

Point of View

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Commission for Racial Justice
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BY Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
Racial Injustice in Indiana

Michigan City, Indiana is a city of approximately 38,000 with African Americans representing twenty percent. In many midwestern cities and towns, there are growing signs of racial tensions due to what many believe are signs and indications of institutionalized racism. Recently, Michigan City was the site of a racial disturbance after a 16 year old African American youth, Chris Crawford, was killed by an "accidental" hit and run automobile incident.

This incident was a spark that ignited the community's sense of ongoing frustration with the white power structure of Michigan City. The fact that Chris Crawford laid in the street for almost an hour before the municipal ambulance arrived angered members of the African American community. For many in the community this was the last straw of a

series of incidents of racial brutality and insensitivity involving the local police and city government.

A non-violent protest march was held where over 300 African Americans marched for over one mile through the downtown section of the city. One of the problems that we have identified before is that in many cities and towns throughout the nation there are African American communities in particular that feel that they are isolated from national organizations and national leaders.

African Americans in Michigan City do own and reside along some prime real estate and beach front properties along Lake Michigan. There are many who believe that the African American community in Michigan City has been targeted for special racial

See JOURNAL, Page 6

Don't Confuse Goals With Quotas

By Congressman
Augustus F. Hawkins, Sr.

Congressional debate continues to rage on the Civil Rights Act of 1990 (H.R. 4000), a bill which I introduced with Senator Ted Kennedy, to reverse five specific Supreme Court decisions on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. These decisions were viewed by many as a retreat from past civil rights gains. Additionally, the bill would enhance remedies against intentional workplace discrimination.

As has been the case in the past during discussions of affirmative action and equal opportunity laws, these technical yet important issues are too often reduced to misleading catch-phrases and erroneous conclusions. Foremost among the confused, are those who equate affirmative goals and

timetables with quotas. The word quota is one of those words that sets off a spark among many in the public as something which is unfair. Blinded by a firestorm of reaction, no rational argument can usually satisfy those individuals.

During the last Administration, when the convenient ploy of misusing the word quota instead of goals and timetables was a frequent tactic, I developed a question and answer fact sheet to help educate the public and the media about affirmative action. Here are some key excerpts from that fact sheet which are unfortunately as necessary today as they were then.

Q. What is Affirmative Action?

A. Affirmative Action is a tool which includes any measure, beyond simple

See HAWKINS, page 13

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To Be Equal

FEDERAL ANTI-POVERTY THRUST OVERDUE

By John E. Jacob

A recent news story said that an interagency group of government officials developing plans for a new anti-poverty thrust were overridden by the Domestic Policy Council.

It seems the Council thought the plans being considered were too expensive or too politically controversial, and decided to just try to make existing programs work a bit better.



John E. Jacob

The story quoted a top presidential advisor as saying the outcome can be summed up: "Keep playing with the same toys. But let's paint them a little shinier."

That won't work, either as a good domestic policy strategy or as a sound political strategy.

President Bush, who showed political courage by agreeing to necessary tax increases, needs to infuse his domestic advisors with a similar courage when it comes to anti-poverty policy.

Shining up inadequate programs won't diminish poverty, won't economically empower today's poor, and won't help the nation develop the strength to compete in a tougher global economy.

We're still feeling the effects of the Reagan era's deep cuts in programs that were proved successful in reducing poverty and its refusal to initiate new, experimental programs.

Those policies were directly responsible for the startling rise in poverty during a period of economic expansion, and for the widening income gap between the

poor and affluent beneficiaries of tax cuts.

Well over 30 million people are poor, and if federal poverty guidelines reflected real living costs, the number would be closer to 50 million.

There's an urgent need to beef up survival programs that help provide food, housing and health care.

And there's an urgent need for education, transition to work, and job training programs to help people become productive.

Those critical needs won't

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go away just because some top officials think they cost too much to resolve or that solutions are politically controversial.

The news report mentioned some of the programs under consideration. Some of them may be off-base, but others don't strike me as either costly or controversial.

For example, one was to consolidate government field offices so poor people could apply for a variety of services at one site. If anything, that, and unifying government check-writing for social programs, would probably save money.

But saving money should be secondary to investing resources in the productive capacities of all of our people to ensure the future generation of wealth and economic power.

A nation that spends hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out failing savings and loans and to build excessive and unusable weapons systems, can invest in its own future.

And the presidential advisors are worrying about the political fall-out they fear from a renewed anti-poverty thrust.

See JACOB, Page 13

NOTES FROM THE HILL

By George Wilson

One Sting, Many Bites

After months of anticipation, citizens of the District of Columbia and the world were finally able to view videotapes of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry allegedly smoking crack cocaine.

The tape was rolling as the Mayor constantly tried to get Rasheeda Moore to submit to his sexual advances. That same tape also recorded what appeared to be some conversation about the purchase of cocaine and the smoking of this potentially lethal substance.

As I watched the scene repeated numerous times on every available television outlet, I felt both shame and anger. Shame because the Mayor appeared to give credence to the notion that sex and drugs were two things that a man can't refuse. I was angry because this grisly tape was shown numerous times in the middle of the afternoon, therefore making it accessible to untold numbers of

youth. Additionally, the videotape showed that once an individual is targeted our government will go to extraordinary means to snare that person.

Barry's trial and the events surrounding it have served to bring out the worst of the media. The media overkill surrounding this could not possibly produce a beneficial effect in the Washington community. In its pursuit AND REPORTING OF THIS STORY, THE MEDIA HAS CREATED A SITUATION THAT MAY CAUSE DAMAGE THAT CAN NEVER BE CORRECTED. I experienced a preview of coming attractions while travelling by bus through the predominantly White Georgetown section of Washington. I was engaged in a conversation about Nelson Mandela's visit to Washington with the African American bus driver when a middle-aged, White male

See WILSON, Page 13

The Black Labor Alliance and the 1990 Elections

By Norman Hill

As the 1990 elections approach, it is important for the black-labor alliance to understand what is at stake in this year's races at the national and state levels.

The significance of the congressional elections is clear. President George Bush has consistently thwarted congressional efforts to pass effective legislation for the benefit of blacks and workers. For example, he recently vetoed family leave legislation that would allow workers 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year to deal with personal and family medical matters and guarantee that upon their return they would have their old jobs or similar ones. Workers in some 100 countries have this very elementary type of protection. But President Bush argued that this legislation places too great a burden upon employers. Because the rights involved are so basic, this is a particularly glaring case of President Bush's insensitivity to the

needs of blacks and workers.

But it is far from the only example of the President's indifference to the black-labor agenda. He has vetoed reform of the Hatch Act that would restore the basic political rights of federal and postal workers. The threat of presidential vetoes has been one factor causing Congress to dilute child care legislation now on Capitol Hill. The Civil Rights Act of 1990 seeks to reverse the impact of last year's Supreme Court rulings that eroded protections against job discrimination. But unless it is weakened in Congress to suit Bush's conservative views, this measure will be another veto candidate. The same scenario may well occur later in the year in connection with national health care legislation and a bill to prevent employers from hiring scabs as permanent replacements.

So far, Congress has not been able to muster the two-

See HILL, Page 7