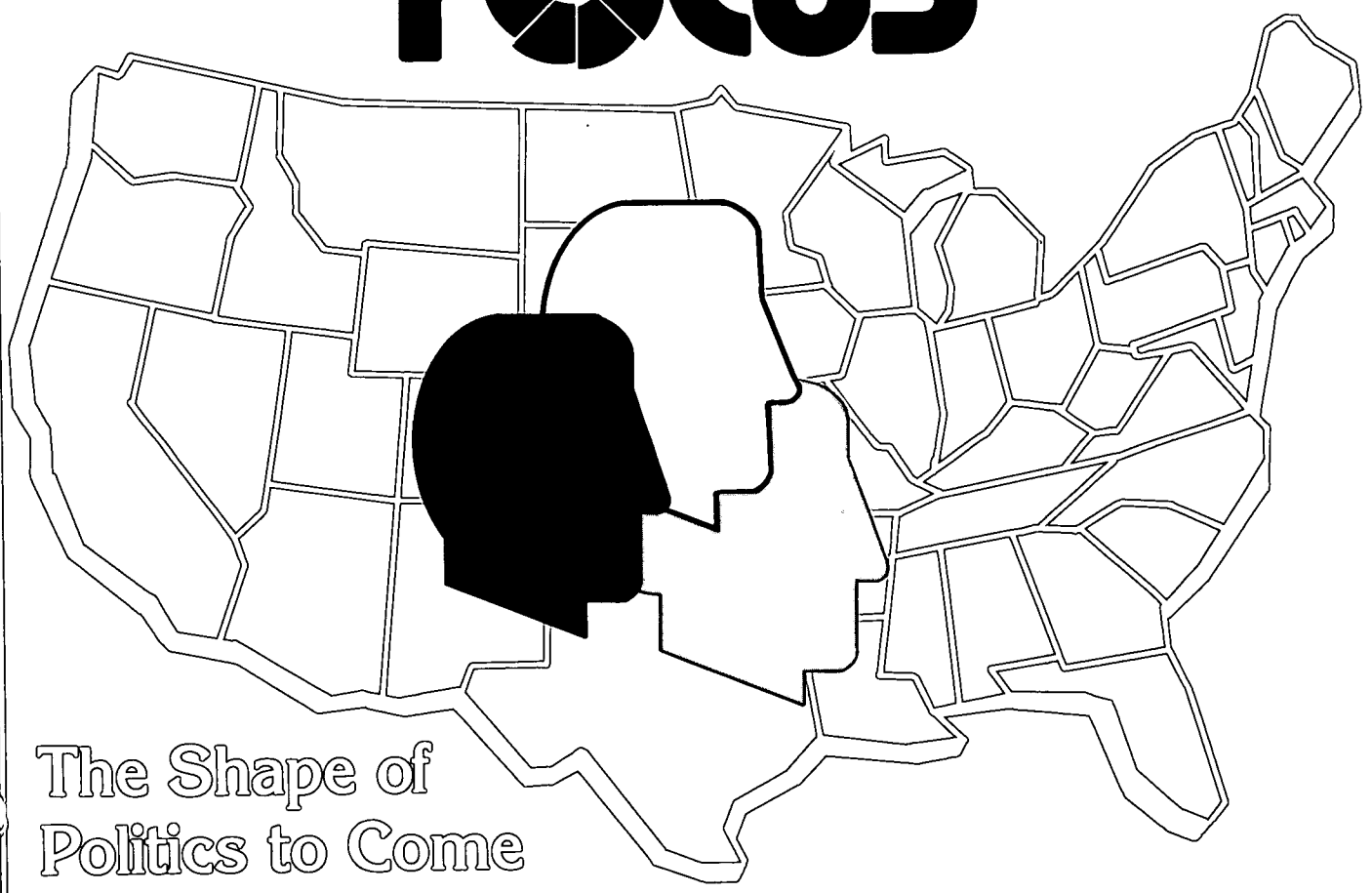
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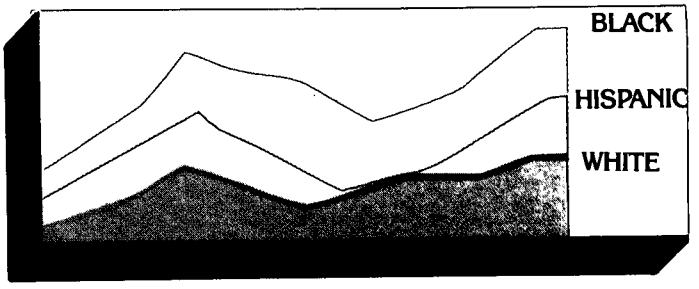


The Shape of Politics to Come

An overview of the emerging lines of political conflict in America.

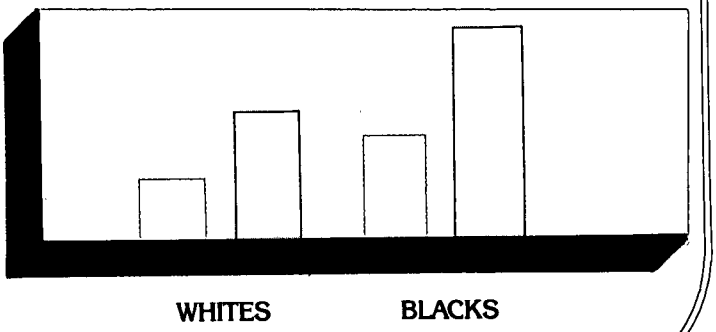
What the Recovery Means to Minorities

When the economy sneezes, blacks catch pneumonia. And there's not enough medicine to go around.



Unemployment: A Look behind the Numbers

You might not know, from the monthly unemployment rates, that over one quarter of American workers were unemployed for some part of 1982.



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Perspective

A vast chasm separates the world of education from the world of work. Every year our high schools and colleges confer diplomas on largely inexperienced youth of widely varying aptitudes and inclinations. These graduates (and drop-outs) are then left to grapple with an ever-shifting mix of entry-level jobs that require particular qualifications and impose concrete performance standards.

What results is a frustrating mismatch between job applicants and job opportunities. Employers complain that today's youth are not properly socialized to the world of work. Applicants charge there are not enough meaningful, well-paying jobs. In a sense, both are right.

What is needed is a durable bridge to span the gulf betwen school and work, a program that combines improved education and training with practical experience. As a participant in the American Productivity Center's recent Computer Conference on Training and Productivity, I proposed one possible program—National Youth Service. The idea, of course, is not original. It was put forward as early as 1910 by the American philosopher William James. It is now an idea whose time is at hand.

The APC conference, a prelude to the September White House Conference on Productivity, was convened to consider ways of facilitating three transitions: the move from school to work, the move from one job to another, and the move back into the work force following unemployment.

All conferees agreed that currently available services and information regarding the school to work transition are inadequate, especially for women and minorities. I proposed, therefore, that an experimental program of volunteer service to the nation be developed to overcome deficiencies in the way we prepare our youth for work. Such programs as Peace Corps, VISTA, Job Corps, and CETA could be folded into a unified national service.

A national youth service would offer undecided and inexperienced teenagers:

- A systematic and meaningful connection between previous schooling and work. (Educators and psychologists tell us that young people must understand this connection to make a rational choice between entering the work force and continuing their formal education.)
- An opportunity to have a hand in meeting the needs of the nation, thereby learning the true meaning and value of citizenship.
- A relatively pressure-free environment in which to acclimate themselves to the world of work, and
- A chance to make themselves more employable by mastering skills through experience and training previously unavailable to them.

The pilot programs should be designed and implemented by the federal government in partnership with the business community; more specifically, the president or a cabinet-level official should work with a group such as the Business Roundtable, an association of CEO's from some 200 major corporations, and perhaps the foundations and several governors and mayors to devise a blueprint. Business leaders should be involved in the implementation as well as the planning of this venture, which, I believe, should be privately funded.

Others have recognized the value of some kind of national youth service. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recently recommended that students spend at least 30 hours a week doing volunteer work to prepare them for responsible citizenship. The Potomac Institute also proposed the idea, and Ford Foundation President Franklin Thomas recently threw his weight behind the concept.

What we need to do now is to fill in the broad outlines and begin laying the foundation for a span that will ease passage from the classroom to the workplace.

Eddie N. Williams
President

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The Shape of Politics to Come

by Thomas E. Cavanagh

(The author is a research associate at the Joint Center. This article is adapted from remarks prepared for a National Staff Development Conference of the Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice.)

Political alliances and animosities shift constantly under the influence of many forces: economics, demography, tradition, current events. The very basis of the American economy is changing from industry to service and information. The Hispanic population is growing faster than any other group, and the black population is growing faster than the population as a whole. How will politics in America reflect these changes in the next few decades?

Although there is no science of political forecasting, we can nevertheless project demographic trends into the future with some degree of certainty. And these trends can give us some sense of what our society's problems will be and how they may develop into political conflicts.

White Ethnics

Distinctions among the white ethnic groups in the United States are becoming blurred by the more visceral distinction between the races. This process was revealed in Chicago earlier this year, when Bernard Epton's Judaism was all but forgotten by Irish, Polish, and Italian Democrats in their rush to forestall the election of a black mayor.

There are still a few cities, such as Boston and Waterbury, where fights between Irish and Italian factions for control of city government can provoke ire, but on the whole, white versus white antagonisms in contemporary America tend to be ones of life-style rather than ethnicity. In the Northeast and Midwest, for example, the children and grandchildren of working-class immigrants of various ethnic groups visit American Legion halls and Knights of Columbus meetings—places where many upper middle class WASPS would feel quite foreign.

The only realm in which white ethnicity remains very important in politics is foreign affairs. Polish-Americans, Hungarian-Americans, and others of Eastern European descent tend to be strongly anti-communist. Many Irish-Americans are passionately committed to the Irish Republican Army. American Jews are perhaps the most politically distinctive white ethnic group; their strong support for Israel governs many of their other political actions and opinions.

All these groups play a role in influencing American foreign policy. Similarly, Hispanic Americans take a special interest in Latin American affairs. Blacks are becoming more prominent advocates for a progressive foreign policy in Africa and other areas of the Third World.

Labor in Transition

The rapid transition from an industrial to a service economy is changing the face of one of the major forces in American politics: organized labor. Shortly after World War II, one-third of the country's work force was unionized; today, only about one-fifth belong to unions.

The high pay from blue-collar union jobs enabled workers to move to the suburbs, own their own homes, send their children to college, and otherwise enjoy the amenities of middle-class life. Blacks have been among major beneficiaries of these opportunities, and are being hurt disproportionately by the loss of jobs in such industries as steel, automobiles, rubber, and glass. One striking indication of how important union jobs in these industries are to the black community: the UAW estimated in 1979 that a Chrysler bankruptcy would reduce national black income by 1 percent.

As this engine of social mobility falters, the old political conflict between business and labor is in many ways being superseded by a novel conflict between workers skilled in the new technologies and those who see their industries failing. Union "give-backs" in recent labor negotiations are one sign of the mutual interests of labor and management in the survival of the threatened industries.

But the decline in the smokestack industries is also producing the most politically active union movement since the 1940s. Just as farmers were radicalized by the Depression of 1893 and the business community fought to stem the tide of regulation in the 1970s, so labor is mobilizing today. The pre-primary endorsement of a Democratic candidate by the AFL-CIO is an indication of this trend.

The post-industrial economy of the future is likely to be starkly stratified, with a relatively small tier of well-paid, highly trained professional, managerial, and research workers at the top but the bulk of employment in low-level service job categories such as secretaries, janitors, fast-food workers, and security guards. Access to education will therefore loom ever larger as the key to status, and thus differences in the quality of education being provided to different population groups will become one of the hottest political issues in the years to come. The issues of merit pay, competency testing, "back-to-basics," and tuition tax credits are only the first stages in what will be a long-term set of conflicts.

Blacks and Urban Politics

Many of these smokestack industries were the economic heart of America's largest cities. As these industries decline, blue-collar jobs disappear from the cities and close-in suburbs, creating a downward spiral: a population increasingly dominated by the elderly and by unemployed minorities—many of whom require public assistance—and a shrinking revenue base. Crime, poor schools, and inadequate housing hasten the decay.

To be sure, many cities experienced a downtown office building boom and a trend toward gentrification during the late 1970s. Both forces contribute to the overall economic health of individual neighborhoods and cities, but they also spawn political conflict. On one side stand young, affluent professionals, their employers, and real estate development interests, often quietly encouraged by city government

(Continued on page 6)

What the Recovery Means for Minorities

by Gerald David Jaynes

(The author is an associate professor of economics and Afro-American studies at Yale University and an adjunct fellow of the Joint Center for Political Studies.)

Although the Reagan administration is trumpeting an extraordinary economic recovery, economists fear that the recovery may turn out to be quite modest. Furthermore, while recovery will mean some improvement in economic conditions for white America, for minorities it may only signal a move from worse to bad.

How Strong Is the Recovery?

The recovery statistics cited most frequently—9.2 percent economic growth in the second quarter of 1983, a sharp drop in inflation, and declining unemployment—are undeniably impressive, but a more thorough examination of the figures shows that this recovery is no better than typical of recent economic upturns. For example, figures for personal spending and saving and for the *average* growth rate so far this year are comparable to statistics recorded in the first year of the 1976-1978 recovery.

That recovery was sufficient to reduce overall unemployment from 8.5 percent to 6 percent before the beginning of the next recession. Unemployment today hovers around 9.5 percent. If the present recovery remains comparable, unemployment may never fall below the 7.5-8.5 percent range.

But while the recovery so far may look typical, the recession from which we are recovering is not: unemployment reached a post-war high of 10.8 percent in December 1982, and the federal government has registered the largest budget deficits in history (approximately $200 billion for the coming fiscal year). A "typical" recovery may not be able to overcome these unique circumstances, which impose tremendous burdens on the economy.

Each percentage point rise in unemployment represents roughly one million people out of work and, therefore, billions of dollars of spendable income lost to the economy.

Wall Street says that huge budget deficits siphon off money that would otherwise be made available to business for investment and expansion. The deficit must be financed through government borrowing from the same sources that provide loans to businesses and consumers. This direct competition for limited funds inevitably drives up interest rates—the cost of these funds—and thus reduces business investment both directly and by reducing consumer purchasing. Business investment, of course, would lead to new jobs as well as to the purchase of needed plants and equipment. The fear of rising interest rates is the greatest single threat to continued economic recovery.

Continuing Minority Unemployment

Even if the current recovery meets administration forecasts and reduces overall unemployment to around 8.5 percent by 1984, black and Hispanic unemployment will likely remain at double digit levels (see figure).

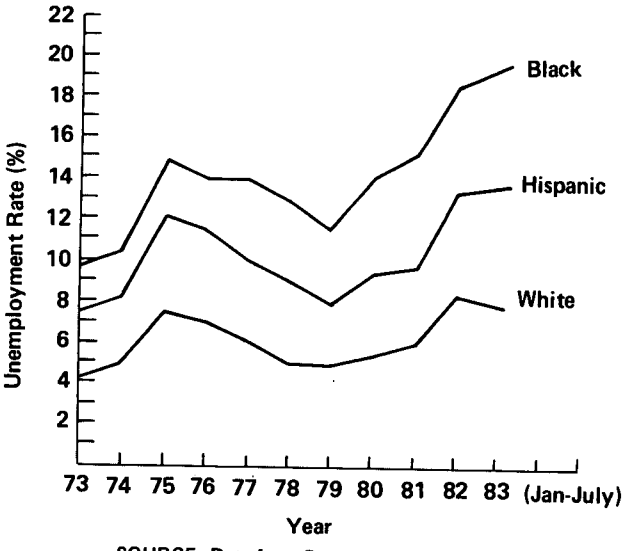
Minorities are concentrated in manufacturing and construction jobs, both of which will probably continue to decline for a number of years as the economy shifts from an industrial base to a service and information base. The recession exacerbated the effects of this structural shift, and the recovery will probably speed it along since investors are likely to favor newer, so-called "sunrise" industries over faltering "sunset" enterprises.

Between 1979 and 1982, employment in heavy industry declined 10 percent, while employment in the service sector rose 3.6 percent. Even after the recovery was supposedly well under way—during the first half of 1983—employment in heavy industry remained unchanged, while service sector employment bounded ahead by a full point. Because blacks and whites are unevenly distributed between the surging and lagging sectors, whites will taste the fruits of recovery much sooner than blacks.

What's more, all indications are that the economic disparities separating black and white workers will become more pronounced during the first year or two of the recovery. Since the beginning of the recovery in 1982—black unemployment has *risen* from 18.9 percent to 19.5 percent, while white unemployment has fallen from 8.6 percent to 8.2 percent. This was the pattern during the last recovery as well. Between 1975 and 1977, the unemployment rate for blacks held steady around 14 percent, even though white unemployment fell nearly two points, to 6.2 percent.

Although the concepts "recession" and "recovery" are useful for charting the performance of the economy as a whole, they are poor indicators of the economic conditions confronting nonwhites. The country was genuinely alarmed when, during the depth of the recession, unemployment exceeded 10

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SOURCE: Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment: A Look Behind the Numbers

by William P. O'Hare

(The author is senior research associate at the Joint Center.)

The monthly unemployment rate rose to a post World War II high of *10.8* percent in *December* 1982, but declined slightly to 9.4 percent in August 1983. Black unemployment, at 20 percent in August, is also at record levels.

But these monthly unemployment figures don't tell the whole story. While monthly unemployment figures of nearly 11 percent—roughly 11 million people out of work—are distressing enough, over the course of the *year,* more than *twice* that many people actually experienced unemployment. Nearly 26.5 million workers were unemployed at one point or another in 1982, compared to an average monthly unemployment figure of *10.7* million.

The Bleak Picture for Blacks

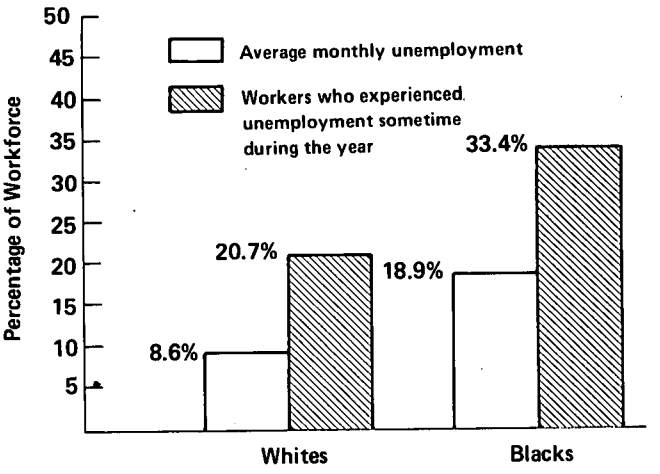
For blacks, the ratio of monthly unemployment rates to the percentage of workers who experienced unemployment over the year is not as extreme, because a higher proportion of blacks than whites remained unemployed throughout the entire year. In 1982, the average monthly unemployment rate for blacks was about 19 percent, and 33.4 percent of blacks were unemployed at some time during 1982 (see figure). But over one quarter (27 percent) of the 4.1 million blacks who experienced unemployment during 1982 looked for work all year without finding any; among whites, 13 percent of those who looked for work in 1982 reported that they could not find any.

On the average, whites who experienced unemployment in 1982 were unemployed for 14.9 weeks; the average unemployed black worker was out of work for 18.9 weeks—a 27 percent difference. Almost 58 percent of black workers who were unemployed were out of work for 15 weeks or more, compared to 47 percent of whites, and 36 percent of blacks compared to 33 percent of whites had two or more spells of unemployment.

Even for those who worked, there was a disparity between the races. Only 66 percent of black workers worked full time for 50-52 weeks in 1981. For whites, the figure was 76.4 percent. On the other end of the spectrum, 5 percent of white workers but 9 percent of black workers worked less than 26 weeks during the year. Thus, not only are blacks unemployed at a higher rate than whites, but blacks who *are* working work fewer weeks of the year.

What the Children See

An individual's unemployment of course affects family, friends, and community. One of the starkest disparities between blacks and whites is in unemployment rates for heads of households with children under 18. In 1981, 28.2 percent of black heads of such households did not work—they were either unemployed or not looking for work. Only 8.3 percent of whites in this category did not work. Children in more than one-fourth of black families, then, suffered the effects of adult unemployment.



Black and white unemployment, 1982.
SOURCE: Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These labor force experiences not only have direct economic effects, they affect expectations, ambitions, and plans—which have long-term economic consequences. Given the statistics above, it is not surprising that the number of minorities called "discouraged workers"—those who have given up looking for work—is approaching the number of minority unemployed—those who are actively seeking but not finding work. The National Urban League reported in its July 1983 *Quarterly Report* on the social and economic conditions of black Americans that there were 1.6 million black discouraged workers in the second quarter of 1983, compared to 2.4 million unemployed.

Teen-age unemployment is generally higher than overall unemployment: 19.8 percent of whites and 53.0 percent of blacks 16 to 19 years old were unemployed in August 1983. But note that while 58.0 percent of whites in this age group participate in the labor force (that is, they either work or seek work), only 37.8 percent of black teenagers do. This means that *less than 20 percent* of black teenagers were working in August.

These figures reflect a rather disheartening set of experiences for a large segment of the black population and can only bode danger for the future of today's young blacks.

. . . Recovery Means For Minorities

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percent, yet black unemployment has been below 10 percent only two of the past ten years.

Now is the time to recognize that business cycles of this country are leaving minorities farther and farther behind. In spite of rhetoric about "new" approaches—supply-side economics and the Reagan revolution—the present recovery does not seem to differ significantly from its predecessors. That is not great news for America, and it's very bad news for America's minorities.

. . . Politics to Come

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officials who are pleased by the prospect of an increase in the tax base. On the other side are blacks, Hispanics, poor whites, and neighborhood and tenants associations, who may have less than ideal living conditions but fear displacement and loss of neighborhood cohesion.

This "two cities" issue is popping up with increasing frequency in city elections. The very success of urban redevelopment engenders resentment in those segments of the population which feel left out and left behind. Newly gentrified areas, rather than ghettos, may be most at risk if there is another wave of urban disorders.

On the other hand, demographic and political trends may have the ironic effect of reducing conflict over two of the hottest issues of recent years: busing and residential integration. Recent court decisions have been reluctant to mandate busing across city or county boundaries. Because many whites are fleeing large cities and many of the remainder are fleeing the public schools, there will soon be few white children left to bus.

Controversies over scattersite subsidized housing may also become moot before long. The current scarcity of federal, state, and local housing programs reduces the perceived threat of subsidized housing in largely white neighborhoods. Of course, it also threatens to leave the minority poor in dire straits when it comes to finding housing. And in the long run, stagnation in residential segregation could lead to increased and hardened divisions between the races.

The concentration of impoverished minorities in cities leaves them vulnerable to further declines in an already low standard of living. Road repair, sanitation, and police and fire services are all being reduced in most cities around the country, and there are scant prospects for improvement in the near future.

All of these trends are likely to make for turbulent city politics. Blacks are now approaching majority status in many of the larger cities of the Northeast, Midwest, and South. The initial push for black political control invariably reaches a crescendo in mayoral races involving black candidates. The results are frequently large increases in both black and white turnout and a polarization of community opinion—although the extremes reached this year in Chicago are not likely to be repeated elsewhere.

As the racial symbolism of such victories wears off, black politicians may be confronted with the growing dissatisfaction of constituents unhappy with city services. The result probably will be factional struggles within each city's black political community; whites and Hispanics will play pivotal roles as swing constituencies. This pattern has already emerged in Washington, D.C.—which is 70 percent black—and will doubtless become more common.

Since the number of black-majority locales without black representatives is declining, cities and other jurisdictions with sizeable but not predominant black populations represent the next frontier for black candidates. Black politicians will have to become sensitive to the dynamics of competing for office in a racially mixed environment, especially one that is middle class. Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles and Kansas City Congressman Alan Wheat, who enjoys strong support from the local Chamber of Commerce, are pioneering this new style of black politics. Bradley's near-miss in the 1982 California gubernatorial race suggests that one or more blacks will probably win a governorship or a U.S. Senate seat within the next decade.

The current surge of political activism among blacks is primarily a reaction against Reaganism in its many manifestations. The administration's assault on education, welfare, and nutrition programs has heightened awareness of the relevance of politics to economic survival and has prompted energetic voter registration drives in black communities throughout the country.

Hispanics: Deep-Seated Diversities

Worried over widespread mobilization of the black vote, Republican strategists have targeted the Hispanic vote to counter black political strength. The strategy has had mixed success at best, because of the diversity of the Hispanic community. Puerto Ricans, who are especially prominent in the Northeast, tend to be almost as Democratic in their political preferences as blacks. The Cubans, who arrived here immediately after Castro came to power, on the other hand, tend to be staunchly anti-Communist and committed to free enterprise; many need little prompting to vote Republican.

A potentially decisive factor will be the political inclination of the Mexican-Americans in the Southwest and California. They tend to be New Deal liberals on bread-and-butter economic issues—which is not hard to understand given the 15 percent unemployment rate among Hispanics and the organizing struggles of the farmworkers in recent years. Yet they are also sympathetic to conservative views on such issues as abortion and school prayer. And they are more concerned than most Democrats about left-wing insurgency in Latin America but less inclined to a purely military solution than the Reagan administration.

Two issues are inextricably entwined with Hispanic politics: immigration and language. Hispanic Americans are torn between the fear of intense job competition that would result from open immigration and the fear of arbitrary harassment of Latinos seeking work—a likely result of stricter immigration policies.

The language issue shows up in several contexts: whether Hispanic children in public schools should be allowed to receive instruction in Spanish; whether elections should be conducted in both English and Spanish; whether public signs and services should be in two languages.

As with so many issues, the schools are likely to emerge as an early battleground on this topic. A growing consensus appears to favor giving Hispanic children some initial instruction in Spanish, in order to teach basic concepts. The major conflict concerns whether this practice should be viewed

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Telescope

Coalition Monitors Pennsylvania's Judicial Appointments

Since 1979, a coalition of public interest organizations called the Pennsylvania Judicial Selection Project has been monitoring presidential and gubernatorial appointments to the federal bench in Pennsylvania, with the goal of increasing the number of minority and women judges. The coalition also encourages the public to vote for minority and women candidates for judicial positions at the state and local levels.

According to Sharon A. Bembery, executive director of the coalition, President Carter appointed five blacks to Pennsylvania's federal bench between 1977 and 1980. In contrast, President Reagan has appointed only one minority to the federal bench, even though there are 620 black attorneys in Philadelphia alone. And although Philadelphia has 1,200 women attorneys, only four of Pennsylvania's federal court judges are women.

The coalition consists of 25 organizations, including the Urban Leagues of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the League of Women Voters of Philadelphia, the NAACP, and the Philadelphia chapters of the National Conference of Black Lawyers and the American Civil Liberties Union.

CUNY's Student Voter Registration Drive

The City University of New York has launched an ambitious, citywide plan to register all of its students and encourage them to vote. CUNY's total enrollment is 53 percent minority; overall, New York State has the largest number of unregistered blacks in the nation.

According to Donna E. Shalala, president of Hunter College, registering students at the same time they sign up for classes has been the most successful means of getting them on the voter rolls. Students are encouraged to volunteer to help register their fellow students.

Other methods to be used by the colleges in the CUNY system to stimulate student interest in politics include inviting politicians and celebrities to speak to students, using college media, and sponsoring political debates and panel discussions.

A Black Gender Gap?

More black women than black men vote, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population. And the percentage is increasing faster for women than men. Between the 1976 and 1980 presidential elections, the percentage of eligible black men voting increased slightly, from 47.2 percent to 47.5 percent. The proportion of eligible black women voting increased from 49.9 percent to 52.8 percent.

Among whites, the number of women voters has exceeded the number of men, but the voting proportions for white men and women have been much closer than for blacks. In 1976, 60.5 percent of eligible white women and 61.5 percent of eligible white men voted. In 1980, the proportions of white men and women who voted were 60.9 percent each.

Hayes Wins Seat Vacated by Washington

In Chicago's special election to fill Mayor Harold Washington's vacated seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, black unionist Charles Hayes soundly defeated his opponents, Republican Diane Preacely and independent candidate Ed Warren. Hayes, who was endorsed by the mayor, had defeated 13 other Democrats in the primary. His closest rival in the primaries was Lu Palmer, a black community activist and radio broadcaster. However, once Hayes had captured the Democratic nomination, his victory was virtually assured in this overwhelmingly Democratic district.

Conference on the Threat of Toxic Substances to Minority Communities

The Urban Environment Conference, Inc. is sponsoring a conference entitled "Taking Back our Health: An Institute on Surviving the Toxic Threat to Minority Communities," to be held in New Orleans on November 18-20, 1983.

This will be the first national citizens conference to address both the occupational and environmental health problems facing minority communities. Toxic substances are often found in industrial areas and rural communities, where minorities are a disproportionately large segment of the work force.

Conference participants will include representatives from unions, health and environmental organizations, religious and civil rights groups, and the communities that have been affected by environmental hazards.

For more information, please contact George Coling, executive director, Urban Environment Conference, Inc., 1314 14th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; telephone: 202 797-0446.

Information Please

Blue Wooldridge of the Institute of Public Service International will chair a panel on "The Challenge of Achieving Equity in a Time of Retrenchment" at the 1984 National Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, to be held April 8-11 in Denver, Colorado.

He is seeking to identify strategies used by public and nonprofit organizations to increase the equitable distribution of public goods and services. Such strategies might aim at minimizing the impact of taxes or user charges on low-income individuals, limiting the effects of labor-force cutbacks on women and minorities, and maintaining the equitable distribution of services during budget cutbacks.

Mr. Wooldridge would appreciate examples of such strategies, with brief descriptions, for use at the conference and later in a *Focus* article on this subject. Address information to:

Blue Wooldridge
Institute of Public Service International
University of Connecticut
1380 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
Telephone: 203 241-4924

. . . Politics to Come

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as a temporary expedient, with transition to English-language classes made as early in schooling as possible, or whether education should be genuinely bilingual—raising the possibility that Hispanic students might leave high school with imperfect fluency in English and a disinclination to assimilate into American society. Hispanic leaders themselves are divided over this issue.

Hispanics currently have an extremely low level of political participation. Hispanic voter registration and turnout is the lowest of any racial or ethnic group in the electorate, running about 15 percentage points below the rate for blacks, which in turn usually trails white turnout by 10 percentage points.

Several factors appear to depress Hispanic turnout: the language barrier, the relatively high proportion of noncitizens, and the seasonal migration of farm workers, which clearly presents difficulties in both registration and get-out-the-vote efforts. Partly because of this low participation rate, there are fewer Hispanic office holders than one might expect in areas with concentrated Hispanic populations.

There are signs, however, that Hispanics are currently registering rapid electoral gains of the sort won by blacks about a decade ago. The accession of Henry Cisneros as mayor of San Antonio and Federico Pena in Denver are important benchmarks.

Prospects for Coalition Building

The potential for building a coalition involving blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican-Americans is quite promising. Puerto Ricans and blacks share a strong identification with the Democrats and have worked together effectively in the New York State Legislature for over a decade, despite some conflict over post-1980 redistricting. The inclusion of Mexican-Americans is feasible as long as the coalition concentrates on economic issues and downplays social issues.

Cubans are generally so conservative that they would be unlikely to join wholeheartedly in a black-Hispanic coalition. Moreover, tensions between blacks and Cubans in Florida have been heightened by the economic success of Cuban immigrants (as compared to the lack of economic opportunity for blacks), resentment over the growing dominance of Spanish in the local economy, and the contrast between the treatment of Haitian and Cuban refugees.

But the main difficulty in building a black-Hispanic coalition may be the relatively low level of political involvement within the black and Hispanic communities. Increased political mobilization of these communities could bring a "rainbow coalition" to fruition. The enormous gain in black participation since 1978 is being paralleled by similar activity among Hispanics. The Southwest Voter Education and Registration Project, under the leadership of Willie Velasquez, has been especially effective in Texas and other Southwestern states.

Despite the potentially ominous trends in economics and public policy outlined above, electoral politics continue to function as a vital mechanism of social adjustment. The equality of the ballot box has the potential to counter the inequality of the economic structure. The current groundswell of minority political activism is a tremendously healthy sign of the vitality of America's promise of democracy. The channeling of frustrations into politics, if accompanied by some visible indications of success, may forestall an explosion of more destructive forms of protest later in the decade.

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