

Point of View

The views on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one depicted as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication

TO BE EQUAL

ENDING THE SILENT DEPRESSION

By John E. Jacob

While Washington debates the Administration's economic recovery plan, many have an uneasy feeling that events may be passing us all by.

They point to a worsening employment outlook and suggest that the only thing that can pull the nation out of a long-term job drain is a massive, long-term public works improvement program that goes beyond anything yet proposed.

Those voices need to be heard in the debate, because the economic recovery now

under way may lead to a new complacency about America's ability to generate jobs for all.

Such faith is unwarranted, for there is evidence that this is what has been called "a jobless recovery." The statistics say that the recession is over, but unemployment is higher. Fewer new jobs are being created, and many of those are part-time.

Despite stagnant job growth, last year's productivity growth was the biggest in twenty years, largely because many companies are restructuring, or as the current term has it, "re-engineer-

ing" to produce more goods and services with fewer workers.

According to a recent Wall Street Journal story, some experts estimate that re-engineering could wipe out as many as 25 million jobs, or almost a fourth of total private employment.

It would be easy to dismiss that view as a scare story, if there wasn't so much evidence to support it.

Almost every day another major corporation announces massive layoffs, plans to shrink jobs by attrition, or restructuring of operations to cut its workforce.

We've come to expect technology to destroy manufacturing jobs, but now it threatens service jobs as well. That's especially worrying because the service sector is where the jobs are.

The Journal article quotes one expert who predicts that over the next seven years re-engineering will destroy over a third of all jobs in the banking industry — and financial services has been one of the few areas in our economy where job growth was strong.

Because the technological

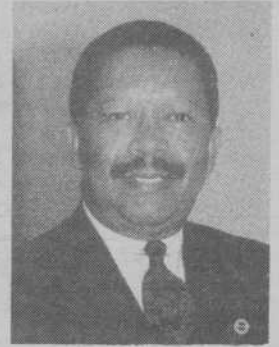
revolution is making it possible to increase productivity with fewer workers we may be in a long "Silent Depression" different from any in our history. The economy could grow, but job opportunities could be stagnant.

The Great Depression of the 1930s didn't end until World War II soaked up unemployment with military service and defense production.

It didn't return after the end of the war, because of two developments: the Cold War, which created jobs in the military and in defense industries, and massive government investment in the infrastructure, such as the federal, highway program that opened up the suburbs and spurred a housing and consumer boom. How do we end the "Silent Depression" in today's changed economy?

Some say all that needs to be done is to cut the deficit and spur private investment. But much of the investment will go into labor-saving technology that

cuts potential job growth. Another view says that public infrastructure investments will create jobs and will lead to a boom in consumer goods and services that will create more jobs. But the huge deficit stands in the way. Even supporters of federal job creation and infrastructure investment programs fear a ballooning deficit that could lead to financial collapse. The trick is to find the right balance of policies that lay the groundwork for an adequate public investment program while reining in the long-term deficit. The Clinton Plan tries to do that, which is why it inspires so much hope. Whether it is bold enough, or goes far enough, is something time will tell.



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POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



"THE MAN, HE FIX IT"

Joey is a fine boy as he enters elementary school. Although he is a good kid, he neglects to learn what he needs to learn to do well in high school, but he does learn how to put a basketball through a hoop with the greatest of ease. He reaches high school without the basic skills to read and write. It looks as though he won't be able to play basketball because of his academic deficiencies. But wait, an understanding, caring person comes along and enrolls him in classes that do not require basic academic skills, or in other courses where the teacher is understanding and caring. The man, he fix it, and Joey plays high school basketball.

Joey's academic deficiencies finally catch up with him and he cannot enroll in a university to play basketball. But wait, a caring, understanding person finds a junior college that will enroll him and Joey gets to play basketball again. "The man, he fix it."

Two years later, Joey wants to enroll in a university

so he can play basketball. But his academic deficiencies are now greater, not less. So what is he to do? But wait, a caring, understanding person finds a university that has a special program to help students with academic deficiencies. This university prides itself on being so good that it can take a person whose reading is poor and writing is worse, who often has little or no motivation to do either, allow the person to work outside the classroom thirty hours a week, miss a large number of classes and still provide the student with a university education. In fact, some caring, and understanding person even picks his classes for him and walks him through the registration process. At the end of the semester he is placed on academic probation. But wait, a caring, understanding coach talks to the caring, understanding teacher, and Joey receives an incomplete rather than an F. The academic advisor for student-athletes calls the caring, understanding teacher to see what Joey needs to do to remove the incomplete. "The man,

he fix it," and Joey is allowed to register for one more semester. Joey joins several of his teammates as they are led through registration by a caring, understanding assistant coach or academic advisor of student-athletes. Faculty at registration look away in embarrassment.

At the end of the year Joey is on final probation or suspended and is ineligible to play basketball his senior year. But wait, some caring, understanding people search diligently and systematically through the curriculum to find courses taught by caring, understanding faculty. Joey deserves every chance to succeed. So we give him one more chance; because we care. "The man, he fix it."

One year later, Joey's collegiate career is over. Joey is suspended because we gave him every chance to succeed, but he just didn't have the motivation. But why should he, other caring, understanding people did it all for him. And they all benefited except him. This time the man does not fix it.

Those who have no next game, who hear no roar, and



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

who have discovered that "the man no longer fixes it" soon find out the reality that all the caring and understanding people who used to "fix it" for you is now spending their time "fixing it" for a new Joey in elementary school, starting the "fix it" cycle all over again.

Too often the African American athlete is the greatest victim of all. When these student's courses are selected to keep them eligible rather than to provide them with an education, that is the exploitation. When the systematic selection of courses undermines the student's education and is not only tolerated but is done by personnel of the institution.

In 1992, 3,648 senior athletes did not make it to the professional ranks; it is time that we move to assure that our children begin early to work and think for themselves. And more importantly they understand that the man who will really "fix it" is staring at them in the mirror.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'm sure you've all heard some white person at one time or another make statements as to where he or she thinks there tax dollar is wasted. Most recently they were bitching about their tax dollar going to rebuild the Westside. Statements like, "Why should I pay just because they decided to burn their own neighborhood. Statements like

that really piss me off because they assume they are the only ones paying taxes. Black unemployment is bad but it hasn't reached 100%, yet.

Last I heard it was about 20%; This means that about 80% of us are paying taxes right across the board. And we don't get any loopholes.

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Betty Brown, President & Publisher
Lee Brown, General Manager / Editor
Ramon Savoy, Advertising & Marketing Dir.
Lourdes Cordero-Brown, Office Mgr.
William G. Ramirez, Assistant to the Editor
Willis Brown, Production
Ulysses Palrose, Distribution
Don Snook, Graphics

Contributing Writers:
Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams
Ray E. Willis (CCSD)
Rev. Jesse Scott (NAACP)
James S. Tate, Jr., M.D. (NAARPR)
R. K. Brown
Gwen Walker
Kimberly Bailey

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