

Point of View

To Be Equal

Meeting National Needs

by John E. Jacob

The terrible earthquake in California has exposed some fatal flaws in the way America is using its resources to meet national needs.



John E. Jacob

As commentators focused on the billions necessary to rebuild damaged freeways, the realization came that simply rebuilding earthquake-damaged highways and bridges represents just the tip of the iceberg.

Even without natural disasters to account for damage, time and neglect have led to a deterioration of the transportation infrastructure this nation depends on for its economic well-being.

The Department of Transportation estimates it will take almost \$400 billion to repair or replace ageing bridges and highways, and modernize the air traffic control system.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development says it will take about \$20 billion just to restore deteriorating public housing, and it will take many billions more to increase the housing stock so that poor people and the homeless have decent housing.

The human infrastructure needs repair, too. Education and job skills training are crucial to America's ability to compete in global markets. But federal support for education and for job training declined sharply in the 1980s.

The boom of the 1980s bypassed the poor and the

cities, and resources will have to be found to reduce inequality, provide access to health care for the poor, and to end the intolerable poverty that afflicts a fourth of all American children.

Clearly, the 1990s will see massive federal investments

John E. Jacob is President of the National Urban League

in the nation's physical and human capital. Those investments have been deferred for so long that within a couple of years it's going to become a crisis situation -- and it often takes a crisis to finally get government to meet its responsibilities.

Where will the money come from?

Some of it will have to come from tax hikes. The tax cuts of the 1980s were so deep that government has plenty of latitude to raise taxes in the highest bracket. America's affluent pay for lower taxes than those in other countries and, while the tax system became less progressive, they sharply increased their share of national income.

There are other sources for increased tax revenues, too -- closing loopholes that survived the 1986 tax reform, ending deductions for mortgage interest on second homes, and a consumption tax on luxury items, are among the possibilities.

But many of the needed resources can come from shifting budget priorities.

With the Cold War winding down, we've got to ask whether we still need to spend \$300 billion on the military. The Soviets say they want to cut their defense spending by half, and even Cold Warriors here say that if we take them up on the offer, our own defense budget can be cut by a like amount

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Political Points

By

Assemblyman

Wendell P. Williams

Has City Hall Run Out Of Ribbons?

The City of Las Vegas is one of the fastest growing cities in America. Most of the economy is booming and growth can be seen almost everywhere. If you've lived here anytime at all, you've seen either on television or in one of the local newspapers, our Honorable City Fathers cutting ribbons on one new project after another. Often times we even see ribbon cuttings as soon as the sight of location is determined, even before one single brick has been laid. Of course, we all appreciate seeing these cuttings because each one is another indication that we're growing throughout the Valley. Also there is one point that you can always count on, which is, elected officials enjoy being a part of ribbon cuttings because they view ribbon cuttings as a way to show their constituency that he or she is working to make new things happen for them; they view these ceremonies as scoring political points.

These reasons alone make one wonder why the new building located on West Owens, across from the Nucleus Plaza, constructed by the City of Las Vegas, has seemingly been so hush-hush. Not to mention how residents that live and work in the West Las Vegas area where this new unoccupied building is located must feel about not being informed about the intended operation of this facility. As an elected official having this building sitting right in the center of my district, I resent the tone that is being used by City Hall to citizens when they inquire about, as one minister called it, "the white elephant." I found this remark interesting because the term "white elephant" is derived from an old custom of the kings of Siam, who presented a "white elephant" to a courtier they desired to ruin. The term in common use is to designate a gift that causes the recipient more trouble or costs more than it is worth. Also this term is one of the few if any occurrences where the word white is used in a negative view. At any rate, the building has been up now for about ten months and no press conference, no reception, no ribbon cutting, no word, no idea, no respect!!

However, after contacting the City's Department of Economic Development I did find out that the building is called a "business center". The business center is intended for light industry and professional offices, according to the Economic Development Office. The 18,000 to 20,000 square foot building will also consist of a warehouse. The City claims that the project has caused them some problems because 80% of the cost to construct the building was Federal dollars.

It's regretful that sometimes when two levels of government work together it can be a slow process. But that is still no excuse for citizens and business people as well as potential business people not being informed about new and upcoming projects, especially ones that are constructed at taxpayers' expenses. The community welcomes new growth and development but everyone in a particular community should also get a fair shot at taking advantage of new growth and development. This does not happen by keeping progress hush-hush. Or maybe the City just ran out of ribbons. Finally, don't hesitate to be informed about economic development issues in our community. In the City of Las Vegas, the Department of Economic Development can be reached at 386-6551. And you can reach your City Councilman at 386-6405.

POINT OF VIEW: A man who will not labor to gain his rights, is a man who would not, if he had them, prize and defend them.



Frederick Douglass

Minimum Wage, Maximum Shame

By Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins

One day after Halloween, the House of Representatives took action to increase the Federal minimum wage to \$4.25 over two years. Unfortunately, for low wage workers, the vote was more trick than treat.

The vote represents only a partial victory for those individuals on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. While the action by the House represents a long overdue increase, it is no cause for celebration, for it does not fully restore the lost buying power of the minimum wage, which should be at least \$4.90 in 1990 if adjusted for inflation.

I voted for this compromise piece of legislation because it represented the best we could get, under current political realities. But, like other supporters of fair labor standards, I did so, holding my nose. As the original author, with Senator Edward M. Kennedy, of the initial minimum wage legislation (\$4.65, in three years) introduced earlier this year, I am heartened that we did succeed in putting pressure

on the White House to raise the labor standard. Something, is better than nothing, and it is my hope that the next administration, whether it be republican or democrat, will work with Congress to increase the minimum wage rate to more equitable levels. I am disheartened however, by our political leadership on critical issues facing America's low and moderate income families. Issues such as education, child care, and the minimum wage should be addressed on their merit. In contrast, President Bush floats these issues out to the public like a weather balloon, and then, gauges his support on how he feels the public sentiment is drifting.

Minimum wage workers unfortunately have no organized constituency. They are voiceless and powerless. Even the rank-and-file members of the AFL-CIO, strong supporters of a higher minimum wage, are not minimum wage workers. Without an organized con-

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United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

BY Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Challenging Racism In Chicago

The pervasive and systematic existence of racism in the city of Chicago is really nothing new. Since the unfortunate and tragic death of Mayor Harold Washington two years ago and the subsequent election of Mayor Richard M. Daley, there has been a steady increase in overt and violent racist acts in Chicago.

Much of this renewed racial violence has been directed against the African American and Hispanic communities. The good news today is that there appears to be a growing citywide grassroots movement of concerned Chicago residents who are determined to make an effective challenge to racism and violence in Chicago.

Recently, more than 1,500 persons staged a successful

"March Against Fear and Racism" through a predominantly white section of Chicago where two young African American youth had been beaten by a white mob. The march was called for and led by local civil rights leader, Atty. Lewis Myers.

The details of the incident that precipitated this large protest march is worth reviewing. Two months ago, fourteen-year-old Joseph Weaver and Calvin McLin were walking from a basketball game at Comiskey Park. These two African American youth were picked up by two white Chicago police officers for alleged curfew violations. One of the police officers, Kathleen Moore, reportedly slapped both youths across the face and shouted racial

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