

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
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Political system is the only viable solution to problems of minorities

by ARNOLD SAWISLAK

WASHINGTON — The day before the riots began in Miami, the NAACP in New York announced a \$500,000 program to register and get young blacks to the polls this year. The two events are mentioned together because they have a connection. From everything that has been said and written about Miami, it appears that blacks there have little leadership and even less political clout.

It would be foolish to say that there would have been no riot in Miami had the blacks there been more powerful politically. But it is almost sure that many of the complaints of Miami blacks would have been dealt with had they wielded more influence in and on government.

This is not civics book theory. It is based on fact. Blacks in other cities — from Atlanta, Detroit, Newark and Los Angeles for four — have pooled their political power and gotten results.

Those results included the election of black mayors, but more than that they included a voice, often for the first time, in the way those cities are run and in the distribution of public resources. Perhaps more to the point, they frequently brought reform of police departments and their dealings with minorities.

It is obvious that the problems of disadvantaged people in this country cannot be solved solely by political action. It will take far more than the election of blacks to public office to solve the economic, educational, health, housing and social problems of the nation's minorities. It will take among other things, intelligently planned, efficiently operated public programs and a lot of money over a long period of time to make them work.

During the 1960s, it was shown that the majority can be shamed, cajoled or even frightened into providing some solutions. But when the pressure is eased, the programs peter out. More riots might start them up again, but they also might trigger even harsher repression.

The political system provides the one legitimate way to commit the country to long range solutions of social problems. People who use their voting power to reward their friends and punish their enemies in this country usually get what they want. Using the vote is considered the smart way to win.

That is what the NAACP is trying to impress on young blacks in its registration and get-out-the-vote effort. It made clear from the start that the purpose of its campaign goes beyond simply signing up a lot of new voters — it wants to counter the pressure now being applied on Congress to balance the federal budget at the expense of social programs.

Said Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP: "The largest group of unregistered potential voters in the country today are our nation's youth. Our political action program therefore will specifically focus on registering and educating them and getting them to the polls."

"In effect, we will create a massive new army of voters who will answer those legislators who vote against their interests in the new budget."

Many politicians won't be impressed by Hooks' words this year. But if the NAACP succeeds in building a voting bloc of young blacks in 1980, you can be sure attention will be paid the next election year.

Industry spokesmen: Chronic ills affecting steel manufacturers

by JAMES A. WHITE

NEW YORK — Most American businesses can look on the recession like a hangover — it will quickly pass. Not so for the steel industry.

The economic slump certainly will cut domestic steel shipments 10 percent, possibly 15-20 percent, this year. Even after recovery, steel's problems will remain. The industry's weakness is chronic, with any real cure years away.

So said steel executives at the industry's annual meeting sponsored by the American Iron and Steel Institute last week in New York. The message was not new — just more strident in placing the blame for steel's woes on Washington rather than Pittsburgh.

While foreign governments seemingly do nothing but help their steelmakers, steelmen contend, Washington constantly hurts domestic producers by allowing unfairly priced imports, requiring tough environmental standards and taxing away the money the industry needs to rebuild itself.

The result, they say, has been the loss of 100,000 domestic jobs over the last decade and the prospect over the next decade that the United States will become as dependent on foreign steel as it is today on foreign oil.

"There seems to be a widespread misconception — a misconception evidently shared by some, not all, of the present administration — that these trends are somehow magically going to reverse themselves overnight," said U.S. Steel Chairman David M. Roderick in the keynote speech to 1,000 steel executives.

The "some, not all" was added to Roderick's prepared text to soften the condemnation of the Carter administration. But steel executives overall did little to mask displeasure with Washington that time being lost in taking the corrective steps needed to revitalize the industry.

The industry believes it needs to spend \$7 billion a year in

the 1980s to get out of its slump, compared with its \$2.9 billion annual average in the last decade. A forthcoming Washington study on steel's needs is expected to fix a lower price tag.

U.S. producers say they have to catch up with the new investment made by foreign makers.

"Our problem with technology is not knowing what to do but in having the resources to do it," said William E. Dennis, vice president of AISI, the industry's chief trade association. The U.S. industry, he said, "has been liquidating itself due to the fact that depreciation and net income has been inadequate over a decade to replace capacity."

The problem feeds on itself. "The current image of the industry as being low in profitability, capital-starved and a government whipping boy does not make it an attractive place for bright young people to pursue a career," Dennis said.

Steel's research investment also has been deflected in favor of projects that promise a shorter-run payoff.

Some steelmen think the means are at hand to increase efficiency.

"The industry must find ways to do a better job with what it has and that means it must focus its attention not on investment in new equipment but rather on more efficient use of people," said S. Edward Renner, vice president of Jones and Laughlin Steel Corp.

Researchers from Canada's Dominion Foundries and Steel Ltd. said the industry can reduce its energy consumption by 30 percent if it puts today's best know-how to work.

Whatever the industry does on its own, Lewis W. Foy, who shortly will step down as chairman of Bethlehem Steel Corp., and other executives feel it won't be enough without help from Washington.

"Unless things change, the worst is yet to come," Foy warned. "It's a bleak outlook but it may be inevitable unless the government acts."

Americans' marriages to autos are not headed for divorce court

by DICK WEST

WASHINGTON — While economic and energy conditions appear largely to blame for the current slump in new car sales, gossips are whispering that America's love affair with the automobile is going sour.

I never stoop to talebearing myself. But if you find Lee Iacocca writing to Ann Landers, you'll know the affair is at least temporarily on the rocks.

Oh, well, it was swell while it lasted. Fabulous, in fact. As celebrated in song and story, America's love affair with the automobile was so deep and abiding not even the Edsel could put it asunder.

What's to blame for the rift? As is so often the case when you come to the end of an affair, you can't really single out any one thing as causing romance to fade.

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Some experts in matters of the heart say the automobile had become less sensitive to America's needs and begun to take its lover for granted. Other counselors in human-auto relations suggest that for too long America was too blinded by love to recognize its adored one's faults.

Now, having finally discovered the automobile was less than perfect, America feels betrayed.

There was a certain amount of immaturity in America's infatuation, they say. America needs to grow up and put aside its foolish fancies and accept the automobile for what it is.

If these are the reasons for the estrangement, it's as much

one's fault as the other's. Maybe it isn't too late to patch things up.

A trial separation may be the wisest course. That way they can see how they get along without each other and perhaps be more willing to take each other back.

Both should see lawyers and try to work out an amicable settlement. While these situations are always messy, much of the strain and heartache can be ameliorated if financial bitterness can be avoided.

After all, America has been supporting the automobile for years. It certainly would not be fair, now that the bloom is off the rose, for America simply to cast the automobile aside like an old shoe and leave it to shift for itself.

In Chrysler's case, Congress has approved a program of government-guaranteed loans, but I should think almost any would be more equitable and appropriate.

Even if they aren't hitting it off too well these days, I just can't believe America and the automobile are headed for Splitsville — not after all they have been through together.

It sounds more as if America were in a mid-life crisis, casting goo-goo eyes at bicycles, subways and just about anything else that moves.

Well, the automobile is more than just another pretty conveyance. Eventually, I trust, America will come to its senses and realize it and the automobile were made for each other. If not, let's hope they can at least still be friends.

Marijuana

Harvard researchers offer advice on its use

by PATRICIA McCORMACK

Kids do more than play in the "grass" around the schoolhouse. A lot are already beyond experimenting with marijuana — about one-sixth between the ages of 12 and 17 are "users."

Among high school seniors, about 10 percent admit daily pot use.

Questions about the risks of marijuana to adolescents — and pre-adolescents — are coming up more frequently these days, says June's "Harvard Medical School Health Letter," because younger kids are using the stuff now and larger amounts are being used.

"Only in the past 15 years has marijuana become a truly common recreational drug," the Health Letter said.

"By 1977, some 43 million Americans had tried marijuana and over 16 million used the drug regularly."

What will be the effect on the physical and mental health of this young generation? Will America itself grow soft as a result of pot?

"Little is known about marijuana's long-term effects on children and adolescents," the Harvard experts said in the newsletter edited by Dr. C. Timothy Johnson and put out by the Medical School's Department of Continuing Education in Cambridge, Mass.

"Thus, their widespread use of the drug is a form of mass self-experimentation.

"Even if marijuana proves to have few or no adverse effects on the health of young people, the time they spend 'high' is time that could be spent in normal learning and physical activity.

"Growing up should be as drug-free as possible."

The Harvard experts said research over the last 10 years leads to these recommendations to parents who wish to discourage their kids from using marijuana:

1. Limit access to the drug. If a school or other area becomes identified as a source of supply, parents can take action to change matters.

2. Since peers are the major influence on youngsters' use of drugs, encourage friendships with non-using companions to reduce both the incentive and the chance to indulge.

3. At least delaying a child's experience with marijuana is probably worthwhile. The later someone begins to use the drug, the less likely he or she is to become heavily involved. Often, use tapers off spontaneously by age 25.

4. Parents ought to think about their own approach to drink and drugs. Kids whose parents have relatively casual attitudes toward these things are more likely than others to become involved with drugs.

Can parents make their kids marijuana-proof? The Harvard experts, ranging from pediatricians to psychiatrists and neurologists, say:

"Parents protect their children from drug use by being close to them, remaining actively involved with them and their friends, supporting their self-esteem, and expressing high expectations for achievement in school."

So what if your school child in such a supportive family takes up pot?

There's not much parents can do, the Harvard experts say. Parents often are not able to help the kid kick the habit. But in the case of marijuana the use is likely to wind down of its own accord in a few years.

Should you throw the kid out of the

house? Get a divorce? Engage in a psycho-drama and blame your mate?

"It is probably not productive to let marijuana become ammunition in the war between the generations or to treat experimentation as a catastrophe," the Harvard experts said.

They advise parents in such a fix to keep some perspective about drugs.

"Just because tobacco and alcohol are more familiar does not mean that they are safer than marijuana," they said.

"They are a very real threat to health at every age. Marijuana is still a somewhat uncertain factor, and it may have serious drawbacks, but it does not threaten lifelong severe addiction in the way that cigarettes do.

"Nor is it as toxic as alcohol. However, these conclusions should not lead to the conclusion that marijuana is safe."

Other points by the Harvard experts: — No convincing report has yet been published to show that marijuana perma-

nently damages the brain. It would not be surprising if there were some effect from heavy, prolonged use, but the weight of the evidence, at the moment, suggests that there is none.

— During the "high," marijuana causes the heart to beat faster and work harder. Although this effect is insignificant in healthy people, it may be a hazard for anyone with heart disease.

— Production of the male hormone testosterone and of sperm can be reduced by marijuana, although the effects appear to be temporary and reversible. Effects on females are less well studied but it appears marijuana is capable of disturbing the menstrual cycle.

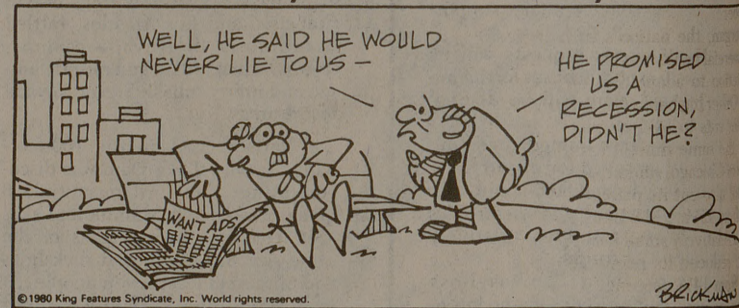
— Young people who are depressed and have low expectations for themselves — and whose parents expect little of them — are more likely than others to make heavy use of marijuana. Heavy use may be a symptom of depression and low self-esteem rather than the cause.

Readers' Forum

Guest viewpoints, in addition to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' forum should be:

- Typed triple space
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- Limited to 100 lines

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