Baltimore Afro-American

OPINION

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Black caucus strategy

Our elected officials, particularly those of our community, contend often that we misunderstand them or misinterpret their actions.

Similarly, we could counter with the protest that our elected officials confuse the mission of a free independent black newspaper.

We are almost always in support of our elected officials but our function is not exclusively that of cheering section. Our job is to tell the community what is going on, to provide information.

Sometimes the news does not present one or more elected officials in the best light.

Here is where the process often breaks down.

For example, some of our Assembly members recently professed deep hurt when we questioned why they voted for budget cuts that would impact on our community.

As we questioned, we also said we were prepared for some of our politicians to then criticize us for being either simplistic or not cognizant of the legislative process.

Which happened.

What has also happened is that some of our friends in the Assembly have provided us with what they feel were significant accomplishments of black politicians working for us in the General Assembly that lessened the impact of the harsh cuts that the age of Reagan demands on all government spending.

We will quote directly from a position paper we have recently received on black caucus accomplishments and strategies.

"When the 1982 budget was finally enacted on Monday, April 6, black legislators in Maryland had much to be proud of - for through a carefully planned, well executed strategy, they had succeeded in averting almost every budget cut proposed in state government."

"Moreover, they were able to prevail on the governor to put back $300,000 in cuts for day care that he had previously made and bills providing targeted aid for education and $4.4 million for Baltimore (books and supplies) were well on their way to enactment.

"In all, the black state legislators were instrumental in having more than $27 million cuts restored.

"Delegates Douglass, Rawlings, Young and Dean of the House, along with Senator Blount on the Senate side, coordinated the strategy.

"All members of the Legislative Black Caucus played integral parts in the effort. "The legislators attributed their success to a thorough understanding of the legislature and using this information to work for them.

"They had carefully laid out a strategy prior to the session and coordinated it closely at every step process breaks down.

"The committee owes a special debt of gratitude to Senator Blount, who was the only black to serve on the Budget Conference Committee and held firm against the cuts.

When the dust settled and the budget was enacted, black state legislators were almost ninety percent effective in preventing cuts. Only the medicaid issue escaped their grasp.

A scorecard of the Legislative Caucus priorities shows:

OPERATING BUDGET Program-Item	Restorations
1. Black Colleges and Universities (Morgan, Bowie, Coppin, UMES)	$ 415,340
2. Positions vacancy 6 months or more (Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Black Colleges)	65 positions restored of 68 recommended
3. Welfare grants to (a) students (18-21 yrs.)	$5,011,000
(b) stepchildren	3,887,000
	8,698,000
4. Medicaid	4,000,000
5. TB Prevention Program for Baltimore City	332,000
6. Metropolitan Transit System	500,000
7. Youth Service Bureaus	484,417
8. Grant Program for Community Mental Services	175,000
9. Gifted and Talented Program	101,250
10. Compulsive Gambling Pilot Program	121,710
CAPITAL BUDGET (House Action)	
1. Construction Technology Building at UMES	$5,100,000
2. Planning and design for science complex at Morgan State University	125,000
SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET	
1. Day Care	300,000
2. Target Aid ($4.4 million for books and supplies in Baltimore City for education)	7,000,000
Total Restored	$27,352,717

"This should remind all blacks that politics is critical to our lives and blacks must participate in politics if we hope to win."

The report we have quoted herewith is most encouraging. We are pleased to publish it in this space.

But there is still that catch, that dividing line between elected officials, no matter what their ethnicity, and the press.

To achieve what our elected officials report in the way of budget restorations that help our community means that a lot of political trades had to be made.

Our black legislators are but a tiny band seeing the Assembly as a whole. We would imagine they did some heavy trading to preserve as much as the budget as they did.

And here, again, is where the process breaks down.

Our question now, on behalf of our readership, ladies and gentlemen of the caucus, is what did you give up to get what you got?

Our community cannot afford any surprises further down the line. Our situation is too critical.

It was Dixon's bill

One of the many virtues of Assembly Delegate Isaiah (Ike) Dixon we have come to appreciate is that he is amiable even when wronged.

In Tuesday's AFRO we reported, as did the United Press International news service we employ, that Del. Frank Conaway was urginga bill that could make cross burning a felony.

We promptly contacted Delegate Conaway, and one of his virtues is that he is almost always accessible, and he explained the proposed legislation to us succinctly as well as the reasons for his stand.

Whereupon Delegate Dixon followed with a gentle phone call after the cross burning story appeared to point out modestly that he, not Mr. Conaway, was the author of this proposed legislation.

Well we did wonder for a moment or so why this had escaped Mr. Conaway's notice.

In any event, we promised Delegate Dixon we would set the record straight.

Our news story in this issue does just that.

AFRO welcomes letters

The AFRO welcomes letters from its readers. Letters should be brief and must bear the writer's name and address.

All letters will be given consideration for publication.

MADELINE MURPHY

Violence is just a thing

By Madeline W. Murphy

To say that violence is as American as cherry pie and that the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation, sum up in a nutshell the recent explosive attempted assassination of the president.

The reports that there were those who laughed and those who felt some strange sensation of revenge only speaks about the base nature of the human being and his lack of understanding that to personify the ills of the nation in one man will not change the attitudes present in this right wing administration.

Because there are still those hawks, those anti-social program cutters who still go on in their attempt to dismantle the humanism of this country.

Nor will Gen. Alexander Haig, Secretary of State, who dubbed himself in control during the emergency, change his outward look to weed out terrorism directed mainly at the Soviet Union. The tide of militarism goes along its inexorable way as desperate men have their fingers pressed on the nuclear war button.

What we have here is an ignorance of our history and that of world history, where the "red threat" has been so successfully programmed into the mouthings of the Reagan administration, that it becomes the easy scapegoat (with shouts from an ignorant "Amen" corner) to all our problems, while becoming the raison d'etre for an obscene military budget and for gobbling up the mineral resources of the world.

One need only review the recent report of 100 Green Berets being sent as advisers into Liberia to understand that A foot in Africa backing a military regime in Liberia, whose recent military coup resulted in the assassination of President Tolbert is the forked tongued answer to rooting out terrorism.

Some of us who fancy wishful thinking might believe that a Christian man's brush with death would change his ways.

But with all the good humor, with all the face of stalwart stoicism that the president has shown during his ordeal, we may expect predictably now that he has achieved a position of being on stage, front and center, that even more stringent reversals in civil and human rights shall be the order of the day.

Already rumblings of pre-Watergate surreptitious domestic tit