

*To Be Young, Gifted and Black*

# What Will Reagan's Cuts Mean to Black Students?

By Bill Rouselle

*("To Be Young, Gifted and Black" will appear as a monthly column in Statesman).*

With the beginning of the 1981-82 school year, we will examine the current status of blacks in higher education in this month's column. While the survival of black colleges remains the most vital issue confronting black students, the Reagan budget cuts in education could have a more long range and devastating impact on education opportunities for black students.

According to the Commerce Department's Census Bureau, about one million blacks were enrolled in college in October 1980. While the one million black college students figure is nearly doubled the 1970 black student population (522,000), it is no where near the proportionate number of black college-age young people in the U.S. population. Census figures indicate that blacks comprise 11.5 percent of the nation's population and 14 percent of the country's college-age population of 18 to 24 year olds. However, only 12 percent of college-age blacks attend college. In 1976, black students accounted for only 9.3 percent of the total higher education enrollment. In 1980, that percentage was down to 8.8 percent of the 11.4 million total college enrollment.

These figures indicate a percentage decrease in blacks attending college. It is yet impossible to concretely determine the impact of various desegregation efforts on this decline, but the figures do indicate that more and more black college students are enrolling at black college campuses while the overall enrollment percentages continue to decline. One can only assume that the decrease is coming from a decline in black enrollment in white institutions and an increasing white student enrollment on black college campuses both of which could be linked to desegregation efforts.

The Reagan administration appears to have a

commitment toward increasing money available to black institutions (i.e., Title III monies, the second largest source of funds to black colleges, is proposed to receive a \$9.9 million increase in the 1982 budget, one of the few increases in the Reagan education budget). The Republican administration is also taking a public position in support of the continued existence of black colleges. There have been recent settlements in desegregation cases in North Carolina, South Carolina, and movement toward a settlement in the critical Louisiana case which prompted the initial Adams vs. Califano suit that laid the basis for massive desegregation efforts during the decade of the 1970's. While these settlements seem to soothe some fears about mergers and destruction of black colleges in those states, Reagan's policy of shifting responsibility for social and educational programming to the states (federalism) could make state governors, legislatures and boards of higher education "the overseers of a new plantation system," according to Tony Brown, in an article which appeared in the August/September 1981 issue of *The Black Collegian* magazine.

Brown therefore issued a call for organizing on a state by state basis in 15 states in 1981 to mark black college survival efforts. Plans are underway for demonstrations, marches and organizing efforts in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia directed at state office holders to gather support for increased funding and resources to assure the practical survival of black universities.

Meanwhile, the Reagan budget cuts in other education program areas could have a more devastating impact on black educational opportunities. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "a key element in the Reagan budget plan is a set of proposals to revamp student-assistance programs

for which middle and upper income students have been eligible since 1978. Under existing law, families earning less than \$25,000 a year are required to contribute up to 14 percent of their disposable income. The Reagan plan would require them to contribute 20 percent of their income to education costs, and wealthier families may be asked to pay even more.

"The Administration also called for an end to present federal policy of backing loans to students, regardless of their families' income. The loan-reform plan would reduce federal subsidies even for the neediest students, by ending the federal policy of paying the interest on loans while borrowers are still in college. To cut cost in the new guaranteed-loan program for parents, President Reagan proposed increasing the interest charged from 9 percent to market rate interest (currently over 20 percent).

"Yet, another source of federal aid to college students would be cut off entirely, under an Administration proposal to eliminate Social Security payments to students. President Reagan recommended that no new beneficiaries be allowed to enter the program after August 1981, and that payments to the 800,000 students already receiving benefits be reduced by 25 percent a year until recipients reach the age of 22."

The impact of these "reforms" in student assistance programs on educational opportunities for black students will be watched closely. While many surmise that black students will continue to receive substantial assistance since they are generally from low income families, the actual implementation of these reforms could mean that many needy students will not get grants and even more will not be able to secure loans with market interest rates ranging in the 20 percent category.

*(The writer is the public information director of The Black Collegian magazine.)*

# NYPIRG: Against Students' Interests?

By Thomas Hawkins

On Thursday, Oct. 15 a person accosted me while walking through the Union. "Vote Yes for NYPIRG" he said. I asked him what it does. He said, "Oh, lots of things." I tried to ask him what, but he had already stopped two women by then. This within 15 feet of a polling place.

This action could have been done by an over-zealous supporter of NYPIRG or a person who has no affiliation with it. So I passed it off and went about my business (even after I was stopped by a "Vote Yes" person right by the South P-Lot polling area.).

But after reading *Statesman* of Oct. 16, I decided otherwise. The *Statesman* article concerned the action taken by the Polity Judiciary, invalidating the NYPIRG and athletic referenda due to the fact that "the voting students were unjustly deprived of their right to have views expressed regarding the issues involved." The thing that got me going was the statement by NYPIRG Project Coordinator Jim Leotta, who said "The Judiciary and the Election Board both voted to invalidate the referendum...over NYPIRG's protest."

Mr. Leotta, how can you and your group print such a statement as "Defend Student Voting Rights" while everything you do and say is opposed to that very principle (defend them when they agree with you?). A well informed electorate is a right; one that must be encouraged and nurtured, not hindered and abused. Your own statement speaks louder than mine.

Mr. Leotta, if I am to pay money that I've worked very hard for into your organization, I would like you to have set goals. But you have none and that is dangerous to the public. From a Viewpoint written by yourself in the Oct. 15 edition of *The Stony Brook Press* "...an active role in solving the many (?) social problems which exist in the surrounding community." But in your very next sentence you state "NYPIRG has grown in a short time to become the Nation's largest... Community? Nation's largest? Please Mr. Leotta, my head spins enough in MSM 231, I don't need your doubletalk to help it.

Due to your statement I looked into one of the issues NYPIRG backs. What I found left me frightened and wondering who benefits from this group.

NYPIRG claims a major victory for the passing of Suffolk's "Bottle-Bill" (all returnables) and the group is pressing for statewide approval. The bill will, according to NYPIRG, "decrease litter, conserve resources and drive down prices on bottled goods." These statements, as I found out after doing my own research, border on fantasy. There is a real world out there NYPIRG, and the state of Michigan is its name. For you see Michigan has such a law and has had accurate studies made of its effectiveness.

Litter- Michigan's litter control budget has grown from \$1.7 million to \$2.2 million in the first two years (Michigan Dept of Natural Resources) and total Michigan litter has increased by 10 percent (Environmental Protection

Agency).

Natural Resources - Before the law took effect it required 75 gallons of fuel to deliver 1,000 cases of soda. It now takes 99 gallons (Can Manufacturer Institute study). Before law, four gallons of water per 1,000 oz. filled, now 22 gallons (Midwest Research Institute). Prices - In June 1979, the Michigan accounting firm of Ernst and Whinney found consumers paying 36 cents more for a six-pack of soft-drinks and 30 cents more for a six-pack of beer (avg.). And in a 1980, General Accounting Office study they found an \$850 million saving due to unreturned bottles (money consumers lost). Add to that increased production costs - \$1.3 billion.

Mr. Leotta, why didn't your group state that the "Bottle-Bill" would create more jobs. It stated the opposite of everything else. Is it because such diverse groups as the GAO, EPA Dept of Commerce and the AFL-CIO all agree that the passage of "Bottle-Bills" nationwide would eliminate jobs - lots of them. The AFL-CIO predicts 60,000.

It took me two days to find this out.

One person. Alone. For this NYPIRG wants \$120 per year, per student. That's \$120 times 16,000 (app.) \$67,000. Mr. Leotta, when it is obvious that you are deceiving us or that neither you nor your group knows anything about what you are fighting for, serious questions must be asked.

- 1) What is our money doing?
- 2) Where is it going? (or to whom?)
- 3) Where do you get your statistics?
- 4) Why are you lying to the people who fund you?

A serious re-evaluation of NYPIRG should be started immediately (Dr. Marburger, Jim Fuccio). So much money, taken from so many, should be spent in a more productive manner. Ideas such as a study on the feasibility of starting a business school or the enlarging of the Union may be starters.

This "Bottle-Bill" thing is just what I happened to pick up on because NYPIRG has been heralding it this past semester. Who knows what havoc they have wrought before. But their deceptions got to me.

*(The writer is a senior Computer Science major.)*

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