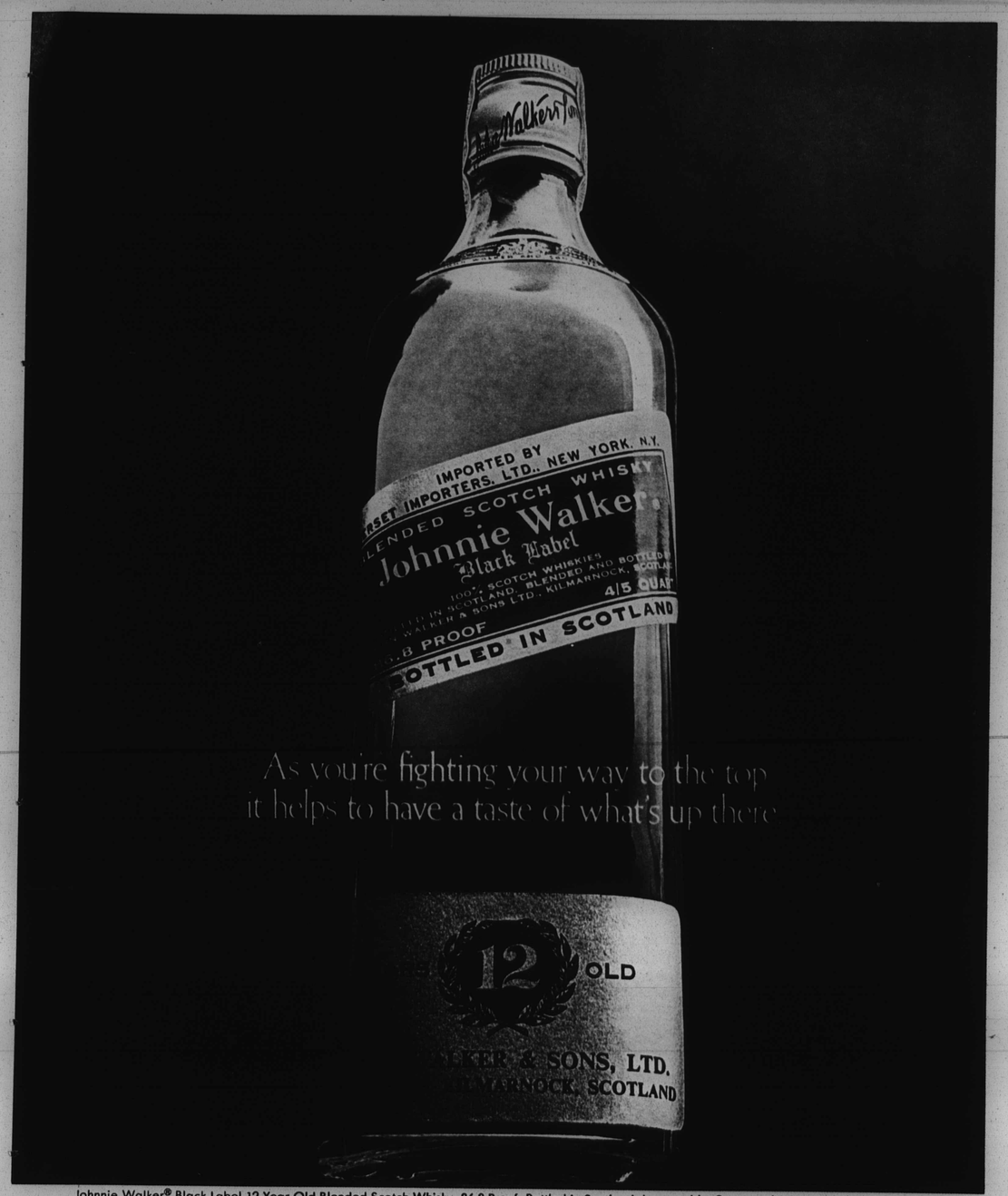

Johnnie Walker® Black Label 12 Year Old Blended Scotch Whisky, 86.8 Proof. Bottled in Scotland. Imported by Somerset Importers, Ltd., N.Y., N.Y.

# The Nixon Budget

(Continued from Page 4)

*DOES THE GOVERNMENT CARE?*

Stein's put-down was far more than merely adding insult to injury, though it was that. He wasn't denying that the publishers had, indeed, recognized long-standing injury and frustration. What he was saying was that they had failed to recognize something truly different about the *nature* of the new injury and its implications for the future.

It wasn't that the government didn't understand; it didn't *care*. That, and a few things more, are the messages to black America contained in the Nixon fiscal-74 budget that takes effect this July 1.

Critics of the new Nixon budget have focussed on the dismantlement—without Congressional authorization—of the OEO. This focus is justified, though not so much for what OEO did or did not do for the black and poor of the nation, but rather for what OEO symbolized.

OEO symbolized mainly two things: (1) Hope, based on a belief that government cared, and (2) a pulling together under one umbrella (OEO) the responsibility (though not the authority or resources) for lifting citizens out of the grinding poverty that had characterized the lot of black people in particular for over three centuries in America.

The Executive Branch organizational chart that accompanied the announced budget listed OEO along with more than a dozen other agencies in the Office of the President. A notation for OEO stated: "Office to be discontinued, functions to be distributed to other agencies."

That line took care of both things symbolized by OEO. Hope was being "discontinued," and the umbrella was being "distributed" in such a way that not even the responsibility for caring or doing would be possible to locate.

From time to time, the administration has tried to explain that the OEO benefits would be continued, but at the local level through such gimmicks as revenue sharing.

*MR. NIXON'S EXPLANATION*

In a nationwide radio broadcast, March 4, President Nixon, however, called the General Revenue Sharing law he signed during his first term a "Declaration of Independence for State and Local Governments." That law, he said, gave federal money to states and localities to "put more policemen on the streets...or whatever you think best."

Similarly, the proposed new $2.3 billion "Better Communities Act" would differ from the OEO boondoggles largely in the fact that the state and local chieftains "would not have to get Washington approval" for whatever they did or did not do with the federal funds.

Thus, the effect of the revenue sharing games is that the black and poor are thrown once again upon the mercies of state and local fiefdoms whose history is too ugly and familiar to bear repeating. Only this time, perhaps for the first time in a decade, the federal government will not even pretend any responsibility or authority.

"It has been charged that our budget cuts show a lack of compassion for the disadvantaged," President Nixon acknowledged on nation-wide radio, February 21.

"The question is not whether we help," he explained, "but how we help. By eliminating programs that are wasteful, we can concentrate on programs that work. Our recent round of budget cuts can save $11 billion in this fiscal year, $19 billion next fiscal year, $24 billion the year after. That means an average saving of $700 over the next three years for each of America's million taxpayers."

*AME BISHOPS TAKE ISSUE*

The President was responding to such criticisms as that hoisted by 18 bishops of the AME Church who adopted a resolution saying, in part: "This action by President Nixon represents a cruel and callous disregard for the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty and is an offense to the sensibility of justice which lies at the heart of our Judeo-Christian faith."

Democratic Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota charged that Nixon's budget "comforts the comfortable" and represents a "retreat" from social and economic justice.

Calling the budget a "disaster," Mondale said:

"This budget would, among other things, eliminate 180,000 desperately needed jobs; end the federal aid for low-and moderate-income housing; slash health research, aid to education, Medicare benefits for the aged; and abolish practically every effort to strengthen rural America.

"While nearly 100 programs to help people would be destroyed, the defense and foreign aid budgets would rise dramatically, and not a single tax loophole for the rich would be closed."

Mondale was giving the nation an equal-time response to the President's February 24 radio message on human resources. In it the President sought to place his budgetary actions in proper historical perspective. He said:

"During the 1960's, the Federal Government undertook ambitious, sometimes almost utopian, commitments in one area of social policy after another, elbowing aside the State and local governments and the private sector, and establishing literally hundreds of new programs based on the assumption than any human problem could be solved simply by throwing enough Federal dollars at it.

"The intention of this effort was laudable, but the results in case after case amounted to dismal failure. The money which left Washington in a seemingly inexhaustible flood was reduced to a mere trickle by the time it had filtered through all the layers of bureaucrats, consultants, and social workers, and finally reached those whom it was supposed to help.

"Too much money has been going to those who were supposed to help the needy and too little to the needy themselves. Those who make a profession out of poverty got fat, the taxpayer got stuck with the bill, and the disadvantaged themselves got little but broken promises."

*VICTIMS OF CON GAMES*

The con games the government now routinely plays on the citizen are such that it is indeed difficult to keep track of their number, much less see through them. Seeing through any part of them requires the tough discipline of objectivity, and usually incurs some discomfiture. But it must begin.

OEO's major contribution to the black and poor was a deceptive hope. Its real contribution was a fat one to the private corporate coffers of the rich. The big paydays went, for example, to giant corporations such as Litton Industries, ITT, Packard-Bell Electronics, Xerox, IBM and others who ran massive Job Corps centers and sold goods and services to OEO.

*MUST FEND FOR THEMSELVES*

Thus, OEO has been merely the table upon which black and poor hopes were laid, and under which the money was passed to the white and rich. And thus, the dismantlement of the table means essentially two things:

1. The Nixon Administration is no longer offering hope—not even the disingenuous promise, the deceptive hope heretofore offered by OEO.

2. What, with relatively clean escapes through Watergate, an election sweep, the appointment of top Litton executive Roy Ash as the new head of the Office of Management and Budget, $250 million hand outs to each Lockheed and Penn Central, some intimidation of the nation's press—with such "successes" as these—the Nixon Administration apparently feels that it no longer needs such tables as OEO under which to hand public money to rich private coffers. Perhaps it may now do so with impunity *above* the table.

The administration's message to the publishers was that these OEO-type covers are no longer needed.

The new Nixon budget escalates "benign neglect" to malignant abandonment. It tells the nation that the black and poor are—at best—left to fend for themselves.