Nixon's New Budget

What It Means To Black Americans

By SAMUEL F. YETTE

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Historian Lerone Bennett Jr. called it "the white natives gathering for the rite of purification and initiation."

At any rate, the Second Inaugural of President Richard Milhous Nixon had taken place a week earlier, and late last January, several dozen black publishers climbed four breath-taking, spiral flights up to a briefing room in the Executive Office Building, next door to the White House.

Undoubtedly, some of the more veteran members of this National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) recalled that nine years earlier they had met in the White House itself, where President Lyndon B. Johnson personally confided to them that the following day he would announce an "unconditional war on poverty."

But, this year, instead of seeing the recently re-installed President Nixon, these publishers of the more than 100 newspapers would meet with three of the President's Germanic surrogates: Communications Director Herbert Klein, Economic Advisor Herbert Stein, and budget-cutting expert Casper Weinberger.

They confirmed that peace had been declared in the so-called war on poverty. The "Great Society" had been buried along with its creator — LBJ — the day before; and the Congressionally-enacted Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) would be among those Great Society programs cut out of Nixon's new budget to be announced the following week.

Klein, Stein and Weinberger were attended at the briefing by two black men: Stan Scott, former newsman and assistant to Klein; and 2-star Air Force General, Daniel (Chappie) James.

General James indicated both in his presence and his presentation how successful a black man can become in the military. (During the 1960's, Daniel P. Moynihan, the same erstwhile Harvard professor who commended "benign neglect" to Nixon, also explained military service as the best option open to black men. It helped them develop "manhood," Moynihan said.)

Militarism seems equally a promising option for elite whites. Weinberger moved from directing the President's budget to taking charge of the nation's health, education and welfare as HEW Secretary. His predecessor at HEW, Elliot Richardson, moved effortlessly from the concerns of health and well-being to taking charge of the nation's death-producing arts as Secretary of Defense.

So, like General James, HEW chief Weinberger also told the publishers mainly about the good opportunities for black youths—in the military.

But Weinberger also told the publishers that they and their readers should take heart in the fact that the new $268.7 billion budget would increase spending for "human resources" by $18 billion. These "human resources," he said, included such down-to-earth and heart-warming items as heavy law enforcement and military pay raises.

JOB CRISIS OUTLINED

Herbert Stein was the first star of that three-star show, and he, alone, was worth all the alarm that should have been felt by these publishers.

Without the slightest trace of discomfort, economist Stein acknowledged that black unemployment runs generally twice the rate of white unemployment. He said that is because "The black population is younger"—a new way of saying that black people tend not to live too long.

In any event, unemployment generally reduced from 6 per cent to 5.1 percent last year, Stein said, and the 1973 goal is to reduce it further to 4.5 per cent — leaving black people with only a 9 per cent or 10 per cent unemployment rate.

One of the publishers told Stein that such high unemployment represented a "job crisis" in the black community.

But Stein had a nifty reply for that: "There is very little unemployment among Negro Ph.D.'s," he said.

"What hope is there?" one publisher pleaded. "What have we to offer our young people? How about some Federal work programs?" Stein pointed out that last year black youths were 62 per cent of the Job Corps, 33 per cent of the MDTA (Manpower Development and Training Act.), and 61 per cent of the CEP (Concentrated Employment Program).

A Baltimore woman long associated with civil rights and black publishing, Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, told Stein that the Job Corps and these other social programs were being cut back if not eliminated. "If these young people have no jobs," she warned, "they'll have to turn to crime. What are we going to do?"

"The government is not the solution to the problem," Stein said, without emotion.

Dr. Carlton Goodlett, publisher of the *Metro Sun-Reporter* in San Francisco, rose and told Stein that his (Stein's) approach to these questions had been "too sterile."

Goodlett insisted to Stein that as the President's representative before the publishers, Stein should "take a message back to your associates and to the Administration, in general..."

Before Goodlett could quite finish his comment, Stein lowered his glasses, and glared icily at Goodlett.

"I got your message," Stein said haughtily, "but I don't believe you got mine."

So saying, President Nixon's Economic Advisor briskly folded his papers and marched toward the anteroom off-stage.

Stunned, the publishers stared in stony silence.

Chief communicator Herb Klein leaped to his feet, causing Stein to pause at the stage exit.

"Let's give Herb Stein a good round of applause," Klein urged the publishers.

Perhaps more polite than prepared for these events, the publishers briefly applauded.

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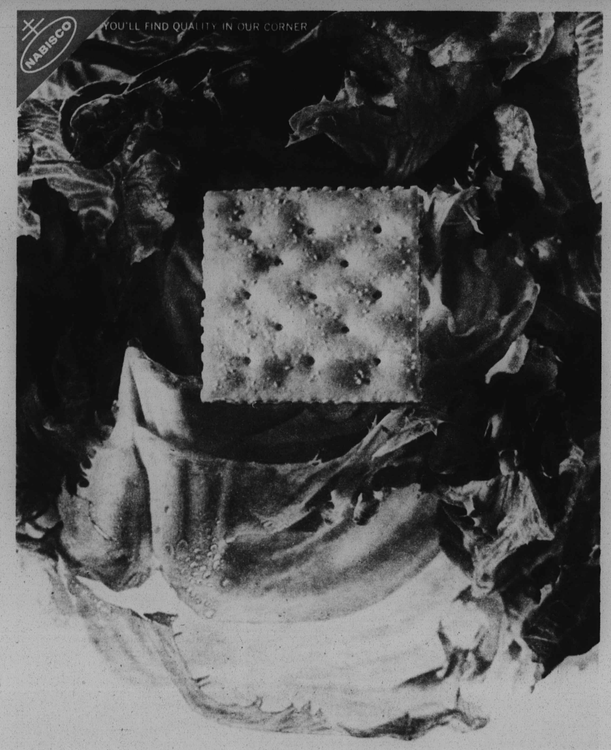

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Upcoming Events

APRIL

Interracial Council for Business Opportunity, Americana Hotel, New York City

APRIL 18-21

National Association of Black Social Workers New York Hilton, NYC.

MAY 3-6

Department of African and Afro-American Studies, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass.

MAY 3

National Conference of Black Political Scientists, Fairmont-Roosevelt Hotel, New Orleans, La.

MAY 5

National Scholarship and Fund for Negro Students (NSFNS), Americana Hotel, NYC. Interview Session

MAY 7

National Scholarship and Fund for Negro Students (NSFNS), Sheraton Hotel, Philadelphia, Pa. (Interview Session)

MAY 10-11

Chicago Economic Development Corporation, Pick-Congress Hotel, Chicago, Ill.

MAY 10-13

National Association of Market Developers, Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, Calif.

MAY 11

National Scholarship and Fund for Negro Students (NSFNS), Robert Treat Hotel, Newark, N.J., (Interview Session)

MAY 18

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Annual Institute, Americana Hotel, New York City.

Dawn Quiz

1. Who was the first black officer to command a United States warship?
2. Has any black person been a presidential cabinet member in U.S. political history?

ANSWERS

1. Admiral L. Gravely when he took command of the destroyer escort U.S.S. Falgout in January, 1962. He was a lieutenant commander then.

2. Yes, Robert C. Weaver was head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). He was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on Jan. 13, 1966.