

Point of View

WHAT BLACKS ARE THINKING

By Norman Hill

As we head toward Election Day, November 6th, the mood and views of black voters are increasingly making their mark on the political process.

A major catalyst in this renewed emphasis on the black voter has been the recent remarkable upsurge of black voter participation in the 1984 Democratic Presidential primaries. Largely attributed to the dynamic and charismatic candidacy of Jesse Jackson, black voter participation in fact has been on the rise in recent elections for a variety of reasons: increased numbers of black candidates

campaigning for office at the local, state, and federal level; increased awareness among blacks that their economic well-being is linked to decisions made by elected officials; and black mobilization against the conservative onslaught of the Reagan Administration.

Yet, despite the attention paid to increased black political involvement, less is known about the specific views of black voters on major national issues. How, for example, do blacks view the 1984 presidential campaign? How are blacks likely to vote in November? Are those blacks who voted for

Jesse Jackson likely to stay at home in November, when the articulate black leader no longer is a candidate? What do blacks think about defense spending?

The answers to some

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of these vital questions can now be found in the fascinating results of a recent nationwide poll of black public opinion conducted by the *New York Times*.

According to the poll's findings, 57 percent of all blacks have a favorable opinion of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and 64 percent believe that his

campaign has helped black Americans. Yet, when asked who they would "like to see the Democrats nominate for President in 1984," 53 percent of black voters preferred Walter Mondale, 31 percent Mr. Jackson, and only 7 percent Senator Gary Hart. Clearly many blacks who had voted for the Rev. Jackson during the primaries had done so because they wanted to send a message about black plight. Yet, come November, according to this poll, they are likely to support Walter Mondale strongly. Indeed, more blacks have a favorable opinion of Mondale than of Mr. Jackson.

Black voters also believe by a 16-to-1 margin that they had been aided rather than hindered by the Democratic Party. By a 3-to-1 margin blacks also felt that unions had "helped" rather than "held back" blacks. By contrast, by a 5-to-1 margin, blacks agreed that the Republican Party had held back blacks.

On the vital question of defense, the poll found that black voters were pragmatic supporters of a strong national defense. 55 percent of blacks said they believe military spending ought to be increased or kept at current levels. The black electorate, thus, does not agree on this issue with the Rev. Jackson, who had made deep cuts in defense spending a key theme in his campaign.

The profile of black voters which emerges from this sampling is that of a pragmatic, politically sophisticated, and well-informed electorate. It is clearly an electorate which makes up its own mind on

Editorial

The USA TODAY Aug. 15 issue made a report on activist Rev. Joseph Lowery's view on how the civil rights movement has been set back under the present presidential leadership. He, like many black leaders across the country, are rapidly stepping forward denouncing the Reagan policies relating to the "rights" struggle. The following was reported:

Veteran activist the Rev. Joseph Lowery is no friend of President Reagan; there's no one he'd rather see lose his job.

But Lowery — who convenes the national convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference today — also "credits" Reagan policies with a rebirth in the civil rights movement — a struggle he helped forge 20 years ago.

Preparing for the SCLC's 27th annual convention in Charlotte, N.C., Lowery said the "insidious insensitivity that Reagan represents has played a significant role" in the rebirth of the civil rights cause.

Lowery claims the SCLC lost the prestige and influence as the civil rights movement's frontline organization after the assassination of founder the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968.

Since his assumption of the presidency in 1977, Lowery said the number of SCLC chapters across the USA has increased to more than 100 with an annual budget of \$1 million.

"We went through a period where we won so many battles that a lot of people thought we had won the war," said Lowery explaining the decline of the organization that brought to prominence such black leaders as the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young.

But concern that the Reagan administration is trying to turn back the clock on civil rights has pulled together blacks, women, labor, Hispanics and other members of the "progressive family," he said.

While the SCLC officially is non-partisan, Lowery makes it clear the group will try to influence this November's election through "registration and education" of black voters, especially in the South.

"We're not endorsing a candidate," he said, "but we condemn Reaganism, and we challenge Mondalism to put more emphasis on the creation of jobs."

Strong stands on jobs and equal rights are more important than having Jackson endorse or campaign for Mondale, Lowery said.

Lowery seized the national spotlight when he led an unofficial 1979 Middle East peace delegation that met with PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

He also chastized sportscaster Howard Cosell last year for referring to a black football player as a "little monkey."

His wife, Evelyn, and three daughters all have been involved in the SCLC with him. He is the pastor of the 2,000-member Central United Methodist Church.

Lowery, 59, said the SCLC and his church give him little spare time. "I like to play golf, but I don't have much time," he said. "I've got some very rusty clubs."

The views expressed on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one indicated as the SENTINEL-VOICE editorial represents this publication.

issues on the basis of program for America. It national interest and is an electorate which economic interest. It is an electorate which doesn't need any signals from one up above as to how to vote in 1984. It is an electorate which voted for Jesse Jackson in the primaries without accepting lock, stock, and barrel, his entire thinks and votes for itself.

"If you have no confidence in self you are twice defeated in the race for life. With confidence you have won even before you have started."

Marcus Garvey

