

The biggest one, so far, seems to be the willingness of the Republican leadership in Congress to encourage fundamental change to improve the District's long-term prospects. Tax benefits, school vouchers, extensive privatization, increased infrastructure investment and more should be tried not only in Washington, D.C., but in every metropolitan area. A bipartisan interest in developing a real urban agenda in America is way overdue. Without such an agenda, no city plan anywhere in this country is realistic in the long run.

Some of the problems we face in New York as well as those of the District were self-inflicted and due to irresponsible policies. Many others, however, are not of our doing. Only national policies can deal with national problems such as poverty, health care, crime, education and immigration. The idea that sending welfare and Medicaid back to the states will be viable is total fantasy—simply an excuse for massive cutbacks with unfathomable results.

America is the only advanced Western democracy that does not consider its cities as both its cultural and economic crown jewels. In Europe, cities existed long before countries came into being. The notion that Paris, Rome, London, Berlin or Amsterdam could face the kind of economic pressures and physical neglect that is faced by America's major cities is unthinkable. Without a change in the appreciation of what cities mean to the U.S. economy, we will ultimately be doomed to fail here in New York, and the District of Columbia will be a permanent ward of the federal government. If the cities fail, ultimately we will be doomed to fail as a society and as a nation.●

TRIBUTE TO MIKE CURRAN

● Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to salute a valued and trusted public servant, Mr. Mike Curran, who is retiring this month following 30 distinguished years as an employee of the U.S. Forest Service. Since 1986, Mike has been the forest supervisor for the Ouachita National Forest in Arkansas, and that is where I came to know him and to admire his abilities.

Mike has been an outstanding leader of people and manager of assets throughout his career in public forestry, and his exceptional ability to forge through new concepts to meet changing public demands certainly caught my eye. His creative style and national flair for addressing competing interest groups and issues has been key to his success.

In 1990 I became involved in one of the most divisive forest issues ever to face the national forests in Arkansas. Public demand to eliminate the practice of clear-cutting had reached a peak. Mike was instrumental in bringing the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service to Arkansas to meet with me to determine whether or not a new way of looking at forest management could be developed that would allow us to eliminate this disagreeable practice and continue to produce quality timber in quantity.

This event led to the implementation to the new perspectives concept of sustainable forestry and placed the Ouachita National Forest, under Mike's leadership, in the lead position

in a national movement toward the ecosystem management philosophy. Mike weathered much criticism from many corners as this system began to be developed. At times I know he felt he was under siege personally. Today the Ouachita National Forest has never been healthier, and its future is bright.

Mike has made a significant contribution to our Nation, and all of our forests have followed his lead. Thank you, Mike. We wish you Godspeed in your future endeavors.●

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, ON THE MERIT SYSTEM

● Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, the University of California has been the focus of above-average attention on the issue of affirmative action because of the presence of two national political figures, Governor Pete Wilson and the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

I wish we lived in a time in which affirmative action was not necessary but that is not the case. We have improved as a society—even though many people may not recognize that—since the days of my youth, but we still have a long way to go.

Of particular interest to me was a New York Times op-ed piece by Professor Orlando Patterson about the California situation.

I ask that the op-ed piece be printed in the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to read his remarks, if they did not read them in the New York Times.

The material follows:

[From the New York Times, Aug. 7, 1995]

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, ON THE MERIT SYSTEM

(By Orlando Patterson)

CAMBRIDGE, MA.—For years Americans have complained about government programs for the disadvantaged that do not work. Now, however, we are on the verge of dismantling affirmative action, the one policy that, for all its imperfections has made a major difference in the lives of women and minority groups and has helped us achieve the constitutional commitment to the ideal of equality and fairness.

In utilitarian terms, it is hard to find a program that has brought so much gain to so many at so little cost. It has been the single most important factor in the rise of a significant, it still economically fragile, black middle class.

So it is hard to understand why it has become the most contentious issue in the nation. One would have thought that a policy that so many politicians denounced would have adversely touched the lives of at least a substantial proportion of those opposing it.

The facts show just the opposite. A National Opinion Research Center survey in 1990, still applicable today, found that while more than 70 percent of white Americans asserted that whites were being hurt by affirmative action for blacks, only 7 percent claimed to have experienced any form of reverse discrimination. Only 16 percent knew of someone close who had. Fewer than one in four could even claim that it was something they had witnessed or heard about at their workplace.

STANDARDS ROSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN THE LAST 12 YEARS

So what was the source feeding all the outrage? The vast majority of those interviewed

claimed to have heard about the problem either through the press or from other second-hand sources, like their political leaders.

Of course, such data would not matter were affirmative action something inherently evil. But this could hardly be the case, because for more than 15 years leaders of both parties, including Senator Bob Dole and Gov. Pete Wilson of California, both Republican Presidential candidates, supported this initiative. Indeed, they lauded it, as both morally defensible and the only effective means of remedying the intolerable exclusion of disadvantaged minorities and women from opportunities to train and apply for the better-paying working- and middle-class jobs.

What happened? How did so manifestly worthy and effective a program lose the support, including that of some people who stood the most to gain from it?

Blaming the media or the cynicism of our leaders will not do, the transparent opportunism of Mr. Dole and Mr. Wilson notwithstanding. Several factors account for the collapse of support for affirmative action.

The first is that the largely erroneous arguments of neo-conservative and other right-wing critics somehow carried the day. Merit, we were repeatedly warned, was being undermined, resulting in both individual inequities and, worse, severe threats to our economy and the demands of a high-tech society.

Nonsense, both. Only a minuscule number of whites, we now know, are affected by affirmative action, and of this small fraction, a still smaller percentage are able to claim genuine grievances.

The claim that our economic efficiency is being threatened is simply laughable. Oddly enough, the problem right now is not a shortage of highly trained manpower but an oversupply, demonstrated by a saturated market for scientists and engineers. An alarming number of them are becoming lawyers (the overdependence on which being perhaps our biggest waste of manpower resources).

White men still control more than 99.9 percent of all the important top positions in private and public institutions, as well as the vast majority of middle-level and high-paying jobs. They will continue to do so unit well into the next millennium.

There is also the argument that affirmative action has done nothing for the underclass and poor but favors people already in the middle class. Although rhetorically it is extremely effective, it is deliberately misleading. This point figured prominently the recent broadsides against the University of California's affirmative action policies from Governor Wilson and an influential university regent, Ward Connerly.

But affirmative action was never intended to help the poorest and least able. It is, by nature, a top-down strategy, meant to level the field for those who are capable of taking advantage of opportunities denied them because of their sex or race.

For the underclass and the working poor, an entirely different set of bottom-up strategies are called for, although no one seems to know what these might be.

The University of California's experience with affirmative action demonstrates beyond doubt the shallowness of the politicians' criticisms. Over the past 12 years, it has achieved its goal of incorporating students from disadvantaged minorities.

But far from experiencing a decline in standards, the university has not only fulfilled its mandate of selecting students from the top one-eighth of the state's graduating class, but has increased its eligibility requirements five times during this period. It is now a far more selective institution than before the introduction of affirmative action, with improved graduation rates for both black and non-black students.