

Congressional Black Caucus

306-307 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES-ANNEX
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515 (202) 225-1691

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SUMMATION OF POSITION STATEMENTS

presented to the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
(August 21, 1974)

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

The following is a summation of position statements by members of the Congressional Black Caucus submitted to the President of the United States of America on August 21, 1974 for his consideration. It is our firm belief that these statements are an accurate reflection of the views and attitudes of our constituents in particular and the minority community in general. As such we hope they will receive the serious attention and deliberation they deserve.

INFLATION

The economic policies of the previous Administration can be labeled only as total failures. Recent history and poor economic performance indicate economists advising the Administration misconstrue the causes of inflation. High interest rates, reduction of funding for critical national needs and social programs, and creating unemployment have not succeeded and are not the answer. The major social and economic gains made by Black Americans during the 1960's are now being eroded by the twin evils of inflation and unemployment.

The median income for Black families did not grow in comparison to White family income, and has actually declined, from 0.61 percent in 1969 to 0.58 percent now. This is even more pronounced since the income of Blacks in the upper end (\$10,000 - \$15,000 and over) rose more rapidly as compared with those Blacks under \$3,000. In 1973, about 1.5 million Black families (28% of all Black families) were below the low-income level. Their number has actually increased over the last four years.

Inflation has had its sharpest impact on Blacks. Its effect on welfare and food stamps benefits caused poor and welfare recipients to suffer declines in purchasing power. Food prices for Black consumers since December 1972 increased by 26.4 percent (as compared with 25.9 percent for White consumers). In July 1974, the unemployment rate for Black workers stood at 9.4 percent while that of Black teenagers rose to 35.3 percent.

It is obvious that inflation is only a symptom of serious economic dislocations which have been with us since the beginning of the Vietnam War. If anything, the repeated failure of any combination of fiscal, monetary and income policies to have any apparent long-term impact on either inflation or unemployment should readily indicate that solutions dealing only with symptoms instead of basic causes not only do not work, but that such stop-and-go policy applications cause even greater problems over time.

We propose a number of recommendations for immediate action that will begin to solve the causes of inflation and eliminate its most deleterious effects.

1. Public service employment of at least one million jobs at an annual funding of about \$10 billion with a substantial amount of this allocated to Title II of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.
2. Elimination of the tremendous slack in the military budget.
3. Continuation of OEO with increased funding.
4. A major overhaul of the structure of the tax system including the elimination of government handouts and subsidies to inefficient business enterprises and the tightening up of existing tax loopholes.
5. The re-institution of a wage-price control commission with the power to curb prices, profits, and interest rates as well as wages.

HOUSING AND MINORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As recent as August 15th, the House of Representatives passed the Conference Report on S. 3066, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. While the bill addresses itself to the critical housing problems confronting us, there is much in the legislation that we cannot support. With this in mind we make the following recommendations.

1. That \$22,000,000 be placed under HUD management for counseling on tenants in housing owned or subsidized by the government.
2. That all housing funds impounded during the past year be released at once.
3. That the Administration create a program to provide employment for tenants in housing being subsidized by the government.
4. That the Administration demonstrate moral leadership in the area of equal opportunity in the access of available housing to Blacks in the suburbs of the nation.
5. That the Administration provide strong and positive leadership in formulating a policy under which limited dividends would be available to non-profit organizations which operate housing especially under the 236 housing program

It is only through such measures as these that we the members of the Congressional Black Caucus feel the nation will avert a disaster in the housing field.

Today, Black Americans and other minority groups are actively and vigorously seeking full participation in the economic process. The seventies have brought recognition of the fact that equal justice and civil rights are linked to economic security, and that political empowerment must be undergirded by economic empowerment.

It has become quite clear to us that there is a critical need to consolidate the fragmented governmental efforts designed to assist minority enterprise.

Furthermore, if minority enterprise is to become a viable entity in our economic system, the relationship between minority enterprise and the larger private business sector must be improved. To this end, we urge the President to create a Task Force to explore opportunities in the private sector for minority business, with the goal of insuring minority business participation in meaningful projects such as the Alaskan Pipe Line, and Mass Transit programs.

The state of the economy and the recent energy crisis have severely affected minority enterprise, and the unemployment rate for Black citizens is twice as large as the national rate of unemployment. Obviously, this situation reduces individual saving capacity and minority banks face a serious reserve problem.

We call upon the President to use the full power of his office to increase governmental programs to improve the participation of minority citizens in the economic life of this nation.

AFRICA

As you so wisely recognized in your speech to Congress, the world economic interdependence of all peoples is a fact of life. We hope that this interdependence will be recognized and reflected in the future policies of your Administration.

However, we are concerned that, at the same time, Africa has been given a very low priority in our overall foreign policy planning. For example, the recently-established mechanism to review our foreign policy - the Commission on the Reorganization of the Government for Foreign Policy which was just created by Congress last year - does not include Africa in its planning. Further evidence of the low priority which Africa is given is the fact that in the meetings with ambassadors recently, the President did not meet with one African ambassador as an African. It is our hope that this Administration will reverse this state of affairs and raise Africa to a level of priority more consistent with its increasing significance to the United States.

CIVIL RIGHTS

In a speech before the National Urban League Convention in San Francisco, the President correctly pointed out that electoral politics holds the key to social and economic progress for Black and poor Americans in our society.

We hasten to add that we agree with that assessment wholeheartedly. For Black Americans to actively participate in and to have their voices heard in the major policy decisions affecting our nation and our lives, we must join the ranks of elected officials at the national, state and local levels throughout this nation.

If electoral politics is the key to Black social progress, then access to the voting booths of this nation is the mold from which that key is formed. Since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, some two million Black and poor voters have been added to voting rolls across this nation, particularly in the South. These Black voters, in a demonstration of their commitment to and faith in the democratic process, have gone to the polls in record numbers, and elected more than 1,400 Black officials in the South alone. It is this tremendous growth in Black voter participation that has given rise to what many now call the "new South" - a South based on mutual respect and cooperation between Black and White voters and Black and White politicians.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act will expire in August 1975. When this historic legislation was passed, it was designed to eliminate all practices which had prevented political participation by Blacks in the South. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act was specifically written into the law by Congress to insure unhindered access to the polls in those jurisdictions covered by the Act. Section 5 prohibited states covered by the Act from enforcing any new law, practice or procedure with respect to voting until they obtained a determination from the United States Attorney General that it is not discriminatory in purpose and will not be discriminatory in its effect.

The importance of that rule then and today is borne out by the fact that the Justice Department disallowed 63 changes affecting voting rights in 1971, 50 changes in 1972, and 47 changes in 1973 because they violated Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The proposed Post Card Voter Registration Bill, pending in the Congress, would provide a mechanism for the disenfranchised to secure their rightful access to the voting system. Both the continued effective enforcement of the Voting Rights Act and the enactment of the Post Card Voter Registration Bill are necessary to protect our elementary voting rights in a democratic society.

If the status of Blacks compares unfavorably to that of Whites, the status of Black women is even more severe. Black women are more likely to be in the work force than their White counterparts in order to supplement the income of their husbands. About forty-nine percent of the Black mothers with children under five were members of the labor market in 1973, seventeen percentage points higher than the comparable proportion of White mothers. Because their work experience is relatively low, unemployment among Black women stood at eight percent last July, compared to 4.8 percent for White women.

Pending in the Congress are numerous proposals to improve the economic status of women; equal credit, flexible hours in Federal employment, insurance availability, pension reform, family planning services, and coverage under national health insurance for maternity and fertility related health expenses. If the new Administration is serious about representing over half the nation's population, it will seriously consider and support the best proposals in these areas.

The employment picture for both Blacks and women would be brighter if Federal recruitment, testing, and promotion policies were made more equitable. Enforcement of the mandate of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance to insure equal employment opportunities for potential and actual employees of companies with Federal contracts is a must. Finally, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission must be granted cease and desist power if it is to be effective.

Ten states are less populous than the District of Columbia; but, they have 36 congressional representatives - 20 Senators and 16 Representatives. These ten states have 20 percent of the votes in the Senate and nearly 4 percent of the votes in the House. The District of Columbia has no votes in either body and no representation in the Senate. The continued denial of representation to the residents of the District of Columbia flies in the face of the Constitution and is an insult to all Americans.

The issues addressed above involve the basic rights of American citizens. That they must be raised is the result of an historic legacy of racism and sexism. The solution to these issues requires no large outlay of Federal funds. For the most part it only requires the effective enforcement of existing laws. All that is needed is the commitment of the Executive and the Legislature to make America a free and equitable society.

HEALTH

The test of America's commitment to the idea of equality, the test of America's concern for those of its citizens who are unable to help themselves is the manner in which this country provides for the health care problems of its underprivileged, its aged, its infirm, its chronically and mentally ill. So far the actions of the Federal government to assist those unable to totally and adequately provide for their own health care leaves much to be desired.

The United States ranks 15th in infant mortality.

The United States ranks 27th in male life expectancy at birth.

Further, high income people are three and one half times more likely than low income people to have an annual routine physical examination;

Children from high-income families are four and one-half times more likely than those from low-income families to visit a pediatrician;

Women from high income families are four and a half times more likely than those from low-income families to visit an Obstetrician-Gynecologist; and one third of women who deliver babies in public hospitals receive no prenatal care;

Thirty-five percent of inner city children have not received protective immunization as compared with twenty-seven percent of children living in small towns;

Disability due to illness or accident is 50 percent higher for the poor than for the non-poor;

One-fourth of all people with family incomes less than \$3,000 have chronic conditions which limit their activity; and

Infant mortality rate for non-whites is double that for whites.

The objectives of a national health policy should guarantee: that every individual have access to adequate, high quality medical care; that no family should be forced to suffer severe financial hardship for needed medical care; and that a national health policy, which certainly will utilize large federal expenditures to implement, should curb the high cost of maintaining a healthy population, a cost which from 1967 to 1972 increased at the annual rate of 12.2 percent. Further, the government commitment to Professional Standard Review Organizations should be maintained.

Primary health care M.D.'s comprise less than 30 percent of the nation's doctors. If greater emphasis is to be placed upon improving the delivery and capability of the health system, greater emphasis must be given to training physicians and para medical personnel to make health more accessible. Greater emphasis must also be given to the training of young Black men and women for careers in medicine.

At the same time, we strongly endorse the full implementation of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT) administered by the Social and Rehabilitation Service of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The program strongly emphasizes early identification and treatment of medical problems. An estimated 10 million children under the age of 21 are eligible for care under this program. A preliminary report indicated that the screening rate may only be 7 percent of those eligible. This program was adopted by the Congress in 1967 and is contained in P.L. 90-248. The failure to implement this program is a national tragedy. We urge a total commitment to its full implementation.

In the President's address to the Congress, on August 12, 1974, he asked "why don't we write a good health bill in 1974...?" We think that we can and we should. We ask that the above be seriously considered in so doing.

NARCOTICS

No law enforcement measure has proven as successful as the agreement reached between the United States and Turkey to eradicate the source of illicit drugs by placing a ban on the cultivation of the opium poppy in Turkey. There is little doubt that the ban made a positive and substantial contribution toward eliminating the heroin menace. There has been a dramatic decrease in both the quantity and quality of heroin on the streets of America, and a corresponding decrease in the number of heroin addicts. The Drug Enforcement Administration reports a reduction in the estimated number of heroin addicts by more than 60 percent over the past two years. Correspondingly, the number of heroin overdose deaths and drug related criminal activity has shown a marked decrease.

In New York City (where over half of the nation's heroin addicts reside), the purity of a "bag" of heroin has declined from 7.7 percent to 3.7 percent. The number of addicts admitted to New York correctional institutions has decreased by 36 percent. The New York City police department reports that drug related burglaries have decreased by 17 percent.

In light of all of this progress directly related to the cessation of opium production in Turkey, the announced resumption of opium poppy production in seven Turkish provinces poses a serious threat to the health and safety of our communities.

On Aug. 5, 1974, a concurrent resolution was passed by the House expressing the sense of Congress (an identical resolution is pending in the Senate) that the President of the United States should take the leadership in seeking to prevent the Turkey government from resuming opium poppy production. We urge the President to support this resolution.

Critics of the Turkish ban claimed that a shortage for opium based medicines has developed because of the ban. A GAO report suggests that present demand for opium based medicines is increasing faster than the supply. However, the degree to which there is a pending crisis is questionable. The shortage of 1973 was directly attributed to a drought in India which produces essentially all of the opium exported to nonproducing countries for legitimate medical purposes.

Although Turkish opium production is the most important factor in decreasing the supply of heroin in our communities, it is one aspect of a multi-pronged attack that the Ford Administration should wage against drug abuse. The other aspects of the fight against drug abuse also require direct and immediate action.

Below are those areas we think need critical attention:

1. Heroin from Mexico

Increased law enforcement operations with the government of Mexico is necessary to prevent the increasing flow of brown heroin from coming across the Mexican border. Brown heroin has been filling the void created by the Turkish ban.

2. Funding of rehabilitation programs

The domestic emphasis should again be placed on the funding of rehabilitation programs. The present federal drug program budget calls for a decrease of \$46 million from \$791 million to \$745 million. Of the \$46 million reduction, \$35 million have been eliminated from the rehabilitation area.

3. Psychotropic Substances

The Senate must be urged to ratify the Convention of Psychotropic Substances, S. 2544. This would provide regulatory controls on the manufacture, distribution, exportation and importation of substances like barbituates and amphetamines. It has been substantiated that the United States manufactures the psychotropic

substances which are exported and find their way back to the U.S. illicit market, primarily through Mexico.

4. Opium Alternatives

Federally funded research toward alternatives to satisfying medical needs for opium without increasing supply is needed to begin to eliminate opium importation to the U.S. The GAO study indicates that the present projected supply will not meet our projected legitimate national need.

EDUCATION

America's educational institutions are failing to do the job they were created to perform - and this is true for Black children and White children alike. Although the signing of the Education Amendments of 1974 will exhibit a marked concern and support for the education of American children, there still exists a major crisis in the financing of public education. School districts everywhere are faced with the problems of dwindling resources and rising costs. The school districts which have the highest concentration of poor and minority students face the most severe fiscal crises.

In the area of postsecondary education, more attention and funding must be given to Black colleges and universities by the Federal government. The Black colleges and universities to this nation have served and continue to serve this nation as a national resource, producing the majority of Black graduates. Policy implications for these institutions of higher learning, for they portray the conditions of Blacks, minorities and similarly situated students in our society.

We think it is vital that Title III of the Higher Education Section of the Education Amendments of 1972, be given continued support. This program entitled, Strengthening Developing Institutions, has been very important to Black institutions. Also, the Federal Student Financial Aid Program must be shifted to primarily support higher income groups, as some fear it may. 70 percent or more of Black colleges cannot continue without financial aid.

A commitment by the Executive Branch to include these institutions more representatively, and the programmatic activities of departments and agencies other than the Department of Health, Education and Welfare are critical and imperative. We request that in the development and subsequent changes in the education policy of the Administration that the President allow us to provide him with our insights as to the direction that policy might take.

TRANSPORTATION

The energy shortage and the necessity of environmental protection in urban areas have combined to warn this country of the urgent need for more and better public transit. There is general agreement on the need for federal assistance in the area of urban mass transit. Recognition of this need has been demonstrated by the passage of the Federal Mass Transportation Act of 1974.

The major question of this Bill revolves around the amount of funding to be authorized. We recognize and concur in the President's concern for inflation, but an investment in mass transportation, more than anything else in the federal budget, will directly and positively affect the economy by providing immediate employment both in the manufacture of vehicles and the construction of the system itself. The best way to limit federal expenditures in the area of mass transportation is construction in the shortest number of years.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus represent areas where existing rail transit systems are running up large deficits. Other members of the Caucus come from cities such as Atlanta, Houston, Detroit, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Baltimore which are greatly in need of new transit systems. The enactment of the Federal Mass Transportation Act of 1974 would greatly assist our nation's public transportation services and those citizens that depend on these services.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The national nightmare that propelled the President into office has inundated us with examples of the mortal diseases that plague the institutions responsible for administering criminal justice in this country. The system has long been used in the name of efficiency to exploit powerless nonwhites and the poor and promote the interests of whites and the affluent. Equal access to the courts - a right secured by the Constitution and consistently supported by case-law - is hardly a reality today. Oppressed minorities cannot compete economically for equal legal services.

A report just released shows that in the South - where a majority of Black reside - the ratio of Black lawyers to residents is 1:16,000, while it is 1:450 for whites. There are no Black federal judges in the South, compared to a Black representation nationally on the federal bench of 7 percent, and 1 percent at all judicial levels. This is a sobering statistic, considering that Blacks constitute 13 percent of the Nation's people. The prospect of future Black visibility in our courts, other than as victims, is dim, for the same report revealed that Blacks comprise only 3 percent of the student bodies of the 17 major law schools in the South.

The correlation between poverty and crime is still inescapable. The prison population confined for robbery and violent crimes associated with the urban ghetto has doubled in 10 years and now makes up 41 percent of all those behind federal bars - a jump of 22 percent since fiscal 1963.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which the Nixon regime touted as the panacea for the soaring crime rate, has proved thus far to be little more than a funnel to states for bigger police arsenals, and, as such, is cosmetic rather than corrective. Indeed, after six years of operations, LEAA's house is hardly in order.

The few facts just outlined are merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of indicating the seriousness of the whole problem area of crime and criminal justice. It is of particular concern to us because our people are more consistently the victims of its oppressive cycle.

GENERAL REVENUE SHARING

The State and Local Fiscal Assistance Act of 1972, commonly known as General Revenue Sharing, can be utilized as a valuable fiscal tool in alleviating the impact of the present inflationary spiral now facing this country. However, it has become apparent that certain essential changes must be made prior to the expiration of that legislation in 1976. As a practical matter it is recognized that funds under the Revenue Sharing program can be utilized to meet the inflationary problems created as a result of the high unemployment rate and expensive cost of consumer goods in the inner cities of large urban communities.

To insure that Revenue Sharing will be distributed in as equitable a manner as possible and still maintaining the original legislative intent of program flexibility, we offer these recommendations which will have a direct impact upon the equalization of both the Revenue Sharing distribution and the final expenditures:

1. That the Revenue Sharing formula be adjusted so that poor urban communities receive a larger portion of fund allocations.
2. That the 20 percent minimum be removed so that wealthier communities receive only their formula share.
3. That a need factor be incorporated into the formula.
4. That a provision be enacted to compel the Bureau of the Census to correct the 1970 undercount of minorities.
5. That the President issue a Presidential directive to Treasury and the Office of Revenue Sharing relative to enforcement of Civil Rights provisions.

6. That the civil rights sanctions for non-compliance be made as strong as other non-compliance provisions.
7. That citizen participation be made mandatory.
8. That recipient governments be required to publish copies of the Planned Use Report at least 60 days before that report is submitted to the Office of Revenue Sharing.
9. That the recipient government be required to justify changes made in the Actual Use Report when those changes are at variance with the Planned Use Report.

MASS COMMUNICATIONS

The following policy recommendations allow the implementation of needed techniques and methodologies designed to develop credibility by structuring an interactive media - a communications design that allows decision-makers to receive measurable feedback from a broad national constituency. Implementation of these steps will consciously build the Black community into the structure and performance of the U.S. communications industry.

1. The new White House staff should include Blacks on the press secretary's staff and the White House news corps needs to include more Black journalists from radio, television and the press.
2. The President must move knowledgeable and trained Black communications technocrats into policy making positions at Federal Communications Commission, Office of Telecommunications Policy, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, International Radio Board, Federal Trade Commission and the Senate Commerce Committee (Senate Communications Subcommittee), House Commerce Committee (House Communications Subcommittee). Authorities on cable policy making boards and commissions must include Black persons.
3. The President should publicly support the concepts and establish boards/committees to research the implementation of government subsidies to Black persons gaining broadcast licenses; and the Federal Communications Commission giving special consideration to minority ownership in deciding which group should be awarded a broadcast licence.
4. Recommendations should be made to actively include the National Association of Television and Radio Artists (Cecil Hale, President) and its membership (primarily Black D.J.'s, television personalities and record industry) in circulating information concerning local, state and Federal preparations for the Bicentennial celebrations.
5. The Chief Executive must be open to structured comments from information specialists in the public and private sector for news and information on international affairs, in particular African affairs.
6. We recommend that President Ford take positive steps to assure an "open candid" media involving Black persons and organizations in the origination and distribution of a foresaid services.
7. The only way that the present Chief Executive and his Administration can avoid the past Administration's gross violations of the public trust is to open the doors of the White House and develop a significant constituency with the American public and within the international communities. Lines of accountability and communications designed to include African-Americans must be established.

AMNESTY

Mr. President, we cannot ignore this country's crying need for moral leadership at this crucial point in our history. The agonies of Vietnam have come home to us all, even in the sad facts of Watergate and its many mutations. Cynicism and moral decay will prevail unless a fresh and convincing moral tone is provided here and now. This mood is not erased by the spectre of de facto amnesty for convicted felons who held public trust. Messrs. Agnew and Kleindienst may well be followed by others, including Richard Nixon. But vengeance, even when righteous, will not heal. If we are really going to bring about a reconciliation among America's citizens, let us begin by forgiving. But let us finally be big enough and wise enough to forgive those young men who acted, not out of greed or avarice, but out of deep moral and religious convictions, and grant a general amnesty for those who refused to participate in the saddest spectacle of our history. Let us finally bring the boys home - to their families and loved ones, to their lost lives, to a nation which needs all its people working together to meet great challenges.

We can only conclude with the words of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "Governments can err, Presidents do make mistakes, but the immortal Dante tells us that Divine Justice weighs the sins of the cold-blooded and the sins of the warm-hearted in a different scale. Better the occasional faults of a government living in the spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference."

CONCLUSION

The issues and recommendations we have discussed constitute Black legislative priorities. But in a larger sense they reflect the priorities of America in general. Only when the problems of America's most disadvantaged citizens are solved can we have true stability and unity. Inflation is a symptom of serious and long-neglected needs in our nation. It will take the combined efforts of both the Executive and the Congress to meet these needs. The recommendations presented here are but a first step toward a better quality of life for all Americans.