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FOCUS

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Two Million New Jobs Are Not Enough

Secretary of Labor Robert Reich Lays Out Clinton Administration Plans to Create New Jobs and Reduce Unemployment

The Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964

The Courage and Commitment of Civil Rights Workers, Black and White, Thirty Years Ago Changed Mississippi and the South Forever

Blacks and the Information Superhighway

A New High-Tech Communications Network Will Soon Bring Goods and Services Into Our Homes, But Some Americans May Not Be Connected

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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Nation Time in South Africa

With the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa after a free election that included all races, we have witnessed a historic moment. Many of us can remember the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, the brutal suppression of the Soweto youth revolts in June 1976, and the death squads of the 1980s. Although imprisoned over most of this time period, once he was released, Mandela threw off the shackles that oppressed blacks in that country and draped over them the mantle of statehood. Mandela is great, not only because of his triumph over his former persecutors, but because he has the strength and grace to forgive them and to make former President F.W. de Klerk a partner in governing the country. In his State of the Nation Address, Mandela said, "The nation must come to terms with its past in a spirit of openness and forgiveness and proceed to build the future on the basis of repairing and healing."

Now the serious work of building a new nation begins. If Mandela's government is to realize his dream of a "people-centered society" that is free from want, free from hunger and deprivation, free from ignorance and suppression, and free from fear, there is much to do. Perhaps the first order of business is instilling a sense of nation in the minds of the people—all of the people. That will start when guarantees of equality are written into the new constitution. But it will take some time for South Africa to reverse 350 years of entrenched racism and guarantee equality to women and people of all races, religions, and ethnic groups.

In addition to ensuring human rights, many of the physical evils of apartheid must be undone. For example, over the last 45 years black South Africans living in what were declared "white areas" were forced from their homes. False states called "homelands" were formed—Xhosas, Zulus, and other ethnic groups were required to relocate on them. In addition to writing a new constitution, Mandela's government will have to deal with land redistribution in a country where whites, who are 13 percent of the population, own or control 87 percent of the land.

Mandela has a plan for South Africa to rebuild its townships and urban areas, create new jobs, and provide job training, especially for unemployed youth. For that plan to succeed, economic apartheid, both insidious and inefficient, must also be dismantled. Reserving professional and technical occupations for whites, paying blacks substandard wages and benefits, and condemning them to the dirtiest, most dangerous and menial jobs are practices that will not be eradicated overnight.

Mandela will need direct assistance from abroad if the South African economy is to grow sufficiently to accommodate his vision of a new society. President Clinton's decision to provide short-term financial aid to address South Africa's social and economic problems is to be applauded. But the international community must do more. There is a role for African American leaders to encourage the U.S. government and the private sector to expand economic support of and trade with South Africa. The Joint Center plans to continue the work we have begun with our South African Election Support Project because we see that country's first truly democratic elections not as an end but as a beginning. It's nation time. In the words of President Mandela, "Now let us all get down to work."■

Eddie N. Williams

PRESIDENT

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Two Million New Jobs Are Not Enough

Secretary of Labor Robert Reich Lays Out Clinton Administration Plans to Create New Jobs and Reduce Unemployment

On May 16, Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich was a guest speaker at the Joint Center as part of its Leadership Discussion Series. He was appointed to his present post by President Clinton with a mandate to "bring forth a revolution in lifetime training and education of our workforce." Reich has created the Office of the American Workplace to encourage greater collaboration between workers and managers, and under his leadership, the Labor Department has renewed its commitment to enforcing labor laws. In the past 15 months, the department has collected more than $40 million in back pay and other damages for victims of discrimination. The department has also cracked down on sweatshops, unsafe worksites, and fraudulent health insurance schemes. Under his guidance, legislation has been introduced to reform the pension system and ensure full funding of pension plans.

Reich was on the faculty of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government before coming to the Labor Department. He served as an assistant to the Solicitor General in the Ford administration, and headed the policy planning staff of the Federal Trade Commission in the Carter administration. He has written seven books and more than 200 articles on the global economy and the U.S. workforce. Reich graduated from Dartmouth College and Yale Law School, and received a degree from Oxford University where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar. The following are excerpts of his comments:

This administration is not going to reduce its aggressiveness with regard to creating jobs. Since January, we have seen about one million new jobs created—at least one million since February 1993. So approximately two million new jobs have been created in a year and a half, notwithstanding defense and corporate downsizing. The trajectory is good, but it is not great. The jobs that are being created are mainly for low-skilled or entry level work—primarily retail, restaurant, hotel, and hospital jobs. Many of them do not pay an adequate wage. In fact, 18 percent of full-time employees do not bring home enough in their paychecks to support a family of four. That's up from 12 percent in 1979. So challenge number one is getting a job. Challenge number two is making sure that the job pays a good wage.

Job creation means opening up foreign markets, stimulating entrepreneurship, providing venture capital for small businesses, as well as creating jobs through infrastructure projects and low-income housing in central cities. Part of our task is to fight attitudes in the private sector. Some people on Wall Street say that we are nearing full employment capacity for the economy. That seems bizarre to me. How can you even talk about full capacity when there are 8.5 million Americans unemployed and another 5.5 million people who are in part-time work but who would rather be in full-time jobs? To address joblessness among the various sectors of this society most in need, the President has put forward several major initiatives.

School-to-Work. The recently enacted School-to-Work Opportunities Act is a pool of money that state and local school systems can bid for. In order to get any of the funds, the school systems must establish programs in their high schools that combine classroom academic education with a work-site based education system. These types of programs give young people a sense of the relationship between what they are learning in the classroom and what is actually happening out there with regard to jobs, inducing high school students to study harder and stay in school longer. We are very excited about this program because it focuses on the 75 percent of America's youth that do not go on to college.

Jobs to Fight Crime. The President wants to spend a billion dollars over five years in the highest crime areas of the country to get the teenage nonemployment rate down from 60 or 70 percent to 20 percent through intensive job counseling, job placement, training, and, if necessary, public service jobs. I believe, as does the President, that if we can get jobs for these young people, the crime rate goes down dramatically. I don't think you have to be a rocket scientist to come to that conclusion.

Job Training. We hope to make about a 13 percent increase in Labor Department training programs specifically designed to help economically and socially disadvantaged Americans. That includes all the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs. Most of the studies that I have seen suggest that short-term training for the disadvantaged, particularly African American boys, simply is not paying off. We are tipping those programs more in the direction of programs that seem to work—that is, where there are actual employers at the end of those training processes.

Reemployment. We are seeking additional funding for reemployment programs to address the needs of dislocated workers given military downsizing, corporate downsizing, and the sharp decline of the American manufacturing sector. We now have a very large program of unemployment insurance and a lot of training programs for dislocated workers. The trouble is that these programs are not designed to be an integrated one-stop system. It's a maze. If you lost your job, you stand in an unemployment line. If you're lucky enough to qualify for unemployment insurance, you stand in another line. For employment

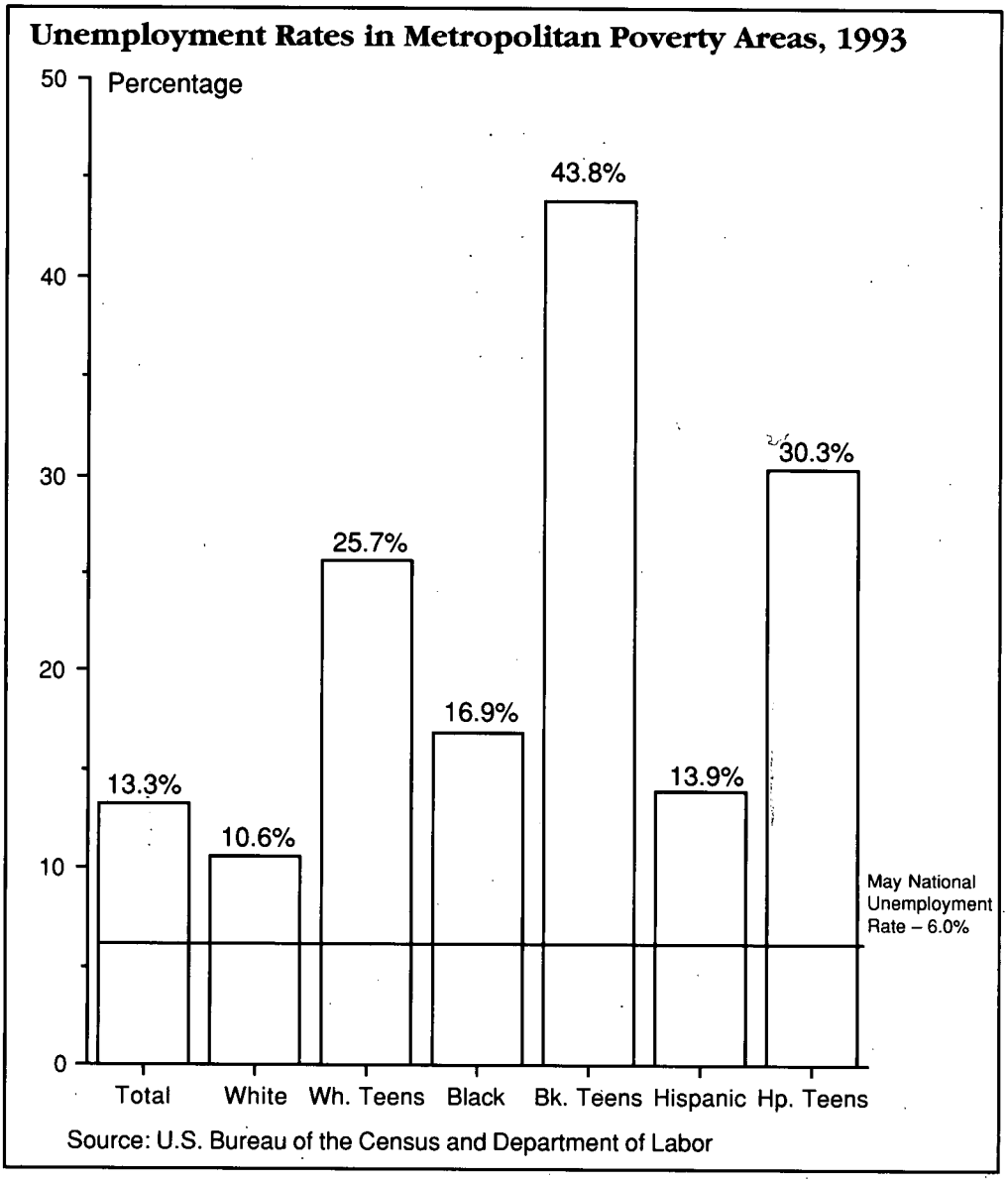
(Continued on page 4)

Reich

(Continued from page 3)

services, another line, and yet another line for JTPA assistance. The President's Reemployment Act is designed to put this all together at one stop so that wherever you go you get access to all services at once, including income support, counseling, and job search assistance with good information about what kind of jobs are available. The President is asking for $13 billion over the next five years to make sure that this happens.

With regards to the most difficult problem we face, jobs for disadvantaged African American males especially in metropolitan poverty areas, I wish I could come to you with a terrific idea on what we are going to do. The President has asked us to do a study of the problem of African American male unemployment/ nonemployment and he wants ideas. I have talked with high officials in the Defense Department in recent weeks because the military has one of our most effective training programs for African American males, although many of its training programs are being cut back.



Reasons for Optimism

We have got to change the climate in the business community. One of our biggest challenges is to make corporate executives in other companies understand their social obligations. There are reasons for optimism. As I have travelled around the country, I have been struck by certain kinds of successes which were not expected. On the West Coast, for example, the Shell Oil Company has a very active apprenticeship program not focused on the oil business, but to underwrite about a dozen small businesses. Each of which is taking disadvantaged young people directly out of school and giving them apprenticeship training in those businesses. The President and I are going to mount a major campaign over the next year to get more employers involved.

I was in East Los Angeles not too long ago in a classroom composed of 40 young African American and Hispanic men, most of whom had been members of gangs who had not finished high school. They were all learning mobile electronics—auto mechanics. And 85 percent of them were being placed in jobs with a starting salary of $20,000. This was happening because garage owners all over Southern California discovered that they did not have people who adequately understand electronics under the hoods of cars. They were actually seeking people that didn't necessarily have college degrees or high school diplomas but who had at least the basic communication skills so that they could continue to read the manuals.

I saw a similar kind of program in Chicago among employers in the plastic injection molding and spring coiler industries. These are two old Rust Belt industries, but they are bouncing back because the auto market is bouncing back. They were hiring people who had high school degrees and had about nine months of additional training to operate machine tools. In central Detroit, Project Focus Hope is turning teenagers into factory technicians. I have seen enough around the country to know that there are jobs to be had. There is a demand for people who have a high school diploma and the ability to communicate and learn the fundamentals of a job. ■

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Inside This Issue:

- Joint Center President Eddie N. Williams is concerned that the jobs component of President Clinton's welfare reforms may fall short.
- Labor Secretary Robert Reich reports that equal education does not ensure equal earnings across race and gender lines.
- Ernest Finney becomes the first black chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court.

Joint Center President Concerned About Clinton Welfare Plan

Making good on his promise to "change welfare as we know it," on June 14 President **BILL CLINTON** sent to Congress his proposal to reform the Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC) program. The plan proposes to limit AFDC cash assistance to a lifetime maximum of two years, and places a very strong emphasis on moving recipients into the private labor market. Individuals who apply for AFDC and are deemed "job-ready" will be required to search for work immediately; anyone who is offered a job will be required to take it. Parents who refuse to take jobs or look for work face tough new sanctions (the loss of some or all of their AFDC grant) and far fewer recipients will be exempt from these work requirements than is the case under current law.

If a poor parent is not able to find private employment after two years, she will no longer be eligible for cash assistance through AFDC, but can participate in a new program called WORK. Participants in the WORK program will only be paid for the hours that they work. Most would work at minimum wage for between 15 and 35 hours a week until they have earned the equivalent value of their previous AFDC grant. Thus, individuals in the WORK program cannot earn enough to lift their families out of poverty.

State governments will have a great deal of flexibility in designing their own WORK programs (they can place participants in subsidized private sector positions, in the public sector, or in non-profit community organizations), but the federal funds available for the childcare, training, and administrative services will increase significantly under the Clinton plan.

Noting that welfare reform is long overdue, in a June 16 press release, Joint Center President **EDDIE N. WILLIAMS** applauded the President's commitment to change a seriously flawed social program. While praising provisions of the administration's welfare reform proposal that increase funds for child care and training as measures that will make it easier for poor mothers to enter and remain in the workforce, Williams said, "In my opinion, the proposal fails to deliver on the central issue of jobs. With over eight million Americans out of work, the private sector is not going to suddenly generate a bounty of new jobs because we mandate that welfare recipients should work. This means that any reform that aims to get more welfare families into the workforce must rely heavily on community service jobs. Unfortunately, the number and quality of jobs offered under this plan will not allow poor families to work their way out of poverty or off the welfare rolls.

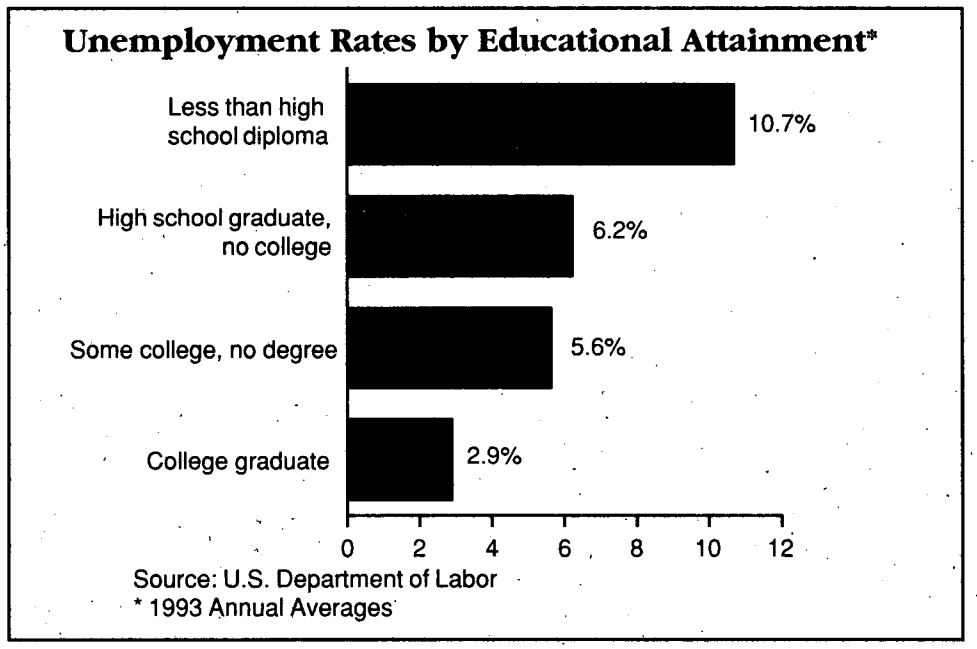
"I am concerned about the financing of the administration's plan. Financing would be obtained by cutting back on other programs for the poor, particularly by limiting eligibility for Supplemental Social Security for legal immigrants and individuals with substance abuse problems and by capping Emergency Assistance programs. These changes are likely to shift the costs of caring for these groups of the poor to already financially strapped state and local governments. States and localities burdened with large numbers of poor will be unable to take on these costs.

"As welfare reform moves to the Hill, we hope the President and Congress will work together to find alternative

financing mechanisms and to develop work opportunities that will allow the poor to move into the economic mainstream."

More Education Doesn't Always Equal Higher Salaries

The Clinton administration sees poor education and limited job skills as major contributors to joblessness and lower wages. According to 1993 U.S. Department of Labor statistics presented by Labor Secretary **ROBERT REICH**, the more education one has, the less likely he or she is to be unemployed. Labor Department data bear out this assertion. The average unemployment rate for U.S. workers with less than a high school diploma was 10.7 percent in 1993, while the jobless rate for college graduates in the same year was only 2.9 percent (see chart below).



While it logically follows that better educated Americans have higher employment rates, a breakdown of workers' earnings by educational attainment shows that the relationship between learning and earning does not necessarily follow across race and gender lines. Race and gender biases remain as factors in the workplace, and what has been a constant in the American experience is that white males at each level of educational attainment, on average, earn more than their black or female counterparts. For example, white males with four-year college degrees earn an average of $10,000 more than black males, and nearly $15,000 more than white women with the same education (see chart below). In addition to racial discrimination in employment, in many cases the wages of women continue to lag behind those of men, even when women are better educated and perform tasks similar to or more complex than those performed by men. For example, white males with only high school diplomas earn more on average than black and white women with two-year associate degrees.

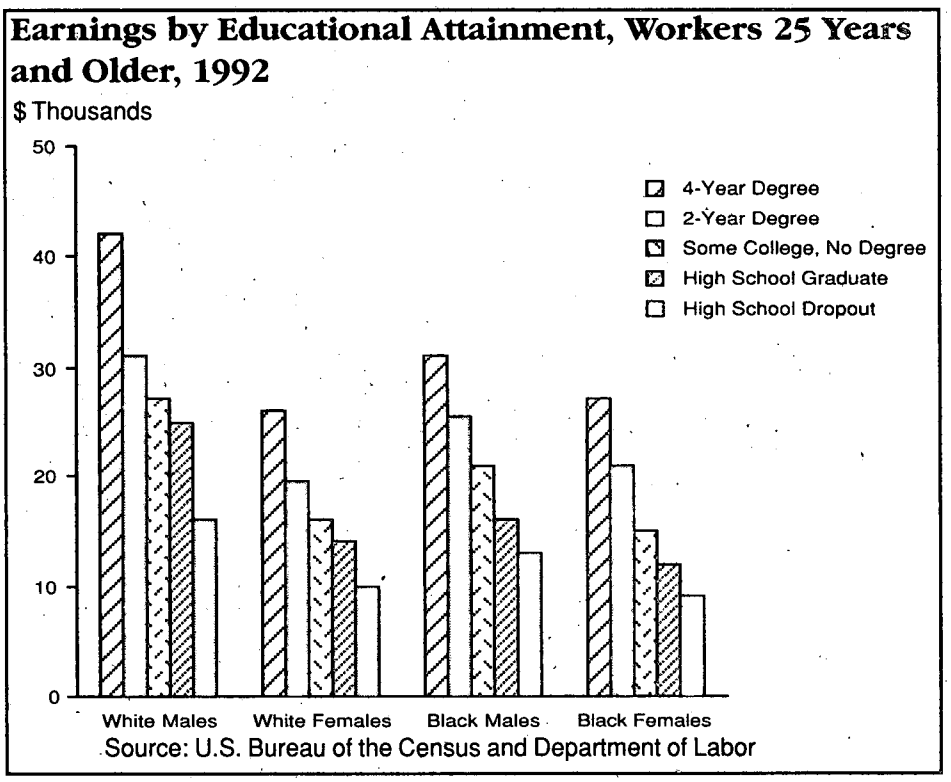
Despite the enactment of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (which prohibits pay disparities for men and women performing substantially equal work) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which, among other things, prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of sex or race), full pay equity for women and people of color has yet to be realized.

According to the National Committee on Pay Equity, in 1992 women of all races earned an average of 70.6 cents for each dollar earned by men of all races. Women of color experience the worst pay inequity. Black women earn 63.9 percent and Hispanic women earn 55.3 percent of the annual wages earned by white men, while white women earn 69.8 percent. Men of color also experience serious disparities in wages. Black men earn 72.1 percent and Hispanic men earn 64.6 percent of the wages paid to white men.

These disparities even hold among the professions: Female lawyers make only 78 percent of what their male counterparts earn; female doctors make only 72.2 percent as much; and female managers earn 66 percent as much. Women in educational roles fare slightly better. Female elementary school teachers earn 84 percent of male

elementary school teachers' wages, and female college professors earn 80 percent of male college professors' wages.

Women are still segregated in traditionally underpaid so-called "female" jobs, however. Sixty-two percent of all working women are employed in sales, service, administrative support or clerical occupations, which pay substantially less than traditionally male-dominated occupations. Furthermore, women make up two-thirds of the



low-wage work force. A woman of color is four times as likely to be a low-wage worker than is a similarly qualified white man.

After 12 years of the Reagan and Bush administrations, Secretary Reich has stated that affirmative action in employment will be reestablished as a goal of his department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), "and that office has already been, at least under our tenure, reactivated." The OFCCP has authority to enforce the provisions of Executive Order 11246 which requires that all private companies performing on federal contracts provide equal employment opportunity to their workers through affirmative action. During a May meeting with the Joint Center staff, Reich said that "**SHIRLEY WILCHER**, who is the newly appointed deputy assistant secretary for OFCCP has got a very clear message from me that affirmative action will be necessary for firms to be in full compliance with the Executive Order." Wilcher was formerly general counsel to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Reich went on to say: "We found a tremendous backlog of [OFCCP] cases. That backlog has been reduced by half. And we have also mounted some major lawsuits already." According to Reich, about 25 percent of all employees in the United States are protected by the Executive Order.

Black Judge on South Carolina's High Court

On May 11, Justice **ERNEST FINNEY** became the first African American to be named chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. He will assume office in December 1994 when the chief justice-elect, **A. LEE CHANDLER**, steps down after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 72. Finney will be the 30th chief justice in the state's history. With a law degree from South Carolina State University, Finney, 63, began his career in 1954 as a school teacher since there were few opportunities for black attorneys. He opened his own firm (along with now federal judge **MATTHEW PERRY**) and handled thousands of civil rights cases. For four years, he served in the South Carolina House of Representatives, and he won election as a state circuit judge in 1976. In 1985, he became the first black associate justice on the state supreme court since 1877 during Reconstruction.

ACROSS THE NATION

ALABAMA: On June 28, Tuskegee Mayor **JOHNNIE FORD**, 51, lost a primary election runoff bid in his quest to become Alabama's first black state auditor and the first African American to be elected to a statewide Alabama office without first being appointed. Ford was defeated by **CHARLEY BAKER**, a Jacksonville businessman who had served as the assistant state auditor from 1991 to 1993. Ford garnered 46 percent to Baker's 54 percent. On the June 7 primary, Ford earned 37 percent of the vote compared with Baker's 29 percent. (Two other candidates, **KAREN HAIDEN** and **ROGER SCHNEIDER**, earned 21 and 13 percent, respectively.) Twenty-five percent of Alabama's population is black; there are over 550,000 black registered voters in the state.

Ford began his political career working on Sen. **ROBERT F. KENNEDY**'s ill-fated presidential campaign in 1968. Since his election as mayor in 1972, he has served as president of the National Conference of Black Mayors in 1982. In 1984, he founded and became president of the World Conference of Mayors, which boasts a membership of 1,110 mayors from 33 nations. In 1991, the Alabama League of Municipalities elected Ford to be its first black president.

DELAWARE: On April 16, **MARGARET ROSE HENRY** became the first black woman to earn a spot on Delaware's 21-member state senate, winning the 2nd district seat with 54 percent of the vote. Henry is only the second African American to serve in the Delaware State Senate. The first, **HERMAN M. HOLLOWAY, SR.**, died in March. Henry won Holloway's seat in this special election. The district includes Wilmington's East Side and southeastern suburbs and is the only predominantly black Senate district in the state.

What is also remarkable about her electoral achievement is that after agreeing to a request from the GOP to be its candidate, Henry, a registered Democrat, ran and won on the Republican ticket. Her victory is a coup for the state GOP because the overwhelmingly Democratic 2nd district had been held by the late Senator Holloway for 30 years. At present, the state senate has 14 Democrats and six Republicans. Henry, who will sit in the Republican caucus, is an administrator at a retirement home based in Wilmington, and currently is on the board of trustees for the Medical Center of Delaware. She also sits on the Wilmington City Planning Commission.

Democratic State Rep. **HERMAN M. HOLLOWAY, JR.** (son of the late state senator) was also a candidate. He was the Democratic party nominee and received 38 percent of the vote. **SAMUEL L. GUY**, a lawyer and president of the state NAACP, ran on the independent A Delaware Party ticket, and only polled eight percent of the vote.

GEORGIA: Black first-term Congressman **SANFORD BISHOP** will face an election challenge for his 2nd congressional district seat from **JAMES C. BUSH**, a black former congressional aide, in the July 19 Democratic primary. In 1992, Bishop won the newly created majority-black seat by narrowly defeating then six-term Congressman **CHARLES HATCHER** in a Democratic primary runoff (53 percent to Hatcher's 47 percent). (The 2nd district, which includes Macon, Albany, and Columbus, has a black voting-age population of over 52 percent.) Bishop currently serves on the Agriculture, Veterans Affairs, and Post Office and Civil Service Committees, and is an advocate of federal aid to schools and tax incentives for enterprise zones.

Bush, 47, was the former district coordinator for Hatcher, a position he held for 12 years. He most recently served as the director of community relations for Albany State College. A Vietnam veteran, Bush worked on the police force in Dougherty County for two years before joining Hatcher's staff.

MICHIGAN: In the upcoming August 2 primary, 15-term Democratic Congressman **JOHN CONYERS, JR.**, the most senior black member of the U.S. House of Representatives and chair of the House Government Operations Committee, will have a fight on his hands to hold his 14th congressional district seat. He will face two black challengers: Detroit City Council ombudsman **MARIE FARRELL-DONALDSON** and lawyer **MELVIN "BUTCH" HOLLOWELL**.

During his tenure, Conyers, 65, has been instrumental in winning passage of the motor voter law and the establishment of the national **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.** holiday. Besides chairing the Government Operations Committee, he is number three in seniority on the Judiciary Committee and also sits on the Small Business Committee. In 1993, he made an unsuccessful bid to succeed retiring five-term Detroit Mayor **COLEMAN YOUNG**, garnering only four percent of the vote and losing to **DENNIS ARCHER** in a field of four candidates.

Farrell-Donaldson, 46, has been the city's ombudsman—a position that is responsible for assisting residents in resolving their grievances with city agencies—for 10 years. Previously, she had served as Detroit's auditor general (the first African American and first female to hold that job), responsible for auditing Detroit's $1.5 billion budget. Hollowell, 35, a partner at the law firm of Lewis, White & Clay (the largest U.S. minority-owned law firm), is running on a platform to reduce the number of licensed gun dealers in the Detroit area; provide alternative sentencing for first-time, nonviolent offenders; and establish community development banks.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964

The Courage and Commitment of Civil Rights Workers, Black and White, Thirty Years Ago Changed Mississippi and the South Forever

by Frank R. Parker

The brutal murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman in June 1964, just as the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was getting underway, were a defining moment in the history of the civil rights struggle. Their highly publicized deaths at the hands of law enforcement officers and Ku Klux Klan terrorists shook the national conscience and stood as a monument to the horrifying depths to which segregationists were willing to go. These murders—part of a broader, systematic pattern of suppression and terror by police and the Klan—showed beyond doubt that outside intervention would be necessary if civil rights activities in Mississippi were to continue.

With Mississippi as the venue for the Freedom Summer Project, civil rights organizers had selected a state that historically had been the most resistant to racial equality. Mississippi, which had always had the largest proportion of black residents of any state, also led the nation after Reconstruction in the number of lynchings, and in 1890 was the first Southern state to adopt a new constitution disfranchising black citizens.

In short, Mississippi was the testing ground for whether the full promise of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments could ever be fulfilled. The state's voter registration procedures remained the most discriminatory in the country. Despite an intensive, four-year statewide voter registration effort by civil rights workers, by 1964 only 6.7 percent of Mississippi's black adults had been signed up to vote.

Ten years earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision had mandated the desegregation of public schools, yet school officials in every district of Mississippi continued to maintain strictly segregated schools. All public facilities remained segregated as well—restaurants, movie theaters, motels, city parks, and swimming pools. In the poorest state in the nation, black people remained the poorest of the poor. The chief occupations of black men were as field hand, yardman, or chauffeur, and the chief occupations of black women were as maid, nursemaid, or cook.

Plans of a Sharecropper

The Freedom Summer Project was conceived in 1963 by Robert Moses of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Allard Lowenstein, a white civil rights activist, with support from local SNCC workers, notably Lawrence Guyot and Fannie Lou Hamer. Moses was a young black teacher from New York who had been directing voter registration work in Mississippi with SNCC since 1961, and Lowenstein, a college official from Stanford University, had recently arrived in the state to aid in the efforts. Guyot and Hamer were both black Mississippians with passionate commitments to the cause, he a SNCC organizer and a recent graduate of Tougaloo College and she a sharecropper who had been thrown off a cotton plantation for attempting to register to vote; both would become deeply involved in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Convinced that the voter-organizing efforts to date by SNCC activists and local leaders had failed, Moses decided on new tactics. As historian Clayborne Carson writes, Moses "decided that outside intervention alone would make possible a significant breakthrough in voter registration in Mississippi and that this intervention could come about only with greater national publicity regarding Mississippi civil rights activities." A SNCC prospectus for the project described its goal as forcing Mississippi officials to change their policies or face the alternative of "the federal government intervening on behalf of the constitutional rights of its citizens." Planners hoped that a massive influx of white college students would persuade the federal government to provide civil rights activists with greater protection.

The organizers also proposed to build new political institutions in Mississippi outside the existing political structure. Voter registration efforts having been stymied by county registrars who refused to register black citizens, SNCC organizers decided to establish a separate, unofficial "freedom registration" process. A new political organization, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), was also launched in order to contest the legitimacy of the state's Democratic party—an all-white apparatus—and its all-white state delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City that summer.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project marked a transition for the Southern civil rights movement, shifting its concentration from protest toward political and community organizing on a massive scale. Previous community organizing for civil rights had been largely limited to individual counties or multicounty areas, but this would be a statewide, coordinated effort involving every national civil rights organization as well as a number of national

(Continued on page 6)

Mr. Parker is a professor of law at the District of Columbia Law School and successfully litigated numerous civil rights lawsuits in Mississippi and other Southern states.

Mississippi

(Continued from page 5)

religious and liberal groups.

Approximately 1,000 student volunteers traveled to Mississippi for the summer to assist with voter registration drives and MFDP organizing, to open up "freedom schools," to educate black children, and to operate community centers. As a result, 17,000 black citizens tried to register to vote, although only about 1,600 were allowed to register, half of them in Panola County under federal court order. In contrast, approximately 80,000 black citizens were enrolled in the freedom registration campaign. The freedom schools also yielded impressive numbers: although organizers initially projected a statewide enrollment of 1,000 students, about 2,500 attended classes at 47 sites around the state.

A Seat at the Party

In June 1964, Mississippi's Democratic party had predictably excluded black citizens from its process for selecting delegates to the Democratic National Convention. In response, the MFDP held its own set of parallel precinct meetings, county conventions in 26 of the state's 82 counties, and a state convention to select its own biracial slate of delegates to challenge the seating of the regular all-white delegation in Atlantic City.

The MFDP's challenge at the 1964 Democratic National Convention won national support from civil rights groups, labor unions, and some liberal Democratic party leaders. It was here that Fannie Lou Hamer stirred the nation with her nationally televised testimony before the convention's credentials committee, in which she described how she had been brutally beaten by her jailers and made plain the terror regularly experienced by black Mississippians who asserted their political rights. Nonetheless, at the urging of President Johnson, who feared that recognizing the MFDP delegation would jeopardize his own election, the convention rejected the MFDP's challenge.

The liberal Democratic leadership at the convention instead offered a compromise: the state's regular, all-white delegation would be seated, but two MFDP delegates, state NAACP president Aaron Henry and white Tougaloo College chaplain Edwin King, would be accepted as special at-large delegates. The MFDP delegation, however, rejected the compromise as a capitulation to racism and segregation. As Hamer put it during the final debate among the MFDP delegates: "We didn't come all this way for no two seats."

Despite this defeat, the 1964 challenge caused the national Democratic party to reform its rules for delegate selection, and laid the groundwork for a MFDP victory four years later. As part of a compromise with the MFDP, the 1964 convention adopted a nondiscrimination requirement to be included in the call to the 1968 Democratic National Convention. At that convention, a biracial coalition led by Aaron Henry and including many who had participated in the 1964 challenge again contested the seating of the predominantly white Mississippi Democratic party delegation—and this time they won.

Black Political Empowerment

The most dramatic and enduring legacy of the Freedom Summer Project is this: for the black citizens of Mississippi it marked the beginning of political empowerment. In 1964 the state had no black elected officials, except for the city council of the all-black town of Mound Bayou. Thirty years later, because of the groundwork laid in 1964 and the subsequent passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reports that Mississippi has 751 black elected officials, more than any other state. The state has one black member of Congress (out of its delegation of five in the U.S. House of Representatives), 42 black state legislators (out of 174), 85 members of county boards of supervisors (out of 410), six black sheriffs, 32 black mayors, 302 black city council members, and 119 black school board members. Seven counties are governed by majority-black county boards of supervisors.

There is a straight line from the Freedom Summer's voter registration efforts to the passage one year later of the Voting Rights Act, which finally gave black people in the South the right to vote. If the March 1965 police attack on civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama, provided the catalyst for Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act, the discrimination against Mississippi's black citizens in their efforts to register in 1964 prepared the way by showing the need. The 1964 Freedom Summer efforts persuaded President Johnson and Congress that the Voting Rights Act was necessary by providing an irrefutable record of the extent of discrimination.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act struck down the racially discriminatory voter registration tests that had been used throughout the South, authorized the Justice Department to send federal registrars to Southern states, and required that any new changes in the voting laws of covered states be precleared with the Justice Department or the federal district court in Washington.

As a result of the elimination of the literacy tests and the poll tax (which was struck down by a federal district court in Mississippi in a Justice Department lawsuit), together with the dispatch of federal voting registrars to 23 Mississippi counties, within two years the state's black voter registration rate showed an astonishing ninefold expansion. It increased from 6.7 percent to an estimated 60 percent, the highest rate of any Southern state covered by the Voting Rights Act.

The Farish Street Crowd

Many of the gains achieved by the state's black citizens since 1964, like the enormous increases in black representation, could not have been accomplished without litigation, yet this too is a legacy of Freedom Summer. Apart from a small handful of progressive lawyers, white lawyers in Mississippi generally refused to take civil rights cases.

(Continued on back page)

Blacks and the Information Superhighway

A New High-Tech Communications Network Will Soon Bring Goods and Services Into Our Homes, But Some Americans May Not Be Connected

By Rick Blake

Working in her home office, an engineer in Atlanta transmits the designs of an electric engine to an auto manufacturer in Turin, Italy, while her husband, sitting in the den, edits his book on early subSaharan architecture "online" with his publisher in New York. Meanwhile, in the basement, their daughter is taking a Japanese lesson from an instructor in Kyoto, and their son is purchasing hiking equipment for a trip he will take to the Appalachian Trail from outfitters in Maine, Oregon, and Colorado. In the not too distant future, scenes like this will be commonplace as millions of American homes will be connected to an "information superhighway" that will enable us to have access to a virtually infinite array of goods and services through our television sets, telephones, and computers.

Companies such as AT&T, the Regional Bell Operating companies, cable corporations, and computer hardware and software companies like IBM and Microsoft have already begun building this system that will include new satellite technologies and Personal Communications Systems (PCS), the next generation of cellular communications. While potential profits are projected to be huge, the needed upfront investments are also tremendous. For example, the Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOC) are reportedly set to invest more than $40 billion to "wire" the homes of potential consumers with fiber optic connectors. Companies building the information highway anticipate big returns on their investments—an estimated $3.5 trillion in new sales of merchandise and services.

Major questions on how to regulate the information highway of the future, however, remain unanswered. For example, policy makers are unsure how to ensure that poor urban communities are wired into the new super network. Civil rights groups worry that, like cable companies in the 1980s, the major firms building the superhighway may not connect low-income urban neighborhoods.

Activists are fighting to prevent that kind of one-sided commercial development and are working to ensure that there is a public interest component to what they see as "probably the most important venture of this century," according to Nolan Bowie, an associate professor of communications at Temple University. "What we are putting in place is the country's electronic nervous system," notes Bowie. "It will pretty much determine who has a voice and who is left out."

Another concern is how the government can compel corporations building the information superhighway to take minority firms on as partners. "Black businesses want a piece of the action," says George Dobbins, an African American businessman with Southern Telecommunication Systems, a minority-owned cellular communications company in Memphis. "But if you don't have $50 or $100 million, you can't get into the game unless you're connected to a major company." Some African American legislators have taken up the issue of minority business participation on the information highway. "My primary concern is that we [in Congress] make sure that those individuals, institutions, and business entities that are traditionally the last to benefit from major technological changes are not left behind," says Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-Ill.), chair of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Competitiveness.

"African Americans, other minorities, women, small business and nonprofit institutions must not be left standing on the access road while big companies tool down the communications superhighway," Collins says. She has introduced legislation requiring common carriers like the telephone industry to submit to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) annual plans for increasing opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses, and for the commission to lower market entry barriers for small and minority-owned firms which are seeking to provide telecommunication services and information services.

However, black entrepreneurs do not see these amendments as adequate. Congress and federal regulatory agencies like the FCC will have to move quickly to develop further incentives to encourage minority and small business participation in the construction of the information superhighway. At the current rapid rate of business partnering among majority firms that want to develop the highway, there soon may not be many opportunities.

To predict the effect of the superhighway on our society and on blacks is risky. However, some things are already clear. African Americans are disproportionately affected by the loss of lower level jobs and the expansion of technologically related jobs. In addition, many schools in black communities do not have computers.

Our society has critical choices to make in the next several years that will define to what extent our democracy survives the onslaught of new technology. We are building a new society in which technologies and access to them may well define almost all of our public, commercial, and private transactions. The question is will this new system include all of us? Stay tuned. ■

Mr. Blake is a Washington-based public policy analyst.

Mississippi

(Continued from page 6)

During the Freedom Summer, approximately 150 volunteer lawyers came to Mississippi to take on the project's legal work, which mostly consisted of representing civil rights activists and summer volunteers who had been arrested. These lawyers were recruited by and associated with four national legal organizations: the National Lawyers' Guild, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC). In response to the Freedom Summer Project and the legal needs of the civil rights movement in Mississippi, all four groups opened offices in Jackson, and after the summer staffed these offices with full-time attorneys. Federal district judge Harold Cox, who was hostile to civil right cases, called these lawyers the "Farish Street crowd," named after the street in Jackson's black business district where they had their offices.

As a consequence, Mississippi gained one of the largest concentrations of full-time lawyers devoted exclusively to civil rights litigation of any Southern state. The local presence of their privately funded national legal organizations gave a tremendous boost in courtroom battles against entrenched racism. The congressional purpose behind the civil rights statutes of 1964-65 was to move the struggle from the streets and into the courts, and after 1964 that was where much of the action did take place.

Mississippi Will Never Be the Same

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project set in motion a series of political and social changes that were slow to come but that nonetheless were profound. This was because the organizers and participants defined the South and Mississippi, not as it was, but as they believed it ought to be. In the early 1960s, Bob Moses had the vision that some day black people in the Mississippi Delta would be able to elect a black member of Congress, something that was clearly impossible at the time or even in the foreseeable future. Hundreds of young college students were willing to spend their summer living in the Mississippi Delta and to endure violence and terror to pursue Moses' vision, even though their voter registration efforts would seem largely futile while they were there.

Although many profound advances have taken place, not all the goals of the Freedom Summer have yet been achieved. Racism and its invidious effects have not yet been eradicated from American society, and the issues of economic disparities and poverty remain to be addressed in an effective way. While black people in Mississippi have made enormous gains, they still do not have their fair share of elected offices, many of their schools still fail to provide top-quality education to meet today's challenges, and many remain unemployed, in poverty, and economically oppressed. One might say that Mississippi has generally caught up with the rest of the country only to find that it shares the rest of America's lingering social and racial problems.

Yet because the organizers and participants in the Freedom Summer Project were visionaries, they helped develop and strengthen a grassroots movement that began the process of liberating Mississippi and the South from the myths that formed the bedrock of the racist society—the myths of white supremacy and racial inferiority. Mississippi and the South will never be the same. ■

This article has been excerpted from "Turning Point: The 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer," written by Mr. Parker and published in June by the Joint Center.

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