

CIVIL RIGHTS, 1970s

BLACK AMERICA AT THE CROSSROADS

By Bayard Rustin

Commencement Address
Tuskegee Institute, May 31, 1970

Let me begin on a personal note. For a number of reasons, I had a difficult time deciding what I should say today. We are living through such a monumental social crisis that the usual address to a graduating class on the challenging opportunities that lie ahead would carry little if any meaning. Nor would it be worthwhile, however, to engage in the currently fashionable pastime of bemoaning our nation's condition to the point where our pessimism seems to justify our failure to take effective action. We cannot afford the luxury of either exhortation or despair. We owe it to ourselves and to all other black Americans to analyze the nature of the present crisis with unsparing objectivity, and from that analysis to formulate a political strategy and a social program by means of which the crisis can be resolved. And most important of all, we should consider the kind of role that you, as young men and women who are part of the black intelligentsia, must play in the struggle for equality.

The nature of this role is something you will have to discover for yourselves out of your own encounters with failure and success. Certainly your generation has already lived through a period of unprecedented upheaval. Most of you were only five years old when the Supreme Court declared school

segregation unconstitutional. You were seven when a young black preacher named Martin Luther King emerged as the leader of the Montgomery bus protest. At eleven you witnessed the beginning of the sit-in movement in Greensboro, North Carolina, and for the next ten years--your adolescent years that were to shape the perspective with which you ^{now} look out on the world--you lived through a period in black American history which was more eventful than any other decade, including the decade of the Civil War. The March on Washington, the outbreak of large-scale violence in hundreds of Negro communities in both the North and to a lesser degree in the South, and the rise of the Black Power movement...These events no doubt had their precedents in the March on Washington Movement of 1941, the race riots of 1919 and 1943, and the black nationalist Garvey movement in the twenties, but in the 1960's they occurred with a driving momentum that made the race problem the central issue in our national politics.

It is difficult to judge precisely what the effect of this experience with uninterrupted social protest has been on your generation (I am referring here to young whites as well as to young blacks). But I would not doubt that it has made the political consciousness of this generation sensitive primarily to what we may call the upward arc of historical movement. The problem is that such a consciousness cannot fully come to grips with the reality that history is a dialectical process. It consists of alternating periods of movement and stagnation, of action and reaction, of tremendous hope and enthusiasm which can be followed by a descent into cynicism and exhaustion.

I am not suggesting that this process is inevitable, though to a certain extent it does seem to contain an internal dynamic that operates independently of human will. What I am suggesting is that we must understand this process if we are to be in a position to influence it. In the early period of the civil rights movement some of the young SNCC people were fond of quoting George Santayana's dictum that those who do not understand history will be doomed to repeat it. I think there is considerable truth to that remark, so let us try in the short time that remains to analyze what is happening today in the hope of identifying certain fundamental principles which should guide our political and intellectual involvement.

What we must first understand is that the pendulum of history has already begun to swing downward. It is impossible now to gauge the extent of this reaction. My own feeling is that we are living in a time of great flux and that the movement to the right in American politics can be reversed if we do the correct things. But we cannot escape the conclusion that, for the present at least, the conservatives have made important and ominous gains. They control the White House and, through the power of presidential appointment, have gained a majority on the Supreme Court, and there is ~~a good~~ ^{Some} possibility that they will emerge from the 1970 elections in control of the Senate for the first time in two decades.

What is happening today is not very different from what happened in the 1870's. At that time the country had been through a period as turbulent as the one we have just experienced.

The Civil War and its aftermath left the North with a moral burden that it simply could not bear. It was far more interested in pursuing its own commercial interests than in advancing the welfare of Negroes in the South, and of course the North also suffered from the disease of racism. All hope for black equality collapsed when Northern Republicans worked out a compromise with Southern Democrats in the disputed election of 1876. The Southern Whigs agreed to let the Republicans retain ~~control~~ control of the White House, in return for which the federal troops were withdrawn from the South and large subsidies were provided for the construction of the Southern railroad system. The Compromise of 1876 initiated the darkest period in the history of American Negroes. The system of Jim Crow was constructed, and lynchings and terrorism became commonplace as poor Southern whites, embittered by their own poverty, were encouraged to unleash their wrath upon Negroes.

Things have not yet reached that stage today, but the parallels are frightening. The Southern Strategy of the Nixon Administration is based upon the same principle as the Compromise of 1876: namely, that Northern Republicans and Southern conservatives share common interests and goals and that together they can rule this nation. I do not think it is possible to condemn too harshly what the President has done in the South in order to form this alliance. Indeed, I can think of no President who has more blatantly sacrificed the ideals of equality and racial justice for his own political ends. What is important to note is that Nixon is not simply

riding the wave of reaction. He is encouraging that reaction, for he knows that he became President because of divisions in the society, and that it is in his interest that these divisions grow wider. More specifically, he wants to see another anti-black Wallace vote in 1972, only this time he wants ~~to~~ cast for himself..This is the prime motivation behind such unconscionable acts as the President's opposition to the extension of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, ^{his} nominations of Haynsworth and Carswell to the Supreme Court, ^{and} most vital of all, his clear message to Southern segregationists, that the Federal government will not oppose any efforts to roll back whatever advances had been made in school integration. ~~By~~ means of such acts he has helped foster a mood of confrontationism and racial hostility. He has profoundly and perhaps permanently alienated blacks, he has put the white moderates of the South on the defensive, and he has given the go-ahead signal to the reactionaries that the time has come for them to come out of hiding and boldly proceed to attack the agents of progress as well as progress itself.

To a very large extent the Nixon Administration's Southern Strategy is responsible for the revival of vigilantism in the South. The physical assaults upon blacks and the bombings and burnings of churches, schools, and community centers, acts which some had thought to be ~~a~~ relics of Southern history, are now taking place with increasing frequency. Such violence represents a form of white resistance which is encouraged and legitimized by the policies of the Administration and by the statements of the Vice-President and the Attorney General. I will go so far as to say that the powers that ~~be~~ be in Washington

must share the blame for the terrible killings that took place some weeks ago at Jackson State College.

What worries me most about the present situation is that there has been a decline in the effectiveness of some of the forces which traditionally have held reaction at bay. In the case of the South, we have already seen how the Federal Government, formerly an ally in our struggle, has contributed to the resurgence of conservatism. And nationally, the progressive coalition of blacks, liberals, and the trade union movement, which has been responsible for all of the major social advances since the New Deal, is now weakened by internal divisions. In part this is due to conflict between blacks and lower-middle class whites. This conflict has probably been exaggerated in the press, but a disturbing amount of it does exist primarily because of economic competition between the two groups. Such competition can be reduced to a minimum if an expanding economy provides enough opportunities for everybody. But today, as a direct result of the Nixon Administration's disastrous economic policies, we are in a recession. Consequently, the likelihood is that there shall be an increase in racial tension which shall further eat away at the unity of the progressive coalition.

Finally, the dramatic events of the last few years seem to have totally disoriented a sizable portion of the liberal community. Many liberals have lost a sense of purpose and direction. The traditional goals of integration and the expansion of the welfare state are no longer thought to be feasible or even desirable. But they have found no goals

to replace the ones they have cast aside, with the result that they have become politically immobile. A number of theories have been created to give this mood among liberals a forward-looking image, but it is really nothing more than an accommodation to the new conservatism.

By no means do I want to give the impression that I think the situation is hopeless. There is a tendency today to anticipate the apocalypse, and shallow theories are put forth about the end of the American era. These ideas are sheer indulgence, because even if there were any truth to them--and I do not believe there is--it would be our duty to act so as to prevent the worst from happening ^{rather than} ~~and not~~ to anticipate the fulfillment of our prophecies. Such hopelessness can even be harmful, for as George Orwell has pointed out, "an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks." Our struggle is too important, there is still so much that remains unaccomplished, that it would be a grave error were we to indulge in any way in the feeble decadence of this end-of-the-world school of thought.

I do not believe that the situation is hopeless because there are progressive forces at work in American society which did not exist in 1876. There is, first of all, the militant desire for racial justice which is shared by countless numbers of young blacks like yourselves. In the words of the civil

rights song, I don't think that anybody is going to turn you 'round-- not now, not after we have come so far. Then there is the black vote which in both the North and the South has become the major new factor in American politics. This vote has increased not only in numbers but also in sophistication, and in addition to the gains it has already won for blacks, it exercises a restraining influence on the scope and effectiveness of anti-Negro forces. The problems George Wallace is having in the Alabama primaries should make this point eminently clear.

Lastly, there is the trade union movement which, though much maligned from both the right and the left, remains the strongest bulwark against reaction. Let us be very clear that the civil rights forces alone could not have defeated Haynsworth and Carswell. They succeeded only because they were allied with the trade union movement, and it is this alliance, which is based upon the mutual interest between blacks and labor, which offers the greatest hope for future progress.

Thus, there are factors that are working both for and against the achievement of full racial equality. In a very real sense we are at a crossroads. If Mr. Nixon succeeds in carrying out his Southern Strategy, then the commitment to equality which America defaulted on almost one hundred years ago shall once again be deferred to some future time. And if he fails, then we shall be provided with an opportunity to resolve once and for all the central dilemma in American life--the relationship of blacks to American society and, in an even more profound sense, their relationship with themselves. Our task, yours and mine, is to see to it that he fails.

If we are to have any hope of accomplishing this task, it is essential that we make an important distinction between politics and psychology. We should see this as the distinction between our public and private selves, between what we do in order to influence the political and economic relations in the society and what, in a more personal way, we do to achieve self-knowledge and identity. Now I do not think that these are hard and fast categories which exclude one another. A just society certainly encourages a healthy psychology, and individuals can find personal fulfillment through political involvement. But I think we must make this distinction because in periods of great social upheaval, and we are living through such a period, there is a tendency to politicize all things, including scholarship, art, friendship, and love. The most extreme form of this total politicization is totalitarianism, a stage we have not yet reached. But even a more moderate form can be dangerous since it can lead to a politics that is so preoccupied with psychological issues that the goals of political action are obscured and thereby rendered unobtainable.

This problem bears upon what is happening today among many young black Americans. As you well know, a great cultural revolt is taking place. Young blacks are striking down the traditional symbols of racism. They are taking new pride in their cultural heritage and are demanding to be accepted as full and equal human beings. I think this is an exciting and creative social phenomenon, but it raises two political problems which we must analyze very carefully.

The first is that in some instances the cultural revolt includes the demand for racial separatism which is entirely self-defeating from a political standpoint. Translated into political terms, the cultural revolt expresses itself as a desire for self-determination. Now this is a very complex issue which A. Philip Randolph tried to deal with almost 30 years ago. At that time he acknowledged that "the Negro and the other darker races must look to themselves for freedom. Salvation for a race, nation, or a class," he said, "must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given, it is exacted." But Mr. Randolph did not mean by this that blacks should isolate themselves from broader political movements in the society. He followed that statement with these words of caution: "But Negroes must not fight for their liberation alone. They must join sound, broad, liberal, social movements that seek to preserve American democracy and advance the cause of social and religious freedom."

This should indicate to us a political principle that we must never forget. As long as blacks constitute only 11% of the population, any go-it-alone strategy will fail. Separatism can only aid and abet Nixon's Southern Strategy which is designed to build a conservative majority on the basis of hostility to blacks. In this sense separatism is the opposite of self-determination because it can only lead to the continued subjection of blacks. Real self-determination can only be achieved by a unified black movement joining with other progressive social forces to form a coalition which represents a majority of the population. We must keep this in

mind if we are to prevent the black cultural revolt from becoming a tool in the hands of white conservatives and segregationists who are the very worst enemies we have.

The second problem raised by the cultural revolt is that it has been exclusively preoccupied with racial issues and has thus tended to ignore other issues that are also vitally important. Ralph Ellison has written of his "struggle to stare down the deadly and hypnotic temptation to interpret the world and all its devices in terms of race." He wrote this as an artist who has devoted his life to portraying human reality in all its manifold complexity. I would like, if I may, to apply Ellison's idea to the economic situation of black Americans today.

It goes without saying that Negroes are brutalized by racial prejudice and discrimination. What is not often remembered, however, is that were we to eliminate racism today we would have solved only part of the problem from which blacks suffer, and perhaps not even the major part. The fact is that we live in a society which not only tolerates a relatively high level of unemployment, but which is willing to increase that rage in order to combat inflation. The fact is also that automation is eliminating thousands of jobs that were held by both whites and blacks. This problem does not spring from blackness but from a technological revolution that has affected all poor people regardless of their race. We can psychoanalyze the racism out of all the prejudiced white people in the country, but until we are willing to accept the principle that every able-bodied man or woman has the right to a decent and well-

paying job, we shall not have begun to attack the economic roots of racial injustice. We need a social and economic program that will wipe out poverty far more than we need pure white hearts. I do not mean to disparage the need to attack racism, but if we do only that, we shall provide an out for those whites who are far more interested in "giving a damn" about impoverished blacks than in doing those things that will eliminate their hunger and deprivation.

I am emphasizing these economic problems for a special reason. As graduates of this university, you are part of an intellectual elite among blacks. As such it is extraordinarily important that you do not lose touch with the problems and the aspirations of the great mass of blacks who are not part of this elite. In order to do this you must guard against the possibility of becoming isolated in an intellectual, cultural, and political world while the problems of lower and working class blacks remain economic. These people do not have the choice of withdrawing into the kind of fantasies that are now so prevalent among certain elements of the black intelligentsia, and until they do have that choice, it is your responsibility to fight for those programs that will enable them to achieve full economic justice.

I think it is also your responsibility, especially those of you who will go on to graduate work and university teaching, to protect the intellectual integrity of the university. In THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK W.E.B. DuBois wrote that ^{the} function

of the university is above all "to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization." You must help it perform that function, particularly in the controversial field of Black Studies. The study of the black experience in America is so vital to an understanding of our country and of our people that it must attract scholars of the very highest intellectual eminence. We must not permit this promising area of study to become a refuge for charlatans who are more skilled at intellectual intimidation than investigation. For this reason it is essential that those students and faculty members who are committed to upholding the scholarly standards of black studies firmly refuse to accommodate to anyone who would debase them.

We are living in a time of such rapid change that we must continuously redefine our terms and reassert those principles which seem to hold some truth. I do not regard as radical or progressive any black person who does anything which strengthens the forces of conservatism. Therefore, I do not regard as radical those who talk of separatism, however loud may be their words and however militant and controversial their actions. For all practical purposes, they stand with the opponents of our struggle. I do not regard as radical those who moralize about the evils of white society if at the same time they do not present a program that can solve the problems of the black society. Nor are they radical who assume a revolutionary posture, but who then propose nothing more than an escape from American political

reality and from the grinding and endless social struggles that we must participate in. The real radical is that person who has a vision of equality and who is willing to do those things that will bring reality closer to that vision. And by equality I do not mean "separate but equal," a phrase that was created by segregationists in order to prevent the attainment of equality. I mean equality based upon an integrated social order in which black people, proud of their race and of their heritage, shall have no door closed to them. In such a social order there will not be walls, representing fear and insecurity, which separate people from one another. Such walls, whether they are constructed by whites or by blacks, are built to oppress and repress, but never to liberate. I admit that most likely we will not achieve such equality ~~next month~~ ^{or even in this decade.} ~~or even next year.~~ But it is a goal that we must hold ever before us, even in the darkest of times, for it not only confesses dignity upon our struggle, but it should indicate to us how we must act towards one another today if we are to preserve for tomorrow the possibility of a just society.

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Benign Neglect: Rustin Replies to Moynihan

By BAYARD RUSTIN

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With the publication of his memo to the President urging "benign neglect" of the issue of race, Daniel P. Moynihan once again finds himself involved in a bitter controversy.

We seem to be in the midst of a replay of what took place almost five years ago when his report on the Negro family was published. An internal government memo written by Moynihan and relating to Negroes is released to the public, the general reaction in the black community is outrage, recrimination and explanations follow, and Moynihan emerges a hero to some, a villain to many others.

Such at least are the similarities, but there are significant differences which must be seen if we are to understand the full meaning of Moynihan's recent message to the President.

Beyond the fact that he is likely to lose more friends this time around than the last, Moynihan is not in the same position today that he was in five years ago. At that time he was a member of a liberal administration.

His report, whatever else might be said for or against it, was an attempt to draw attention to a social problem, to identify the social and economic causes of that problem, and to outline what he called "the case for national action."

While there is reason to doubt the wisdom of some of Moynihan's formulations, at least he sensed the urgency of America's racial crisis.

Today just the opposite is true. Moynihan is a member of a conservative administration, his memo is designed to draw attention away from a social problem, he places the blame for our racial crisis almost exclusively on the Negro, he offers no proposals for government action beyond some studies and conferences, and his tone is infused with complacency and self-congratulation.

THE CHANGE cannot be explained away by observing that this is one liberal's way to adapt to the conservative period that we are in. Mr. Moynihan, for all intents and purposes, has become a conservative himself.

Let us first look at his "general assessment of the position of Negroes" at the end of Mr. Nixon's first year in office. As a sociologist Moynihan is aware that statistics can be both used and misused with great effectiveness. I think it is fair to say that in his memo to the President, Moynihan is guilty of misusing statistics.

His figures are correct, as far as I can judge, but he has been highly selective in choosing only those which give the impression that "the American Negro is making extraordinary progress." Important progress was made during the last decade. Everybody knows that.

But as Andrew Brimmer and others have pointed out, the benefits of progress accrued largely to middle and working class blacks, while the social and economic condition of impoverished Negroes did not improve and, in fact, worsened. We are beginning to see that Negroes in one area can bring problems in another.

The improvement in the income and living standards of many black families enabled them to move out of the hard-core poverty areas of the cities. But they left behind them black communities that were worse off than before the onset of "progress," more homogeneously poor, with fewer stable middle class elements, with schools, housing, and health care facilities rapidly deteriorating, and with the population density as high as ever since the departing middle class was replaced by impoverished immigrants from the South.

During the last decade Negroes trapped in the inner-city ghettos became more desperate, more despairing, more subject to the vicious conditions of poverty and segregation.

MY INTENTION is not to demean the importance of the progress that was made during the last decade. But nor will I use superlatives, as does Moynihan, in describing what amounted to a first step in attacking the overwhelming and complex social problems of this nation.

It is one thing to point out improvements where they have been made, but not to couple this with an urgent call for more action is to provide an excuse for complacency and criminal inaction.

I also take issue with the interpretation, which is implicit in Moynihan's argument, of the origins of progress and poverty in the black community. His statistics on black progress all relate to "husband-wife Negro families," while according to Moynihan, "Increasingly, the problem of Negro poverty is the problem of the female-headed family."

Here we have it again, the same old argument about the Negro family, only unlike before, Moynihan does not offer joblessness as a major cause, but rather as a major effect, of family instability.

He has reversed the tables and in the process has placed the onus of blame for poverty on the black community, a characteristically conservative argument.

He also has neglected to mention the real source of progress for blacks in the sixties, namely, the dramatic expansion of our economy with the accompanying reduction in unemployment and poverty. It is true that many hard-core unemployed, because they lack the proper training, were not prepared to benefit from the economic boom.

But the very fact that there was a tight labor market motivated government and industry to initiate training programs to employ these individuals. Today, however, as a direct result of Nixon's regressive economic policies, we are moving into a recession.

Unemployment is increasing as more and more workers are being laid off, and training programs are closing down. Only last week the Department of Labor terminated a large contract to hire thousands of hard-core unemployed for production jobs in Chrysler plants.

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THE PROGRESS some Negroes experienced during the last decade is thus being undermined, and whatever opportunity there was for the hard-core unemployed to escape from poverty has been crushed, at least for the present.

Moynihan has written a memo to the President on the condition of Negroes without mentioning the disastrous effect the administration's economic policies are having upon blacks. One can only conclude that either Moynihan is a partisan of those policies, or that he just does not want to make waves within the administration. If the latter is true, he is guilty of gross irresponsibility.

One can expect nothing less than outrage in the black community at Moynihan's statement that "Apart from white racial attitudes . . . the biggest problem black Americans face is the anti-social behavior among black males."

Moynihan totally neglects social and economic injustice as he narrows the problems of the ghetto down to the simple and cruelly misleading remark, "Black Americans injure one another." Once again he is attempting to pin the blame for the racial crisis upon the Negro.

Take Moynihan's long digression on the fire problem in the ghetto which amounts to over one-eighth of his memo. He admits that some fires result from population density but the real cause, he says, is "social pathology." Slum residents "deliberately set" a large part of the fires in their communities.

This is as far from the truth as it is contemptuous of the Negro community. There is no mention of the drastic housing shortage which has severely affected the whole society, and most of all the ghetto.

The problem is not simply that the population density in the ghetto has become unbearable, which it has. What is worse is that in the absence of decent housing blacks are crowded into old, dilapidated dwellings which have unvented heaters and faulty wiring, and which, Mr. Moynihan, are nothing more than fire-traps. Not only is President Nixon doing nothing to alleviate this problem.

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HE HAS ACTUALLY aggravated it by cutting back on funds for Model Cities and urban renewal and, most importantly, by raising interest rates to the point where home-building has declined to its lowest level in more than twenty years.

There is an element of social pathology here, but it is not in the black community as much as it is in a society which permits a situation like this to continue.

All of this is by way of introduction to the really controversial aspect of Moynihan's memo, his suggestion that "The time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect.'"

Let us look closely at what this means since we would not want to be accused of misunderstanding the President's counselor. Moynihan is saying that we should not neglect the problems of blacks so much as the issue of race. He wants to see tempers cooled and extremists of either race isolated.

Now all this is fine enough, but in the context of Moynihan's entire memo, not to speak of the political context in which the memo was written, these words take on a different meaning.

Many civil rights leaders and spokesmen, myself included, have firmly opposed extremism of both races, black as well as white. But we have done so not simply to cool tempers but to build movements.

We have seen that racial extremism is self-defeating, that it divides blacks from natural allies in the white community, that it undermines the central objective of building a coalition of progressive forces which can become the political majority in America.

We have seen that until such a coalition exists, our nation will not undertake a comprehensive program to wipe out poverty among blacks, Mexican-Americans, Indians, Puerto Ricans, and whites.

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BUT MOYNIHAN has no such objective in mind when he urges "benign neglect" of racial issues. Indeed, he is an important member of an administration which is the major opposition to the coalition I just described. "Benign neglect," as Moynihan has used it, is consistent with the rest of his memo and, therefore, does not mean neglect of the issue of race but government neglect of the Negro.

It is significant that Moynihan borrowed the phrase "benign neglect" from a colonialist context. It was originally used in a report written in 1839 by the British Earl of Durham.

According to Moynihan, the Earl recommended self-government for the British colony of Canada which had grown self-reliant "through many years of benign neglect" by Britain.

From our discussion of the other sections of Moynihan's memo, it should be clear that this phrase was carefully chosen to support the rest of his contentions. Whether he was discussing unemployment or social pathology, Moynihan took care to locate the source of the difficulty in Negroes themselves, in what he claims are our "female headed families," our "anti-social behavior," our penchant for arson, and our "social alienation."

Like Canada in the early nineteenth century, Moynihan feels that today America would benefit from a period of "benign neglect" during which it could put its own house in order, tidy up its family life, and get its arsonists under control.

His argument is fundamentally for a limited role for the federal government in solving the problems of the black poor. Moynihan's memo must have found a receptive audience in a conservative President who has done everything possible, in keeping with his philosophy of "The New Federalism," to reduce the role of the federal government.

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MOYNIHAN'S suggestions to the President on what he should do in relation to the black community make an excellent case for government inaction. Aside from urging "benign neglect," he suggests that administration officials get together to "talk out the subject a bit" in order to develop "a more coherent administration approach," and that the administration do more research on crime.

It is indeed remarkable that after noting that the unemployment rate among black teen-agers is 24.4%, Moynihan can only suggest that we need more studies on crime, as if, to borrow a sociological phrase, we did not already know that there is a high correlation between poverty and crime, that unemployment is a "leading indicator" of criminal behavior. And the Nixon administration is hardly doing anything to reduce unemployment.

Finally, there is Moynihan's suggestion to give more recognition to the "silent black majority," the black working class. Nixon will have to give this group far more than recognition if he is to befriend it, for it has already been deeply offended by his economic policies and Southern strategy.

This is the group that is being laid off from jobs, that can't find decent housing, and that is being hit by rising interest rates and the funding cuts for education and health care. This group could hardly be expected to appreciate the nominations of Haynsworth and Carswell to the Supreme Court, the reluctance the administration has shown to press for school integration in the South, the efforts it has made to water down the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Moynihan urges a cooling of racial passions, but the policies of the Nixon administration are making extremists out of moderates. The Black Panthers will not disappear if they are ignored, as Moynihan suggests. They will not disappear because the conditions which produced them continue to exist.

And as long as this society fails to carry out a social and economic program which can attack those conditions at their roots, there will be extremists in the black community.



BAYARD RUSTIN
A Reply to Moynihan

MOYNIHAN NEVER once refers to the necessity for such a program but talks only about the necessity to lower our voices. Mr. Nixon also talks about "bringing us together," but he has done nothing to further that goal.

On the contrary, his policies have deepened divisions and broadened the base for extremism. But of this Mr. Moynihan has nothing to say.

Several years ago, at a National Board meeting of the Americans for Democratic Action that was held soon after the violence in Newark and Detroit, Moynihan urged that liberals form a coalition with conservatives in the interests of social order.

Moynihan, who has the courage of his convictions, has entered into such a coalition with the result that he has in effect become an important ally of the conservative cause.

Writing in *Commentary* some months back, Andrew Hacker pointed out that for Nixon to build a Republican majority out of what is essentially a right-center coalition, he would have to undertake simultaneously two approaches—a reactionary strategy led by such men as John Mitchell and Spiro Agnew which would appeal to the right, and a more progressive strategy directed by such house liberals as Robert Finch and Moynihan which would appeal to the center.

From this point of view Moynihan's role in the Nixon administration becomes tragically clear. As the liberal cover for a conservative administration, he is not advancing liberalism so much as helping to entrench conservatism.

If President Nixon is successful in building his majority, Moynihan's memo will take on a significance that was perhaps not intended by its author.

Historical periods are often defined by single phrases which seem to capture the mood or the political climate of a nation at a particular point in time. In America today we are dangerously on the verge of entering a period when social problems are ignored and allowed to fester until they emerge at some future date in such a diseased condition that the social order is threatened with a general breakdown.

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WE HAVE been through a period of difficult change, and people are tired. They do not want to be reminded that there are still problems, most grievously the problem which Gunnar Myrdal called the American dilemma."

Whites are retreating, becoming hostile and fearful, blacks are becoming enraged, and liberals are confused and disoriented. And the federal government, the principal agency through which we can find a way out of our racial agony, is in the hands of men who lack progressive vision. "Benign neglect," a phrase borrowed from the past, seems to define the present.

Neglect of problems that are difficult to solve, avoidance of realities that are unpleasant to confront; Mr. Moynihan's phrase speaks to our society's weaknesses, its capacity for self-delusion and apathy.

We have not entirely reached this point yet. There is still time to reverse our direction, to move forward. To fail to seize this opportunity today may make it impossible for us to do so in the future.

Perhaps the lack of vision evinced by Mr. Moynihan can shock us into a recognition of how far we must still go to achieve the evasive yet splendid goal of racial justice.

~~Rustin Article~~

RUSTIN article
3/27/72

That the past twenty years have seen great progress in civil rights is now a cliché which, however true, obscures for both blacks and whites the real meaning of what is happening to American society.

Much of American history has revolved around and all of our history has been affected by the presence of blacks in this country. The true significance of the events of the past two decades is that from having been continuous objects of our history black people are now becoming participants in it. And this participation means that a process has been initiated which will have enormous and incalculable political, economic, cultural and other consequences for the lives of all Americans far into the future.

The political consequences are the most immediate and fundamental.

American politics, we are told, has been "redefined" by one or a combination of movements spawned by the social upheavals and foreign policy discontent of the 1960s. Thus the peace movement, with its built-in limitations and the youth vote, with its uncertainties, were to have effected an ideological realignment of the Left while at the other end of the spectrum the Wallace phenomenon was to have provided the previously inarticulate backlash element with a permanent coherence. Absorbed as it is with the unique and fashionable, the news media went as far as to transform embryonic social movements--feminists and environmentalists are two noteworthy examples--into activist monoliths with a reputed limitless potential for political influence.

Without intending to downgrade the peace and ecology movements, both of which ~~we~~ feel have influenced electoral politics to a degree well out of proportion to their numerical strength, nor meaning to minimize the palpable dangers of Wallaceism, such movements will not, indeed, cannot, equal the black political movement's long range, intensive, constructive influence on our democratic institutions. This is true whether one measures the success of a movement in terms of its permanency, size or, for that matter, degree of consciousness.

While other movements have surfaced, fragmented, and shattered in conflict and confusion, ours has survived, first, the legal and social barriers which stood in the way of black advancement and second, the differences, many unquestionably bitter, within our own ranks. We endured and prospered while others failed or dropped out because our struggle, moreso than any other contemporary struggle, is firmly anchored to self interest, a prerequisite for the success of any political mass movement. Our common past of discrimination, whether written in southern code or embedded in national custom, and our present oppression (which we share with many whites) based on economic class, does not permit any long term deviations from the essential goals of our struggle.

The ramifications of our political maturation are reflected throughout the political decision making process. We influence the selection of candidates, the formulation of programs, and the tone of a campaign simply by the fact of our increasing presence in the electorate.

Among its positive effects are counted the overthrow of corrupt, wheezing urban machines, the frustration, in alliance with liberals and labor, of President Nixon's full scale assault on congressional progressives, the unfettering of southern liberals from the shackles of the race issue, and the moderation of the once stridently segregationist tones of southern demagogues.

I can cite no more illustrative example of the pervasiveness of our influence than Strom Thurmond, once the personification of southern white supremacy, preaching racial fairness, hiring a black aide, and going out of his way to accept credit for the awarding of federal grants to black areas. That Senator Thurmond was afflicted with a social conscience at this late stage in his career is highly improbable. He was more likely motivated by pragmatic politics; blacks, once a negligible element in South Carolina elections, now comprise, thanks to a massive voter registration effort, nearly 25 per cent of the state's electorate, too much for even a man whose career has been firmly bound to the exploitation of racial prejudices.

This is not to say that the intensification of our political awareness has not had its negative aspects. Particularly in those municipalities and states where political slates have been fashioned on a monoracial basis have we provoked a sharp reaction from the white populace. To the long catalogue of anxieties which black self-assertiveness evokes in whites must be added fear of the black mayor or the black governor.

The outcomes of several recent elections were determined, not on substantive issues, but on "we-they" confrontations revolving on race. Race was the cutting edge in Cleveland, where the mayoral candidate hand-picked by Carl Stokes was defeated by a Republican with a strong identity in the city's sizeable ethnic communities. There was a similar outcome in Mississippi, where blacks had hoped to extend their control of local offices and add to their meager representation in the state legislature. Instead, a massive effort to arouse the political consciousness of blacks had the reverse effect of inducing a high white turnout (highest of any Mississippi general election) which doomed the overwhelming majority of Negro office-seekers.

The results of 1971 will no doubt weigh heavily on the judgements of those who are attempting to assess the impact of the growing black electorate on ~~the~~ presidential politics. The Nixon Administration will examine the outcomes in Cleveland and Mississippi, the elections of Rizzo in Philadelphia and Imperiale in Newark and take heart: the Southern Strategy, it would appear, is as valid in 1972 as it was ~~to~~ four years ago, even in the north. Already Kevin Phillips is predicting that the increased influence, and, in a growing number of instances, domination of northern political machines by blacks will ~~drive~~ socially conservative Catholics into the Republican Party's waiting arms. More doctrinaire conservatives will take comfort in instances of disappointing black turnouts: centuries of sub-par education and obeisance to the white man have proved too formidable an obstacle for southern blacks to overcome in a few years, they will conclude, while northern blacks, seemingly consigned to a treadmill ghetto existence, have turned ~~indifferent~~ to the unkept promises of liberal politicians, no matter what their

race or party affiliation.

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If there has been a positive element in Richard Nixon's election, it would be the reunification and closing of ranks between disparate forces within the movement which had permitted differences over strategy and objectives to become exaggerated during the Johnson administration. With the White House occupied by a man whose personal philosophy was essentially conservative, and who represented social forces with a vested interest in the economic status quo, the issues which had created such serious internal ruptures became irrelevant. For instance, the debate over whether we should pursue the creation of a separate, ghetto-centered economy was recognized as academic since we understood that, his campaign rhetoric aside, Nixon would never commit the federal government to spend the billions necessary for even a limited program like black capitalism to succeed. More to the point, ghetto housing would not be replaced, there would be no improvement of ghetto medical services nor any perceivable expansion of educational opportunities for the children of the ghetto. We even found that those who had expressed disdain for integration as a social ideal during the controversy over community control began to reappraise their position when the new president, in one of his first actions in the area of race relations, made a transparent attempt to retard the pace of school desegregation.

Our view of Nixon was shaped at least partially by events of symbolic and psychological nature. Nixon's campaign, moreso than any presidential effort since Herbert Hoover, failed to speak to black needs or to treat blacks as individuals, and appealed, though in a more sophisticated manner than did Wallace, to those individuals who had justifiably earned reputations as enemies of black aspiration and to those emotions based at least partially on racial prejudice which lurked in the souls of a not insignificant percentage of the electorate.

Having assumed office, Nixon greeted us with an unintegrated Cabinet, the appointments of Haynesworth, Carswell and Rehnquist to the Supreme Court and the blundering attempt to emasculate the Voting Rights Act of 1965,

But for many blacks the economic consequences of the Nixon administration were far more personal and profound. The recession which Nixon helped engineer, while cutting across racial lines, emburdened Negroes more severely than any single segment of the economy. The 10.5 per cent unemployment rate among blacks cited by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is the highest black jobless rate since 1963 and double the percentage for whites. The impact of Nixon's policies fell even harder on those who reside in our ghettos, with over 14 per cent out of work, including 12.5 per cent of able bodied men and an even greater percentage of teenagers.

The country's economic failures have had two results of significance to the black community. One is the almost total negation of the potential of the myriad manpower and job development programs which were launched in an atmosphere of high hopes in the 1960s. While some of these programs were hampered by poor planning and administration, the overriding cause of their failure was the state of the economy: no group, no matter how extensively tutored or trained, can achieve social mobility during a time of recession and rising unemployment.

Recession, in turn prompted a reevaluation of not only the programs, but also the philosophies and strategies of those generally considered "traditional" civil rights leaders. Integration and full employment, which had been eclipsed by the appeal of community control, black studies and "self determination", were now recognized as fundamental to equality and social justice. At the same time those leaders--such as Roy Wilkins and A. Philip Randolph--whose commitment to true equality never wavered, assumed a new stature as the public wearied of those who preached violence and a distorted form of militance.

The most dramatic reflections of our political growth have occurred in the municipal elections in Gary, Cleveland and Newark, where control of City Hall was wrested from white-dominated machines which had ignored the needs of the substantial black populace. The psychological value of these victories can hardly be measured, for their influence reached beyond the ghettos of the three cities to fill all black people with confidence and courage to demand their rightful share of political

control.

But I feel it is necessary to add a cautionary note here. We cannot afford the luxury of deluding ourselves into believing that the control of three, or even a dozen cities will eliminate the ghetto or, for that matter, solve the basic problems of the urban impoverished. To do so would be to leave ourselves vulnerable to the same disillusionment and disaffection ^{+ frustration} which fell upon the civil rights movement when it discovered the existence of economic and social discrimination far more deeply imbedded than legally sanctioned segregation.

The powers of a mayor have always been severely limited under our federal system and his authority is further checked by the shrinking tax bases and rising government costs which characterize almost all cities. A mayor ^{black or white} can promote limited improvements in police and fire service to a previously-neglected black neighborhood and, if he is fortunate enough to have inherited a solvent municipal bank account, build a school or a park in the ghetto. But a mayor ^{black or white} cannot reduce welfare rolls, provide the unemployed with jobs, or rebuild abandoned ghetto housing unless there is a comparable commitment to economic justice from the federal government.

Our movement, therefore, must have a basically national orientation so that the impact of our local advances is not blunted by a failing economy. To reach objectives that are national in scope, we must develop a set of strategies and tactics which are broad enough not only to accomplish our goals but also to solidify our relationship with other progressive elements in society. This is neither an easy task nor a romantic adventure, for ^{we} include among the progressive forces elements who do not always agree, or, for that matter, regard each other with affection. It is certainly simpler to arouse fantasies of a liberal electoral coup by calling for a coalition of minorities, militant women, students, the poor, and, though not necessarily, workers added as an afterthought. There are today respected liberal politicians who proclaim openly that through just such an alliance lies the path to political victory and ultimately, social change. Seductive as such an approach may appear to revolutionary imaginations, it is guaranteed to lead ultimately to defeat, defeat which permits its adherents to luxuriate in the purity of a clean conscience, but defeat nonetheless. The victims, of course, will not be those who ^{propagate} the strategy,

to call a movement to ignore minorities or treat them as footnotes.

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but those whom they claim to represent, particularly minorities and the poor.

We must clearly understand that a movement which seeks the liberal transformation of society cannot succeed if it consigns workers to a secondary role within the coalition. I should stress that by workers, I do not refer to some mythic creation of New Left imagination of total irrelevance to the American experience, but to all working people, and particularly to those represented by the trade union movements.

Constructing and maintaining a strong, progressive coalition of heterogeneous elements requires that one enter with a spirit of compromise, professionalism and militant commitment to ultimate objectives. It requires that political undertakings be more than mere exercises in education and consciousness raising, if for no other reason than an obligation to act responsibly on behalf of those whose economic ~~and~~ futures most critically depend on its success.

Coalition building also asks that those who contribute in strength and program be accorded a leadership position in relationship to that contribution. It is for this reason that a genuinely progressive coalition can neither ignore the labor movement nor treat it as a footnote. ~~X~~ I emphasize this not out of sheer pragmatism, though labor's mass base, sophisticated organization and commitment to the defeat of Richard Nixon are facts of no little consequence. Beyond this, however, is the fact that the goals of labor and the objectives of the black community are fast converging; that as we emerge from the economic and social underclass our needs and priorities will become increasingly inter^{twined} and identical with those of the trade union movement.

It is therefore in our interests to guard against the philosophies of separatism and narrow strategies which would nullify our numerical power and create discord and misunderstanding within the coalition itself. We must reject those who urge that we embark on a separatist course aimed, presumably, at letting the white power structure, the Democratic Party, or whomever know that it does not control black minds or black votes just as we rejected similar blandishments of Dick Gregory and Eldridge Cleaver in 1968.

There will ^{be} those who will attempt to draw us into a fourth party movement which, given the rhetoric of its proponents, will proclaim itself to be the most effective avenue of upgrading the conditions of minorities. Putting aside for the moment the question of its contribution toward the re-election of Richard Nixon, I do not believe such a movement will ever win general support among blacks precisely because its advocates do not address themselves to those problems which most profoundly affect black people; that is to say, the problems of daily living which confront all working Americans.

We are prepared to support the candidate and party that emphasize a full employment economy, national health insurance, the rebuilding of our cities, tax reform; in other words, the unfulfilled legacy of the New Deal. With one of ten unemployed, blacks are not likely to view with enthusiasm the candidate who conceives of society's problems as an amorphous "quality of life" who seeks solutions through various forms of psychological liberation, or, even worse, denounces technology and calls on workers to reduce their consumption of goods and services.

Black presidential voting patterns forcefully demonstrate the unlikelihood of our giving substantial support to a candidate running ⁿ outside the two principal parties. Since the Depression, our voting habits have been consciously motivated by self interest. We have supported Democratic Party nominees because they by and large expressed a more complete commitment to the extension of civil rights and because, in each instance, the Democrat advocated social welfare and economic reform measures which would benefit the poor and working classes.

But our ballots was not proffered in the form of blank checks upon which the Democrats could dictate the terms of our support. The black vote often varied in direct proportion to the perceived civil rights commitment of the Democratic and Republican hopefuls. Thus Adlai Stevenson, who devoted little attention to the specific needs of blacks and balanced his 1952 ticket with Alabama's John Sparkman, enjoyed measurably less black support than did Lyndon Johnson or Hubert Humphrey. Another illustrative case is that of Richard Nixon. In 1960, running on a civil

rights platform which approximated in strength that of the Democrats, Nixon received 30 per cent of the black vote. Eight years later, no longer running as the champion of racial equality, his black support dwindled to around 10 per cent.

Indeed, as the Republican Party has shifted from its ^(moderate) pro-civil rights position, through Goldwaterism and the Southern Strategy, it has suffered a perceptible loss of black strength. Whereas only one half of the black electorate identified themselves as Democrats in 1960, fully three of four did so in 1970. Our increasing tendency to affiliate with the Democratic Party came, significantly, during a period when white voters were shedding their party identifications and calling themselves independents in increasing numbers.

This phenomenon is not due solely to Democratic Party platforms and personalities: it can be traced at least in part to the party's increasing willingness to bring blacks into policy formulation roles and leadership positions. ~~Those who denounce the party as a closed, unyielding institution which has systematically denied society's minorities the right to participate in its internal affairs may not have once had a point, no black would contend that the party has in the past been a beacon of internal democracy.~~

~~But we must look to the present and future: current reality is that the process of internal reform which was in part initiated by the Mississippi Freedom Democrats at Atlantic City in 1964 has progressed to the point where the Democratic Party may perhaps soon be more open to participatory democracy than any major political party among the western industrial states. And while I do not necessarily believe that the guidelines formulated by the McGovern and Fraser commissions will solve all the problems or pacify all the critics, they should significantly eliminate the possibility of a repetition of the flagrant abuses of the past.~~

~~The party's commitment to reform was underscored by Lawrence O'Brien's recent pledge to apportion to blacks a share of convention delegates approximately equal to black membership in the party. Should O'Brien succeed in keeping this pledge, it would mean that black delegate strength would rise from 5.5 per cent in 1968 to~~

will serve as anything more than a forum for public hearings and a vehicle for public relations.

~~around 20 per cent this year.~~

Another important development was the election of Patricia Harris, a Negro attorney and former dean of the Howard University Law School, as temporary chairman of the convention credentials committee. Within the party structure, there was no area where racial discrimination was practiced more blatantly than in the selection of convention delegates. Democratic organizations in southern states either ignored the Negro party members or would choose a few hand-picked black delegates whose votes could be controlled by the white leadership. These practices, and the mounting Negro reaction, led to the bitter and divisive conflicts during each of the past two conventions when unrepresentative southern delegation were challenged by insurgents from southern states. The potential for a recurrence of racial controversies will have lessened considerably with the appointment of Mrs. Harris ~~and the adoption of the reform guidelines.~~



Within the black political movement, the Congressional Black Caucus has perhaps enjoyed the most notable success in capturing the attention of the news media. But we must ask ourselves whether its ~~effectiveness will go beyond publicity raising.~~ Can the black caucus, by itself, deal effectively with those remaining traces of discrimination and, more to the point, advance those economic reforms which will lead ultimately not only to black equality but to the building of a majority coalition with broad support among the black and white proletariat?

I do not wish to denigrate the role which the intelligent use of publicity can play within a social or political movement. The civil rights movement certainly owes much of its success in eliciting white sympathy and white support to the news coverage of Birmingham, Montgomery and the 1963 March on Washington.

But as our goals have changed, so must our tactics. We are now confronted with economic and political problems, rather than purely social wrongs and we need a more sophisticated strategy to deal with these problems.

It will take more than publicity ^{to rebuild our cities} and put all our people to work. Indeed, the pathos of the ghetto has been reported extensively by television, magazine, book and newspaper and the results have been half measures, promises or continued neglect.

The black caucus suffers the limitations of any organization which perceives of itself as essentially a public relations mechanism. It cannot, by definition, act within the vanguard of a social movement but must instead concentrate on those issues, such as racism in the military services, the subject of the caucus's first hearing, which lie at the periphery of substantive change.

This limitation is not due to the capabilities of the caucus members or their political orientation, but is rather a weakness endemic to any movement which emanates in Congress. While Congress can certainly lay claim to substantial contributions toward racial progress, it did not provide the stimulus for this progress. As an institution, it reacts to pressures from outside, whether they be from constituents, lobbying interests, powerful social movements or the President. Its members, by the very act of their engaging in electoral politics, take on a set of styles, values and roles markedly different from the mass movement or protest leader. Thus while a black congressman may see himself as a spokesman for the Negro masses, this roles will be secondary to his allegiance to the ^{particular} constituents whose votes he must court every two years.

The priorities of the Daley machine, for instance, may influence the record of a black congressman from Chicago while a black who represents a sizeable, or perhaps majority white electorate may find it prudent to lower his racial profile. And while some black representatives may believe that a massive reduction in defense spending may provide a dividend for the reconstruction of the cities, a black representing a district with a heavy concentration of defense industry workers may view such an approach as only worsening unemployment.

Black congressmen are also subject to the same ambitions as are their white colleagues. Whether a congressman sees himself as the first Negro vice president,

future senator, cabinet member or ambassador may reflect itself in his voting record and political style. We have already witnessed how a desire to advance within the House has influenced the record of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm when she rejected appointment to the Agriculture Committee. Mrs. Chisholm was speaking as a member of Congress when she explained that "there are no farms in Bedford-Stuyvesant." In terms of improving the daily lives of blacks, however, many feel she may have exerted more influence on the agriculture committee, which oversees the allocation of food stamps, ^{farm subsidies and rural development.} and is controlled by some of the more entrenched southern conservatives. It was also her congressional ambitions which motivated Mrs. Chisholm's support for Hale Boggs in his race for Majority Leader. While Boggs civil rights record has been fair, it does not compare to those of two of his opponents, James O'Hara and Morris Udall. By supporting Boggs, the candidate of the southern and moderate wing, Mrs. Chisholm was able to achieve a seat on the prestigious Labor and Education Committee.

We must also ask ourselves how the caucus is seen by the rest of society and whether this perception affects its ability to pursue legislative goals. Will the caucus strengthen the bonds between black and white or appear as yet more evidence that Negroes prefer the separatist path to equality? More important, what is its impact on potential allies among the white working class who may as yet not understand the class kinship between black and white worker? Might it not serve to reinforce the presumptions of those who would prefer a black populace which does not value integration as a social ideal?

There is also the question of priorities. Should those whom black people have with their vote designated as their representatives dramatize subsidiary issues, like military racism, at a time when there are so many more profound issues which affect the daily lives of the overwhelming mass of blacks? My question is rhetorical, for obviously 13 members of Congress, no matter how unified, cannot alone transform economic institutions implanted deeply in our history and national heritage. But yet if these institutions are unchallenged even by those who represent the most impoverished, alienated and disaffected of our society we would be forced

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to admit that a half century of struggle for meaningful social change had been abandoned with a majority of our goals unachieved.

The challenge of molding a mass movement through which we can effect these changes is no longer a proposition for debating clubs or academic discussion groups; it is a matter of uppermost necessity for millions of poor and working class Americans. Translated into practical terms, it means mobilizing behind a candidate who can at once offer a broad ranging, radical economic and social program while unifying the various elements of the coalition: both those who depend on such a program for economic well being and those who have a moral commitment to the success of such a program.

I propose such a strategy fully aware that it would produce opposition not only from the right, but also from moderate liberals and some radicals.

Some on the Left will object to a campaign anchored to economic issues as morally flawed and strategically incorrect. They conceive of 1972 as the year in which those Democrats who may at one time or another have supported the war in Vietnam confess their past errors or be read from the party. Should these forces somehow manage to succeed in turning the presidential campaign into what has been termed an exercise in "left-wing Goldwaterism" they would certainly alienate sizeable numbers of the natural liberal constituency for years to come and deal incalculable damage to the aspirations of blacks and the poor for the foreseeable future.

At the same time I do not accept the objections of moderates who insist that a political program which calls for fundamental economic changes would intimidate the American worker. A belief has sprung up, nurtured by liberals who should know better, that workers are somehow moving to the right as they grow increasingly affluent. While it is true that some social issues, such as law and order and school busing have produced conservative reactions in working class neighborhoods, the same cannot be said for economic issues. Far from moving to the right, Americans are becoming growingly receptive to economic reforms which a decade or so ago would have been denounced as socialistic. The adoption of Medicare did not produce an outpouring of sentiment for

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Black people are still ~~to~~ twice as likely as whites to be unemployed; three and a half times as likely to live in poverty; four times as likely to inhabit slum housing. We need a program of economic growth which can promote full employment, enable the underemployed to improve their status, rebuild the cities, ~~and~~ enable all young people ~~who~~ wish to attend college ^{to do so} regardless of financial conditions, and provide access to quality medical care through national health insurance. ~~This is~~ To accomplish this ambitious project is obviously ~~a task~~ a task too massive in scope for 13 congressmen, no matter how committed or unified.

~~The role of~~ The Black Caucus can play an important ^{and} constructive role in dramatizing these fundamental economic issues, and in mobilizing the support and commitment of liberals and moderates so that their eventual passage ~~is~~ may be ensured.

These ~~the~~ issues, should have a broad appeal among the electorate. Despite the carefully nurtured myth of ~~the~~ America as the affluent society, we find today that fully 90 per cent of the population lives on a take home pay of under \$15,000; that over half of the nation's families earn under \$10,000, a figure which the federal government employs to define a "moderate" standard of living and that fully 20 per cent ~~of~~ ~~the~~ subsist on less than \$5,000.

a return to the purity of free enterprise medical health care. On the contrary, an overwhelming majority of Americans now demand that the Medicare concept be extended to all age groups.

Far from divisive, a truly radical program would draw to the coalition those who have grown cynical of government's ability to effect meaningful change and of liberalism in general. It would create a focal point around which those with sharply contrasting social attitudes but common economic problems could unite. And it would enable the candidate of the left to distinguish his program from that of the President, no minor point when you consider Nixon's ability to create the impression of moving to the left at the same time that his basically conservative approach remains unchanged. There is scant evidence to support the thesis that an incumbent president can be defeated by a campaign centering on degree of candor and style when the public can see no perceptible difference in the issues which affect them most severely.

It is no longer enough to gloss over the divisions within liberalism in the hope that, given the time, they will resolve ~~with~~ themselves. The problems of the poor are here and now; their solutions require a massive, coordinated assault from government and the support of the larger society. Should we fail in 1972, we would face four more years during which we at best could mount no more than a holding action against the forces of conservatism and, at worst, witness the exacerbation of those differences over foreign policy and social issues which even now threaten the very foundations of our movement. The role of the black community in unifying liberals and giving their program a form and substance can be that of the vanguard. Its success could bring about a majority government committed to progressivism and radical reform for years to come. Its failure, given the temper of the times, may well signify the end of the liberalism we know and respect as a force in the political scheme of things.

What Happened To King's Dream?

In 1963 the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. told the world, 'I have a dream.' He was slain 10 years ago today as he pursued that vision. Have his ideals been realized?



Newsday Graphic by Gary Viskupit

By Bayard Rustin

Last week, I was talking to a young man who—at the time of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968—was in 10th grade. He recalled that evening in early April when the shocking news of King's murder was broadcast to the world. He remembered the stark, yet exceedingly dignified, funeral procession through the somber streets of Atlanta.

But this young man had few, if any, meaningful recollections of the great civil rights struggles of the 1950s and the 1960s. Names and places like James Meredith, Birmingham, Medgar Evers, Selma, "Bull" Connor, Little Rock, Rosa Parks and Montgomery were blurred in his mind, vaguely remembered but not fully comprehended.

He was, unlike his parents and older neighbors, untouched by the bitter reality of racial segregation. For him, the very concept of segregation seemed alien and peculiar, indeed unthinkable.

The attitudes of this young man, I think, testify to King's greatest accomplishment: racial segregation, whether de jure or de facto, has become politically and morally untenable in modern America. King, through the enduring beauty of non-violent witness and the political power of mass organization, successfully challenged the moral legitimacy of white supremacy. He showed America the true face of racism, a face which was hideous and inhuman.

But King and his supporters paid dearly in their crusade to unmask the obscene system known as Jim Crow.

Bayard Rustin, president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute in New York City, was an associate of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. during much of the civil rights era.

I can still remember the beatings, the fiery church bombing, the jeering faces and the slaughter of innocent children. And I can still recall, in vivid detail, the late-night strategy sessions, the sometimes heated policy debates and the exhaustion at the end of a mass demonstration.

Yet, as painful as the memories are, they also provide a certain aura of comfort and solace. For only in remembering the trials of the past can we accurately measure our progress and set our direction for the future.

What, then, is the state of King's dream 10 years after his brutal death, and 15 years after he so eloquently proclaimed it on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial? Is it enough that young Americans—both black and white—are shielded from the horrifying practices of racial segregation? Or is it enough that blacks are no longer forcibly barred from the voting booth?

To answer these questions properly we must first understand King's message, a message which has been all too frequently distorted by friend and foe alike.

Unlike many earlier black leaders—I have in mind men like Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington—King was not simply a "black leader," concerned only with "black issues." He was substantially more than that. In presenting King to the assembled masses at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom, A. Philip Randolph was far more precise when he called King "the moral leader of the nation." And it was King, more than anyone else, who transformed the civil rights movement into a broad social movement, seeking and forging coalitions with white allies.

This coalition strategy was based on King's social dream, a vision that consisted of two intimately linked components: first, the full realization of civil and political rights; and, second, the achievement of economic and social equality by black Americans.

In short, King proposed what might be called "a pack-

age deal" for black liberation. He viewed the social dynamic of collective struggle—rather than individual black achievement—as the chief instrument of black liberation. Freedom, according to King, would not—and should not—come piecemeal, nor would it come through the sheer benevolence of the white power centers. It would come only as the result of a social revolution, non-violent to be sure, but a revolution, nevertheless, in the true sense of the word.

I have already argued that the civil rights movement has scored many remarkable victories during the last two decades. Nowhere in the United States—not even in the most isolated and backward regions of the Deep South—can a white man defile the dignity of black people by placing a "White Only" sign in his store or restaurant window.

Throughout the country, black children sit side by side with white children; they are no longer forced into grossly inferior "colored" schools. And everywhere, black voters, though seriously under-registered, are openly courted by black leaders, as well as by white politicians who only a few years ago openly and enthusiastically avowed racial segregation.

Whenever I cite the victories of the civil rights movement, as I have done, I am usually confronted by two conflicting, but equally disturbing, reactions, a self-satisfied sigh of relief that manifests a dangerous complacency, or a mocking voice proclaiming, "It doesn't matter, it's all a delusion." Both are reactions of impatient people.

The scoffers, on the one hand, demand instantaneous results and quick-fix solutions. They see people suffering and they react—quite rightly I think—with their hearts. But they fail to see the whole picture; they lack, unfortunately, a sense of history and movement. Ballots, they tell us, will not put bread on the table or satisfy a bothersome landlord.

The complacent ones, on the other hand, are just as impatient as the scoffers. Black people, they eagerly tell us, have "made it." And now they grumble and whine as they implore us to "get off their backs." Like the scoffers, they also fail to see the whole picture, they reject the social vision of the civil rights movement. For the complacent, civil rights and the ever increasing racial tolerance of white America are ends in themselves; anything more is considered black greed.

King wisely anticipated the reactions of the impa-

tient. He clearly recognized the paramount importance of political rights and mobilized the civil rights movement behind the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These two pieces of landmark legislation were not, in his view, mere shams or hollow expressions of white piety or guilt. They were seen and used as tools for social change.

But King also realized that the initial victories of the civil rights movement, though achieved through the personal sacrifice of thousands and even the loss of life, would be the easiest. A year before his death, he wrote an insightful book, aptly titled "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?," discussing the two major phases of the civil rights movement King wrote.

"The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. The limited reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses, and no taxes are required, for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries, parks, hotels, and other facilities with whites . . . The real cost lies ahead. The stiffening of white resistance is recognition of that fact. The discount education given Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if quality education is to be realized. Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voting rolls. The eradication of slums, housing millions, is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters." These words, uttered by King in 1967, contain the unfortunate truth of today's situation.

During the 10 years since King's death, phase II of the civil rights movement—the economic phase—has produced a spotty and somewhat disappointing record. Although most blacks have improved their economic position, at least marginally, since the 1950s, recent years have seen repeated setbacks for black people.

By 1970, the median family income of blacks had risen to nearly 62 per cent of the income of whites (in 1959 it was only 51 per cent). But by 1976, the median income of blacks had fallen back to 59 per cent, a dangerous reversal and an ugly reminder of our segregationist past.

And unemployment rates among black workers remain at intolerably high levels. For certain categories of black workers, teenagers for example, the unemployment rate is double that of white workers. But perhaps even worse, the labor force participation rate for black men of prime working age has fallen drastically since 1958—from 96 per cent to 88.5 per cent. This bleak statistic indicates that thousands of black workers have abandoned all hope of "making it" in contemporary America.

These disheartening trends are easily traced to the disastrous economic policies so doggedly pursued by the Nixon and Ford administrations. Everyone—except perhaps the bankers and certain lucky stockholders—suffered under the yoke of the recessions. And now, with a Democratic president elected with the overwhelming support of black voters, the situation looks only slightly better. Few politicians—and here I include liberals—grasp the concept that economic policy has become, in a very real way, the civil rights policy of the 1970's.

Black workers, no matter how well organized, cannot resume the slow march toward economic and social equality within the context of a chronically ill economy. We must continue to press for a firm commitment to full employment (the recent House vote on the Humphrey-Hawkins bill is an encouraging sign), and a steadily rising standard of living. We must move ahead in the uphill battle for quality intergrated education. And we must reaffirm our support for America's once great urban centers, so often the depressing havens of America's poorest and most dejected people.

No, King's dream has not been realized after 10 long and sometimes cruel years. Nor do I really think that he expected us to see the dream fulfilled in 10, 20 or even 50 years. He knew that endurance and perseverance are the distinguishing marks of any worthwhile movement for justice.

Newsday

Founded in 1940
By Alicia Patterson and Harry F. Guggenheim

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ARTICLE BY BAYARD RUSTIN
FOR CONFRONTATION MAGAZINE - SPRING 1975

For roughly the past decade--a period inaugurated by the outbreak of simultaneous debates over militancy and separatism in the civil rights movement on the one hand, and the escalation of the Vietnam war on the other--American liberalism has experienced a crisis of a dimension unprecedented in its history. The values and principles which for years had been the motivating force in the liberal movement were abruptly called into question, not by liberalism's conservative critics, but by elements within liberalism itself. Racial integration, the most cherished dream of the 1950s and early 1960s, diminished as a social priority while other, less complex causes beckoned to the activist-minded. The role of public education as a vehicle of social mobility was attacked by those who would "de-school" society precisely at the moment when newly emergent minorities looked to the schools as an essential means of escaping the poverty cycle. Economic growth, a principal mechanism for the reduction of poverty, was dismissed as spiritually and environmentally destructive by those dedicated to the "greening" of America. There even emerged a new attitude towards social programs: the Great Society was counted as little more than an ambitious failure; government had tried to do too much in the areas of housing, manpower training, education, and the like; the poor would be more effectively served by decentralized forms of government than by the infusion of funds from Washington.

Most liberals, it should be noted, did not share these views. But a significant, highly vocal, and influential minority did. The question is why. Why this massive crisis in liberal faith at a time when many of liberalism's most sought-after goals were nearing achievement, particularly in the area of civil rights? Many blamed the Vietnam War as the source of disillusionment and as the reason for the failure of Great Society programs. But this explanation does not account for the persistence of disillusionment on matters unrelated to foreign policy even after the war's conclusion.

There is, I believe, something far more fundamental at work here. It relates to how liberals see the state and society and, particularly, how liberals view working people and their representatives in organized labor.

This is certainly not a new problem. Liberals have historically held ambiguous, and very often contradictory, attitudes towards mass movements based on a majority of working people. Because liberalism is a movement based in the middle and professional classes, it has often been torn by contradictory elements: its genuine belief in social betterment and economic democracy frequently conflicts with attitudes and aspirations incompatible with the basic needs of working people. Thus liberals have been much more effective in winning structural reforms of the political system--reforms which, incidentally, made political power more accessible to influence by the middle and professional classes--than in bringing about changes in the economic order.

Until recently, the differences between liberals and labor were easily overshadowed by the fact of their political alliance. Since the time of the New Deal, as labor became more politically active and liberals became more involved with economic issues, liberalism saw the labor movement as its chief ally and embraced the overwhelming majority of labor's programs. As a result, liberals then saw working people as comprising their own movement's basic constituency and they drew up an agenda that swore to ensure as its first priority that working people would never again have to suffer the mass unemployment and widespread poverty generated by the depression.

But this commitment no longer seems to be binding. This is not to suggest that liberals have abandoned working people, but rather that there is a good deal of confusion in how they confront working people, and that this confusion is reflected in the programs and stances liberals adopt. For example, it is not unusual to hear the most simplistic attack on economic growth advanced by someone who at the same time is insistent that society must abolish poverty and racial inequality. It should be obvious by now that healthy and carefully regulated economic growth is a precondition for the further democratization of the economy and that a no-growth economy would intensify existing class differences. A person secure in his commitment to the betterment of the status of working people would never make such a foolish and irreconcilable set of propositions. Only ^{someone} who was uncertain about the direction social change will take could support such a viewpoint.

Current attitudes towards public education is another good example of the liberal dilemma. Americans have traditionally seen the public education system as an important instrument of democracy and upward mobility. And for all the myth-making which accompanies this view, there is a good deal of truth in it. American schools have in fact served as a means of upward mobility to a much more significant degree than have the school system of other countries, including those of the Communist nations. American mobility was particularly evident in the 1960s when the number of college classrooms was greatly expanded; when a higher percentage of students from the lower classes began to look to college as a means of attaining jobs less physically draining and more emotionally fulfilling than those held by their fathers; and when large numbers of minority students for the first time saw a college degree as a real possibility. Whatever problems surfaced, the record of American public education during the 1960s was not one of failure; if anything, it was a flawed but important movement towards the democratization of a basic social resource. And yet the response of important segments of liberalism was one of mounting criticism, coupled with growing disillusionment. There was no recognition of education's strengths; no acknowledgement of the role education had played in helping thousands of working-class youths to reach middle-class jobs. Even more unsettling were the new and "innovative" programs liberals advanced as educational panaceas: community control, the voucher system, performance contracting, radically unstructured classroom atmospheres. These proposals represented, first, a turning away from the traditional liberal approach to educational

Liberals and Workers →

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reform which had stressed smaller class sizes, improved teacher training, and remedial programs, especially for schools in poverty neighborhoods. Second, while these programs had initially been proposed by liberals, they also found widespread support among ideological conservatives: performance contracting and vouchers were embraced by education officials within the Nixon administration for the most conservative of reasons--they would cost the government practically nothing to implement. Third, those innovations that dealt primarily with the structure of education, rather than with improved performance in the schools appealed more to the particular needs of the middle class than to those of poor people, working people, and racial minorities. Widespread adoption of the voucher system, for example, would no doubt damage efforts at racial integration and for this reason, vouchers have consistently been opposed by civil rights organizations.

in recent years

Liberalism has ~~also~~ developed a new cultural attitude toward working people, particularly white working people, that marks a distinct break with past liberal beliefs. ^P During the 1930s, 1940s, and even 1950s working people were looked on with respect as hard^a working, decent individuals whose values were as worthy as those of the rest of society. Contrast this with the current liberal attitude towards teachers, policemen, and construction workers. As individuals these working people are no longer accorded respect in liberal opinion; as for the unions representing ^e these people, liberals often lump them together with corporations as comprising vast and powerful "vested interests" that operate against the public interest. The goals and the

influence of a teachers' union are thus equated with those of the oil lobby.

To maintain any semblance of public dignity, then, working people find that they must identify, not with their job or class background, but rather with their racial, ethnic, or sexual heritage. It appears that liberals have to a significant extent accepted the myth of America as the affluent society in which the role of the working class has been minimized or abolished altogether. Thus workers are no longer valued in terms of their economic roles, but are accepted only in the light of their biological or racial ancestry. To be a Jew or a Negro or an Irish-American is to bear the dignity conferred by a unique historical tradition set apart from the mainstream; to be a worker, on the other hand, is to bear the scorn of society more than its respect.

It is this refusal to view social phenomena in terms of their economic roots that led in the late 1960s to much of the confusion over the direction of the civil rights agenda. And to the extent that many of the Negro's traditional allies in the liberal community believed individual white racism - not the economic system - to be at the heart of racial inequality, to that degree they postponed the implementation of massive social and economic reforms which would, in fact, have helped transform the ghetto. For individual prejudice is not the root cause of black poverty, but rather the discriminatory functioning of a free-enterprise system which makes it unprofitable to build low-cost housing, encourages the exodus of jobs from the inner cities to the suburbs, discourages full employment, and fails to take

into consideration the trauma and disruption of cybernetics and automation. To blame white racism for the Negro's plight is not simply to forestall the possibility of fundamental economic transformation, it is also to imply that white working people-- particularly those whose economic situation is little different from that of blacks--are in large measure responsible for racial inequality. This, of course, makes cooperation and political alliance between white and black workers that much more difficult. X

A more fundamental consequence of liberal ferment is reflected in a new and as yet ill-defined attitude towards the function of the state. Here the position of liberals, on the one hand, and labor and the black community, on the other hand, can be clearly contrasted. Committed to its specific constituency of working people, and thus certain of its objectives, labor knows what it wants from the state: government policy which promotes healthy economic growth, policies and programs to ensure full employment, decent wages and working conditions, and government initiatives to ensure that basic social services--such as housing and health care--are so allocated as to be within the reach of the working class. The state, in other words, should adopt policies that provide more social and economic democracy. And similarly, the civil rights movement, because it speaks for a constituency of poor and working people, pursues an agenda differing little from labor's.

Unlike the labor and civil rights movements, liberals do not have a clearly defined constituency. But their conception of state power does not derive from philosophical abstractions; it is determined by their own needs and particularly by the needs of their political allies.

For many liberals, the economic activism of the New Deal warranted support above all because it was in the interests of their coalition partners in the labor movement, not because of traditional liberal dogma. For much the same reason, liberals endorsed massive federal involvement in a broad range of social and economic areas because another ally, southern blacks, could not achieve its goal of total freedom without the help of a strong, centralized federal government.

What most clearly differentiates the New Deal and the civil rights era from the current period is the degree of cohesiveness within the liberal coalition, together with the social movement generated by this cohesion. Liberals, labor, and later, the black community had sought a set of specific objectives, recognizing that they must move the state in a specific direction in order to realize their goals. There was a sense of order and unity in the formulation of strategies because the partners within the liberal coalition understood what they wanted from the state.

The sense of purpose of the New Deal and civil rights periods has today been replaced by an ambivalence over the role of the state precisely because liberals are ambivalent about whom the state should serve. The formerly strong consensus that the federal government should play the dominant role in formulating and implementing massive social programs no longer exists, primarily because many liberals have concluded that most Americans have now achieved middle-class status and don't need the services of government, and also because they are no longer enthusiastic about programs that do not benefit their own middle class. Instead of strategies to challenge the economic structure, they favor efforts to transform the structure of government, such as

community control and other forms of decentralization. Although it is generally viewed as a radical step in returning political power to ordinary people, the decentralization movement is at heart a conservative notion, a reformulation of the state's rights thesis of which the pre-civil rights South was so enamored. Decentralization demands that the most liberal arm of government--Congress and the White House--surrender power to the most conservative elements in the states and localities. Hence it is hardly surprising that the concept of decentralized power was so warmly embraced by former President Nixon.

Many of the problems discussed here may, hopefully, have been resolved in the past few months, although it is unfortunate that it should take a rapidly deteriorating economy to refocus the attention of society on the precarious state of working people. For it is working people who have borne the brunt of mass unemployment, particularly in the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.

It has taken an unemployment rate in excess of ^{nine}~~seven~~ percent, the highest of the post-war era, to demonstrate that lifestyle and liberation are not the central issues of our time, except insofar as everyone's lifestyle and freedom is threatened by the persisting failures of the economic system.

Thus ~~it~~ is essential that liberals rethink their basic attitudes--towards the state, towards their programmatic priorities, and most importantly, towards the working class. Liberals have played a central role in the struggles for social progress in America, but they have done so only in partnership with other progressive forces, particularly ~~the civil rights movement~~ with the mass constituency of labor. Failure to understand this

fundamental point will not only perpetuate the crisis of liberalism, it will certainly mean the continuation and worsening of the infinitely deeper crisis that America, and much of the rest of the world, is undergoing.

June 4, 1976

Ms. Roberta Berry
Poynter Project
410 North Park Avenue
University of Indiana
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

Dear Ms. Berry:

Here are ten of the points which I will incorporate in my speech for the Addition Locke Roach lecture.

1. Freedom and equality require an economic base.
2. Blacks can accomplish their goals only through political coalition.

The coalition of the 1970s is more genuine and stable than the Republican southern black coalition of the first reconstruction.

3. The political coalition which blacks seek to build must be based on economic issues.

4. The reconstruction period had been misunderstood. Without Reconstruction the 14th and 15th amendments could not have been passed and it would be impossible for the federal government to protect the civil and political rights of blacks.

5. American society has changed in ways that make a rollback like that which followed the end of the Second Reconstruction unlikely.

6. Nixon's Southern strategy was an attempt to repeat the formula that ended the first reconstruction.

7. Reform movements in the United States seldom stick with the most important problems. They are frequently unwilling to see a reform all the way through to a fundamental economic and social transformation.

8. The labor movement is a principal bulwark against retreat on civil rights.

9. Unlike a century ago, the black worker is a part of the economic mainstream.

Ms. Roberta Berry

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10. Despite the despair in the ghetto and despite 14 percent unemployment this is a hopeful period for blacks. Important economic gains have been made and blacks have political leverage. With the intelligent use of political power, the economic dimension of the civil rights agenda can be completed.

I hope that this material will be of help to your committee in planning for my lecture. I am looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday.

Sincerely,

Bayard Rustin
President

BR/hh

Have We Reached the End of the Second Reconstruction

Delivered for the Addison Locke Roache Lecture
Indiana University, Gary, Indiana

June 9, 1976

by Bayard Rustin

History is rarely so simple and neat as to fit its flow to the arbitrary divisions of decades and centuries. The bicentennial of the American revolution is more than a patriotic celebration. Because America traces its origin to a set of ideas and principles, we have a unique opportunity to re-examine our past and to plan for the future of our democratic values.

The history of America has been a constant and unending battle between the impulse to expand the democratic and egalitarian promise of the Declaration of Independence into social practice and the inertia of privilege and prejudice which would restrict democracy to a fortunate few.

Viewed from the perspective of 1776, when the author of the declaration that "all men are equal" was a slave-owner, we can be justifiably proud of how far we have moved toward full implementation of our democratic rights. We can also be optimistic about the ability and willingness of America to solve its still pressing social problems.

But by coincidence, we celebrate another anniversary in 1976, an anniversary that is tragic and sad. One hundred years ago the first reconstruction came to an end. The aftermath of that failure has had a more deeper and lasting effect on the structure of

American society than all but a few events in our history.

The Reconstruction period is the most neglected period of American history. And when not neglected, it has been woefully misunderstood. I would suggest that it has been neglected and misunderstood because America's collective conscience is guilty. For the end of Reconstruction meant that America had turned its back on its democratic principles.

If all of American history can be seen as a struggle to make the principles of the Declaration of Independence a reality, reconstruction was the most noble and heroic struggle for democracy in our first century. Historians have called reconstruction the only authentic attempt at a social revolution in the United States. That judgement was certainly true until the combined effect of the civil rights movement and legislation of the 1960s and the Great Society.

The Civil Rights revolution of the 1960s was a continuation of the uncompleted struggle for social transformation of Reconstruction. The civil rights revolution would have been impossible without reconstruction. Only during the period of reconstruction was the passage of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments possible. Without the period of radical reconstruction, the federal government might to this day lack the constitutional authority to protect blacks from legal and political discrimination.

The future of American democracy will be determined by the question of whether the second reconstruction will like the first, be terminated by an unholy alliance of the opponents of equality and political opportunists. The situation today resembles in many ways

the end of reconstruction. Tremendous reforms have met increasing resistance as important and powerful forces seek to limit and, if possible, overturn change for their political and economic advantage. Now as then, many have grown weary of the struggle for democracy and others bitterly resent the changes that have been made. The essence of the political decision that brought an end to the first reconstruction was the consensus that the race problem was the South's problem and could only be handled there. Today there is a growing sentiment that the problems of the cities are the cities' problem and can only be handled there. And more and more people operate on the assumption that the problems of the poor can only be solved by the poor.

Indeed, the criticisms of Southern whites of the Freedman's Bureau sound more than a little familiar to our ears. The Bureau was attacked for meddling in matters that were not properly within the jurisdiction of the federal government. It was denounced for stirring up discontent among blacks and filling them with false hopes. It was criticized for employing corrupt and inefficient administrators who wasted federal money.

The state's rights plea of 1876 is again echoed in the anti-Washington rhetoric of 1976. The Social Darwinism of 1876 is paralleled by the new intellectual fashion that disputes the possibility, and even the desirability, of equality.

These observations are unsettling, but they comfort some liberals for they prove just how right the liberals are in blaming the current situation entirely on conservatives, reactionaires, and

opportunistic politicians. But there are other similarities between 1876 and 1976 which liberals might not be so eager to hear me raise. One reason for the failure of Radical Reconstruction was that the reformers soon grew tired of reconstruction and moved on to other causes--civil service reform, tariff reform, defense of the gold standard, and prohibition. In our era we have seen the same thing. Reformers began to grow tired of the civil rights movement soon after 1965 and moved on to one cause after another--the Vietnam war, ecology, women's liberation, and the decriminalization of marijuana, to name just a few.

But if the similarities between 1876 and 1976 are to inform our analysis of what must be done, we must do more than list parallels. We must seek the reasons for the failure of reconstruction. One most fundamental reason for the failure of reconstruction was that many radicals acted on idealistic assumptions, while ignoring the sociology and economics of freedom. Most radicals in the 1860s believed that the black was what slavery had made him; give the former slave equal rights, they thought, and he would quickly be transformed into an industrious and responsible citizen. Many reformers in the 1960s just as naively thought that the problems of blacks were solely the result of legal discrimination. Abolish Jim Crow, they thought, and blacks will quickly be equal. And, to be honest, this unconscious assumption was not without its power in the black movement.

The parallel between the reformers of the 1860s and the 1960s is not accidental; it is rooted in the very nature of American