

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Tyson make-over hitting key points

Some people are calling Mike Tyson's weekend charity event for foster children a marketing ploy. The former heavyweight boxing champion needs to polish his image as much as possible leading up to July 9 when the Nevada Athletic Commission decides whether to reinstate his license after revoking it for biting Evander Holyfield during their June 28 title rematch.

Tyson doesn't care about the children, they say.

Others saw Tyson's foray into professional wrestling — he knocked out the "Heartbreak Kid" Shawn Michaels during the WWF-sponsored Wrestlemania in March — served only to get him back into the good graces of boxing fans throughout the world.

They contend Tyson's public appearance and civic outreach are too well planned to be genuine and must be the work of Tyson's public relations camp to reignite the love affair.

The detractors might have a point. A small one.

Helping children, especially foster children, scores points. Opening up your home to hundreds of them and making them feel like royalty — by offering carnival games, thrill rides and a free-throw shooting contest and letting them play with your exotic pets — ups the ante. But the naysayers should remember one thing: Tyson is one of them.

As a juvenile, the Catskills, N.Y. born Tyson bounced from foster home to foster home and in and out juvenile detention facilities. He didn't find a steady place to rest his head until legendary boxing trainer Cus D'Amato took him in. D'Amato introduced him to the sport that introduced him to the world.

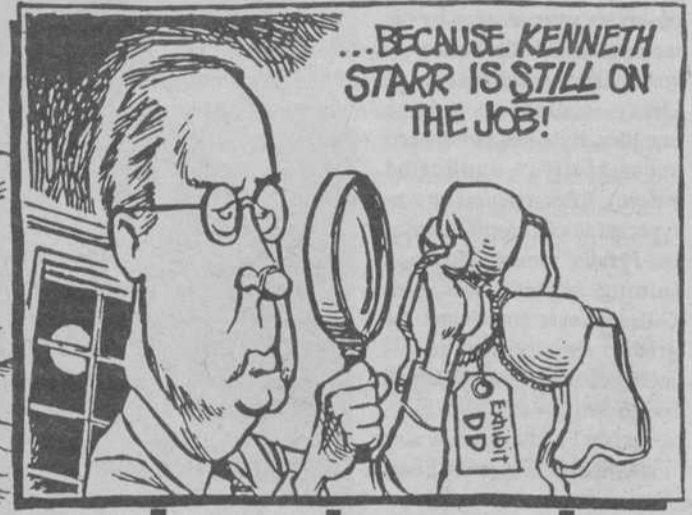
Tyson's dip into wrestling should be lauded, if for nothing than the comic relief it provided. It was also a smart move. It allowed Tyson to test the limits of his sanction, be seen by sports fans, stay on America's psyche, and of course, earn some money. Professional wrestling is a multibillion dollar-a-year industry.

Tyson-haters should note that the former champ has always been one to do civic work. He has worked with youth in his native Brooklyn, lent his financial support to troubled New York youth, created scholarships in other cities and donated \$250,000 to a Las Vegas mosque. So as much as some people want to push his generosity off to posturing, they can't. The precedent had already been set.

Another key selling point: Tyson has dumped Don King, Rory Holloway and others who boxing aficionados blame for Tyson's downfall, beginning with losing the title to Buster Douglas, getting convicted of rape and ending with the biting incident.

But none of these points might factor in as much as this one: Tyson = money, and Las Vegas and money go hand in hand.

Great News for America



Low-wage workers need pay bumped up

Special to Sentinel-Voice

With all the hurrahs over the astonishing current performance of the American economy — the so-called Long Boom — it's easy to forget that portion of the nation's workforce which has hardly shared in the general prosperity: the 12 million Americans whose wages range from the current minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour up to \$6.14 an hour.

That sum, earned by people who work in such low-skill positions as fast-food worker and teacher's aide, adds up to a paltry annual income indeed. The average American worker's hourly wage is \$12.64 an hour. But an individual working at minimum wage for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns only \$10,712 annually — an income that is \$2,600 below the federal government's poverty line for a family of three.

That fact, coupled with recent cuts in welfare and Food Stamps programs, has driven increasing numbers of the working poor to emergency food banks and pantries. A 1996 U.S. Conference of Mayors survey found that 38 percent of those seeking emergency food aid hold jobs, up from 23 percent in 1994; and more and more private charities are saying they can't meet the greater demand on their resources.

We must help Americans who work but often endure great privation move closer to a decent, livable wage.

We can do that by supporting legislation in Congress raising the minimum wage to the threshold of \$6.15 an hour. Senator Ted Kennedy,

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League

D-Mass., will try to bring the President Clinton-backed measure before the Senate after the Memorial Day Congressional recess. Rep. David Bonior, D-Mich, will champion the legislation in the House. The proposed law would raise the minimum wage by 50 cents each year for 1999 and 2000.

We should raise the minimum wage because it's only fair: hard work deserves just compensation at the bottom as well as the top of the salary ladder.

We know from the experience of the 90-cents minimum-wage hike President Clinton signed into law in 1996 that minimum-wage increases benefit the people who need it most — hardworking adults in low-income families. Based on federal labor department statistics, the Economy Policy Institute, a Washington think tank, found that nearly 60 percent of the gains from that minimum wage hike has gone to workers in the bottom 40 percent of the income ladder. Raising the minimum wage by \$1 will help insure that parents who work hard and play by the rules, and who utilize the Earned Income Tax Credit, can bring up their children out of poverty.

Contrary to a widespread view, federal statistics show that most workers earning the minimum wage are adults, not teenagers. Half of them work full time and another third work at least 20 hours a week. Sixty percent of those earning the minimum wage are women; 15 percent are African-American; and 14 percent are Hispanic.

Our recent experience has shown that raising the minimum wage in an era of strong and balanced economic expansion won't undermine job growth. The hike President Clinton signed into law in August 1996 increased the wages of 10 million workers. Since then, the economy has

created new jobs at the very rapid pace of 250,000 per month, inflation has declined from 2.9 percent to 1.6 percent and the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.6 percent — its lowest level in nearly 26 years.

Some have expressed concern that raising the minimum wage will make it even harder than it routinely is for young black males to find work. Of course, the unemployment rate of black males 16 to 19 years of age remains dangerously high: for 1997 it was 36.5 percent. But the minimum wage itself is hardly a significant cause of this decades-old problem, as we've noted before.

Keeping the wages of all low-income workers at subsistence levels will likely only exacerbate the employment problems of young black males — and of the communities they live in.

Increasing the minimum wage now would restore its real value to the level it last held in 1981, before the inflation of the 1980s drove it down.

(See Wages, Page 11)

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