EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr. Chairman of the Board
Francis M. Draper President
THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

MD and the new gun law

A couple of weeks ago, Maryland became the first state in the country to ban the manufacture and sale of the cheap handguns known as "Saturday Night Specials."

The law, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 1990, creates a nine-member board, which is charged with determining which guns can be made and sold in the state. They will use such factors as weight and ballistic accuracy in making their determination.

The new law has teeth, such as: The maximum fine for manufacturers making the outlawed guns is $10,000 per gun. Dealers selling the illegal weapons could be fined up to $2,500 for each violation.

That this law was passed serves as a model for the rest of the country that it can be done. Although such measures have been proposed many times in the past, the lobbying of such groups as the National Rifle Association have successfully fought back any attempts to pass such a law.

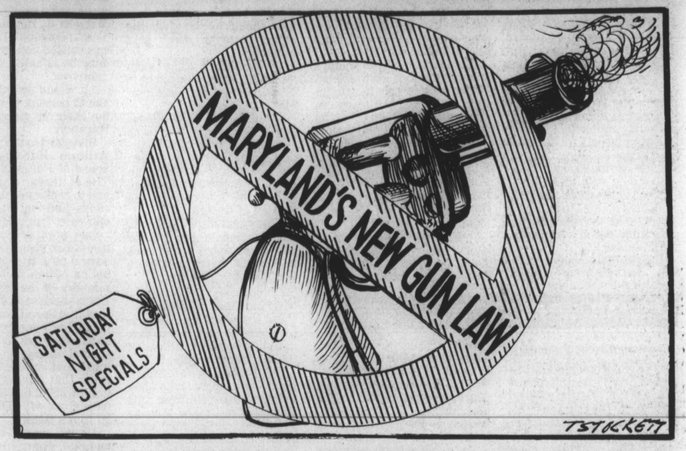
Although this new law is on the books, the NRA and other gun groups have not given up. Already they have collected in excess of 33,000 signatures on petitions to force the matter to a referendum on the November ballot.

Both sides claim the voters will see it their way, and we can expect heavy lobbying both for and against the measure. Handgun advocates see the new law as an outright ban against all handguns in the state of Maryland.

They claim that the board to be set up will have dictatorial powers over the people, because only handguns anointed by his commission can be sold.

We don't think this is such a bad idea. After all, the only use for handguns we can think of, in the hands of the ordinary citizen, is for unlawful purposes—including murder.

Now that Maryland has pointed the way, let us hope that the other state legislatures will have the courage to also make cheap handguns illegal. It won't solve the crime problem—but it is a step in the right direction.



Ruth Jenkins

SOB SISTER

Astrology is 'in' again

O.K., so it's about time to drop this subject, but —

As was expected, all the activists were quick to pounce on the plum of the Reagans' astrology addiction. Critics, commentators, cartoonists, comedians and cohorts. Oh yes, and some kooks.

Especially since some know-it-alls assert that the Reagans' zodiac zeal is age-old. Dates back to their courtship days. And has threaded through most of their 'happier-ever-after' existence.

But we were surprised to see big business also jump onto the wings of this astrology airlift. The Madison Avenue braintrusts never miss a trick. Let a door of opportunity open just a crack and the profit pursuers rush right in.

Maybe the idea was planted by a philosophy professor's comment after the Reagan revelation. He suggested that the media may have fueled the resurgence of interest in the subject because there is a lot of money to be made.

"Astrology is very profitable . . ." he pointed out. "Sort of like selling pet rocks or crystals." That being the case, smart shopkeepers reasoned, it should sell other necessities (?) too.

So rightaway an elite department store displayed a large advertising spread with a fancy fresh approach. A major sale was being promoted. Unabashedly, featuring a sketch of attentive patrons gathered around a fortune teller with a crystal ball.

The come-on convincer was a line declaring that astrological signs favored support of this sale. Advisors such as horoscopes, charts, tea leaves, tarot cards and fortune cookies. They neglected to mention heads-or-tales coins.

And not wanting to be accused of sexism, the ad also omitted some surefire stimulants for shopping sprees: A woman's inability to resist a sales pitch, her natural inclination to spend money, and her inate belief that an idle credit card itches her hand. Oh yes, and a best friend.

We were in such a hurry to get to this bargain bonanza that we didn't take time to read the newspaper horoscope column. Later, we found that it said "Postpone the signing of important papers." And looking at the bills, we figured this reference was to those charge account customer-purchase receipts.

Scientists pooh-pooh astrology as a serious system. But researchers say that nearly ⅔ of the USA population read their horoscopes occasionally. And about 40% believe in their credibility. Some 50 million Americans regularly follow astrology and about 12 million admit it influences their behavior.

Some rugged regional rulers are also listed as astrology buffs. Including Julius Caeser, Queen Elizabeth I, Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolph Hitler and Indira Gandhi.

But a live-and-kicking leadership luminary who is unimpressed and uninvolved is Britain's Boss Lady Maggie Thatcher. The prime minister, a Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) has no plans to retain the services of an astrologer in her government operations.

Nobody expected otherwise of Madame Thatcher. She's not best known for asking or taking advice, from either celestial or earthling bodies.

Wouldn't play 'Simon Says' as a child because rules prohibit any movement without getting permission. Today not even automatic traffic lights would dare tell Maggie when to stop and when to go.

And on the subject of world shakers, President Reagan is in a favorable alignment for participation in the Moscow super-summit. With his wife's advice and consent, of course.

With his cosmic connections, he has an advantage in discussions about Starwars. And the proposal for a joint Soviet-US unmanned flight to Mars.

Preparations were made early to accommodate 5,000 foreign reporters. Hope someone also saved a seat for Nostradamus, (1503-1566) the astrologer. And if the USA rooters need more strength, maybe they can recruit some folks from Mars, Pa. (pop. about 2,000) near Pittsburgh. Prompting the headline 'Martians March On Moscow', that oughta spice things up.

I am the master of my fate
Like it says in the verse
Got no horoscope help today
'Cause Fido got it first.

Les Payne

Attacking the drug problem

The roaring campaign against drugs has been taken up on the street level by the Muslims who, in several cities across the county, are attacking the problem supply-side, but at the very small end of the funnel.

In Washington, D.C., Muslims patrolled an apartment complex at the invitation of residents fed up with police inability to halt the open-air sale of crack and other hard drugs.

One bazaar was shut down, temporarily at least. In this adage era, the Muslim patrollers, keying in on a recent hit movie, took on the inevitable street moniker: "Dopebusters."

Similar Muslim patrols have been securing former crack houses in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Police chase the pushers out, the Muslim patrols go in around the clock and establish perhaps the world's tiniest drug-free zone.

The Brooklyn Muslims are genuinely dedicated to ridding black youth of drugs; the local police have displayed no such interest.

There has been cooperation between the precinct and the muslims, mainly, I suspect, because of former subleases its official duties and the latter eschew violence.

The Muslims in the nation's capital have taken no such oath of nonviolence. Their anti-drug operation got its widest media attention when about a dozen of the dark-suited, bow-tied brethren roughed up a television crew filming their stomping of an alleged shotgun-wielding street dealer. Such messages reverberate on the mean streets.

The capacity to menace has long distinguished outsiders' view of the religious order some insist on calling the "black Muslims." Various sects call themselves different names. The "Nation of Islam" operating in Washington is headed nationally by Minister Louis Farrakhan.

The local leader, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, 38, has a clear analysis of the hard-drug problem in the black community. This trafficking in depravity, he contends, is economic and represents a further attack on the black community by the larger society.

The first mass heroin offensive was opened up in Harlem on a large scale in the late 1950's, when armed black gang members began to turn their ears to the fiery political rhetoric of James Baldwin and Malcolm X. With almost no transition, the gang-war era became the drug-war era.

As organized crime flooded the black communities with heroin, police — when they were not profitting themselves — looked the other way along with the politicans.

The Muslims are old hands at drug rehabilitation on the mean streets. Malcolm X, whose birthday passed Thursday, wrote the book on turning addicts into politicized Muslims.

"The Muslim program began with recognizing that color and addiction have a distinct connection," Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography. Muslim ex-junkies would recruit from the streets and alleyways where they formerly shot heroin, and then put them through a six-point, cold-turkey program.

"The addict first was brought to admit to himself that he was an addict," Malcolm X wrote. "Secondly, he was taught *why* he used narcotics. Third, he was shown that there was a way to stop addiction.

Fourth, the addict's shattered self-image, and ego, were built up until the addict realized that *he* had *within, the self-power to end his addiction.* Fifth, the addict voluntarily underwent a cold turkey break with drugs. Sixth, finally cured, now an ex-addict completes the cycle by "fishing" up other addicts whom he knows and supervising their salvaging."

Except for the style, there was little in the Muslim program that differed from supervised withdrawal by Alcoholics Anonymous. But the Muslim program worked with phenomenal success and was copied with much less success by social agencies.

What bothered the authorities was that the Muslim program not only got black addicts off the streets but gave them a social and political consciousness. The group was never anything more than moral reformists.

The splintered Muslims are back fishing with their anti-drug program. Society might find them more acceptable this time. They don't have Malcolm X to replace the hard drug with something of value.

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Parren J. Mitchell

FORMER U.S. REP.

Soviets and Afghanistan

For heaven's sake Parren, we are facing severe problems in the black community; why write about Afghanistan? Black people now see a withdrawal from the federal government's position to end racial discrimination in America.

In our black communities, the loss of federal funds is causing many cities to re-determine priorities and to consolidate services so that we may have to make more individual and community sacrifices. Black unemployment rates remain at or above the danger level, and the drug problem continues to ravish our neighborhoods.

Write about solutions to those problems, Parren, and not about the Soviets pulling their troops out of Afghanistan — that is simply not relevant to black America.

Oh! But my friends, it is relevant. The Soviet action should be yet another example for America. Just as we hoped Vietnam would have taught the United States a lesson, which it didn't.

Soviet military presence in Afghanistan was a part of the foreign policy of the war of national liberation. Now more than 100,000 Soviets will be pulled out of that country, and there is no doubt but that the USSR has suffered a foreign policy and military defeat.

It played the international power game and lost, just as America played the international power game in Vietnam, and lost. It is reported that the Soviet economy is having great difficulties because of the economic drain caused by Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Th real tragedy is that both America and the Soviet Union having suffered defeats will continue to play the international power game.

America still maintains troops in Korea, at what cost? And Russia continues to pay in Angola with money and support of Cuban troops, at what cost?

Both countries should give thought to how Korea and Angola are hurting their domestic economies, how it is denying money, let's say, for decent housing for all in both countries.

The power game continues. The Soviets are sustaining the economy of North Korea, while America has been attempting to disrupt the economy in the Philippines. Eventually, America will have to pay to restore the economy in the Philippines. At what cost? What if those vast sums of money spent in the power game were invested in education for the citizens of both countries?

MEMBER NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel Payne

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Jesse shootout: end of the dream

Jim Christian will be vacationing with his family on July 18. Ordinarily, this would not be a news item, but that's the date of the opening of the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, and Christian's absence will be notable because it is an indicator of the trouble with black voters that lies ahead in the fall.

His background is impressive. Until June 2, he was Chairman of the District of Columbia Democratic Party, leader of the delegation to the convention and pledged to Jesse Jackson for President.

The only other black chairman of a state Democratic Party is Ed Cole in Mississippi who is on the staff of Sen. John Stennis. Christian has stepped aside to make way for the election of a new leader. However, he will remain on the membership roster.

A native of Pineville, LA., Jim is 40, part of the rising class of young, black professionals who are among the best and brightest of their generation. He is a graduate of Howard University with a B.A. in Political Science and a J.D. degree in law from Harvard University.

In Washington, he is a partner in the prestigious law firm of Laxalt, Washington, Perito & Dubuc. Located on Connecticut Ave. NW, it is representative of the power and politics that gives this capital city a certain patina.

Paul Laxalt, you may recall is, former U.S. Senator from Nevada, very Republican and a close confidante of Nancy and Ronald Reagan. Robert Washington is black, very Democrat.... very influential and an insider with the Mayor of Washington and the power circle.

Christian is a dedicated civic and church worker. He is chairman of the trustee board of Zion Baptist Church, one of the largest congregations in Washington, and just recently he became chairman of the American Diabetes Association which is one reason why he chose not to run for party chairman again. He is married with two small children.

Jim is not deserting the Democratic Party; rather, he thinks the party nationally is deserting its traditions and its most loyal constituency, black voters. That feeling is shared by another avid Democrat who has worked her way up in the hierarchy. Sharon Pratt Dixon is National Treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, herself a lawyer, graduate of Howard U. and Vice President for Consumer Affairs of the Potomac Electric Power Co., which supplies energy to the Washington area.

A native Washingtonian, Mrs. Dixon grew up in the struggle for enfranchisement of the residents of what has been called the nation's "last colony." Congress was the King George who ruled over the voteless subjects who paid taxes, but had no voice in the conduct of their governance.

When limited home rule was finally granted, it was at best a half loaf. Washington now has an elected school board, city council and a non-voting delegate to Congress, Walter Fauntroy.

Once every four years, the half citizens can vote for President, but they are denied the right to select a senator, governor or other state officials.

Dixon got a taste of political activism 20 years ago. She decided to balance off the local limitations by becoming involved at the national level in this overwhelmingly Democratic town.

In 1982, the late Patricia Roberts Harris, a former U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg and later holder of two cabinet posts — Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Secretary of Health and Human Services — sought unsuccessfully to unseat D.C. Mayor Marion Barry in his bid for a second four-year term.

As Harris' campaign manager, Dixon gained experience in the field of combat that goes with public office-seeking. Women were flexing their muscles, determined to break the barriers of race and sex in the male dominated legislative bodies. For blacks in general the opportunities were even more restricted.

Having paid her dues in volunteer work with the Democratic National Committee, serving on several key committees, Sharon Dixon decided that it was time to challenge the party leadership.

In a recent interview she had this to say, "Back in 1984, it was apparent to me that the opportunity was there for a black person to capture a real issue role in the party, whether the party fully understood that or not. The opportunity was there for me to force the contradiction and run for chairman.

"I thought I had a good message and the basic one was the reason we had been losing presidential elections; that we had failed to address the econmic issues. That was a solid base and it was just like a military operation, never expose your flanks or give up your turf in an effort to acquire additional turf. That's a sure fire way to lose, to get wedged into oblivion.

The chief components of that base had been blacks, women and labor, etc.; that was not the reason we were losing. We were losing because we did not have a message to appeal to a broader constitutency. A lot of our base remained out of loyalty, but we were in danger of losing that too because we weren't giving them the right message."

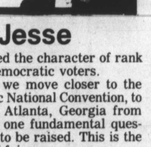
Dixon lost the bid for party chairmanship, but her message came through clearly. From henceforth, blacks were to have more inclusion in the party structure. Blacks had membership on the committee, but none were part of the day-to-day policy-determining administration.

She was elected national treasurer of the Democratic National Committee following the 1984 convention. As national committee woman for the District of Columbia and a member of the Executive Committee of the DNC, she holds a triple crown vantage point for influence in party affairs. Thus, she will go to the convention in Atlanta with extra leverage in helping to shape the direction for a hopeful fall victory.

What bothers Jim Christian and Sharon Dixon and others is the transparently visible attempt to shut Jesse Jackson out of the nominating process and lock up the top of the ticket in the final weeks before the gavel is sounded.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL



Dems: be fair to Jesse

Jesse Jackson is breaking all records as he continues to win votes and delegates in the race for the Democratic nomination for President. The last state primary elections will be held on Tuesday, June 7th. In California, New Jersey, Montana and New Mexico 466 delegates are at stake.

In both Los Angeles, California and Newark, New Jersey I saw thousands of people rally in support of Jackson as he continues to define the key issues of this presidential campaign.

Dukakis and Bush are increasingly being forced to respond to Jackson on the critical issues of the day: the drug epidemic, full employment, equal justice, a comprehensive national child care program, quality education for everyone, comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, and nuclear disarmament and world peace.

Since 1983, Jackson has been responsible for registering millions of new Democratic voters. In fact, Jesse Jackson has done more to pump new life into the Democratic Party than any other person alive.

The building of the Rainbow Coalition has not only expanded the Democratic Party; it has transformed the character of rank and file Democratic voters.

Now, as we move closer to the Democratic National Convention, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia from July 18-21, one fundamental question needs to be raised. This is the question of fairness.

After all that Jesse Jackson and millions of his supporters have done to show thier explicit support for a Democratic win in the upcoming Presidential election, will the leadership of the Democratic party be fair to Jackson?

Better yet, can the leadership of the Democratic party afford not to be fair to Jackson?

Fairness means giving respect, but fairness should be measured in concrete terms. For example, the Democrats now control the United States Senate, in part because of the central role that Jackson played in registering and mobilizing the black vote throughout the South in 1986.

The Democratic Senate has directly benefited from Jackson's efforts by acquiring the chairs of the major Senate commmittees, due to the Democratic victory in 1986.

Fairness means that a reasonable number of United States Senators should openly announce their support of Jackson for President. Yet, to date, not one United States Senator has formally endorsed Jackson's candidacy for President.

Senators fall into the category of "super delegates" to the Democratic Convention and they have a responsibility to support the political mandate of their constituents.

Why is it, then, that in the case of one who has done so much to help the entire Senate, no senator has yet come forward to do what is right and fair?

Jesse Jackson won all the following primaries and caucuses: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Virginia, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, Michigan, Alaska and Vermont. Yet, to date, not one Democratic governor has endorsed Jesse Jackson for President.

And in Puerto Rico, though Jackson won the primary, the governor gave all of Puerto Rico's delegates to Dukakis.

Fairness means that, at the least, in those states where the electorate overwhelmingly voted for Jackson, the Governors — who are also "superdelegates" — should throw their support to Jackson.

Of course, we are only able to make the argument for fairness because of prior massive turn-outs of voters for Jackson on primary day.

Every vote — particularly on June 7th in California, New Jersey, Montana and New Mexico — will count and will increase Jesse Jackson's leverage at the Democratic Convention.

Jesse Jackson deserves to be president. The Democratic Party must face this reality. The leaders of the Democratic Party have respected Dukakis; Jackson deserves no less.

Global View

By Olive Vassell

Race splits U.K. party

Black Sections is falling apart, and tearing Britain's Labour Party apart, according to sources in that country.

Black Sections is an organization made up of active black members of the Labour Party, (one of the three major political parties in Britain).

According to its leaders, it was the pivotal point in achieving the election of four black people to the House of Parliament(the equivalent of the U.S. Congress) late last year, ending centuries of non-representation in that country's governing body.

Three of the four new members of Parliament are active members of the group which has caused widespread controversy around the nation.

Diane Abbot, the only black female in Parliament, said of the movement, "this country wouldn't have four black MPs if it wasn't for the work of the Black Sections."

Its leaders have always argued that the Labour Party—traditionally the favored party of the country's black community—has done little for its loyal black supporters and that the only way to focus attention to the concerns of blacks is to have a separate entity within the party.

Its opponents have argued that any split—especially along racial lines— within the party is nothing more than a self-imposed apartheid, to be as vehemently opposed as the same system in South Africa.

However, quite aside from the longstanding external split with Labour, there are now suggestions that the movement itself is showing signs of strain.

Only two of the nation's four black MPs— Abbott and Bernie Grant—showed up for the conference. Paul Boateng, the son of a former Ghanian cabinet minister, was absent. He is believed to be touring the Frontline states.

Whatever the state of the movement, members realize that they must find some common ground with the Labour Party in the face of Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher's policies.

But the Labour Party's all-white leadership has always kept its distance from the movement, refusing to acknowledge its existence.

One leading black trade unionist called for the organization to directly affiliate itself with the Labour Party. He was, however, shot down in flames by Sharon Atkins, who is facing expulsion from the party for her stand on black issues. Atkins said of the suggestion, "I don't want to be an appendage to the Labour Party, but a first class citizen. Say no to affiliations and yes to constitutional change."

The result of the discussion was that Bernie Grant should request a meeting with the party leadership — effectively putting the ball in Labour's court.

How the situation is resolved will depend on the attitude of the so-far intransigent Labour Party.

The very existence of the organization paints a vivid picture of the state of racial relations in Britain today, and, more importantly, it paints a grim portrait of a political party that proclaims itself to be concerned with the rights of the economic, socially and racially disadvantaged.

For many British blacks the Labour Party's failure to talk with Black Sections is an indication of its lack of concern for them.

It's a story they know well and are tolerating less and less.

Ms. Vassell is the national and international correspondent for the Afro-American Newspaper.

Walter E. Williams

MINORITY VIEWPOINT

Private interests; social good

To paraphrase former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, we must learn to bear the truth about our society no matter how pleasant it may be. Our economic system, despite considerable government interference, is essentially capitalistic.

In the pursuit of private interests (getting more for ourselves), millions of us go about our day-to-day activities to produce our $3 trillion-plus GNP.

"That's selfish, Williams, and I'm not selfish," you say. Then I ask: Those of you who work on the auto assembly line, raise cattle, or grow potatoes, do you worry about me? Lest the questions be misunderstood, let's be direct.

I have a car; I eat the steak and potatoes that you help produce; so I'm asking, "When you get out of bed, even when you'd like to sleep later, do you say to yourself, 'I have to get up to make sure Williams has a car'?"

If you're like most other people, you don't give a hoot about Williams. Your main reason for going to work is to earn money to buy things for yourself and your family.

The fact that I ultimately enjoy the fruits of your labor is the last thing on your mind. That's the miracle of the market; you and I cooperate to serve one another without intending to, or having anyone forcing us to do so.

How about the claim that the spirit of capitalism is anti-poor and must be replaced by government control—a theme frequently sounded by power-grabbing politicians.

When politicians suggest that capitalism needs to be changed, we ought to ask them which system, here on earth, should we emulate? Should it be that of Sweden, England, Russia, China, or India?

When doused with nonsense about how our system has exported most jobs overseas, we must remind them of the facts that Federal Trade Commission Chairman Dan Oliver points out:

In the last five years "Western Europe and Japan have on net actually lost jobs." Oliver asks, "If the United States has been exporting jobs to foreigners, where are the foreigners hiding those jobs?"

There's an Aesop Fable title, "A Dog and A Shadow." A dog is carrying a piece of meat over a rapidly flowing stream. He stops on the bridge, gazes down at the water and sees a reflection of a dog carrying what appears to be a larger piece of meat.

In an attempt to get it he drops the meat he was carrying, and to his chagrin discovers he was in pursuit of a mirage.

I wonder whether Americans, sold on political mirages, will suffer the same temptation and the same fate — losing what we had.