Baltimore Afro American

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Provident negotiations

The delicate negotiations that are taking place between Provident Hospital and the hospital workers union trying to avert a strike illustrate the concern that both sides have for the survival of the institution.

The workers have shown admirable restraint, avoiding provocative acts and make great efforts to find a non-confrontational solution to the hospital's labor impasse.

Provident's fate is in limbo. There has been some state aid given but much more along with aid from municipal government is needed.

Provident has been in dire straits for over a year but steps have been taken to get it back to solvency. Unfortunately for the hospital workers, one of the austerity measures involved cutting back on staff and another involved asking for the workers who already lag behind workers at other hospitals to take a pay cuts.

It is hoped that somehow a compromise can be reached between the two sides because as one hospital official put it, "If the union goes out on strike then the ball game is over."

Hopefully that will not happen because both sides in the dispute realize how vital Provident is to the Baltimore community.

Stadiums and priorities

Very few people would deny the beauty of a spectacular run for a touchdown on a crisp Autumn day or the grandeur of a winning homerun in the bottom of the ninth inning on a sunny hot Summer day.

Sports provide enjoyment for millions of people in society, yet no matter how delightful sporting events are, they are in the final analysis recreation for all those who are not athletes or beneficiaries of the sports team's profitability.

Recently there has been much talk about a new stadium and where it would be built. Many persons inside and outside of government talk about a new stadium as if it is a forgone conclusion that the citizens of the metropolitan area have approved in some form of referendum.

Many figures for what a new stadium would cost have been bandied about, some as high as $166 million. Seed money in the amount of $10 million is said to be needed.

Suggestions for raising the astronomical sums needed include revenue bonds and special state lotteries. However, the question must be raised about the priorities of this state and society at large.

Huge sums fall easily from the lips of community leaders and government officials when the subject is a new sports complex, yet talk of budget restraint is heard when the subject is aid for education, low to moderate income housing or protective services for communities.

The AFRO is not saying that a stadium should not be built nor is it saying sports do not have a place in society, but priorities must be set and at the present time in Maryland there are many problems that should be higher priorities than a sports complex.

Parren J. Mitchell

Congress looks at . . . discrimination in housing

The issue of racial discrimination and segregation in federally assisted and insured housing is of monumental importance to me. I held a hearing this past summer to determine whether racial discrimination was practiced and segregation existed in federally subsidized housing in Baltimore.

That hearing revealed that there was not a discernible pattern of discrimination in federally subsidized housing in the Baltimore Metropolitan area.

However, the testimony did reveal that such housing in Baltimore was segregated by race. The absence of racial homogeneity existed because of no concentrated effort to enforce the existing law.

Those who testified included federal and local officials, and representatives of public interest groups that monitor relevant housing programs and policies.

In surveying the federally subsidized developments in Baltimore and 47 other cities, studies did not find a single locality in which the federal housing was fully integrated. And virtually every predominately white occupied housing project was significantly superior to housing for minorities.

What causes the segregation in public housing? Decisions by HUD in favor of expensive projects tailored for white elderly residents instead of minority families; local prejudice and segregated zoning policies; failure by the housing administration to provide equal maintenance and amenities for family housing occupied by minorities; failure by five presidential administrations to use stiff penalties to enforce fair housing laws.

As a result, the concentration of the poor and minorities in inner cities contributes to many interrelated problems. Such problems include continued segregation of schools, isolation from doctors and health facilities, exposure to environmental illness, little access to new blue-collar jobs, and repeated victimization by crime.

I am not the one who believes that federal fair housing policy should be in such a predicament. After twenty years since the enactment of federal fair housing laws prohibiting discrimination in federally assisted housing, why should this dilemma exist? I concluded that as long as there is the perception that the federal government has retreated from significant enforcement of fair housing legislation, we will continue to witness racial discrimination and segregation in federally subsidized housing.

The Banking Committee recently passed H.R. 1, which includes a provision that clarifies the responsibility of the Secretaries of HUD and Agriculture to collect data on the racial and ethnic characteristics of persons eligible for, as well as benefiting from, their housing and community development programs.

Without this provision, it would be impossible to ensure that the civil rights laws are enforced. Moreover, the data is necessary to assure that affirmative fair marketing plans are followed.

In addition, the bill contains funding for the Fair Housing Initiatives program; which I supported, although it is not comprehensive enough to eliminate the problem of discrimination in housing.

I submit that the Administration has the opportunity to address this problem by publicly supporting enactment of amendments to the Fair Housing Act. Further, more critical review of local housing assistance plans to determine whether they comply with the Civil Rights Laws is essential.

At last resort, the punitive measure of the denial of funds would send a clear message to State and local officials about their responsibility to enforce the law.

Much more needs to be done, but any reform must start with a recognition that current situation needs immediate attention.

LETTERS

Where were you?

Open Letter to the Black State Legislators — Wendell Phillips, Troy Brailey, Clarence Mitchell, III and the Black Caucus:

Did you know that black folks had money in the Old Court and other troubled Savings and Loan Associations? Did you know that the black folks' dollars are green too? Why haven't we heard from you?

Where were you the night of the mass meeting at Milford Mill High School? Do you read the papers, do you have radios or TVs? Did you need a ride to get there, did you need carfare? You represent us, why were you not there?

There were many black folk scattered throughout the audience trying to find out why our legislators sat idly by and watched the thieves abscond with our money. What are you doing to try to expedite plans to give us our money?

State representatives were there from as far away as Frederick, Montgomery, Prince Georges, and other distant counties. We thought you were watching the store. Where were you?

How did you vote in the rescue attempt that brought in Chase Manhattan? Did you vote at all? Stand up and be counted. I want to hear from you. Speak out brothers and sisters.

Did you get caught with money tied up in there or did you know someone who warned you in time yet you failed to tell me. You don't fail to ask for my vote. You promised to make everything better if I would just vote for you.

You failed to watch the till and let the insiders wheel and deal, buy and sell, trade and barter, sow and reap, bet and win, fill inside straights, complete flushes, peep my hole card.

Are you there—where, where? I need some answers before November 4, 1986 rolls around and you come by and tell me what you are going to do for me next time. I know that if you had the opportunity, you would have an answer for me to shut my mouth.

But, meanwhile, where were you October 15, 1985 at 7:30 p.m. when the mass meeting was held at Milford Mill High School for the convenience of voters, citizens, depositors, and taxpayers of Baltimore City. I missed you so.

JUDSON H. KERR, SR.

NAACP problem/solution

Recently an AFRO commentary reflected on the NAACP, its functions and current leadership. I also think it is time for the NAACP to get its house in order. First, it was unbelievable to find out that the NAACP headquarters in New York was still renting a facility.

To correct this problem, the move to Baltimore will hopefully provide a permanent home plus eventual ownership. However, how could this progressive organization go for all those years without owning a building?

Surely the leadership could foresee that ownership would be the best option over and endless jump from building to building to secure a reasonable rental rate.

Second, it is indeed time to re-examine and provide a new direction for this organization. I am aware constant renewal of membership is essential to keep the organization afloat. But, it is time to pass the stage of being "afloat," major financial strategies need to be implemented so this organization will have the necessary funds to spearhead new programs.

Although the funds received from membership is used for expenses, such as; executive salaries, staff, etc., this organization should not come up short of funds every year.

This is ridiculous. Since the bottom line is economics, it's time then, to get on track and get that almighty dollar. Fund-raisers once or twice a year won't do it. The organization is coming up short now, so it is obvious additional innovative ideas are needed.

I suggest a streamline of the current leadership. Since the president of the Baltimore branch is also president at the national level, she should function in one position only. It makes little or no sense to try to function as both.

These positions require a full time, aggressive, and energetic individual who needs to plan for the future growth of the NAACP.

If the Baltimore branch is to continue separately from the national office, then the individual who becomes the new Director needs to have the necessary power and authority to proceed without internal conflict.

No one can function as a director having to look over their shoulder and answer to endless executive directors, presidents, vice presidents etc., with everybody trying to out power play each other. It is the time to cease trying to control "your domain," and have enough intelligence to see a change is due.

To begin, as an officer or chairperson of the NAACP you should be required to purchase a life membership. Thereafter contact every doctor, judge, lawyer, entrepreneur, politican, and all the professionals at every educational institution, industry, and government facility in town.

There are enough politicans alone, black and white, who can be contacted. Is the governor a life member of the NAACP? Does the mayor have his life membership? Do the president, vice president, and City Council members have life memberships?

These politicans come to the community regularly for support and contributions for their fundraisers. It is time for them to stop providing lip service, and come up with the cash. As for the masses they can do what I did, pay $50 down then pay $20 every month until your life membership is paid in full. A "leader" must be innovative, create avenues; and stop sitting on your back sides waiting for handouts.

Then after collecting these new funds locate a volunteer financial planner (who will have a staff that you can also solicit for life memberships) to invest the money in high yielding cooperate investments, money markets, or CD's. Do not spend the interest, advise your financial planner to let it "roll over" and continually put all additional funds in these accounts.

By the time the national office gets completely settled here in Baltimore they will have available funds to start various programs. Our community is rampant with unemployment. Why not purchase a franchise and hire youth to keep them busy and off the streets? This will address the unemployment, teen pregnancy, black crime, plus provide a vast influx of funds for the organization.

That's what the NAACP should be about. The past history of the NAACP is noteworthy, but it is just that "the past," it is time now to move forward and reach greater heights. By working together, our goals can be realized.

Virginia Thompson

Anthony Armstrong

Making a senator

The state senator is the governor of the district. The state senator, if he or she is effective, controls his district's delegation to the Maryland General Assembly.

The state senator can be the life of the district or, if he is weak, he can be the death of the district. When the political "player" talk about Maryland's roster of state senators, the stars of their conversations are names like Bonbegna, Steinburg, Blount, Coolahan, Rasmussen, Levitan, Muller and Cade.

These are state senators that seem to have a vision that adds clarity and drive to their efforts to represent their respective districts, and the state as a whole.

No one would dare announce the other state senators "hacks" but, names like clark, Denis, Bainum and Dorman come-up frequently in conversations about who the most effective state senators are too.

There are those in the state senate that show great promise; among them are names like Trotter, Riley, and Hoffman. Senator Simpson is highly regarded, so is Senator Donovan and; Senator Malkus is very easily the pride of the Eastern Shore.

Until you've learned something about the system of government and, until you've "found your way to the bathroom" in Annapolis, no one expects much from you, in the Maryland Senate.

Some people never learn their way around the politics in this state and, those officials become little more than just someone "in the way."

It is their constituents that suffer most when a state senator is not up to snuff. When the official, particularly a state senator, is now worthwhile, a whole district is left to flounder and the other members of the delegation are forced to do their work and that of the worthless member too.

Nathaniel McFadden came into the Baltimore City Council after 2nd District councilman Clarence H. "Du" Burns was chosen by his peers to become the president of the Baltimore City Council.

"Big" Mac, as he is known by his associates, had already become a fixture in East Baltimore politics, having won a seat on State Central Committee and, running a race for the House of Delegates, that he lost by only some thirty, or so, votes.

McFadden had been a school teacher and, by all accounts, a very good one. He had risen to head the Dunbar night school operation and was seen as an eventual Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the whole city school system.

For more than ten years, McFadden had gone through every nook and alley of East Baltimore, had practiced until he knew the first names of, it seems, almost everyone in East Baltimore and, had learned that politics is a career of service to people.

He had learned too that if an official was to be effective he would have to be hard working, sophisticated, and not afraid.

It was his courage and his intelligence (McFadden is close to being the only Ph.D. in the council) married to his remembrance of when he had nothing that made Nathaniel McFadden something to be reckoned with.

He knew that with work, learning, and guts, poor project raised kid, with thick glasses, could become the leader of people, in this city, who hungered for someone who would not forget them, when favor started to shine on him.

He got his chance and wow what he has done with it. In the space of less than one full term in the City Council, Nathaniel McFadden has become a power.

People respect him, members twice his age listen to him and, his political adversaries fear him.

One political adversary has real reason to be afraid; McFadden is going to be the next state senator from the 45th Legislative District. How do I know; the people of the district are telling me so.

That stadium crisis

The Stadium Modernization Committee has now had the opportunity to review the report of the Governor's Special Advisory Commission on Professional Sports and the Economy, chaired by Bernard Manekin.

The membership was amazed to read that the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House were immediately calling for the utilization of $10,000,000 in public funds as seed money for a new sports complex.

We suggest that the members of the House and the Senate withhold their support for such an immediate expenditure until all positions have been heard and fully defined.

The expenditure of such seed money at this time would only reap a harvest of weeds which could be stored with other weeds in the Old Court Barn.

The Manekin Report is a most porous document and its optimism as to funding runs counter to reality.

The Manekin proposal is to expend $166,000,000 in public money for a new sports complex to be funded by a sports lottery; revenue bonds; general obligation bonds; and lastly, by private sector contributions and purchases.

The public is now overwhelmed by lotteries and realistically, we all know that the purchases will be made by those who can least afford the same and who, in all probability, could not afford to buy one luxury seat at a sports contest.

Past returns on Stadium revenues and admission taxes clearly indicate that there would be no market for revenue bonds. Thus, the sole source of funding is general obligation bonds of the State of Maryland.

The committee would simply call to your attention the dire consequences of a bond issue of $166,000,000, and further demonstrate that in no way could those

Continued on page 5

G. James Fleming

Dr. King's birthday: another view

This column believes unequivocally that the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is most worthy of being honored for the great freedom fighter, non-violence advocate and civil rights leader that he was.

He is worth being honored, too, because he laid down his life for a cause larger than himself, for the fuller human rights for his people and for all people. His was a pervasive spirit that touched and moved many millions the world over.

The nation honors itself mightily in honoring him.

Exactly how he shall be honored, however, in addition to shutting down the national government, more or less, leaves much room for diversity.

He will be honored, we dare say, in the extremely cold regions different from the manner in which the day is observed in the tropical Virgin Islands (incidently, the first place to legalize the King Birthday, the very year of his assassination).

For most people, we fear, it is going to be a day of barely not going to work or of working just for the "double-time" pay involved; for others the day will mean not getting up to get the children off to school; and for still others it will afford an opportunity of sleeping late into the morning.

Fortunately, TV and radio will bring segments of different programs into the homes, recalling the life and times of the man whose "I have a Dream" will never be forgotten.

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But, there is room for diversity. And, among these diversities is whether a public school system must close its schools on Martin Luther King's birthday or may keep them open and commemorate his memory in special programs in each school.

The Baltimore County Board of Education has decided to keep its schools open and have a systemwide, planned program of observances of the Birthday, school by school—a practice followed on the birthdays of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Christopher Columbus.

Opposition by the County NAACP has been mounted against this plan. We suppose the opposition is based on a distrust of the school system and a belief that it will not really pay due honor to Dr. King.

Perhaps the opposition is aroused because of the understandable significance of this first national holiday enacted to honor a black American—closing everything down for one black man," as it might be said.

There is another side, however. If Dr. King's dream" is to come true, then it is important that white people as well as black people (yea, all people) are kept reminded of his message, his life, his sacrifice.

No better place to begin than in the schools where minds are still young and where young Blacks, too, need to know of Dr. King's place in history.

Of course, the opposition would have a point of it, the schools were closed on all other holidays and were going to be kept open only on Dr. King's birthday, but that is not so in Baltimore County.

We believe that, if Dr. King were here, he would say: "Keep the schools open; every extra day in a classroom is a plus for the children of my people, now and for the future."

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If parents (particularly the PTAs) are concerned about the plans of the County School Board, as explained by Superintendent Robert Dubel, they should monitor the schools on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday and see and hear for themselves the kind of programs actually sponsored.

In fact, they should review these plans even now, weeks prior to the birthday observamce, when there may still be time for meaningful "give and take."

As a gesture of goodwill, and to prevent misunderstandings, the Baltimore County Board of Education may change its mind, then next year the George Washington worshippers, the Abraham Lincoln buffs, and the multitude of descendants of Christopher Columbus will all want the schools closed for their special days.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Do you think the current gun control attempts will help?

Robert L. Young — Towanda Knight — Carolyn Lloyd — Mighty Cee

This week the question to the man and woman in the street is, "Do you think the current gun control attempts will help?"

Robert L. Young, III, 38, "I don't feel it is going to help to just ban them without the punishment. I think instead of just banning handguns, they should just enforce the capital punishment law to fit the crime."

Towanda Knight, 19, "I'm with the law against handguns. I don't think they can collect all of the handguns. I do think it is a great idea. I do think it will cut down on some of the crime."

Carolyn Lloyd, 32, "I feel it might help. As far as drug-related incidents, I don't feel it will change. Some guns are registered. Some aren't. People that deal with drugs will find a way to keep their own handguns."

Mighty Cee, 40, "The handguns at a time like this won't make a difference. There's going to be crime anyway. But I'm against handguns because it is mostly young blacks killing each other."

Ronald B. Edwards, 41, "I do think the handguns should have some control. Because it is hard to understand where the young get all these guns from. We should try love and understanding."

Elyn Garrett, 22, "No. I don't think that outlawing handguns will lower the crime rate. Primiarily, because most of the crimes are done with handguns, which have been illegally obtained anyway."

David Fears, 36, "No. I don't think it will help because anybody who uses handguns will find a way to get them anyway. It will hurt the gun collector and gun enthusiasts. As far as criminals are concerned, it won't do a thing."

Helen Reed, 38, "Yes. Because if the criminals can't get the guns, they won't have anything to commit the crimes with. Plus guns tend to make those who use them feel more superior."

Ronald B. Edwards — Elyn Garrett — David Fears — Helen Reed

— That stadium crisis

Continued from page 1

bonds be redeemed by admission taxes and profits of the facility.

When capital improvements are included in the cost of operation and maintenance of Memorial Stadium, even with the most optimistic attendance figures, there is a negative cash flow.

No matter how many additional luxury seats are created at a new facility, the additional income generated could not satisfy the redemption of these bonds.

It is further suggested that a bond term of 20 years is probably the more appropriate. We believe that the members of the House and Senate at this time should seek a firm commitment from a prime tenant as to his willingness to execute a lease, noncancellable, for that term of years.

A guaranteed rental from the facility must satisfy the cost of debt service to insure the redemption of the bonds to avoid any additional tax burden on the residents of the State of Maryland, some of whom never have and never will witness an event at such a facility.

The economic impact of sports so often quoted by the Manekin Commission is most misleading, and the numbers very subjective. Of the total assumed economic impact of $1,100,000,000, only 10 percent represents the impact of major league baseball and football.

$900,000,000 plus of the total is actually represented by horse racing and horse breeding so that when one considers new or modernized sports facilities, one should consider it only in the light of the potential economic impact of those sports.

This Committee does believe in the creation of a sports authority, but with far less authority than that suggested by the Manekin group. We would not anticipate that the House and Senate, as elected officials of the State, would surrender their complete political responsibility.

The Stadium Modernization Committee sincerely believes that the Manekin group, established as a result of the departure of the Colts, has now placed the city and state in a non-negotiable position both as to the retention of the Orioles and the obtainment of an NFL franchise.

Never at any time has the Oriole management indicated a threat to move or indicated a request for a new facility. Conversely, the Manekin group has never attempted to ascertain the advantages to the Orioles, both by gate and media receipts, from their operation in Baltimore as compared to the potential for the same in any other available market.

Frank X. Gallagher
City Council
Chairman - Stadium
Modernization Committee

Save Antioch School of Law

Since its birth in 1972, Antioch School of Law in Washington D.C. has trained hundreds of public interest attorneys in poverty law, environmental law, and laws pertaining to civil and human rights.

One unique requirement for graduation is that each student must live at least a week with a poor family. The School's curriculum emphasizes what is termed clinical training: on the School's own premises are legal clinics where clients some 15,000 families to date—come to obtain free legal counsel and representation.

Long before graduation, Antioch's students appear regularly in local and other courts where, under appropriate supervision, they actually try cases.

From 1981 through 1983, Antioch law students were the national coordinators of the successful campaign to win political asylum for South African poet and exile Dennis Brutus, presently a visiting professor at Swarthmore College.

As the man most responsible for South Africa's ouster from the Olympics and from world sports, he faced certain imprisonment and possible death if the Reagan administration had been able to deport him.

Between 1981 and 1983, thirty percent of Antioch's graduates were non-white, and fifty percent were women—both figures well above the national average.

With that kind of track record, Antioch School of Law has of course, created powerful and crafty enemies, including the Reagan administration. Since 1981, the Reagan-appointed Legal Services Corporation has cut appropriations for the School's legal services clinics.

Now the accreditation arms of the American Bar Association also seem grimly intent on shutting down the antioch School of Law.

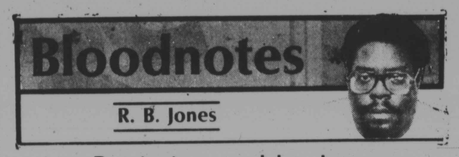
With the kind of blindly racist attitudes so typical of staid, affluent, predominantly white institutions, the ABA's accreditation committee has sought to apply rigidly to this innovative School a set of establishment criteria that were designed long ago for evaluating wealthy and traditional law schools, such as Harvard and Yale.

With every setback for decency and every defeat for progressive and humanistic forces, the Radical Right—with a deadly gleam in its eye—becomes dangerously stronger and ever more virulent.

If we sit back and let Antioch be knifed to death in the dark, there will be no new generation of lawyers specially trained to represent the poor and minorities.

This is clearly a political fight, and must be fought politically. I urge Bar associations, civic groups, student organizations, church bodies and concerned individuals to protest immediately to the ABA's Council on Legal Education before its decisive Dec. 14-16 meeting.

William Worthy



Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Patriotism and hucksters

Someone once said that "Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels." Whoever it was spoke the truth. America is now overrun with swaggering, bellicose manifestations of a patriotism based in historical amnesia and self-delusion. It is dangerous at any time but it is especially dangerous with America waging covert war against its hemispheric neighbors.

One can not look at television without commercials touting the American Way, as if that is the only way. Other commercials ridicule America's adversary the Soviet Union as some regimented, menacing collection of very threatening people, in essence the embodiment of evil and aggression.

This simplistic depiction of a country that has exhibited its tenacity, endurance and will to resist foreign domination many times in the last two centuries has a very complex history that defies simplistic pigeonholing. It America is so good and the Soviets so evil, why is America denounced from every continent on Earth? Have the Soviets brainwashed everyone on this planet? Not very likely.

American popular culture is infested with jingoism. Sylvester Stallone has made a fortune promoting it. His Rocky character came along during the era of the Bakke Decision and showed a courageous but poor white man batterring the coky overconfident black champion who was a surrogate for the defiant Muhammad Ali of the 1960s.

Once the battered but proud Rocky vanquished the Ali surrogate he demolished Mr. T in the era of defiance from Third World people. They were brash enough to attack U.S. interests and Rocky, beating Mr. T. symbolized the reemergence of western white supremacy.

Now Rocky, the symbol of American virility will defeat the menace from the land of endless snow and cold, Drago the giant Soviet fighter. Drago represents the unsubstantiated claim by Reagan that the Soviets dwarf the U.S. in weapons and troops. He is several inches taller than Rocky, but he eventually falls, vanquished by Rocky's indomitable American spirit.

At the fight's end, he is hoisted in victory kissing the American flag and draped in it.

The message of Rocky is that America can go toe to toe with the Russians and come out on top. In reality, such a contest would end up in mutual destruction, but Rocky's propaganda does not deal with consequences, merely symbolism.

The emergence of wrestling as a popular entertainment form, of course it's not a sport, has also fostered a frenzy of unthinking patriotism that is more dangerous than Rockyism.

One wrestling conference or association features a man who purports to be an Iranian. He waves what is supposed to be an Iranian flag in the ring and spits every time he says USA. His partner is supposedly a Soviet wrestler who asks crowds at matches to stand while he sings what is supposed to be the Soviet national anthem. Their actions whip the crowd into a frenzy.

On a recent match the champion defeated the "Russian" and then wiped his shoes on the Soviet flag. Other wrestlers feature a very militaristic image, entering the arena in military dress and approaching the ring to the strains of martial music.

This kind of belligerent flagwaving and intentional baiting of foreign adversaries of the U.S. encourages an attitude that accepts the inevitability of war with these opponents.

Young men who grow up on this symbolic struggle may one day be asked to engage in ill-advised military actions against America's real or perceived enemies and these flag-waving fantasies will not heal human flesh shredded by real bullets in real war.

Perhaps adults can filter these messages, but what about the children? Will the patriotic hucksters like Sylvester Stallone who was not in the real war in Vietnam or the wrestling promoters who encourage international hatred acknowledge the blood that could soon be on their hands? I doubt it. They will be too busy counting their money.

COMMENTARY

Martin Luther King birthday

By William Lunsford

In the long run, I am convinced that the declaration of a national holiday in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday will prove to be a grave mistake.

By establishing another Monday holiday, Congress has assured that, in time, the significance of Dr. King's birth and life will soon be lost amidst the public's euphoria at having another three-day weekend in the middle of winter.

Inevitably, the merchandisers and marketeers will seize upon the free time given the public to devise new ways to dump all of the winter merchandise they were unable to get rid of during the Christmas season.

Any emphasis on Dr. King's efforts to cleanse America's soul will rapidly fade away under the barrage of marketing gimmicks, and the desire to get away from it all for a long weekend.

If you think this isn't true, simply look at what most of our other national holidays, save Thanksgiving, have come to mean.

Why is there reason to expect that, over time, the birth of Martin Luther King will be accorded any more respect than the birth (Christmas) and resurrection (Easter) of Jesus Christ is accorded?

Will the memory of Dr. King be stronger and more meaningful than the memory of what Memorial Day (Indy 500 and beginning of the summer resort season); Washington's Birthday (white sales), or Independence Day (cookouts and the Beach Boys on the Mall) have come to be?

I seriously doubt it.

As I stated in a previous column, the Statue of Liberty does not have equal meaning for all Americans. Likewise, anyone who believes that the mere declaration of a national holiday, in commemoration of the birth of a black man, is going to have meaning, to most Americans (black, white or otherwise), beyond the joy of knowing on Friday, they will not have to go back to the job they hate until Tuesday, is either dumb-founded or found dumb.

Those persons who truly appreciate and wish to honor the memory fo Dr. King would have found the means and mechanisms to express their appreciation and offer their tributes, without the necessity of pretending that everyone shared their sentiments.

To further degrade the significance of the holiday, it was placed on the third Monday in the month of January, instead of on its proper date. Between 1986 and 2050 the national holiday will actually fall on the proper date only nine times, with the first occasion coming in 1990.

The establishment and respect for tradition is a part of what binds a group of people together into a community. Traditions are cherished as being something uniquely personal, there is no effort or desire to involve outsiders in the celebration. What did you do to celebrate Rosh Hashana, or Tet?

Dr. King's birthday offers us the opportunity to establish a day of reflection on, and planning the future course of our journey in America. It is also an opportunity to not wish to honor the memory of Dr. King, but to also honor all of those who have sacrificed to get us to where we are today.

There is a dire need for a black holiday (or holidays), and no need to share that experience with anyone, except those who wish to share it with us. Repeal the MLK, Jr. national holiday and let "us" get on with the celebration