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Schmoke fundraiser

The great success State's Attorney Kurt Schmoke achieved with his mid-term celebration last week, drawing a diverse crowd was more than just a personal triumph for Schmoke, who has admitted to higher political aspirations. By drawing a cross section of races, ethnic groups, social classes and political persuasions, his event along with Council Presidents Du Burn's fundraiser represents a groundswell of support for two black candidates for city-wide office.

Despite the racial and some would say racist conflict in the city council over the squeegie kids which illustrated all too clearly that racial paranoia and stereotyping was still alive and well in Baltimore. Schmoke's event pointed out what the political future of Baltimore could be. Elections based on candidate preference instead of racial origin.

Kurt Schmoke proved in the last election that he could garner broad support in diverse communities. The questions remains, will these same openminded Baltimoreans support him or another black for the top spot on the city-wide ticket?

That reality of Baltimore's new attitude is yet to be tested and the mayoral race is the most crucial test of all. Kurt Schmoke's event was a glimpse of the new Baltimore, the next two years will determine whether it has arrived yet.

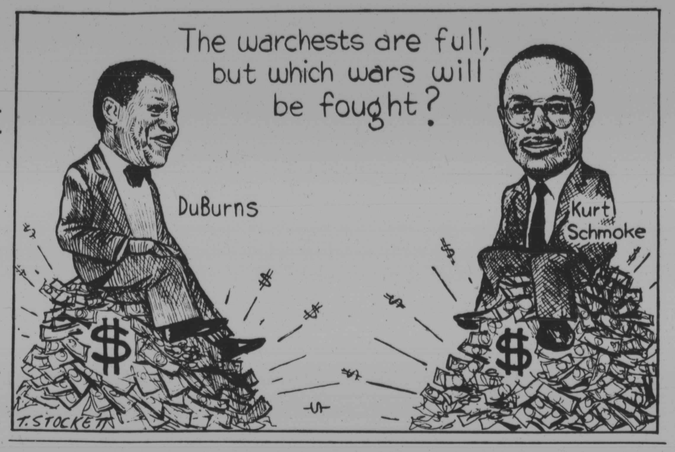
Squeegee Task Force

Through all the debate on the squeegie kids, one fact has been often overlooked, yet it is the most crucial of all. The youngsters in this activity are creating a job where there was none. Unemployment for black youths has hovered over the 40 percent mark for so long one begins to wonder if it is not a permanent fixture of the American economy.

These innovative youngsters need to be controled not eliminated as several participants in last week's acrimonious debate suggested. The arguments for the elimination of the window washers do hot hold water and the safety issue has not been bolstered by any incidences of squeegie kids being injured.

Tempers got out of hand and the mayor called for a cooling off period. Councilman Mfume made some cognet suggestions and a task force was formed to study the issue. This seems to be a delaying tactic. It is not readily apparent what the task force can discover that is not known about the issue already.

Regardless of the delaying tactics, Baltimore will have to face the choice of eliminating the squeegie kids or regulating them in some way so that the courteous, disciplined ones can continue to operate.



Parren J. Mitchell

Government workers and the 1986 budget

On Tuesday, April 30th, the Senate approved the President's proposed 1986 budget by a one vote margin. As you know, there are many inequities contained in this budget. Perhaps one of the most glaring is in the area of pay and retirement benefits for federal employees. If the President's budget proposal is enacted, the 1 million civilian employees who received a 3.5 percent pay raise in January, 1985 would get a 5 percent pay cut next January. This would cost each worker an average of $1,250 a year.

The proposed benefit cuts specifically include:

1) Raising the retirement age for full benefit eligibility from 55 to 65. Employees with 30 years of service could still retire at 55, but would be penalized 5 percent for each retirement year before age 65. For example, if an employee retired at 55, he/she would be penalized 50 percent of his benefits. The new formula would be phased in over 10 years, and workers now 55 would not be affected.

2) Reducing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). The annual COLA for retirees scheduled for payment next January would be eliminated, and the formula for computing future COLAs would be reduced starting in 1987.

3) Cutting COLA payments to any retiree receiving more than $10,000 in annual benefits. For any portion of benefits exceeding $10,000, the retiree would receive only 55 percent of the full COLA.

4) Lowering the pay base on which pensions are computed. Instead of averaging the employee's three highest years of pay to compute pension, the highest five years would be used. The government also would exclude unused sick leave from the computation.

5) Cutting health expenditures. To curb costs in the Federal Employee Health Benefit program, the government contribution no longer would be based on the average premium of the six largest health insurance plans. Instead, increases in premium payments would be linked to the overall inflation rate.

These reductions would also be accompanied by the elimination of approximately 35,000 civilian jobs in the next two years. The major job reductions would include 10,186 at the Department of Agriculture, 3,873 at the Department of Health and Human Services, 3,646 at the Small Business Administration (which could be eliminated), 3,088 at the Veterans Administration, 736 at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and 500 at the Department of Education.

President Reagan cites what he calls "a growing perception that government salaries are relatively high... and that benefit programs are liberal and expensive," as reason for cutting the "expensive, overly generous retirement system" for its 3 million retirees and future retirees. While federal employees may not agree on the effect these cuts will have if enacted, they do agree that they are unfair and unjustified.

Government workers' response to the impact of these proposed cuts is varied. Some believe that the increase in the retirement age would force thousands of older employees to stay on the job much longer than they had planned and prevent a much needed infusion of "younger blood" into federal agencies. Other opponents of the proposal say that some aspects of the proposal — notably the 5 percent pay cut next January, a reduction of 35,000 jobs and reduced cost-of-living adjustments for pensions — would induce many workers to quit sooner. Federal employee unions predict a large exodus of federal workers and a deterioration of government services. They also believe that bright, young students who are already shunning the government in favor of private sector careers will be more discouraged by the proposed cuts.

Although opinion as to the impact of these cuts is diverse, there is a consensus that the proposal will have a severely negative effect on federal employees and ultimately government services. I sincerely hope that we will not have to suffer the consequences of this proposal. I am optimistic and have faith in the integrity of my colleagues in the House to vote down this inequitable proposal that would prove disastrous for the fedral employee when it is considered on the House floor.

While I do agree that something must be done about the massive federal deficit, if reductions are to be made, they must be made fairly and across the board. How can the president propose a budget that is the worst in history in terms of federal workers and still propose high increases in defense spending? I am deeply concerned about national security, however, I fail to believe that $322.2 billion is needed to protect our nation. So until concessions are made in this area, we should not be willing or expected to sacrifice in others. The trimming of the national debt must be done equitably. For this reason, I will not support the reductions in the area of fèderal employees.

Commentary

Adolescent shootings an outrage

The rash of adolescent shootings in recent months is an outrage. Every victim and their families deserve our deepest sympathy. Each perpetrator deserves to be mourned. Our community has become a bad example of a wild west show. A show with no heroes or heroines. Only victims.

To remedy the situation community leaders have organized to express their outrage. Many have argued for gun control laws, some claim the State needs to more regularly invoke the death penalty, and there is now a youth hot line where a citizen might phone in information about a gun packin' youth. Each proposal is a genuine attempt to curb the antisocial behavior of some of Baltimore's youth.

Regretfully the hue and cry is all too familiar as are the remedies. In recent months Baltimore's adult community has been similarly outraged by the rash of teenage pregnancies.

In response, a morals and values education program is being introduced into the public schools, a theatre company is dramatizing the woes of child parents, and there is a Statewide survey underway to better understand teenage pregnancy and the services available to young parents.

The similarity between the rash of shootings and pregnancies is striking. First, there are no heroes and heroines. Only victims. The remedies are similar too. Each attempt to treat or understand the condition is after the fact. It is also the case that the shootings and the pregnancies have the potential of permanently changing life in the metropolitan area.

Finally, the two conditions have generated enormous anxiety and some hyperbole among the adult community. Of course, the irony rests in the absence of ideas intent on preventing the devastation wrought by the two conditions.

There certainly is no magical remedy to the two threats to the health and welfare of youth and community. But, it should be clear that we cannot live with rampant shootouts or pervasive child parents. Every effort and resource must be called forth to prevent the scourges of life and community.

In order to prevent the conditions there must be some understanding of why they fester and grow. Seemingly our lack of understanding would encourage research. The threat to life and community does not permit the patience research requires.

An immediate attempt to prevent is dictated. To do so we must make common sense assumptions about the causes and then develop preventative efforts. For instance, idleness, poor self esteem, and a lack of belonging may be assumed to contribute to child pregnancies and shootings. Of course there may be other causes but idleness, self esteem, and belonging play a part in the disorientation of some youth.

It is also the case that adolescent idleness, self esteem and belonging are as much community problems as they are problems of individuals and their families. If members of the community can agree that this is, at least, a partial cause for the distressing behaviors of our young, adults the responsibilities for attempting remedies are abundant.

Both experience and research inform that sporting events are excellent deterrents to sexual preoccupation. Perhaps the same sporting events and the preparation periods necessary for participation would help in curbing the incidence of violent crime.

The organization of single sex sports clubs or, indeed, mixed sports clubs at the local community level could prove invaluable to the treatment of child pregnancy and adolescent shootings. Inter-community competition, competition between communities and, perhaps, a city-wide olympiad held in the late summer would prove useful and fun.

Sporting events in volleyball, track and field, swimming, and basketball are relatively inexpensive but very demanding, physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Every church, CAP agency, fraternity and sorority, every civic organization and every block association could sponsor a sports club. The potential return would certainly offset the possible inconvenience of such an effort.

Beyond sports clubs there exists the possibility of organized groups sponsoring chaperoned social events — dances, picnics, ski-trips — for young adults on a regular basis. Creating options for social interaction would appear to be important in any attempt to stem the tide of disorientation. Currently, young adults dance belly to belly, in adultless, dark basements or in commercial establishments.

Some of the commercial establishments are havens for drug and weapon abuse and anything goes in the dark basements. Again, the cost for such activity is minimal and the benefits are potentially substantial.

Of course part-time jobs, camping experiences, strengthened big brother and big sister programs, replacement of school based after schools programs, and a strengthening of the City's recreation centers are other steps that can be taken to attack the problems of idleness, poor self esteem and belonging.

It is vital to observe that any effort should be directed toward all young adults but particularly those trapped in the bowels of our city. Also, though such efforts do not depend on schools it is the experience that when young people are engaged in non-school based activities that are important to them, in-school behavior seems to improve.

The fact that the physical characteristics of the victims includes their blackness, this is not a black problem. With all the tinsel and glitter that has helped raise our working class town from the bottom of the barrel there has been no such help for those socially disoriented youth with whom we all must cohabitate.

In paying tribute to those men and women responsible for the City's resurgence it is appropriate to note that the opportunities for the less than priviledged adolescent are lagging, woefully, behind.

Child parents and adolescent shootings are but two manifestations of a community underdeveloped for the young.

Irving Hamer

Anthony Ahlstrom

If

"You know, "F" is a crooked letter and, "I" can't straighten it out." The word "if"; boy, if I had a dollar for every time that word was uttered I'd be a multi-millionaire.

If our young had a better set of values, built on more than the unsatisfied longings for pie-in-the-sky, we'd not have a near epidemic of black youth on black youth homicide, in Baltimore City.

No one, particularly the very impressionistic young, can be expected to see and hear every manner of "get", "get", and more "get" and not be motivated to "have", "have", "have".

The only problem with the tactic of telling people, especially young people, that they ought to have everything they see, is that the people saying it don't go further to tell our young that you only get out of this world what you put into it.

In fact, in life you might even get less than you put in but, one thing is for sure—you'll never get more than you put in.

If (there's that word again) black leadership continued to tell our youth the hard facts of life and, went further to, themselves, live what they preached, our kids would not only listen, they would positively respond.

If people didn't need leaders you can bet they'd sure find a way to get rid of them. People, however, do need leaders and, in a larger sense, leadership someone once said, "If people didn't have their leaders they would create them".

In our community we know a lot about the creation of leaders. You remember the cheap thugs Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton, of 1960's notoriety, who the press tried to make our leaders.

Well, Mr. Cleaver's last fling at fame was an attempt to market a pair of slacks with a hole in the private area, so his considerable genitalia could hang-out, exposed to the world.

Huey Newton, I read, has just been arrested, again, this time for stealing public money from a program designed to help poor kids. Our leaders? Nonsense!

More recently, and closer to home; if people would only stop and think, many of the people our local press try to make our standard bearers wouldn't get past the status of being the local water boy, let alone yours and my leader. But if people would only stop and think, so much among us would be different, wouldn't it?

If we had no welfare, what would people, now on welfare, do? "What, no welfare; man you must be crazy!" Am I?

In the majority of cases, and I am familiar with enough such cases to make this extrapolation, being on welfare has not done anything positive—not in the short term and certainly not for the families who have for generations wallowed on the dole.

Its been said a million times before but, no one seems to be listening; if you give people what they think is a free lunch, the bread is usually stale, the meat rancid and, the result diarrhetic.

If there was no welfare, we'd all probably be quite surprised how innovative people would become, in their efforts to take care of themselves and their offspring.

And to boot, we'd have hundreds of millions of dollars for the kinds of efforts that do bring people respectability and self sufficiency. "Oh, if; only if."

If Mayor William Donald Schaefer decides to run for Governor in 1986 and wins; City Council President Clarence H. "DU" Burns would automatically become the first black man to occupy the office of mayor, of Baltimore City.

How do I know, the city charter tells me so. No election, no fanfare, no nothin—President Burns would be the mayor.

That's the good thing about this system of government that has been devised by the founding fathers. The system is predictable. You can plan years in advance, if you understand the system.

If more of us did understand it, we'd be much further along in achieving our collective goals. It's because we don't understand it that tricks like divide and conquer can still be so effectively used on us.

If you don't believe me, just read the charter! Sure, there would be another election, for a full four year term, in 1987, but and remembering divide and conquer, would it make sense to threaten what, by then, we'd already have?

If, and that's the biggest little word in the English language, we're thinking the answer would have to be no. No but, no and, no if.

Samuel L. Banks

Don't blame the victims

In recent weeks there has been a spate of statements from unexpected quarters, largely black, excoriating, denouncing and heaping the proverbial coals of inferno on the black losers and poor in Baltimore and across the nation.

Dr. Andrew Brimmer, distinguished black economist and a former governor of the influential Federal Reserve Board, now head of a consulting firm in Washington, D.C., urges his fellow blacks to seize the Protestant Ethic (viz., hard work, education, sobriety, conscientiousness, etc.) and success will follow.

The long, bitter and ancient history of black Americans in the United States, past and present, demonstrates clearly and palpably that it was not an aversion to hard work, education or any of the other attributes of Max Weber's sanguine "Protestant Ethic" which denied black Americans equality of opportunity and access in the American body politic, but virulent, persistent and entrenched racism practiced by the majority white society.

It is unmitigated nonsense to argue as does Dr. Brimmer, that the acquisition of academic and vocational skills, in the absence of political power, will enable blacks to enjoy substantive socio-economic mobility in our society.

A clear and incontrovertible case in point is the number of highly educated and skilled blacks who are now unemployed and are now working for economic equity through blacks in Government; a Washington-based organization.

Notwithstanding their superior skills and capacity for hard work, a disproportionate number of black professionals have experienced the socio-economic retrenchment, reductions in force and reactionary policies of the Reagan administration.

President Reagan's veritable obsession with the "Star War Nuclear Complex" provides chilling evidence that black unemployment and underemployment will increase.

The tragic reality is that there are blacks with doctorates and M.A. degrees in the natural sciences, computer technology, mathematics and other disciplines identified as critical for our national work force now "pounding the pavement" without jobs and hope.

Their white professional and skilled counterparts, oftentimes with less preparation, are employed. The chief reason for this continuing "American Dilemma" is deadening institutional racism and exclusion of longstanding in our national life and history.

Dr. Brimmer, I am confident, knows this full well. There remains, for most black Americans, in spite of the level of preparations and skills, a negative correlation between preparation and the level of opportunity.

Locally, there has been much talk by some influential and respected black leaders of ridding the central city of criminal elements. Criminal or deviant behavior, to be sure, central city or elsewhere, is to be roundly deplored, but it makes little sense to tongue-lash and vilify so-called "hoodlums" and hooligans without first addressing the root causes of crime and social disorder.

The declaration of a self-styled "get tough policy" is, in fact, a pious, vacuous and meaningless exercise in rhetoric if the fundamental causes of human misery, alienation and hopelessness are not confronted squarely and forthrightly.

Central City Baltimore, to an overwhelming degree, typifies "Central City America" in being populated by the victims, largely black and Hispanic, of pervasive racism, poverty, historic exclusion, shoddy education, wretched housing, inadequate and poor health care and denial.

It is not they (i.e., victims) who created the sordid, dehumanizing and debilitating conditions under which they must endure, but the white controllers of power and influence who have consigned them and their posterity to a suborder of life.

It is pointless to speak of "getting tough" when people do not have a steak or stake in the society or do not have hope. The drug and alcoholic excesses of the central city population, as well as some suburban communities, is a misguided and painful effort to escape ennui, frustration and a feeling of impotence and hopelessness.

A "get tough" policy is not what is needed, but the development of structural employment, habitable housing, decent and affordable health care and high quality education.

The recent vote in the City Council to ban the creative and enterprising squeegee workers, largely black, is illustrative of gross insensitivity and indifference to the felt and pressing needs of these youngsters.

The vote of eleven to seven in favor of the ban, along racial lines, shows that racism remains alive and well in Monumental City. Moreover, there is no need, given the extended debate in the City Council, for Mayor Schaefer to appoint a task force to study the issue.

If Mayor William Donald Schaefer's ire was aroused because of charges of racism, so be it. Racism is a clear and present reality in Baltimore and must be dealt with, whenever it rears its ugly and venomous head forthrightly.

The youngsters should be allowed to conduct their squeegee work safely without municipal interference or a summit conference. Give the youngsters a break and chance to be productive.

The national mood of retreat and resistance to human and civil rights supports a climate in which scapegoats can be identified and blamed for societal failures.

The excruciating and execrable decision of President Ronald Wilson Reagan to visit the Bitburg cemetery, burial site of German war dead, as a favor to Chancellor Helmut Kohl personifies meanness, stubbornness and colossal insensitivity to Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Hitler's fascism and racism.

The great danger in instances of this type is that when one group is violated that, in time, other groups run the risk to their safety and humanity.

The socio-economic storms that we as black Americans have endured and persevered historically, are not abating or diminishing. Therefore, we must dare to be risk-takers for the losers and downtrodden in our community and nation.

We must always keep in mind what Malcolm X said during a period of enormous peril and upheaval in the 1960's:

"I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner... Being here in America doesn't make you an American."

He, too, indicated:

"I'm the man you think are out if you want to know what I'll do, figure out what you'll do. I'll do the same thing — only more of it."

The time is at hand to strike a blow for freedom and human dignity. Dare to be risk-taker for black survival, human dignity and social justice.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Black candidates for Mayor?

Jesse Smith

Denise Joyner

Richard Hite

Terri Clark

The question asked this week was: Which black person would you like to see run for mayor?

Yvette Smith, student, 23: "Kurt Schmoke. He's the best one out there yet. He has the right idea about cleaning up the streets, the crime problem. And cleaning up the street is what we need the most."

Denise Joyner, salesperson, 21: "Parren J. Mitchell. Everyone knows him. He's definitely for the people. He has the experience as far as politics are concerned. Plus, I like the way he looks!"

Gregory Harris, musician, 21: "Rev. J. R. Bryant. It doesn't take a white person to run the land. It takes spiritual guidance as well as administrative guidance. There's no love among people. It's common knowledge that Bryant is a powerful leader and he's also a powerful spiritual leader. And this world could use some spiritual guidance."

Doris Reid, 35, postal clerk: "Kurt Schmoke. I think he's ready for it. He's experienced enough. I think he'll be fair to all people. He'll have the interest of the city in mind. Kweisi Mfume would be my second choice once he gets more experience."

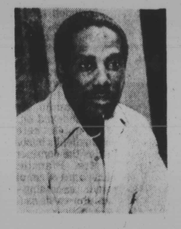
Frank Long, 41, transit operator: "I only see Kurt Schmoke. He's an upright man, not biased and he's not color struck. He will look out for the betterment of the city. He has the education; he has a good record as far as enforcing the law in Md. That gives him a good track record."

Jesse Smith, 68, retired: "Kurt Schmoke. I think it's time for him to get a break, move up. He did O.K. as state's attorney."

Maurice DaCosta, 20, military: "Jesse Jackson, he tried for president and didn't get it. So I detimely think he could be mayor. He's politically involved, he has the knowledge, also. You don't really have to know the city to run it. I've travelled a lot and have seen the same thing happening all over."

Terri Clark, 25, student: "Myself. I'm politically inclined. I could improve not only the downtown areas but other places as well. Places like Murphy Homes need to be worked with also. Even though I might not have held an elected office, I believe you have to start somewhere. Why not the top?"

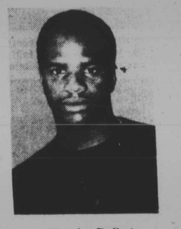
Richard Hite, 45, police officer: "Kurt Schmoke. He's capable and he appeals to all segments of the city. He has new ideas in reference as to how the city should run, new ideas as far as other parts of the city, not just Harborplace. I think he would show fiscal restraint also. It shows how good a person is by the people he employs, and Kurt Schmoke is surrounded by good people. Plus, he listens."



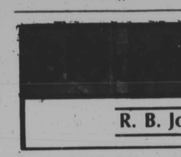
Frank Long

Gregory Harris

Doris Reid



Maurice DaCosta



R. B. Jones

Teenage pregnancies

America needs to stop playing with itself and trying to fool the rest of the world. It's anguished concern over the soaring rate of adolescent is a cruel and unnecessary farce that tries to mask its true indifference.

A recent report on the rates of teenage pregnancy in countries that are comparable to this one in industrial and technological development disclosed that America has the highest incidence of teenage pregnancy among the developed nations. It also has the lowest rate of availability of contraceptive access and information for its young people.

The rationale that is often heard in this country for keeping its young people in such ignorance is that sex education and access to contraceptives makes it too enticing and too convenient for young people to engage in premarital sex.

Some of the overly zealous religionists contend, no matter how absurdly, that teaching abstinence and traditional morality will stem the tide of teenage pregnancies. All America needs they insist, is a return to tradition.

When people talk about returning to traditional America a warning light goes on in my head. The oppression of black people is a very old tradition in America that I would not like to see anyone become nostalgic over. For most of the history of this country contraceptive information and devices were illegal. That is not a healthy tradition to go back to either.

The tradition that many people speak nostalgically about is a nonexistent past when people for the most part went to their marriage beds still virgins and free love was just some eccentricity of a few alienated intellectuals.

According to this mythology teenagers were fairly innocent about sex and without the magazines, films, television and music glorifying sex that are present today, young people would still be innocent about sex.

These pernicious myths are part of the problem that plagues this society when it comes to young people and sex. A major part of adolescence is the rush of hormones that announces that the individual is capable of reproducing and has the unconscious desire to mate.

No one has to teach young people to have sexual desires that seem to have earth shaking urgency. Nature does that. If young people in the past did not act on these desires as much as young people do now it is because they did not have the mobility and the opportunities to be alone and unsupervised comparable to teenagers today.

America must face the fact that young people are going to be sexually active. If that fact is ever faced squarely then the next logical step is to provide the teenagers with measures to prevent pregnancy.

Another step America must take to stem the tide of adolescent pregnancies is to start loving its children. Far too many young girls feel the need to look for love with great desperation in the eyes of boys as young, confused and oftimes as unloved as they are.

Several young mothers I have spoken to told me that they had babies because they felt that if they had a child they would always have someone who would love them. That statement betrayed their naivete. They confused the dependence of a child with love.

America must also confront the mythology that love and sex are inseparable. A teenage girl once told me that young males actually tell girls "If you love me you'll have a baby for me." I didn't believe her so I asked several others and they concurred that she was telling the truth.

This confusion about the difference between love and sex manifests itself in the way that this society encourages people to advertise sex while they are looking for love. This is the provocative, tight jeans era. Yet, this insecure age of threats of nuclear war and economic uncertainty is precisely the era when people crave love and emotional support the most.

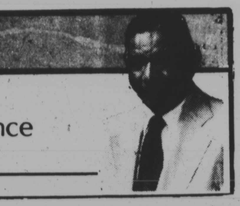
America teaches the young to use the promise of sex as a lure and then punishes them through a lack of support services for young people, who are sexually active.

Once they have become sexually active, it is not likely that they will abstain totally again. Without access to contraceptive devices and information the youths will be caught in a no - win situation.

If this country wants to get over its shock over its embarrassingly high rate of teenage pregnancy some practical steps must be taken to make certain that any teenage pregnancies result from conscious choices and not a failure of society to provide access to birth control information and contraceptive devices.

Just Thinking

EEO's make a difference



By Al Sweeney

If you feel it climbing steps and ache getting out of bed in the norning, you can get the message as you read the obituaries and receive invitations to retirement parties. It's autumn.

Included in the last rash of retirement invitations was that held for Harold Williams, a veteran employee of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the Department of Transportation, Tuesday night.

Williams, a product of the civil rights movement, symbolized one of the many governmental equal employment opportunity managers who quietly do their jobs.

Like any profession there are the good and the bad. We hear about those persons holding EEO directorships to keep the troops quiet and attempt to please the bosses by telling them what they want to hear.

On the other hand, there are others holding EEO positions who become embroiled in constant confrontations and are as ineffective as those "see-no-evil," "hear-no-evil" and "speak-no-evil" individuals.

There is a difference. The loud mouths lose their jobs, while the "no-evils" continue to process their every-two-week sinecure check.

There are thankfully EEO officers accomplishing many notable opportunities for minorities. They succeed in hurdling barriers by winning the confidence of their superiors. They are the competent and committed.

At UMTA, for instance, black contractors receive more dollars from federal contracts than any other agency of a similar sized budget. Williams fashioned it.

My friendship, somewhat rivalry in public service, with Williams goes back to 1955.

I had been covering the court trial of Dr. Martin Luther King, who was leading the famous boycott in Montgomery, Ala.

As history will tell you, the boycott began in December, 1954 with the arrest of Rosa Parks, a seamstress now known throughout the world. It led to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association.

Dr. King, pastor of the town's highly respected Dexter Avenue Church, was selected to lead the movement.

The landmark case wound up in the U.S. Supreme Court with Dr. King winning his first victory. His travels are legendary.

While covering for the AFRO, I was offered the job of city editor of the Cleveland Call-Post back in my hometown, where my father was ailing.

At the peak of my journalism career covering top assignments for the AFRO, the lure of going back home and helping my father was irresistible.

For some 10 years, life as an editor of the Cleveland newspaper was frenzied. In the midst of social change, the newspaper and community-based organizations led the struggle.

It meant taking on the established political machines, many religious leaders and other remnants of the status quo that put a damper on black aspirations.

In Cleveland, a chapter of CORE, led by Ruth Turner, now a consultant in D.C., was the most active community organization in town.

The Cleveland chapter of the NAACP was a moderate organization with many of the over-the-hill self-annointed black leaders holding down the board membership.