

Point of View

Editorial

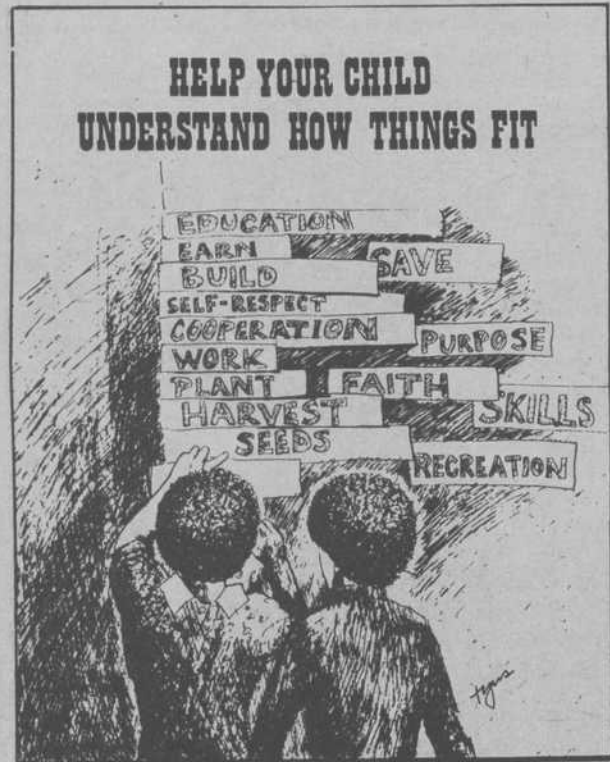
Never before, during the last quarter century, have we seen so many people out of work, without money for basic necessities, and needing help so badly as we see today.

Never before have we seen so much actual scrambling for the very few jobs that become available from time to time.

Now is the time for sharing. Those of us who have been blessed to have jobs, money, a decent home, etc., must come forward and remember our less fortunate fellowmen. Now is the time to realize the many blessings that some of us have been privileged to obtain, and share these blessings with someone.

We believe that there is receiving in giving. We may not receive a monetary reward, but the feeling of having helped the helpless is much greater than any amount of money we may receive.

The federal and state governments are not willing to help in any meaningful ways during these times of ultra-conservatism. Therefore, the Black community must band together and see that help is extended where needed.



To Be Equal

High Court Supports Goals and Timetables

By John E. Jacob

The Supreme Court's ruling in the first of three major affirmative action cases this term amounts to a strong vindication of goals and timetables in affirmative action plans, and constitutes a strong slap at the Administration's misreading of the Constitution.

But despite the ruling's important support of a key principle in affirmative action, the Court continued to shield layoffs, in most situations, from a plan's protection.

The case involved the Jackson, Michigan school board's affirmative action plan that protected minority teachers from layoffs, based on the need to maintain an integrated teaching staff and remedy past discrimination.

But the Court's majority said that while affirmative action in hiring spread the burden throughout society, layoffs put the whole burden on particular individuals and therefore the plan was unconstitutional. Even on that point however, the Court split, with four implying that race could never be a factor in layoffs and one, Justice

O'Connor, implying that in certain circumstances it might be permissible.

A minority of the Court would have allowed the Jackson plan, recognizing



John E. Jacob

that excluding layoffs and could dynamite the goal of higher minority representation.

As Justice Thurgood Marshall noted: "I believe a public employer, with the full agreement of its employees, should be permitted to preserve the benefits of a legitimate and constitutional affirmative action hiring plan even while reducing its work force."

Together with previous rulings, the Jackson case weakens the affirmative program of government

employers by removing most layoff situations from such plans. But more important is the Court's firm backing of the constitutionality of affirmative action plans with goals and timetables, a position the Administration has bitterly fought.

A solid majority of the

present discrimination, can take race into account, and may even harm "innocent persons."

As the Jackson majority opinion written by Justice Powell said: "As part of this nation's dedication to eradicating racial discrimination, innocent

John E. Jacob is President Of The National Urban League

Court explicitly rejected the Administration's argument that the Constitution prevents public employers from using racial preferences that benefit minorities who cannot personally demonstrate they have been discriminated against.

And if the issue came to a straight up-and-down vote on that issue, the vote would be 8-1. That powerful rejection of the Administration's views augurs well for the future of affirmative action programs.

The Court's body of affirmative action decisions say that such programs are constitutional, serve an important public purpose, are a remedy for past and

persons may be called upon to bear some of the burden of the remedy."

In fact, many affirmative action programs wind up expanding opportunities for whites as well as blacks.

The Weber case, for example, upheld a corporate affirmative action plan that involved a skills-training program instituted primarily to raise black hiring and promotion rates, but which reserved half of the openings for whites.

The process of refining and defining constitutionally permissible affirmative action will continue as the Court rules on other important cases this term.

CHILD WATCH

Rx for Better Teen Health

by Marian Wright Edelman
President, Children's Defense Fund

We adults tend to assume that teens do not have serious health problems. But Dr. Robert Johnson of New Jersey's University of Medicine and Dentistry, who has had hundreds of teenagers in and out of his office, calls that belief a "myth."

The facts back up Dr. Johnson. Between five and ten million children under 21 suffer one or more health problems, ranging from poor vision or hearing to chronic illnesses or mental or emotional problems. Low-income teens are at highest risk, because even crippling conditions like poor eyesight are more likely to be untreated or even undetected

during childhood. "The youngsters don't have the money to afford the glasses," says Dr. Johnson.

Today, our teens are increasingly threatened by a whole new group of health trends that doctors call the "new morbidity." These illnesses do not come from germs but from societal ills: alcohol or drug abuse, teen pregnancy, violent behavior, suicide and mental health problems. Some are now among the leading causes of death and disability among our youth.

For example, at one inner city clinic during 1983, the majority of young patients were admitted for "new morbidity" problems. Fifty-

one percent were hospitalized for abortions, deliveries or sexually-transmitted diseases, and another 24 percent for trauma related to accidents and injuries.

The estimated five million teenage girls and seven million teenage boys who are sexually active today are at especially high risk of various health problems. Those teenage women who become pregnant and have babies will be at higher risk of having a low birthweight baby. Both young men and women age 15-19 are in the highest-risk group for sexually-transmitted disease.

Teens often do not know

when they have a serious health problem, according to Dr. Johnson. "Youngsters will come in for a cold and they will actually have a sexually-transmitted disease," he says. Or they need counseling on avoiding teen pregnancy. He tells the story of a bright young man of 16 who tried to share the responsibility of birth control with his girlfriend by taking the birth control pill himself every other month.

What can be done to help more of our teens get the health care they need? My prescription has three parts: make it affordable, make it accessible, and make it appropriate to their needs.

First, only half of

America's poor children are now covered by Medicaid. We should make sure that all children have adequate health coverage, including teens.

Second, we should explore ways of taking the services where teens are. One idea that has often improved teens' health is comprehensive clinics in or near schools or in housing projects where many disadvantaged teens may live.

Finally, all our doctors have got to learn what Dr.

Johnson already knows: how to talk to teens, teach them preventive health care, and

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