

NAACP Energy Policy Spurs New Political Alliances

Five months ago the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People released a statement calling on the Carter Administration to adopt a program of fostering, not discouraging, energy development, including nuclear power. In the wake of that statement's release, pressure from liberals and environmentalists has failed to force the NAACP to repudiate or alter its policy. In fact, the civil rights group has actively sought support for its program from business and labor.

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The mutual interests of "big industry," "big labor," and "big minorities" in forging a federal policy of economic growth and defending the U.S. economy and the dollar were the main features of an address that NAACP board chairman Margaret Bush Wilson gave April 10 to the annual convention of the Edison Electric Institute. In her speech, Wilson reiterated the civil rights organization's commitment to energy development, and spoke of the necessity of solving the U.S. balance of payments problems.

An alliance between the black community and industry will have a telling effect on partisan politics. For decades the black vote has been assumed to be the property of the Democratic Party's liberal wing. Much of the liberal outrage at the NAACP energy statement was precisely due to the fact that a black organization was (in the *Wall Street Journal's* phrase) declaring itself "free at last" from liberal low-growth, low-capital, labor-intensive policy.

Unless the Democratic Party's policy becomes one favoring support for economic expansion, energy development, and high-technology jobs, the "solid" black vote could become a thing of the past. This was the prognosis of Bruce Llewelyn, president of the Harlem-based civic organization, The 100 Black Men. In an interview with this news service, Llewelyn termed Democratic Party-supported public works programs like Humphrey Hawkins bill "a failure." Like the NAACP, Llewelyn, who played a critical role in delivering the Harlem vote to the Carter campaign in 1976, favors energy development and investment in the private sector to foster a domestic economic recovery.

"For Energy Growth and Jobs"

Here are excerpts of Margaret Bush Wilson's speech before the Edison Electric Institute.

....Indeed, I have been bemused every since receiving the kind invitation to be one of your speakers for the First General Session. A year ago this time, neither you nor I would have forecast this particular detail, for then it seemed remote that the NAACP and the Edison Electric

Institute had a mutually compelling interest....

What has brought us near, of course, is a rather provocative nine page document which the National Board of Directors of the largest and oldest civil rights organization in the nation adopted unanimously on the 9th day of January of this year. It is entitled simply "*Statement of Position on a National Energy Policy by the NAACP National Board of Directors.*"

You may find the headlines which this statement sparked as intriguing, as I have.

It was the *Detroit News* which first surfaced the matter with its forthright headline "Energy plan dooms poor, NAACP says." This was followed by the *New York Times* headline which triggered all the rest: "NAACP Takes Side of the Oil Industry in Energy Struggle." This was amplified a few days later by a curious lead editorial in the *New York Times*: "Does Civil Rights Include Energy." Then with staccato rapidity all across the country they came: "NAACP hits Carter Energy Plan." "Who's conning the NAACP on Energy,?" "The NAACP Turns a Corner," "Big Oil's Black Allies," "Did the NAACP Board Know what it was Voting For," and, in the *Congressional Record* Sen. Orrin Hatch lambasts "The New Slavery" and supports the NAACP position, while Representative Richard Ottinger of New York calls it "A Travesty for Blacks."

The rhetoric has moved all of the way from the *Wall Street Journal's* "The NAACP — Free at Last," to Hoyt Fuller's "NAACP Takes a Giant Step — Backward!" Not to mention one of dubious throw-back: "Finding an oil man in NAACP wood pile."

It has been a heady and provocative three months. However, those of us in the civil rights movement who are long distance runners, and I consider myself among them, have mustered the art of endurance and patience, and above all to wear controversy "like a loose garment."

Because there have been conflicting and confusing stories, it does seem important for me to give address to the major thrust of the NAACP Energy Policy. Perhaps no one has described that thrust better than our dynamic, new executive director, Benjamin L. Hooks and I shall quote him in detail:

NAACP National Energy Policy is the sum total of seven months of intensive research and review...The major thrust of that policy is reflected in the following...:

The NAACP feels that President Carter's National Energy Program overly emphasizes conservation as opposed to directing national goals to the development of new and alternative energy supplies.

That the President's emphasis on energy conservation could severely restrict the expansion of the national economy. Historically, energy abundance has gone hand in hand with economic expansion.

The NAACP believes that a static economy will have the most disastrous effect upon the black community. There can be no new jobs created in a static economy and past record reveals that the job pool actually declines during a period of no growth....

The primary thrust of this policy is to protect as well as foster the creation of jobs — especially for black Americans. The NAACP believes that any national policy that does not stress the development of new and alternative energy sources will increase, rather than reduce the present high rate of joblessness....

More than a decade ago, when the Great Society programs were launched, our hope for government solutions to these problems was at its highest point. The reversal and failure of much of this effort, however, has led to widespread disillusionment throughout the black community about the strength of America's will to meet the challenges of the "Last Frontier."

After careful review of the history of social progress over the past 50 years, there are those among us who are now more convinced than ever that the solutions to these hardcore social problems do not rest with government alone. Private industry does have, and must play, a crucial role in this area.

The problem, we again stress, is not merely one of civil rights. In fact, having won the enactment of the several Civil Rights, Voting Rights and Housing Acts, blacks now find that the principal civil rights struggle is that of preventing the erosion of these gains. We must also struggle to ensure that these several laws are enforced.

At the same time, though, there is another dimension to the implementation of these gains. This involves bringing the traditional victims of racism into the economic mainstream of our society. The dominant dynamic today is economic.

And the provision of economic advancement can best be accomplished through the availability of an ample supply of jobs and the assurance of equal opportunities for black workers and black entrepreneurs.

Thus, the principal challenge for black leaders today is to reawaken the concerns of America to the dimensions of these other problems. New jobs come from economic growth in the private sector.

This was another of the goals of the NAACP policy statement on energy. By actively becoming involved in the development of a national energy policy, the NAACP has served notice on our national leaders that a new dimension has been added to our concerns about social programs.

Seeking adequate amounts of welfare and food stamps are fine. But we must go beyond this syndrome since it represents the symptoms of a severe social condition, not a solution. Our broader and long-range perspective must center on closing the gap between black and white income. If we do not do that soon, we will be lost in an economic quagmire for generations to come.

The all-encompassing effects of energy scarcity were made very clear just five years ago when oil supplies from abroad were suddenly disrupted. The nightmare of long gasoline lines still hangs over us. Some still worry that the spigot of Mideast oil may be turned off again as easily as it was then.

There was also the troubling specter of widespread layoffs of workers by several midwestern industries in

the winter of 1977 because of severe cold that caused shortages in the natural gas supplies. Natural gas supplies, we know, are rapidly dwindling. So the problem rapidly worsens.

A much more pervasive — and evident — problem is the price of these fuels. The poor, who drive the old, inefficient gas guzzlers and live in dilapidated housing, already know just how much oil and natural gas prices have skyrocketed. They might still cope now through great sacrifices.

But what will America do when our supplies of oil and natural gas are depleted?

These are questions that affect not only white but black Americans.

These are questions that affect not only American industries but also home owners.

These are questions that affect the poor today; but they will surely affect the wealthy tomorrow.

One of the surest signs of this spreading effect is the rapid decline of the dollar abroad....

And the primary reason for this decline is the widespread lack of confidence that has been generated by America's whopping \$20 billion balance-of-payments deficit which has been boosted by our huge oil importation bill.

Ultimately, it is feared that the increasing balance of payments problem will again spur worldwide inflation and its related problems. Then we will again be sent pell-mell into another inflation-depression situation....

One question that has been raised about the energy industry concerns the number of jobs that you can provide. We are reminded that unemployed, unskilled blacks cannot expect to find much opportunities in capital intensive nuclear, natural gas and oil industries. So what can blacks expect as a return on their support for policies that directly benefit the industry.

One answer — and this the NAACP Energy Policy Statement sought to address — is a vigorous expansion of the national economy. Such an expansion along the lines of 7 percent a year would, we feel, open up enough opportunities for more blacks to find work....

As a phase two of the NAACP Energy Policy Statement, therefore, you should expect that the Association will be addressing such issues as job opportunities within the industry for minorities.

The NAACP will be expressing strong concerns about the amounts of industry profits that are plowed back into research, exploration and development of new energy sources....

What I surmise is that your concern is with inflation and the uncertainties surrounding a yet to be determined energy policy which may aggravate an already spiraling inflationary trend. This creates problems for business expansion, and since capital investment is the engine of economic growth in America the difficulties are obvious. Let me emphasize in the strongest tone possible, however, that *inflation is not caused by too many people working* (emphasis in the original). As my good friend Clarke Watson, who is head of the American Association of Blacks in Energy has said: "There is something very paradoxical about paying the Arabs, the Nigerians and the Mexicans a third to twice as much for their energy, but hesitating to pay Americans to develop their own resources and thus get people back to work...."

“Blacks Want Industrial Development”

An Interview with Bruce Llewelyn, President of The 100 Black men:

Q: Mr. Llewelyn, Percy Sutton (formerly a candidate in the 1978 New York City mayoral race — ed.) said that black people should be represented in both political parties, that they should not automatically vote Democratic but should be a power in the Republican Party. Is this the sentiment of the Harlem community?

A: I would agree with Sutton; black people should be in both political parties. For years black people have tended to “block” vote. Previously blacks considered themselves automatic Republicans because Lincoln freed the slaves. Along came FDR with certain programs that were seen as helping minorities, and the black population switched to voting Democratic. Block voting doesn’t work.

Q: What do you think about Margaret Bush Wilson’s and the NAACP’s explicit support of a program calling for energy development? Do you think the Harlem community favors this over Jesse Jackson’s continued support for Humphrey Hawkins?

A: Full employment is a nice idea. Nuclear power and energy development are nice ideas. The question is, how do you get them? The Humphrey-Hawkins bill as it now stands says that unemployment should be at the level of two or three percent. That’s true. It’s also true that without motherhood none of us would be here.

But to turn around the stagnation of the economy, and in order for a great many people who have jobs, we need economic growth.

There can be no economic growth without advancement of the energy component. Now the next question: if we get those skilled jobs will the unions have us? Will they allow black participation to its fullest? Without energy, without electric power, there are no plants. And that means no jobs.

At this point black people don’t need a Humphrey-Hawkins-type program. Putting people into public works jobs is short term. The U.S. economy needs long-term

investment, and that means development of the private sector. Resources must be developed. Private profit will increase the tax base, public works will not. CETA and Humphrey-Hawkins have been failures.

Q: Are you familiar with Nelson Rockefeller’s proposal for a multi-billion dollar development corporation that would be based in New York? What effect do you think the influx of Arab petrodollars would have on New York?

A: We are waiting to see what develops with that plan. It is still in the talking stages, and could have far-reaching effects for the black community.

I would like to make one sweeping statement — maybe I shouldn’t but what the hell... People believe that politics will solve all the problems. Not really — politics aren’t tangible, they are a mere reflection of the financial and industrial might of this country. True power is in economic power, not in politics. Black people do not get political power by electing city councilmen and state senators. Elected officials represent economic interests.

What made America great? Companies like IBM and General Electric made America great. For years the Arabs were viewed as a bunch of guys wearing bedsheets. Today they are a power to be respected, they are working on realizing their potential.

President Carter stopped in Nigeria on his world tour. Would that have happened a few years ago? The Nigerians supply almost 20 percent of our oil, they are important to us. That is the bottom line in foreign relations or domestic policy.

For years the Jewish community — only 3 million people — has been responsible for influencing foreign policy to be supportive of the needs of Israel... If 20 million black people got together, U.S. policy would certainly be different toward Africa and the Arabs. There would be a basis for developing those parts of the world.

Our aid to Africa and the Arab countries would develop our markets. The U.S. gets back what it gives in aid. None of our aid has been totally a giveaway. We in turn get jobs created, and markets for our exports. This is what we must do with Africa and the Arab world; this is how the U.S. can expand its spheres of influence.

OMB ‘Efficiency’ Is Paralyzing Policy-Making

The Office of Management and Budget, although usually credited with being little more than a “monitoring” agency, is effectively usurping the functions of both the Congress and the President of the United States on vital issues of American policy. It is doing so through its

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nominally “above-politics” position as a monitor and manager, and is currently moving to extend the utterly *political*, factional tendency it represents to the entire executive branch through “civil service reform.”

Rand’s Role in the Executive

From its creation in 1971 the OMB has operated on the

basis of “budget programming,” a technique brought to the U.S. from Britain by the Rand Corporation, to every aspect of U.S. budget appropriations. The OMB has no interest in what policies are in the long-term interest of the nation. Instead, its management function places a staff of “systems analysts” and CPAs in the position of determining how cabinet-level and other agencies will implement and even develop policy. Its weapon is the imposition of criteria that *a priori* demand austerity and prevent the investment that is necessary *now* to ensure the country’s future.

OMB’s relationship to the Rand Corporation dates to its precursor, the Bureau of the Budget. In the mid-1960s then-Defense Secretary Robert “Body Count” McNamara initiated “programmed planning” in his Department of Defense and installed an entourage of Rand personnel to reorganize the agency. From this