National Roundup

By Larry Still and Art Carter

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Le Baron Taylor, CBS Records exeucitve who usually hosts the Congressional Black Caucus's annual opening bash in September, sponsored one of the biggest affairs of President Elect Reagan's inaugural week with a cocktail party for black Republican appointees in the new administration. That's politics and big business for you. CBS Records also joined Mobil Oil in picking up the tab for the elegant opening ceremony of the "Treasures of Ancient Nigeria: Legacy of 2,000 Years" exhibit at the fashionable Corcoran Gallery of Art here following a long run at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The display of 100 fantastic works of iron, bronze and copper sculpture spanning 2,000 years of culture on the African continent was a most appropriate backdrop for the "New Beginning" of the Grand Old Party in Washington as a reminder of the past glories of the ancestors of the District of Columbia Majority.

Most visitors to the Capital during this period were stunned by the artistic figurines from such Nigerian sites as Nok (500 B.C.); Igbo-Ukwu (9th and 10th Centuries); Ife (12th-15th Centureis); Owo (15th Century) and the well known classical city of Benin (15th-19th Centuries) which is still an educational and cultural fountainhead in Africa's largest — and richest — and most powerful independent modern nation. Of course, the New Republicans haven't overlooked Nigeria's increasing importance as a fountainhead of oil, also.

The Treasures of Ancient Nigeria exhibit moved on to Chicago after closing here February 1, the first day of Black History Month. Sponsored nationwide by the Association for the Study of Afro American Life and History. The ASALH kicked off the month with its celebrated Black History Month luncheon at the Capital Hilton at which the memorial U.S. postage stamp of former National Urban League Executive Director Whitney Young was dedicated. Association executive director J. Rupert Picott and his staff really deserve great credit for developing the national focus on February as Black History month while establishing new Afro-American history observances in every state. The organization has started a campaign to establish chapters at all the traditional black colleges and other institutions. If your organization is interested, write Black History Month Committee, ASALH, 1401 14th St., NW, Washington, D.C., 20005. Washington chapter leaders Ernestine Lyons, Ron Powell, Bill Cunningham and Jennie Lucas have prepared a booklet on "How To Hold A Black History Month Program" in your community — which is available for the asking.

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Independent real estate dealer Clarence Robinson was as busy as a one-legged skier in the Poconos Mountains during the inaugural season as he rushed about trying to locate quality housing for newly elected and appointed officials moving into the area. But very few of the "departing" Democrats ate "selling out" in the Capital's inflationary market because they prefer to remain in the growing new international setting which has a reputation for "swinging." Robinson is on the board of the Corcoran Gallery which is one of the major centers for cultural and social events in the Capital.

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They received little media attention, but Washington Mayor Marion Barry's local Democratic administration handled all the arrangements for the Republican inaugural activity in the city. William Rumsey, director of the Department of Recreation, was chairman of the City Inaugural Committee which coordinated all the arrangements, including the parade, transportation and security for the thousands of visitors. As usual, top uniform and plainclothes officers from around the nation were imported to aid Police Chief Bertell Jefferson and his staff in keeping an eye on crowd control, demonstrators, con men — and women, pickpockets and crackpots who usually flock into town for the quadriannual changing of the guard.

While thousands of visitors and hangers on were attending the sumptuous buffets and well stocked bars during the past two weeks of receptions and cocktail hours, Mayor Barry announced meager grants for low-income housing tenants under the city's new Resident Council Financial Assistance Program. For the first time, under this program, grants are made to public housing resident groups for cultural, education and self help programs, but the awards only totaled $44,711 for all 50 public housing developments. The funds come from the Escheated Estates compounded from assets of citizens who die "without heirs." The total amount probably did not equal one round of drinks at one of the 400 inaugural balls televised by satellite by the GOP, but let'em eat cake. It gives you some idea of how four-fifths of the society has to eke out improved living conditions while the other fifth enjoys it all.

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After losing the battle for stronger fair housing legislation in the waning days of the lame duck (outgoing) 96th Congress, liberal and black solons in the still Democratic dominated 97th Congress are fighting a rear guard action to save the Comprehensive Employment Training Act by which millions of low income youth were given jobs to cut the unemployment rate from 40-50 percent to 30-40 percent among blacks. The Republican proposal by San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson to phase out the CETA programs "is an American tragedy in the making," outgoing Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall told the National Association of Counties convention in San Antonio last month. You haven't heard anything yet. Wait until summer approaches and the big city Democratic mayors begin worrying about the millions of young jobless on the streets in the coming hot weather. If you've got suggestions, send them to the new Secretary of Labor Ray Donovan at the Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., 20025.

When GOP plans to phase out CETA funds are coupled with new legislation to reduce the minimum wage for youth — you get some sense of what is in store for "getting America back to Work" by the Reagan administration. And don't forget the President Reagan's meeting south of the border with Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo to discuss greater use of "documented" Mexican workers, among other topics, at a a cheaper labor rate to meet the needs for new industrial workers in the Sun Belt area while millions of trained and experienced workers go without jobs and homes in the crumbling cities of the (Democratic) northeastern belt.

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Well, perhaps organized labor's rank and file got what they wanted in supporting Republicans in the anti-inflation vote. Now, many thousands of old blue collar workers will be able to take "early retirement" while the "new immigrants" from Puerto Rico, Mexico and South America take their jobs. And, as the lady in the Geritol advertsiement says, the black and the poor "can do the best they can with what they got . . . " But, you can look for increased tensions between the "frigid zone" and the "sun belt" over the changing labor problems as black leaders become dominant in the unions. We wonder what Walter Davis of the AFL-CIO, Bill Lucy of the American Federation of Municipal Employee and Horace Sheffield of the United Auto Workers has to say about these changes as Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and West Virginia (along with Alabama) reflect the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

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Incidently, the new Federal minimum wage of $3.35 which went into effect last January entitled an estimated 5.6 million workers to pay increases, but the catch is that the act also provides for payment of subminimum wages to persons employed in sheltered workshops whose earnings or productive capacity is limited by age or physical or mental disability.

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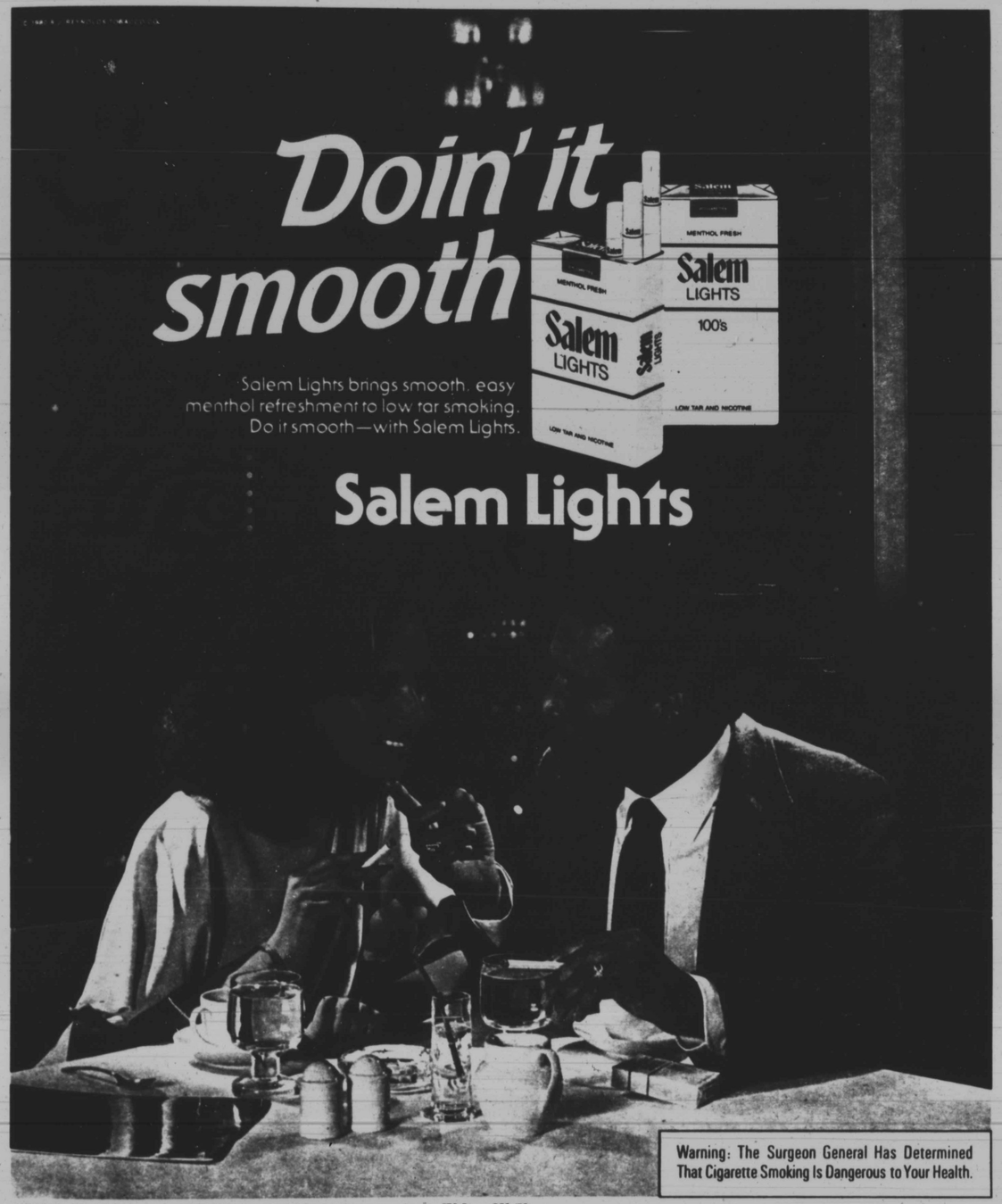
Data available for the first time on weekly earnings by race and Hispanic ethnicity indicated that black married-couple families earned about 88 percent as much as white families and Hispanics earned about 75 percent as much as white families. But, black married-couple families were more likely than whites or Hispanics to have two or more earners.

Married couples continue to dominate the work force, but their share has been declining steadily, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. From March, 1970 to March, 1980, the proportion of the labor force composed of married persons living with their spouses fell from 69 to 62 percent, while the share composed of never-married and divorced persons rose from 24 to 33 percent.



LIGHTS: 11 mg. "tar" 0.8 mg. nicotine LIGHTS 100's: 11 mg. "tar" 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette FTC Report DEC '79