

C O M M E N T A R Y

Bush plotting course for social insecurity

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Bush administration has figured it out. If the goal is to make voters more sympathetic toward Republicans, all you have to do is to fool them into thinking they are members of a phony "ownership society," create a non-existent crisis around Social Security and hammer news organizations until they adopt your language rather than words that would more accurately reflect reality.

First, let's describe reality. Contrary to President Bush's assertion, there is no crisis. Social Security trustees report that the program, if left unchanged and if the most pessimistic economic forecasts are used, can pay all scheduled benefits through 2042. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office projects that the program can continue as is until 2052, a decade longer.

Does the program need tweaking? Absolutely. But that could be done with a single stroke: repeal a third of the tax cuts Bush wants to make permanent.

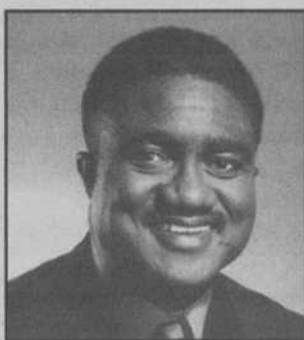
Why change Social Security to make it riskier for future retirees? A worker who is now 20 years old will experience a cut of one-third in his or her benefits — approximately \$160,000 — throughout their retirement, according to estimates by the Washington-based Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR).

Theoretically, this could be made up through the private investment component of retirement. But that's not a sure bet either. Remember how the dot-com frenzy became the dot-gone debacle in 1970? No one can guarantee that we won't experience a repeat of that riches to rags reversal.

Not enough attention is being given to the high administrative cost that will be associated with privatization. "The administrative costs of Social Security are just 0.6 cents of every dollar that gets paid out in benefits," the CEPR paper notes. "By contrast, the administrative cost of systems of private accounts, like the one in England, eats up 15 cents of every dollar in benefits. Social Security also has a minimum amount of fraud and abuse, as numerous government audits have repeatedly documented."

The paper also observes, "Virtually everyone agrees that Social Security is a great system. It provides tens of millions of workers with a guaranteed, core retirement income. It also provides disability insurance to people during their working years. In addition, it provides survivors insurance to the children of workers who die at any early age."

Why would anyone want to change the



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one federal program that nearly everyone agrees is working? In a word: Politics. By drastically altering Social Security, Bush would be dismantling the crown jewel of the Democrats' New Deal program that provided a safety net for the neediest of Americans. By shifting funds from the federal government, Bush also would be simultaneously

rewarding his financial backers on Wall Street and helping persuade retirees that they should have an affinity for the stock market. In other words, they're more likely to become Republicans.

The reality is that when the higher administrative costs and the vicissitudes of the stock market are factored, the payout under the Bush plan is not much, if any, better than the return one now receives from the government bonds now being held by the Social Security trust fund.

Astoundingly, the news media allows itself to be goaded by the White House. Conservatives who have learned that language is everything. In their polling, they discovered that the public is more accepting of "personal accounts" than "privatization" to describe the Bush proposal. Therefore, they are careful to use the more acceptable term.

"While it is not unusual for politicians to try to spin the terminology used in debate, journalists should avoid changing word usage simply because some politicians think it will be to their advantage," says a report by Fairness & Accuracy in the Media (FAIR).

But journalists are accommodating Republicans. "Republican officials have begun calling journalists to complain about references to 'private accounts,' even though Bush called them that three times in a speech last fall," the *Washington Post* reported.

FAIR noted that Carl Cameron of Fox News began asking Bush about "a potential private account" at a news conference last month before quickly amending his question to say "personal account."

The *Columbia Journalism Review* pointed out that Associated Press reporter David Espo used the phrase "private account" 15 times in Social Security stories published in 2003 while referring to "personal" accounts only once. This year, however, he had switched to using "personal" accounts 16 times and "private" accounts only twice.

It's bad enough when any administration, Democratic or Republican, lies or misleads the public to advance a political agenda. It's even worse, when the news media are complicit in this deception.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service.

The NAACP—as it relates to chicken and waffles

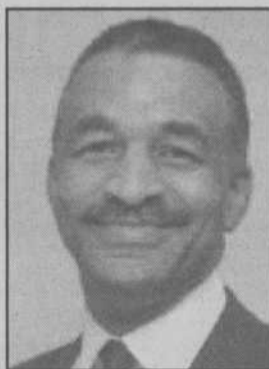
By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The NAACP, the oldest and largest "civil rights" organization in this country, may be forced to change its name. Of course, most of us know its current name is National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Based upon what I have recently seen and heard about our venerable organization, I'd like to make a couple of suggestions for a new name. How about the National Association for the Appreciation of Chicken Parts? Or, maybe we can name it the National Association Against Crimped Pancakes. "Colored people" are now being asked to fight against poor waffle service, and to be compassionate toward chickens.

In case you have not heard, lawsuits have been filed against the Waffle House and a few of its franchisees, and the NAACP has joined

the plaintiffs in alleging racial bias. It is obvious the NAACP is quite concerned about how we are treated at Waffle House restaurants and is determined, once again, to assure we get our day in court. (They give us report cards on hotels to let us know which ones will treat us best, which is a comfort to some Black folks, but I would much rather have a report on how to develop and own hotels. I'm sure the Patels would agree to share their secrets with us.)

Since the waffle lawsuit will probably take a few years, I wonder what the NAACP plan is for the interim. Will it be issuing report cards on restaurants or just waiting for apologies and a payoff from Waffle House. Or, will



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the NAACP tell us how we can own a chain of restaurants ourselves? It sure would be great if I could stop on highways across this country and support a Black owned waffle restaurant chain.

I know the NAACP is not in the business of building businesses, but it certainly could be a strong advocate for it. After all, didn't the organization say a few years ago that the "new civil rights struggle" is economic empowerment? Protesting about how someone is treating us at their restaurants is admirable, but in 2005, in addition to protesting and suing, we should be about owning more restaurants and hotels, and supporting them as well. Even Dubya is talking about an "ownership society."

are running wild. By the way, Benjamin Spock, the expert — his son committed suicide.

Then someone said let's print books and magazines with pictures of nude women and nude children and call it free speech; let's sell sex and pictures of nude children on the Internet. And now, 1.3 women are raped every minute, for a total of 683,000 per year. Pornography is considered an addiction, and child abuse has increased by record numbers. These books and magazines are contributing factors.

Then our entertainment industry said let's make TV shows and movies that promote profanity, violence and illicit sex; let's record music that dehumanizes and denigrates women; let's record music that encourages rape, drugs, murder, suicide and satanic themes and call it entertainment.

The NAACP is also on record as a supporter of humane treatment of chickens. In September 2003, Kweisi Mfume wrote a letter to the parent company of KFC complaining about how they treat chickens by stating, "... KFC has yet to eliminate some of the most egregious cruelty to chickens in the industry," and he suggested they be more humane in the raising and killing their chickens. The headline of the article reads, "NAACP Head Speaks Up for Chickens."

What can I say? I suppose it's a good cause, but for the NAACP, I don't think so. Consider how "colored people" used to kill chickens. I remember my grandparents, when it was time to eat, they would grab one of their chickens by its head and wring its neck, or they would simply place the chicken on a log and chop its head off with an ax. They fed

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why our children have no conscience; why they don't know right from wrong; why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers (like the two young men here in Las Vegas last week who randomly killed a man because they wanted to know what it was like to murder someone) or to kill their classmates. And for some of them, to have even killed their own parents. Benjamin Spock said we can't spank our children. Someone told the teachers and principals that we shouldn't discipline (not beat, not kick, not burn with an iron, but discipline — which is very different than the above mentioned atrocities) our children when they misbehave because it might damage their self-esteem.

And now, we have preschoolers and elementary children whose parents say they can't do anything with the kids, children whom teachers can't teach, and others who

thority from ecclesiastical authority, not from moral values.

We have laws that prohibit murder and theft — which is the legislation of morality, standards of morality that are found in the Bible (the Ten Commandments). Should we remove them from law because the church should be separated from the state?

What are the consequences of all of the laws enacted in favor of "separation of church and state?"

For years we have told God to get out of schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And, He just may have.

Someone said you can't read the Bible in school. The book which teaches thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal and love your neighbor as yourself.

I could go on and on, but I think the message is clear. Separation of church and state promotes absolute power, and there's an old adage that states, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

We are a morally bankrupt society that has a tendency to follow the majority. In Numbers 14, Joshua and Caleb were in the minority when they came back with a good report about the land God had promised them. The Israelites chose not to listen to Joshua and Caleb but to the ten other spies. That decision caused them to die, wandering in the wilderness 40 years.

Just because the majority wants something does not mean that it should be granted, because the majority could easily err. Government was not to be run by whatever the majority wants but, instead, by principle, specifically, principles of the Bible.