Baltimore Afro-American

PAGE 4 — FEBRUARY 11, 1984

Founded August 1892 by John H. Murphy Sr., 1840-1922. Published every Tuesday and Saturday by the AFRO-AMERICAN CO. of Baltimore City, Inc. Carl Murphy (1889-1967) Editor-Publisher (1922-1967).

Shelter for homeless

For years, Johnston Square residents in East Baltimore have struggled to maintain their historic neighborhoods, organizing substantial community groups which speak for them, including members of the 155-year-old Oblate Sisters of Providence, the oldest order of black nuns in the United States.

Yet, this week, the city is proceeding to renovate a two-story building in the 700 block E. Eager St., as a shelter for homeless men, over the objections of the community coalition.

The objectors' voices are impressive—the Johnston Square Neighborhood Association, at the Latrobe Homes Association, the St. James and St. John Catholic Church the Neighborhood PAC, (project area committee), and the Oblates who run a school on the site where the order was founded over a century ago. Added support is given by a communist activist, Ralph Moore, St. Ambrose Housing Aid director.

Residents contend their area is saturated with facilities for the imprisoned, the drug victims and other downtrodden. They note that in the 20-block area bounded by Hoffman, Eager, Fallsway and Eden, they have their share of do-good services.

They point to the City Jail complex at 401 E. Eager, housing 1,800 men and women; the Md. State Penitentiary at 954 Forest St., for 3,000; a state minimum security building at 900 E. Eager, under construction for 250; and five other inmate-related programs, as well as the nearby East Baltimore Drug Abuse Center.

So what went wrong in Johnston Square? Normally, when there is sustained and reasoned objection by neighborhood groups, the city fathers and elected officials listen and react accordingly.

But, records show that the City Planning Commission initially approved the Johnston Square shelter proposal submitted by the Department of Housing and Community Development to refurnish the building to be operated by the Aassociated Catholic Charities. This eight-member planning body includes four black members, two of whom reside in the area.

After a month's deliberation, the City Council approved the project by a 17 - 1 vote. Lone voice in favor of the neighborhood was that of neophyte councilman, Anthony Ambridge. The other 2nd District members, Nathaniel McFadden and Jacquelin McLean, were not convinced.

But, their constituents have not given up. They talk of further protests, boycotts, or possible litigation, insisting that they are the best judges of what is desirable in their neighborhoods.

To an outsider who would counter that a 24-bed facility is a drop in the bucket in a section loaded with prisons and programs for the needy, they extend an invitation to reside overnight and undergo the inconvenience of police sirens and helicopters signaling a jail break, a stray work-release inmate, or a dope bust. They say it is time for other parts of the city to share some of the woes.

We believe that the Johnston Square community leaders and the elected officials who represent them, and other city officials involved in this controversy, are honorable men and women.

With their concern for the betterment of the city, and the involvement of the Catholic Church, long noted for its sensitivity to community betterment, it is possible this matter can be resolved to the satisfaction of all. We hope so.

Do it now!

We repeat—a good citizen is registered and prepared to vote. Baltimore City residents should register now for the Primary Election on May 8, 1984. Churches and community groups should adopt a register-to-vote drive to help new voters to register. Deadline for the Primary is April 9.

Who must register: New residents of the city. Persons who have never voted before, and who will be 18 by the General Election on Nov. 6, 1984. Plus, persons who have previously registered, but have not voted in the last five years.

To vote in the Primary, new voters must register Democrat or Republican. Persons who register Independent can NOT vote in a Primary election.

It's easy! — Register to vote applications are available at all Enoch Pratt Library branches, and at the Supervisor of Elections office at Fayette and Gay Sts.

Clubs and organizations can adopt register to vote drives in their groups and neighborhoods. The Supervisors of Elections will make applications available to interested citizens.

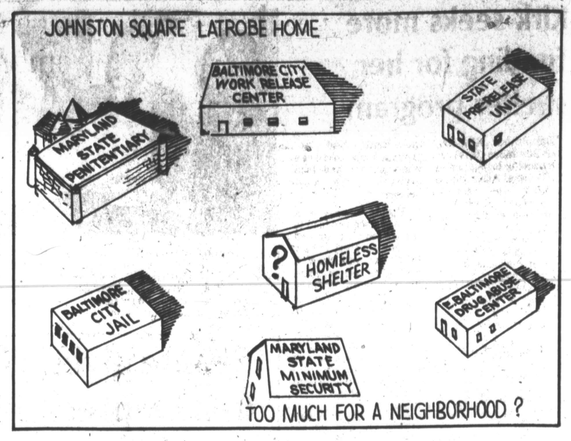
For further information, call Supervisors of Elections, 396-5550.

Worth a try

Baltimore City school superintendent, Mrs. Alice Pinderhughes, has hit upon an innovative idea to improve school attendance. This week, she announced that some 2,000 pupils in grades 6-11 can qualify for free bowling and roller skating.

Under the plan, the four regional superintendents will review attendance records and pick the best schools from which 100 pupils a month will be selected to enjoy a favorite sport at the Shake and Bake Family Fun Center on Pennsylvania Ave.

The times require unique programs to inspire normal activity. The Pinderhughes' plan sounds like a good idea. It's worth a try.



Parren J. MITCHELL

Homeless by choice

Reagan, appearing on the "Good Morning America" show said, "One problem that we have had, even in the best of times, and that is the people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say by choice," Homeless by choice???

It is ironic that, on January 25, 1984, the Housing Subcommittee of the Banking Committee, on which I serve, held a hearing on homelessness in America at a shelter for the homeless in Washington, D.C. Among the witnesses were the Mayors of four major cities.

Mayor Harold Washington testified that there are more than 12,000 homeless people in Chicago; however, public and private facilities make available only 1,078 beds for the homeless.

Marion Barry, Mayor of the District of Columbia, stated that in the last year there has been a 77 percent increase in the utilization of Washington's Food Bank, which means 90,000 people are fed monthly by this program.

Speaking about the city of New Orleans, Mayor Morial testified that the total number of beds made available to the homeless by private service agencies have been completely filled to capacity for the last year, and that the demand for shelter is up 55 percent over the previous year. There are no emergency shelters for families in New Orleans.

The Mayor of Denver, Frederico Tena stated: "Homelessness is a serious problem in Denver and in our society. If we are ever to do more than simply pursue a strategy of 'warehousing' the homeless for short periods of time, we must begin to address the root causes of homelessness. This means addressing the need for:

—permanent low income housing,
—housing with supportive care for the mentally disabled and elderly,
—mental health and social service programs capable of providing care to the mentally disabled and elderly,
—employment and job training programs,
—longer term shelter facilities providing supportive services."

Our Committee also heard from the victims. Their stories were awfully difficult to listen to.

Russell Watson, age 55, fully employed until he became ill a few years ago, and is now no longer able to work. He has no family and lives in a shelter for the homeless in New Jersey.

Leon Fonte, age 29, served in the Navy for five years, worked at Western Electric for four years. He was forced to quit his job due to health reasons. Mr. Fonte does not receive unemployment benefits. He stated that he sought work almost everyday during the two years and five months that he has been without a home.

Shanee Gonzalez, age 26, single parent with two children, ages two and three years who live with her mother. She can't live there because the mother's family members and their children live there. She has not been able to get section 8 housing.

Mike Tomueu, age 29, finished high school, served in the military for three years. At age 21 he got his first job and held on to it for eight years, until the plant closed. He went to Phoenix, Arizona because he heard there were jobs. After more than a year he still gets out at 6:00 a.m. each morning trying to pick up spot laboring jobs. He lives in the streets or in a shelter when space is available.

After hearing from scores of witnesses, there appeared to be a consensus that the following six areas had to be addressed immediately:

1. cities — large and small
2. more jobs
3. more job training programs
4. new low and moderate income housing programs and loan guarantees for housing rehabilitation
5. more social service programs
6. new states and federal programs to shelter and protect the mentally ill.

Governor Mario Cuomo (New York) the lead off witness for the panel of elected officials, made a haunting, eloquent statement. Referring to the State of the Union message to be given by Reagan that evening he said: "...and this evening, when those of us who are blessed to have a job—and the warmth and security of a place to live—lift our voices, and maybe even our glasses, to cheer the state of the union and the so-called economic recovery it describes, maybe we should glance out our windows at the people huddled every where in doorways: the hungry, the lost, the lonely, the homeless.

"And maybe, before we declare economic victory, we should ask ourselves what the test of this union should really be."

"I say as governor of one of its greatest states that no definition I know — no definition ever written by the American people — can allow us to feel ourselves justified as the great American Union while so many of our brothers and sisters are refused any share of our abundance."

My overcoat and gloves were stolen during the hearing, but thank God I had the money to buy a new coat and new gloves. I also thank God that I had heard these stories of human desperation because I knew that Reagan was wrong, dead wrong, when he said, "...the homeless are homeless, you might say by choice."

Letters

Black History Month

Dear AFRO:

February, being designated Black History Month affords people of many diverse cultures an excellent opportunity to learn about the outstanding contributions African-Americans have made to this society. Carter G. Woodson, who started what was known then as Negro History Week, wanted this period to be a time when the contributions of the black race would be highlighted in such a way as to educate all people.

Because of the miseducation of society, many have been blinded to the strengths of the black race and have caused many from the African-American race to feel ashamed of their past. The shame should not be ours because we were enslaved in this hemisphere. However, after having been so inflicted we can still draw strength from our history.

For while Western Europe was slipping into a vice of simplicity or backwardness, Western Africa was the most advanced civilization at that time. The learning and treasuring of our history should be an intrinsic part of our very being. Not only must we learn our history as a black race, but we must use every opportunity to enlighten others about the part of our history that is seldom told. The part that takes us back to the continent of Africa. When and where our foreparents ruled as kings.

I concur with the publishers of the book "In Black America", who had this to say; "Will the picture of the past in black America enlighten the future? To see an overall view-even a bird's eye view made up of necessity, of a mere sampling from the distant past should serve to illuminate the future. For to know yesterday is to build a better tomorrow."

The City of Baltimore, through its many organization have planned much in the way of helping all races to get a better understanding and certainly more than just a -birds eye view-of our past. Throughout the month of February libraries, schools and other public places will assemble a wealth of knowledge to enhance your appreciation of the history of the black race.

By all means we encourage people of all races to join with us in the celebration of Black History Month.

NANCY HOLMES BAXTER

Paper Chase

Dear AFRO:

Thanks for the great feature story in the January 27th issue on our Adult Education programs. The article was informative and really presented a vivid picture of the many courses our division has to offer.

Your paper has made a real contribution in making our adult population aware of how they can enter the "Paper Chase".

Thanks again for your concern and expertise.

ISAAC S. HARMON
Acting Coordinator,
Division of Adult &
Community Education,
Baltimore City
Public Schools

Student objects to Community Service

Dear AFRO:

State Superintendent Hornbeck is proposing that all high school students be required to complete one hundred hours of community service before graduation. I feel that it is not fair for anyone to tell me what to do with my time, especially when my time could be spent doing other things that I barely have enough time to do now.

I think that my time is as valuable as any adult or other person beyond high school, even the President of the United States. If I have to work a hundred hours in order to graduate, I think all people should do a hundred hours of community service before collecting paychecks, welfare benefits, or any other type of renumeration. I think that it's an insult to high school students

I also understand that if a student doesn't do "community service" but passes all subjects in school the student won't graduate. But suppose a student couldn't do community service because he or she spent time babysitting a brother or sister while the parents are out, or maybe had a lot of homework or studying to do, or had work to do around the house and get ready for the next day, or....

I hope Mr. Hornbeck will reconsider his decision.

SHARIE CANTY
A 10th grade student at Lake
Clifton Senior High School

Madeline MURPHY

America! America!

"Oh beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain; For purple mountains, majesty, Above the fruited plain!"

Even if one reads the labels as we are continually warned to do, by public interest consumer groups, there is the limited guarantee that choosing one or rejecting another product on that basis, ensures that we are immune from dangerous side effects.

Because the recent ban of the pesticide, Ethylene Dibromide (EDB)— a known carcinogen in animals—is merely the tip of the iceberg. We really get the clue when we learn this chemical is also used in leaded gasoline!

Nutrasweet and saccharine are sold widely used in diet drinks, diet foods, though tests have shown their cancer causing propensities.

Then there are the nitrates and nitrites in smoked meats as preservatives, ranging from hot dogs to bacon; bologna to sausage.

However, the waves of grain in bakery goods; bread on the shelves; corn and wheat products; convenience mixes like cake and corn bread; make us captives of agribusiness, anxious to make profits regardless of our health.

The ends have justified the means far too long, haven't they?

I wonder, however, if these farmer capitalists have secret plots from which they gather poison-free food for their own consumption. I doubt it. Not with acid rain.

Then take the fruited plains of citrus. When EDB is sprayed on them, what about frozen juices where skin and pulp are ground together from damaged fruit?

Have you noticed lately how apples spoil at the core. Probably from fruit fly eggs that escape the indiscriminate spraying last.

So when the carpet beetle emerges during the late spring as the spirea blooms, Does this mean when our pantry is inundated by all those black bugs that EDB has missed, that the home sifted flour, corn meal, oatmeal, etc., are safer, because these vermin had escaped being sprayed? Or have they become stronger strains?

One biologist, paid by the industry, pooh-poohed the severity of EDB, stating that peanut butter, is more deadly because molds peanuts are used in its making. (Mold on peanuts and corn is supposed to be even more dangerously toxic).

Now what do we substitute for the kick' quick lunch? Because do we know how much moldy fruit and nuts the Environmental Protection Agency limits in production? Whom does the agency really protect?

Perhaps in this regard it is a blessing that Avian influenza has decimated poultry farms, since the chemicals used to induce their rapid growth are equally dangerous to our health. (Divine providence, where God has shed his grace on you and me?).

Add to the list potatoes, coffee and mushrooms, not to mention the poison fed cattle to inhibit bacteria that remains in the meat, and fasting becomes a viable alternative.

Hey out there all you who dote on grains, organic and natural foods. You'd better take another look. What with emission testing on autos, causing acid rain along with increased use of coal, spewing noxious fumes from factories and utility plants, no one is safe from the threat of cancer brought on by this insidious pollution and ground level poisioning leeching into our water.

How ludicrous it all is then that the tobacco industry and the Surgeon General are locked in heated debate over the dangers of cigarette smoking!

Yet what dark secrets about additives (some say formaldehyde) and EDB are kept locked behind the doors of corporate tobacco tycoons as they, blithely grab government subsidies in one hand and sweep up tobacco wastes in the other, rolled into fine papers and cellulose tips to palm off on suspecting and unsuspecting addicts alike?

As the world hears us prate about being the best fed nation in the world, is the joke on us that we are also the most chemically treated, tested guinea pigs on earth, with the blessings of the Reagan administration?

The question we should ask is how adaptable is the U.S. citizen anyway? Rising cancer, heart disease and stroke fatalities give us a clue.

Surely, we are not as adaptable as the common cockroach, that sturdy survivor of billions of years, pesticides notwithstanding.

When one reads of these horrors, day in and day out, one is reminded that corporate America is like the wounded African wildebeast, eating his entrails even while he dies.

More horrifying is the fact, however, that the Environmental Protection Agency prodded by special interests in the case of EDB has dragged its feet for seven years or more, not banning the use of this pesticide, while it may take five more years (they say) to rid the market place of the zillions of contaminated products it foists upon an unsuspecting and benign public.

"Oh beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years."

Most unsettling is how many other kinds of products being consumed today will be banned tomorrow because belatedly someone spills the beans. (Incidentally I stopped eating canned beans when I discovered the liquid to be plastic.)

No wonder affluent Americans have joined the drug culture. Their rationale may just be that while poisoning their bodies, for a moment, they feel good.

What do the straight Americans have? Oh yes, there is that ole devil alcohol.

With cholesterol packed eggs, red meat, butter fat reaffirmed as the heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure villains, leaving us little choice, the day may not be far off (now that most food as we know it is suspect) that we shall be reduced to gulping food pills. Markets and farms will be relics of the past!

As Alice in Wonderland said, things do get "curiouser and curiouser"!

Ah, yes, America the beautiful, crowning its good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

But alas where shall all we, who are gourmands, get our pleasures?

G. JAMES FLEMING

Billingsley classified among endangered species

There are several items the honestly concerned public might want to have in mind as Andrew Billingsley steps down from the presidency of Morgan State University, on February 15 — the latest casualty among other "endangered species."

1. He will not be the first college president to resign, "under pressure" of one kind or another, or because a president felt his resignation was "in the best interest" of his institution.

2. More important is the fact that most of the campus factions which have plaqued Dr. Billingsley's eight years at Morgan could not care less about the auditor's findings, now or two years ago. Nor is their greatest concern necessarily about the educational development of their students. They have had more self-centered and ulterior interests.

3. Next, few people know that the Morgan president, like many other college presidents, has no tenure, no contract. He serves "at the pleasure" of the Board of Regents. In other words, he can be ousted at any time. On the other hand, over 70 percent of the Morgan faculty enjoys tenure, or multi-year contracts, and continues receiving their checks — regardless of the quality of their teaching performance — until retirement or until the Grim Reaper summons. Tenured teachers are a "protected species" — for better or worse.

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What is true at Morgan is true at most educational institutions. In addition to the substantial number of tenured faculty members, all faculty, in free countries, are protected by the principle of "academic freedom," enforced either by a regular trade union or by a union-type professional association.

Even more powerful, in public institutions, are civil servants who make up the important supporting staff. The unions of civil servants and their skilled lawyers defy, to a great extent, any attempt or effort to structure or discipline such workers.

Whether at Morgan or at any other public institution, a president, while hired as chief executive officer, finds that while he has maximum responsibility, he has relatively little authority.

1. He can be ignored by teachers, through subterfuge or directly, in his attempt to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning, under the defense of "academic freedom."

2. Chairmen of departments are elected by their fellows, and new teachers are nominated by incumbents, to the end that most give their loyalty to those with the power to elect or recall them — not to the president.

3. If a chairman refuses to hold departmental staff meetings, because "I do not believe in them," a president cannot order staff meetings, even if he believes in their value or potential value.

4. If a president does not kow-tow to every whim of the politically motivated nucleus of his faculty, he may find himself embarrassed by a vote of "no confidence" and often by faculty-inspired "confrontation" by students. (At Morgan one professor, reportedly, aroused his students against the president by warning that "He is always promoting excellence and excellence means this place will become mostly white").

5. A president knows, and students know, that students and their parents are voters and can have political clout against a president who has only limited political following.

6. In the case of the predominantly black state colleges, there is the perhistoric handicaps—evidenced by the historic handicaps-evidenced by the quality and quantity (or lack thereof) of plant and other facilities; underfunding, too, of the other resources through which a president may make friends and influence people on his campus, in the larger community and among the alumni. In may pivotal official places, for instance, Morgan is still "the Negro college" that must be kept in its place.

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Nothing written here is intended to be any wholesale indictment of academic freedom, or tenure, or union affiliation, or of the prerogatives of civil servants. Most of all, the foregoing paragraphs are no cry for the dreary past when teachers and civil servants themselves were the "endangered species." Rather the effort is to give a picture of the milieu in which a college president must function in a state college.

It must be added, however, that public colleges do not have a total monopoly. In all parts of the country there are stories from private colleges: In the Boston area, for instance, a president has lived through 18 votes of "no confidence," while raising more money for his institution than it had ever enjoyed; in Virginia, another president was pressured away after raising an extra $20 million in about three years and significantly enlarging and upgrading its facilities or his institution. If space permitted, extensive data could be presented to show that, indeed, college presidents are an "endangered species."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Fleming, now a regular AFRO columnist, was on the faculty of Morgan State University for 20 years and also served on its Board of Visitors and its Board of Trustees (when Morgan was a college) and on its Board of Regents, being chairman of the latter, 1976-1980.

SURVEY

What is the purpose of Black History Month?

Michael Johnson — Blair Walker — Herman Bond — Pearleatha Ebron
Zenobia Smith — Gary Christy — Roland Thompson — Sheryl Carter

This week the question to the man and woman in the street was, "What do you feel is the purpose of Black History Month?"

Zenobia Smith, 20, clerk, "It's a month to recognize all blacks who have contributed to the heritage. Organizations should focus their agenda around developing programs to look back on black achievements."

Pearleatha Ebron, 60, retired, "It's that time of the year to teach others about our history. We've been in the dark so long that it is also a month when we ourselves are educated about our history. For so long, we have thought that only whites could achieve, but this month offers us a view from a different angle."

Michael Johnson, 27, underwriter, "There is a need for blacks to have some understanding of what their background is. Black History Month provides resources for that knowledge. The media and other resources ought to sponsor programs and write articles educating a wide audience about the black past."

Herman Bond, 33, unemployed, "Kids need to know that Black history is an important part of American history. They should know that the make-up of our America included the slaving of blacks to do it. As a group, we should celebrate in church or in school by taking advantage of films and lectures educating us about black history."

Sheryl Carter, 25, cook, "Blacks in the city do not hear much about the past for their families and friends. Black History Month should offer the press a chance to educate. This whole concept is odd though because this should be a daily celebration, a daily education."

Blair Walker, 28, reporter, "Black History Month should most definitely be celebrated. It's overdue because blacks have made a lot of significant contributions to the American society and many times aren't recognized. Historians, for example, have often overlooked contributions of blacks. How many black cowboys do you see in history books? Black History Month produces a national focus on black achievements."

Roland Thompson, 38, "Black people have done so much and this month is needed to bring about the proper recognition. I think we are going about celebrating it the right way with all the sudden exposure to accomplishments, but I would suspect there is a need to put more black education in schools. It's a limited education in most schools and should be expanded. Everyone takes it for granted that you already know what blacks have done."

Gary Christy, 31, caseworker, "The month is to recognize the accomplishments of blacks. I'm satisfied with what organizations and agencies are doing now to honor the month. Our history is and has always been distorted because history books were written by whites. I'm glad that black institutions and media are doing things to educate an audience."

COMMENTARY:

When money decides to decide to move

By Anthony Armstrong

"Don't take it personally, business is business and love is, well, something else again." "Sure, you can say that because you don't have to worry where you're going to get the extra money to pay higher telephone bills; besides, the bill was too high even before the break-up happened." "Well Miss Jones, you can always talk less." "Sure you can say that, but while you're talking, should I plan to get sick less, should I watch my television less, should I cook less?" "Frankly my dear, I don't give-a-damn." "But, Mr. Financier, what am I, what are the other poor people who need their telephones, their gas and electric, and their hospital care, going to do?" "Miss Jones, there is nothing you or I, any of us, can do when money decides to move." "What you talkin' but, Mr. Financier?"

"You see, Miss Jones, when an investor plunks his money down for an investment, he expects the highest possible return, on that investment, he can possibly get." "He's not worried about whether or not you have what you need, to make your life a little more convenient or healthy."

"Yes, I understand all that; but I thought that things like phone service, medical care, and utilities were, because of their very nature, set-up in such a way as to take into consideration the ability of the poorest citizen to pay." "Isn't that right, Mr. Financier?" "No, Miss Jones, that's not right!" "Public monopolies, like the ones we're talking about, were structured as they are because of the nature of the product or service they provide.

"The theory behind public monopolies, when they were first started years and years ago, was that it wouldn't be feasible to have more than one utility company or more than one telephone company servicing a given area." "It was thought, then, that basic services, like telephones and gas and electric, could best be provided by a single company.

"To insure that these monopolies did not take advantage of the public, and that they provided the needed services, Public Service Commissions were set-up, in each state, to regulate the levels and kinds of services these private, although heavily regulated, businesses provided, as well as the rates they charged."

"The arrangement, between these companies and the individual governments, went something like this: you businesses provide the services and we, in turn, will help you protect your huge investments of money by keeping any other would-be competitors out of the market."

"The rationale to support such monopolies was easy to explain." "The explanations still sound reasonable today, Miss Jones." "So if the idea of these public monopolies was so good, back then, what's the problem with them now in 1984, Mr. Financier?" "Oh, Miss Jones, the problems are not with the concept of the public monopoly but with the decreasing attractiveness, to big investors like me, of the utility and the local service telephone business." "I can't continue to employ my money, or that of my stockholders, this way."

"They demand a larger return on their investments, and I've got to find ways to give it to them." "You see, Miss Jones, money, unlike water, always flows to the highest level." "If I can't get the desired return on my invested dollar, in one industry like, say, the local telephone industry, I must move that money into industries where I can get the highest return."

"The fact that my decision to move my money into more profitable businesses is creating higher utility bills and reduced telephone service, for you, is something, I'm afraid, I can't, no, I won't do anything about."

"Miss Jones, it's not that I'm a heartless person, but I'm being pressured too." "Come on, Mr. Financier, how are you going to be pressured by anybody, as much money as you have?" "If you only knew, Miss Jones; if you only knew." "Miss Jones, you may not believe me but there are people in this world with so much money, they make me, with my few hundred million dollars, look like a piker."

"Why just yesterday, I read, in the Wall Street Journal, about a man, one man, who gets out thirty million dollars a year from just the interest on his investments—thirty million a year in interest." "So, if you're looking for somebody to get mad at, go talk to that fellow; I think his name is Getty." "Go talk to Walter Wriston, at Citi-Corp bank, if you want to get mad at somebody." "Go talk to an Arab oil billionaire, if you can get him to land his private Boeing 747 wide bodied jet."

"You see, Miss Jones, when money decides to move, real money that is, even us poor millionaires, the ones of us who only control a few hundred million, are forced to move with it." "You and everybody else, Miss Jones, must understand that money ain't concerned with your phone bills or your gas and electric or your health."

"Money is concerned with one thing: more money." "When you, and your people, learn that hard fact of life, then, and only then, will yall be protected against money that decides to move and leave only poor health, telephones that don't work, and utility bills that are too high." "Miss Jones, that's what happens, when money decides to move."

Minority firms are expanding

By Theron J. Bell

The prospects for the nation's 600,000 minority-owned businesses appear good in 1984.

These firms are expanding at a steady pace outside the traditional realm of "mom and pop" stores to growing industries in computers, telecommunications, construction, and manufacturing.

For example, last year, the federal government pruchased nearly $5 billion in goods and services from minority-owned firms. The Defense Department recorded $3 billion of those purchases—far exceeding federal civilain agencies.

Among the largest Defense contract awards to minority-owned firms were: Gulf-Tex Resources, Inc., of Freeport, Texas received $93 million in contracts for fuel oil; Bath East Construction Co., of Ft. Campbell, Ky., received $58.4 million for construction and maintenance; Devils Lake Sioux Manufacturing Co., of Ft. Totten, N.D., received $48.5 million for camouflage and deception equipment; and AMEX Systems of Hawthorne, Calif., received $45.4 million for the installation of electronics and navigational equipment.

These are not the products and services sold by "mom and pop" stores.

Few areas exist today in the Federal government marketplace, one of the world's largest, where minority-owned firms are not supplying goods or services.

Whether it's providing electronic equipment for NASA's space shuttle, auditing for the Labor Department, construction for the Department of Interior, or computer services for the Commerce Department, Minority-owned firms are performing the work. The same is true in the private sector marketplace where minority-owned firms are among the most consistent suppliers of goods and services to major U.S. corporations.

It's not always been this way. Historically, minority-owned firms have struggled, and continue to strulgle, to overcome social and economic barriers of racism and lack of access t badly needed capital when pursuing business opportunities in both government and private markets. These firms are the most underutilized and under developed national resources in this country.

Yet, minority-owned businesses persist—and appear to be gaining ground inthe economy.

A recent study conducted for the Minority Business Development Agency found that a group of young, well educated minority entrepreneurs is operating businesses in emerging, non-traditional areas with substantial growth potential and earnings higher than wage and salary occupations.

According to the study's author Dr. Timothy Bates of the University of Vermont, minority entrepreneurs have been attracted steadily in growing numbers to five non-raditional fiedls: finance, insurance and real estate, business services, manufacturing, wholesale and professional services. The proportion of minority entrepreneurs in personal services and retail trade fell between 1969 and 1980.

Another study found that the average formation rate for all minority-owned firms for the period between 1972-1977 was 16.6 percent. The average failure rate was 12.7 percent. The study also found that failure rates dropped significantly from 12.8 percent to 9.4 percent for firms with more than 10 employees.

As President Reagan's economic recovery program achieves even greater success, the climate for minority business development will flourish.

The Minority Business Development Agency is committed to ensuring that minority entrepreneurs have every opportunity to compete in U.S. and international markets. The prospects for minority entrepreneurs to take advantage of new business opportunities have been enhanced through our 100 minority business development centers across the country providing crucial management, marketing, financial, and technical assistance.

In the months ahead, anticipation is high that minority-owned businesses will continue to reap the benefits of an improving economy. For now, the record is clear, minority business development has been, and will continue to be, good business development for America.

Theron J. Bell is acting director to the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S Department of Commerce, in Washington, D.C.

Tony Brown's Comments

The barbaric rites of lynch mobs and the numerous atrocities committed against Blacks in 1916 was an almost every day occurence and enough to bring the newly-formed NAACP to action.

But it was three savage lynchings that occurred in the beginning of that year that proved to be the impetus for the creation of the NAACP Anti-Lynching Committee. The most brutal of these, and the one to gain the greatest public attention, took place in Waco, Texas in May of 1916.

Nineteen-year-old Jesse Washington, accused of murdering a White woman, was dragged through the streets, his body mutilated and tortured, then burned alive in a square before a cheering crowd of 10,000. After death, Washington's remains were dragged through the streets again and parts were sold as souvenirs. Five dollars brought one of his teeth and a link of the chain that bound him sold for twenty-five cents. The NAACP sent a White undercover investigator to the scene whose findings were later published in an eight page supplement of The Crisis called "The Waco Horror."

In 1917, under a directive from President Woodrow Wilson, the United States entered WWI. Several years before, rumors had circulated in the Black community that Blacks would be eliminated from serving in the armed forces. But the NAACP board had already petitioned for additional units to be opened for the enlistment of Blacks.

In addition, the board promised that the Association would take every conceivable step to prevent discrimination in the Army. Although the NAACP scored a major victory by securing a training camp for Black officers, prejudicial treatment and Jim Crow laws followed these courageous Black patriots throughout the war.

Meanwhile, back in the states, the Association scored another legal victory when the Supreme Court, on November 15, 1917, ruled that local ordinances segregating Blacks into residential districts were unconstitutional. The NAACP's power in the courtroom, however, could not harness urban violence against Blacks.

On July 2nd of that year a race riot broke out in East St. Louis. During the rampage, hundreds of Blacks were shot or burned alive in their homes; 6,000 were left homeless. The

The NAACP fight against lynching

NAACP organized a fund to raise money for the victims and, on July 28, led a "silent parade" of about 10,000 sympathizers down New York's 5th Avenue to protest this mob violence, segregation and discrimination in the country. Ironically, Blacks were blamed for the disturbance and many were charged with inciting to riot.

On November 11, 1918, an Armistice was signed ending WWI. Triumphantly, American soldiers, Black and White, marched through the streets of U.S. cities. The Black man's combat ability, despite allegations of ineptitude, was documented by the performance of such units as the all-Black 369th Infantry. But America's thanks for their heroics ceased almost as soon as the parade ended. Black soldiers had made the world safe for democracy a democracy they could not share in at home.

Post-war America became more and more hostile and African-Americans were now about to experience the most brutal year in their history as free people. In the summer of 1919, a wave of terror swept the country in an explosion of 26 race riots that left hundreds of Blacks dead or homeless.

Black soldiers were lynched in the South for just wearing a uniform. The NAACP sent John Shillady, its newly-elected executive secretary and his assistant Walter White to Texas to investigate NAACP branch harrassment by the state government. Shillady was subsequently attacked and savagely beaten. He never fully recovered physically and psychologically, and subsequently resigned as secretary. The NAACP labelled this period "The Red Summer of 1919" because of the rampant violence against Blacks in cities across the nation.

Now ten years old, the association had survived one of its most difficult challenges and morale was at an all-time high. The conference held that year in Cleveland was the largest and longest to date. Membership had exceeded 56,000 and there were 220 branches nationwide. The Crisis magazine reached a record circulation of 100,000.

A more aggressive approach in the fight against lynching was established in the form of an anti-lynching bill which would be presented to Congress by Rep. Leonidas Dyer. But most importantly, the NAACP took on a new look: The association that was established by Whites ten years ago was now being organized around the country by Blacks.

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL, the television series, can be seen on public television in Washington on Thursday, Channel 32 at 10: p.m.; Friday, Channel 26 at 10:30 p.m.; Monday, Channel 21 at 11 p.m.; and on Saturday Channel 32 at 6 30 p.m. Please consult listing.

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