

OUR VIEW

Haiti isn't Iraq

Haiti is the anti-Iraq. It's poor, where the latter is rich with oil. The United States ignores Haiti, whereas Iraq is fawned over because of its oil. Officially, the United States is an ally of Haiti but was an enemy of Iraq. Unofficially, you'd think it was the other way around.

Officially, Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development, says that America is committed to aiding Haiti. Franco, in a Jan. 17 letter to the editor (Washington Post) noted as much, saying America will help "as long as there is need." Haiti is a "priority country," he wrote, and that's reflected in past commitment. America donated \$71 million in humanitarian aid last year. But the \$71 million in aid last year pales in comparison to the billions of dollars the United States has gifted other democratic countries. Franco's letter responded to a Jan. 9 Washington Post editorial, noting the United States philanthropy in the '90s topped more than \$1.5 billion to install democracies throughout the globe. "But now," the editorial said, America "has all but abandoned Haiti." Franco's insistence that aid to Haitians hasn't stopped despite the Bush administration's freeze on aid to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government is as conflicting as it is disingenuous.

There is simply no way to prevent the end-result of harming innocents - the White House is concerned with what's described as Aristide's "authoritarian approach to governance" - by economically sanctioning the very government that dispenses the lion's share of the aid to the needy masses. Compounding issues is political instability, which has caused unrest in two major cities and led to nearly 60 deaths.

The aid that is getting through is barely doing so. Notes Patrick White of the Daily Trojan (University of Southern California): "In a country that has an incredibly low quality of life with very little fresh water or food, that blockades threaten an already vulnerable population."

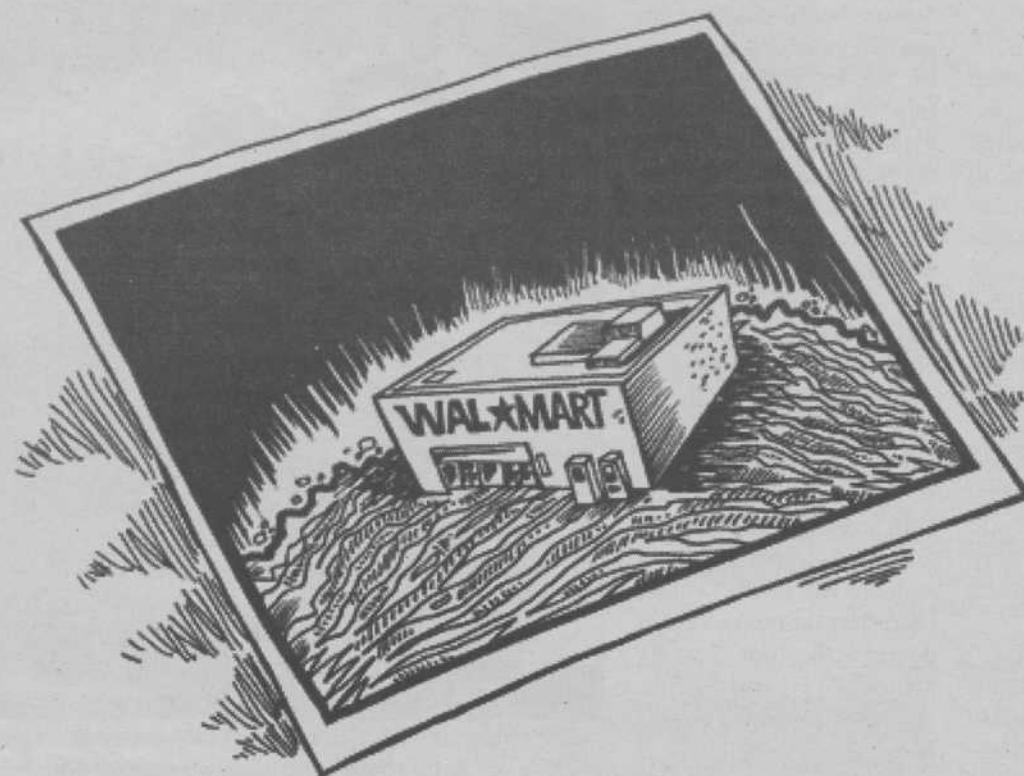
White's well-reasoned Jan. 23 editorial provides cogent reasons for intense U.S. intervention in Haiti. He notes that the United States has intervened four times in the country's 200-year history. The last intervention was in 1994, when 20,000 soldiers helped reinstate Aristide after a military coup. Since Haiti has no military, White writes, a U.S. military presence could quell unrest.

"On a strictly humanitarian basis," he writes, "the United States needs to intervene, putting a stop to the bloodshed and providing the Haitian population with basic human needs. However, the U.S. shouldn't stop there. The current president of Haiti is a clear threat to the stability in the country for his extremist views and needs to be replaced with a moderate president interested in bringing jobs to Haiti rather than ruling through control and racial unrest. Merely forcing Aristide to share power is not enough. As professor Dekmejian of the USC Political Science department puts it, '(Aristide's) dictatorial personality (in) a very poor country with a tragic historical experience is a formula for disaster.'"

Though Haiti doesn't have the oil reserves as Iraq, it deserves every bit as much attention, least of all for the economic opportunities. American entrepreneurs have a tremendous investment opportunity in Haiti, one that could yield a substantial number of jobs, empower the Gross Domestic Product (hundreds of millions of dollars) and improve quality of life in country among the most poverty-stricken in the western hemisphere.

The aid the United States has given Haiti shouldn't be prolonged. Lest America wants blood on its hands, the time to extend even more help is now.

POINT OF VIEW



STARTLING NEW SATELLITE PHOTO OF THE SURFACE OF MARS

Pace of change remains stagnant

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Does it seem to you regardless of what the project, matter, or issue is in Las Vegas it seems to take forever to get done? For instance, why does it take forever for highway projects to get done?

The answers are poor planning and a few firms have a lock on all the work.

The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) is pervaded with a type of self-breeding cronyism. This type of employment situation prevents the best qualified, except in rare occasions, from reaching decision-making positions. Over a period of time, the results are a bunch of incompetent people planning highway construction projects and the public being forced to suffer through interminable traffic delays.

Further more, when only a few contractors receiving all the bids, once they are on site, it's not cost effective to replace them when they fall behind schedule. Due to the volume of work they are performing contractors are perfectly content with constantly shifting equipment and staffing between jobs with no concern for completing projects on time. In both instances the attitude is the public be damned!

The matter of poor performance of the Clark County School District (CCSD) is another example of how slow things get done in Las Vegas. Each and every year CCSD offers excuses for why things



LOUIE OVERSTREET

are going to "hell in a hand-basket."

Without fail, a gullible public buys hook, line and sinker the false premise that students are performing poorly because not enough money is being spent on public education. The reason students can't read, write or do arithmetic hasn't anything to do with money.

The real reason students are not learning as they should is that the board of trustees and administration do not have any clues on how to allocate available resources, both capital and human, to produce outcomes that meet planned objectives.

By far, however, the slowest thing to get done in this town is changing attitudes about issues of race. Given some of the attitudes that continue to exist, one could easily conclude that Nevada fought with the South during the Civil War instead of being admitted to the Union as a free state during the height of the war in 1864.

Where is the proof, you may ask? Madams and

Messrs., your pudding is coming right up! The Urban Chamber of Commerce established the "Blue Ribbon Committee on Race" in early 2001. The Committee was made up of 30 persons representing a broad cross-section of citizenry in Las Vegas.

The Committee held four public hearings on topical issues of education; social services; contracting/employment; and criminal justice system.

A report of findings was issued in February 2003. The report was distributed to elected officials at the local, county and state levels. Out of 250 people who received the report, many in a position to bring about needed change, the Urban Chamber received only three letters acknowledging receipt of the report.

Space prevents me from listing many of the recommendations contained in the report. Thus I will list only a couple under each topical area.

Education:

1. The school district should monitor success of language acquisition for English learners. A resolution adopted by the Nevada Legislature should be used as a guide for developing acquisition programs.

2. Based on the fact the school district is becoming more diverse each year, methods utilized to recruit teachers and administrators need to be reviewed and revised.

Social Services:

1. Ways to make childcare, in learning environments, affordable for the working poor must be identified.

2. A "watchdog" group should be established to "sniff-out" instances of media bias in the reporting of hard news. (Wendell P. Williams, do you read me?)

Contracting/Employment:

1. All public contracting agencies should mandate minority and female subcon-

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