-bearing accounts with First Western Savings. Some of us may want to give some answers as to where the interest went.

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