EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Minimum wage hike possible

The Federal minimum wage has been the same since 1981, and the purchasing power of that wage has decreased by 37 percent. Arguments against raising this wage include the supposition that millions of workers will lose jobs.

The Congressional Black Caucus is strongly in favor of an increase in the minimum. According to CBC chairman Rep. Dymally, they expect to bring the matter to the floor of Congress immediately after the July 4 holidays.

In fact, Rep. Dymally is calling for the electorate at large to call on elected Representatives to support and vote yes on the rule which determines debate in the House, a yes vote on the Ridge/Robinson compromise to HR 1834, and a yes vote on final passage of the compromise bill.

The proposal as it is in the Senate version, calls for the current $3.35 hourly minimum wage to increase to $3.75 in 1989, $4.15 in 1990 and $4.55 in 1991.

It is expected that the Senate bill will pass without too much opposition, however, it is expected to be vetoed by the President. It seems unlikely, at this juncture, that there is enough support for the measure to override.

According to a report by the Children's Defense Fund, the decline in the earning power of the black community, and of black men in particular has created grave economic and socio-cultural consequences. It has fueled substantial increases in poverty among young families and their children. The fund continues, "It is time that we stop this vicious cycle."

We agree.

Revolutionary War memorial

An estimated 5,000 black soldiers served in the American Revolution. In addition to honoring them, the memorial honors the many slaves who petitioned for freedom at the time of revolution, and the thousands of slaves who fled to freedom.

Advocates for the memorial have fought for three years to get approval. It came last week. Remaining stumbling block is getting formal approval from the Fine Arts Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission. Then it will be signed by the Secretary of the Interior.

The site picked for the memorial would be in Constitution Gardens, midway between the Lincoln Memorial and Washington monument, bordered by the reflecting pool and a lake.

President of the memorial, Maurice Barboza, summed up the feeling of the committee which worked diligently to get the memorial approved:

"We want people to come to the site, walk around the lake, and reflect on the long struggle. Blacks have been struggling from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam."

Les Payne

Tyson-Givens spat challenges white media excesses

On his car-fender shoulders, Mike Tyson carries not only the burden of the heavyweight championship these days but also the dross of the American media's excesses.

I speak not as a guardian of Tyson's privacy or a critic of the press, but rather as a practitioner appalled at the slant and temperature of recent stories about Tyson and his family. ***Sports Illustrated*** and ***People*** magazine have struck the lowest front-page blows.

Under the headline, "Will Love and Marriage KO Mike Tyson?" ***Sports Illustrated*** seems to question the very right of this black gladiator to marry. Before wedding actress Robin Givens, Tyson entrusted his entire $20 million to his co-managers Jimmy Jacobs, who died in March, and Bill Cayton.

Finding no fault with this, the media suggested that Givens was only after Tyson's bankroll despite her reluctant courtship early on and their obvious expression of love later. Through a willing press, Cayton struggles to hang on to his Golden Calf by resorting to threats and news leaks.

Fights, even arguments, between the young couple have been played up in the media in an obscene manner. Celebrity family spats, true enough, are fair media game, whether it's Stallone, Springsteen, James Brown or Wade Boggs.

What smells about the coverage of the Tyson's tiffs is that it disguises — without intelligently dealing with — the real story: Cayton's desperate move to keep all other hands off Tyson's money.

The media portray Givens and her mother, Ruth Roper, as bloodless golddiggers. In trumpeting the manager's line, the media openly challenge in Tyson's marriage what is taken for granted in others.

They are appalled, for instance, that Tyson would marry Givens without a prenuptial agreement. The wife's inquiry into her husband's holdings, not unknown in this country, is treated like an indictable offense.

Chortled ***Sports Illustrated***, "Givens and her mother persuaded Tyson to order Cayton to show them the books, and Roper's lawyer, Michael Winston, sent Cayton a letter demanding to be shown a full accounting of Tyson's fortune.

Cayton termed the request "insulting," and responded by allowing only the trusting, undereducated Tyson to "pore over ledgers for several hours." As intended, the champion came away dizzy and with no special insight. However, he was steady enough to utter: "Everybody's making a big issue about my wife asking about what I've made. If my wife asks something, just give her what she wants."

Cayton and Jacobs' widow equally split 33 percent of Tyson's gross income, both in and out of the boxing ring. Should Iron Mike reap, say, $27 million from his fight with Michael Spinks, Mrs. Jacobs will receive $4.5 million. Is it unreasonable for Givens to ask why? The sporting media instead call into question the right of Mrs. Tyson to concern herself with her husband's affairs.

"They didn't think I was a hustler until I started asking how much money Michael has in the bank and why he was giving them 33 percent," said Givens, a Sarah Lawrence graduate. "They don't seem to understand that I'm his wife. He is my husband. My mom has become his mother."

If the couple were white, the press would understand. But power and money are at stake here. The media recoil at the idea of a boxer's "arrogant" black wife and her mother recovering money from white handlers. Tradition must hold.

The exploitation of black fighters by white managers is acceptable to the media. Sports reporters, residing at the bottom of the journalistic heap, gag on any attempt to alter this cozy arrangement. I grew up mistakenly believing newspaper stories that Joe Louis went bankrupt in large measure because of this wife's spending.

Instead, it was his handlers who goose-plucked him. Also, in order to gain his shot at James J. Braddock's championship in 1937, Louis' manager cut a stranger agreement. Mike Jacobs guaranteed Braddock 10 percent of Louis' net profits for 10 years if he lost to the Brown Bomber. The media never made much of this grossly bizarre piece of human exploitation.

Interestingly, the Spinks-Tyson fight comes near the 50th anniversary of the night Louis avenged his loss to Nazi-darling Max Schmeling. Last week, sports pages typically spoke of the Nazis' Aryan propaganda surrounding the 1938 bout, but little was written about American racism directed at Louis.

"Joe Louis, the lethargic, chicken-eating young colored boy, reverted to his dreaded role of the 'Brown Bomber' tonight," wrote Lewis F. Atchison, of the ***Washington Post***, after the 24-year old Louis knocked out Schmeling.

Often it was difficult to distinguish between the Nazi sportswriters and the Americans. Repeatedly they used animal images in referring to Louis. "He is a jungle man," wrote United Press' Henry McLemore, "as completely primitive as any savage, out to destroy the thing he hates. Even the style of fighting he has been patiently taught was abandoned. He fought instinctively and not by any man-made pattern."

There continues in this country the notion that successful black fighters, like Kentucky thoroughbreds, are commodities for white profit. Muhammad Ali, working with Don King, began to reverse that, followed by Joe Frazier and Larry Holmes. Each encountered stiff resistance, sometimes isolation and heavy fire from the media.

In the current case of Tyson-Givens, we get a glimpse of just how irrational and irresponsible the media can be when a white prerogative is challenged.

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Parren J. Mitchell

FORMER CONGRESSMAN

Black GOP candidate

I am registered as a member of the Democratic Party, but I long maintained that a strong two-party system will benefit black citizens. However, I have also held that blacks will never switch over to the Republican Party, nor vote Republican for as long as the conservative far right dominates the Republican Party.

The Grand Old Party must embrace the political philosophies of such men as Charles Mathias, the former U. S. Senator from Maryland; Nelson Rockefeller, the former Governor of New York State; and the late Theodore McKeldin, who was Governor of the State of Maryland.

Unfortunately, the arch conservatives return their iron grip on the reins of the Republican Party and show no sign that they are willing to be more flexible in their policies.

Black voters in Maryland and Virginia will have to make wise political decisions because in those two states, there will be black candidates seeking election to the U.S. Senate.

In Virginia, Maurice Dawkins, a black man, long associated with the struggle for civil rights and other just causes, has been selected as the Republican candidate for the U. S. Senate.

Though professing to embrace the prevailing conservative political agenda. Dawkins, to his ever-lasting credit, announced that he has a civil rights agenda, and that he will fight to implement his civil rights agenda.

Virginia Republicans are among the most conservative in the nation. The Virginia Delegation in the U. S. House of Representatives, with only one or two notable exceptions, is, for the most part, to the political right of Reagan, Meese, and Senator Paul Laxalt, and, that's pretty far right.

Rep. Dawkins is backed by all the conservative political organizations in Virginia, including the followers of Pat Robertson who avow their support for Dawkins.

In Maryland, Alan Keyes, a friend and protege' of conservatve Rep. Jack Kemp, will be the Republican candidate for the U. S. Senate seat now held by Paul Sarbanes, a staunch supporter of civil rights and civil liberties, who has been with the black community since he served in the Maryland General Assembly.

Keyes is, by his own admission, a true conservative, who decries an activist role for the federal government. I think I am correct when I say at the core of his conservatism is the belief that the federal government should not be provided low-cost housing; jobs for the unemployed; no funds for health and education programs because the private sector can do these things more efficiently and more cheaply.

Black Republican candidates should cause us to stop and think. Yes, we want to see blacks in all positions in political life, but now, especially now, it is critical for us to know what these black candidates stand for, and who, if any one or group, controls them or will control them?

If these black candidates honestly believe they bring about positive, fundamental changes in the Republican Party policies, then more power to them.

But the more important questions must be put to the Republican organizations in Virginia and Maryland. Are you using these black candidates to divide the black vote for your own cynical reasons?

Are you using these black candidates as sacrificial lambs because no white Republicans were willing to take on strong Democratic candidates in Virginia and Maryland? If you are using them for sacrificial lambs, doesn't that mean you will not provide them with funds to run strong campaigns?

Are you using them as window dressings to try to mask the Republican posture that appears to be anti-black, anti-poor and anti-minority?

During the 1960's and 70's, Republicans in Congress would attempt to add watered-down amendments to all civil rights bills and then vote for the weakened version to show that they were civil rights.

Are these black candidates being used to water-down the present negative perceptions of the Republican party but with the understanding that those practices and policies which created the negative perceptions will remain unchanged?

MEMBER NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel Payne

BEHIND THE SCENES

Burris goes to Atlanta: selecting a nominee

CHICAGO—Roland Burris is packing his bags to go to Atlanta. He will set aside his responsibilities as Comptroller of the State of Illinois to take part in the selection of a Democratic nominee for President of the United States. It will be a familiar arena for one who has the taste of politics like the taste of honey.

Born in Centralia, Illinois, the conservative heart of the Prairie State, the 51-year old Burris has achieved the improbably art of the possible. Three times, he has been elected by wide margins to one of the highest positions statewide.

A look at the demographics of Illinois tells one that for a black man to set such a record is a phenomenon. "Downstaters" are rigidly Republican with old fashioned values, and are resistant to great social changes.

Yet, Roland Burris, whose family roots go back four generations, has walked through the gauntlet of partisanship and has maintained the confidence of the voters.

Illinois is the state of Lincoln. Adlai Stevenson, Everett McKinley Dirksen and the king of kings in ward politics, the late Mayor Richard Daley and the late Mayor Harold Washington.

Only in Illinois can there be such paradoxes, between black and white, liberal and conservative, and bare-knuckled bossism. Roland Burris is a Democrat who thrives on the momentum of politics. He draws his energy from the fervor of the process, while managing to keep a clean profile.

Burris holds degrees from Southern Illinois University and Howard University Law School. He did additional studies at the University of Hamburg, Germany as an exchange student. Fresh from his academic training, he became a vice-president of the Continental Illinois National Bank.

From 1973 to 1977, he served in the Governor's cabinet as Director of General Services and was national executive director of Operation PUSH. In this capacity, he formed a close, personal alliance with Jesse Jackson which continues to this day.

It was in 1979 that he made history when he was inaugurated Comptroller, thus becoming the first black to hold a constitutional executive office in Illinois. He soon found that the job carried headaches along with the prestige.

As a Democrat working with a Republican governor, James Thompson, and a Republican administrtaion, political rivalry inevitably colored the picture.

A meticulous fiscal manager with a devotion to budget balancing, the Burris style has won him the respect of the conservatives that has carried him through fiscal crises.

He writes 15 million checks a year and oversees the expenditure of $81 million daily. Each month, he issues a report on the State's financial condition, detailing the spending of public funds.

Says Michael Bakalis, former Illinois comptroller. "Basically, the rule of the office is that you get the checks out on time so people don't get mad at you. "But last year, Roland Burris was not doing that.

At Thanksgiving time, there was a minor flap over a delay in payments to foster parents. The fault wasn't his. The money wasn't there. Stacked on his desk were unpaid bills of $325 million. The problem was in the cash flow.

Part of the fault was in the governor's office with a delay in vouchers arriving at the comptroller's office. Burris didn't panic. He calmly laid out his priorities and waited for Springfield (state capital) to move.

Meanwhile, he was keeping up his schedule of speaking engagements around the state, the "chicken dinner circuit," as it is described. He is a good orator who can move crowds to get into "the spirit."

He bashes Republicians, but doesn't hesitate to chastise his own party when the need arises. He is aware of the issues that rile voters, so when there was a revolt brewing against a state gasoline tax increase, Burris was up front with the opposition.

Burris does a balancing act between state and national politics. He stirred a controversy in 1985 when he challenged the incumbent black vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Richard Hatcher, the Mayor of Gary, Indiana and a long-time activist at the national level.

The bruising battle that ensued strained relations between the party black pros and divided the Congressional Black Caucus. Hatcher who had headed the National League of Cities as well as the National Black Conference of Mayors', was an insider, part of the "old boys network. Burris was defeated in the Caucus, but won the seat in the floor balloting. He was accused of being an "Uncle Tom."

He has taken a discreet position on the contention of Jesse Jackson that he should be seriously considered by Michael Dukakis for the vice presidency. He is staunchly loyal to Jackson, but insists that the question is one of pragmatism. He sees Jesse as a catalyst for improving the party position on social issues and reestablishing the old coalitions that gave it victories in 1960, '64 and '76.

Meanwhile, Burris has his own ambitions. They date back to his childhood days. The public swimming pool in Centralia was segregated. His father was determined to integrate it. Roland was 15 at the time when his father sought legal counsel to remove the racial barriers.

He searched in Chcago and then East Louis, Ill. where he paid a lawyer a $100 retainer fee to argue the case. On Memorial Day, 1953, the two Burris boys and three other black youth swam in the pool without incident. However, the lawyer never showed up!

His eyes are now on the big prize of governor in 1990. If he makes a serious run for the post, he will join two other blacks who are readying for a try, in Virginia Lieutenant Governor Douglas Wilder and in Georgia, Mayor Andrew Young.

Burris thinks it's time to break the taboo against blacks seeking higher elective state offices. Currently, there are just five elected blacks at state level, including Burris, Doug Wilder, and State Treasurer Jim Lewis in New Mexico.

His best assets include an attractive family. His wife, Berlean Miller Burris, is Dean of the College of Nursing at Chicago State University. A writer and author of several works on nursing education, she has distinguished herself in her chosen field. The Burris' are the parents of two chldren, Rolanda Sue and Roland II.

In past Democratic conventions, Burris has served as adviser on the delegation in several ways. He will be working studiously to get strong language in the platform committee on such issues tax reform, welfare, education and health matters.

He says he enjoys the excitement of the scene, but wants to see a first ballot nomination and an open competition for the vice presidency. He thinks that Jesse Jackson has earned a place in the running.

If he doesn't make it to the governor's chair in 1990, Burris says he's ready to hang it up (the political battles) and retire to spend more time with his family and "make a little money." "I wouldn't change a thing, says he. "It's been stimulating. More young people need to become involved in politics. How else can it be improved, without their participation?"

Walter E. Williams

MINORITY VIEWPOINT

What should government do?

In an effort to understand behavior, we often resort to broad generalities. Some familiar ones in the field of science are: When rapidly moving molecules collide with slower ones, the rapidly moving molecules lose speed;

A larger body (the earth) attracts a smaller body (the moon); when the cost of something rises, we buy less of it. Knowing generalities helps promote internal logic, provide consistency, and save us from falling for tricks.

This fall's presidential campaign promises to be contentious. So it might not be a bad idea to try to establish generalities about the proper role of government in a free society.

Before I run some generalities by you, let's see if we can agree on the principle that "all people own themselves."

Now, my more-religious friends might quibble, saying God owns people. I'll plead nolo contendere, and proceed on the modified premise that no human should own another.

Since we agree that people own themselves, let's turn to the proper role of government. How about: Government should do those things which make people happy? Under that generalization, if a person doesn't have much food, government should provide it.

But why limit government's happiness-generation to food? What if supplying happiness requires supplying a house at the beach, a Lincoln convertible, a fancy Princess phone?

Clearly, if government's job is to make people happy, there are virtually no bounds on what Congress can do.

We may disagree on the right amount of happiness, but we must recognize that the road to congressionally created happiness is paved with congressionally created unhappiness.

In other words, in order for Congress to make one American happy it must first make another one unhappy. "Okay, Williams," you say, "explain that!"

Wouldn't you be happier if the amount on your IRS W-2 Form showing the amount withheld from your pay for federal income and FICA (Social Security) taxes were lower?

Granted, a portion of these taxes are for things you use, and you're duty bound to pay for them, such as national defense, roads, and courts.

But most of the money deducted goes to other people in the form of food stamps, agricultural subsidies, retirement checks, aid to foreign countries, you name it. Therefore, you're being used as a tool to make others happy.

The Founding Fathers, believing in natural law, saw the role of government quite differently. They expressed this belief in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

The Founders believed that it is not government's job to grant these rights; they are God-given. It is government's job to protect these rights from encroachment.

And by the way, the Founders saw the "Pursuit of Happiness" as freedom of initiative and rights to property.

The question for the presidential hopefuls is whether their party platform promotes the sanctity of the individual, or makes him a tool to serve the purposes of other people. No candidate is going to be honest enough to say his platform makes individuals tools in the service of other people. That's much too crass.

But if the candidate says he wants to provide funds to: revitalize cities, help businessmen compete with foreign competitors; aid farmers; protect workers; and aid higher education, he's really talking about using some people to serve the purposes of others, and no amount of rhetoric, no disguise, can remove the stench of such a proposition.

It's another matter if the candidate plans to get the money to finance his brand of "happiness" from Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy.

I'm not against charity, a uniquely American institution whereby we do 80 percent of all the giving in the world. What I'm against is confusing and cheapening charity (a noble cause) by forcibly using one person as a means to another's end.

Joe Clark: the hype vs. the education

By Cong. Augustus Hawkins (D-CA)

We have seen and heard the hyped media accounts about Joe Clark, the principal of the predominantly black and Hispanic Eastside High School in Paterson, NJ, whose unorthodox disciplinary measures have won him praise. But now that he is to be glorified in a Warner Brothers movie, his record should be carefully scrutinized.

The issue of providing a quality education to minority and disadvantaged students has become a national concern as a result of the rapidly changing demographics in this country. By the year 2000, it is projected that approximately 40 percent or more of the American workforce will be comprised of today's minority students. The 3,000 minority students at Eastside High School will be among that workforce.

The education of minority students is also a major concern to states like California and cities like Los Angeles where the demographics have already begun to reflect dominant minority representation in our public schools. Students in these major cities and states will also be a part of the workforce in the year 2000.

Joe Clark is a principal who practices school "leadership" with a bullhorn and baseball bat. His methods run counter to all we know about effective education and school leadership. The following are some of the facts behind all of the hype that reveal the impact of his leadership on the achievement and success of his students:

— The state has been able to determine that approximately 600 to 650 students drop out and/or are expelled yearly. During Clark's six-year tenure, that is a total of 3,600 plus students who are probably on the streets with no future.

— Student test scores on the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) are well below state averages.

— Eastside High School figures are also lower than the average scores for the 56 districts listed as urban by the New Jersey State Department of Education.

— Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are the lowest in the county.

— The number of seniors who go on to college has risen less than 2 percent since Clark took over six years ago, from 182 in 1982 to 211 last year.

— Reading scores remain in the bottom third of the nation's high school seniors.

— There is an extremely unstable professional staff at the school which is an indicator of an unstable educational program.

— The school is moving into Level III of the state monitoring review system which is the last stage before a controversial state takeover of the district will be activated.

Additionally, Clark alleged that the 66 students whom he recently "eliminated" from the school were all 19, 20 and 21-year-old students who were not working toward graduation. In New Jersey, the legal age for public education is 21. A statistical review of these students reveals the following:

— Of the 66 students, 29 were 17 years old, 26 were 18 years old, 9 were 19 years old and only 1 was 20 years old.

— Students must earn 110 credits to graduate. The statistics revealed that 47 of the students had earned 50 to 100 credits.

— All of the students were currently taking 25 to 50 credits, and the one 20-year-old student had earned 50 credits and was currently taking 35 credits.

In spite of these facts, it is alarming that the Reagan administration, through the media, has portrayed Joe Clark as yet another contemporary national hero. Even more disturbing, he has been portrayed as a symbol of what is good and effective for educating urban, minority students.

In glorifying Clark, the Reagan administration has broken its rigid position of protecting states' rights and sovereignty by intervening in a "local" school matter. Clark has been publicly and personally praised by both the president and Secretary of Education William Bennett.

The effective school research that targeted urban education proved that there are effective schools in urban neighborhoods that students can and do achieve, when properly instructed, in spite of low socio-economic background. It also proved that schools can and do make a difference in the success an achievement of these students. As a result of those research findings, the excuse of low socio-economic status can no longer be utilized by ANYONE . . . black or white, for not properly educating poor, disadvantaged students.

In conclusion, I emphasize that it is the 3,000 black and Hispanic students at Eastside High School and the millions of other minority students in cities like Los Angeles, and states like California who are "imperiled" as a result of this major media hype and miseducation of the public.

On a national and state level, it is the students' welfare that must be considered. Their futures as well as the nation's future are being determined on a daily basis by the quality of the education they are receiving.

The facts do not support elevating Clark to the level of a national hero who properly represents the American educational system . . . urban or otherwise. More importantly, he is not an ideal role-model for students or educators and definitely should not be depicted as a hero in a Hollywood movie!! He must be "graded" on the performance of his students, and on that basis, Clark fails . . . not the students.