

Point of View

FROM CAPITOL HILL

Our Leaders' Thinking Is Clouded With The Drug Hysteria

By Alfreda L. Madison

At this time, there appears to be a great hysteria gripping our politicians over drugs in the nation. The drug problem is nothing new, and some attempts have been made to correct it. Is this present concern prompted by the Len Bias incident, or did his death provide a new election gimmick which will place other important issues on the back burner?

Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate were seen on camera making very strong speeches on the seriousness of the drug problem and proposing very stringent methods of dealing with it. Some of them were seen strongly advocating the death penalty for drug-related killings. They even exhibited a mean spirit while advocating killing the criminals.

The House approved a mandatory life sentence on a second conviction for selling drugs to a child or teenager, and voted many millions of dollars to aid local governments in enforcing drug laws. Even after all this discussion, which seems to be playing to the public for a showing that they are not soft on drugs, they are doubtful of the effectiveness

of their proposals.

Representative Barney Frank, Democrat of Massachusetts, said "I'm afraid this bill is the legislative equivalent of crack. It yields a short-term high but does long-term damage to the system -- and it's expensive to boot..."

Speaking on the danger of the proposals to civil liberties, Representative Don Edwards, Democrat of California and Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Law, said "This is what happens when you have panic and hysteria."

The House calls for the use of the military in significantly halting the transport of drugs into this country by ship or airplane. Secretary of Defense Weinberger strongly objects to the use of the military in the enforcement of civilian laws. The House also approved the exclusionary rule which will allow illegally obtained information to be used against a drug defendant. This allows police to use illegal methods to apprehend others who are guilty of committing illegal acts. The District of Columbia is even commissioning police to sell drugs, in order to catch drug users. This is a very controversial

endeavor since it can be considered as entrapment and buyers can maintain that they were lured into buying drugs.

The President, by an Executive Order, is requiring government agencies to test employees whom they consider as holding sensitive jobs to take urinalysis tests for drugs.

Robert Tobias of the Treasury Union said, "the order is the product of a propaganda effort to win political medals for the generals in the White House at the sacrifice of the constitutional rights of the people in the tranches of the federal work force."

The American Civil Liberties Union stated, "We think the President's proposal is blatant violation of the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution which protects against unreasonable search and seizures."

Representative Patricia Schroeder, Democrat of Colorado, said "they will find very little usage in federal employment, and they are spending a whole lot of money that could be much better spent in law enforcement getting at the source of drugs."

Secretary of Education William Bennett has proposed suspension for students' first drug offense and expulsion for the second offense. He was asked by Representative Charles Rangel of the Congressional Black Caucus and Chairman of the House Narcotics Committee, after suspension, then what? Secretary Bennett had no answer to the question. The question is will these expelled students be returned to the streets or will they be recommended to a rehabilitation program?

The House proposed a stronger prison term, but there is already a shortage of prison space. They authorized money for building new prisons, but what will be done with the drug offenders while waiting for completion of the prisons? Money has been authorized, without clear-cut knowledge of the funding source.

To Be Equal

Full Employment Policy Overdue

by John E. Jacob

Does anybody know what full employment means any more? There was a time when it meant that anyone who wanted a job could get one after a short search.

Some defined it as unemployment rates below four percent, but now there is general satisfaction when the government announces jobless rates around seven percent. Some even say the economy is at full employment today.



John E. Jacob

That's a strange conclusion to draw from figures that used to be considered recession jobless levels.

And if overall unemployment figures are at recession levels in the midst of the current economic boom, black unemployment is at Depression levels. The fifteen percent joblessness suffered by black workers is well over double the white rate.

This program will prove to be very expensive, if testing federal employees is done. The Gramm-Rudman Act has put a great restraint on federal spending. However, House Speaker O'Neill said that he will not be bound by Gramm-Rudman in funding the drug program.

The nation's leaders are so caught-up in the drug rage that a cloud appears to be hanging over their ability to think clearly. In announcing his presidential candidacy, Pierre DuPont has proposed testing for all school teenagers. These testing proposals, says Alan Adler of the American Civil Liberties Union, has "turned the

There are plenty of excuses for not having a full employment policy, ranging from inflation to increasing the deficit to harming productivity. In fact, a sound full employment policy would not rekindle inflation, would contribute to reducing the deficit, and would increase productivity.

Just cutting the present jobless rate by only one percent would move over a million unemployed people into jobs. They would be paying taxes instead of consuming them, thus reducing the deficit. For each percentage point of

destroyed factories and offices -- physical capital -- they are complacent about the equivalent destruction of human capital.

Full employment is vital because it also produces crucially important human and social benefits. Joblessness imposes terrible costs on unemployed people, in lowered self-esteem, higher levels of illness, mental strains, and family problems.

And since unemployment is not evenly distributed, but concentrated among groups that are already disadvantaged, it widens

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unemployment, the government loses \$30 billion through forgone taxes and social expenditures.

Over the long term, prolonged high unemployment inflicts terrible damage to the nation's economy. Aside from lost output and the shrinkage of the nation's economic base, there is the loss in skills and knowledge acquisition among the millions of unemployed that reduces future productivity.

In fact that means the nation is trashing irreplaceable human capital. But while people would be alarmed if we randomly

presumption of innocence on its head."

The risk in this urinalysis test is an incorrect identification of those tested as drug users. This test has been criticized by eminent toxicologists as being inconclusive. A company that developed the test acknowledges that it is five percent deceptive.

In their hysteria, our leaders are substituting the correction of one ill with a sweeping destruction of constitutional mandates.

racial and class differences and further strains the damaged social fabric of the nation.

A full employment policy is more than just cheerleading from the sidelines when the unemployment rate drops a fraction of a point. It is a coordinated set of policies that include educational, training, and job creation components.

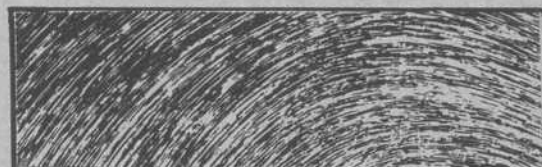
And those programs have to be targeted at the disadvantaged, who have always been left out of the economy. The fastest way to raise productivity and improve the economy is to make the so-called unemployable, employable.

A wide range of tools can be used in a full employment policy, ranging from lower interest rates that stimulate business activity to direct government public service jobs and paid training programs.

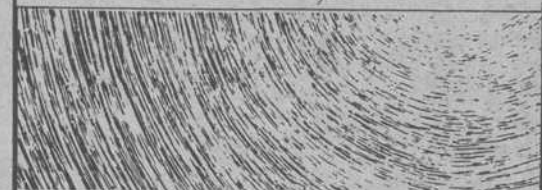
Whatever the immediate costs, the ultimate economic and social benefits of a full employment policy far outweigh them.

Words of Marcus Garvey

By Kofi Tyus



"Sloth, neglect, and indifference caused us to be slaves. Confidence, conviction, and action will cause us to be free men today."



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