

file Race
Initiative

~~CHARLES 6/12/97~~
Civic Mrs.

I'm sorry, I skipped over Tom Kean, who I think you all are familiar with -- the former Governor.

Q Tom who?

MS. MATHEWS: Kean. And it's spelled K-e-a-n.

The other name that I will go ahead and announce now is Christopher Edley. Chris Edley is not a member of the advisory board, but what Chris is going to do is he's going to be a senior advisor to the initiative, and he will help us with our policy development. He'll be a consultant and will come down periodically and work with our Domestic Policy Council, Elena Kagan and Jose Cerda, to organize and develop policies over the period of the year.

So those are the names, and why don't I now go to --

Q Wait a second, what's Taylor Branch's role going to be? Is he going to sort of work with the President to write his report?

MS. MATHEWS: If it's all right, can I get through the initiative and then return to the question, or -- I think that might be helpful if we could get -- we'll do it that way, then. Good.

First, under the goals: Goal number one is to articulate the President's vision of racial reconciliation, and we think that's an important thing because it is his vision of how we want to take the country into the next century and talk about what he believes and why that's right, and that will be the focus of the speech. Part of why we're doing this briefing now is so that he has that ability in the speech on Saturday.

Goal number two is to help educate the nation, both about the facts surrounding the issue of race and the history. At this point, we have a generation -- the education has two focuses to it: the past and the future. We have a situation now where many people don't know the history of the civil rights movement, or a lot of the nation's history with regards to race relations, whether it's black, white, Hispanic or Native American. Additionally, the education part is about talking about what the future is going to look like.

If you looked at the Gallup study, I think you all probably saw some very interesting statistics. While that was black-white only and the initiative is broader than that, you saw the number of people, whites, and what they thought the racial mix was. There are some misperceptions in education there on what our racial balance is now, but also I'm not sure how many people in the United States realize that in the year 2050, we'll be at about 53 percent white and then 47 percent other minorities.

The third goal is to promote a constructive dialogue. I think that's something you all have talked and heard a lot about leading up to this effort. And one thing I would add there, it's a constructive dialogue on the difficult issues. In order to have a dialogue, we need to have a dialogue on some of the positive things, like the Tuskegee apology, but we also need to talk about some of the tough issues like the kind of issues you all face every day, whether it's in your news organizations and hiring or in your communities.

The fourth goal is to recruit and encourage leadership. In order to give the effort breadth and depth, part of what we will do is try and work to get others involved, whether it's in business or in state and local government in the states throughout the nation.

And finally, the fifth goal is to find, develop, and implement solutions in critical areas, such as education, economic

opportunity, housing, health care, crime and the administration of justice. And these solutions that we're looking for are for individuals, communities, for corporations, and for state and local governments.

On the methods, just a couple of points. One is Presidential leadership. This contrasts with past issues because of the close involvement of the President. That's why he chose to do an advisory board instead of what has been viewed as a traditional commission.

Then let me just say, it has three elements really, if you think about it: dialogue, study, and action. And I can spend time, but I will wait for questions to do that.

The elements of the initiative: one, the advisory board, which we just talked about. Those people will help scope and focus the study and dialogue work that we do over the year. They will also help us with policy ideas, with outreach to the community, with working with experts, and talking to the American people.

Two, the President is going to do significant events throughout the year. I think as it has already been reported, some of those will be town halls; others of those will be events like Tuskegee, and today we're announcing that we will be going to Little Rock for the Central High anniversary.

Q When is that?

MS. MATHEWS: September -- I don't know the exact date that we're going, but we can get that for you.

The third element is the outreach and consultation of leadership, which our advisory board will help us with and our staff that we'll set up will.

And the fourth thing is the President's report to the American people. Instead of having a report from a commission, the President will be doing his own report to the American people.

Finally, something that won't be in your paper but is an important element, is that we will be selecting an executive director and a staff. The staff will be about 15 to 20 people and will be a combination of detailees, agency reps, and a few hires. That will be funded -- we're working with -- Justice is working with its appropriators right now to try and do a reprogramming of funds to do that -- to pay for that.

I think with that, I should stop and we should take questions, unless you have anything to add, Maria.

MS. ECHAVESTE: I just wanted to add that in formulating this initiative, we did engage in a process of outreach that was both wide, but also close in. Senior staff, as well as the President, talked in depth with between 25 to 35 individuals in the course of the last two and a half months. But we also spoke to over 100 people before we finalized the initiative -- getting their reaction and their thoughts about what road he should take. We have ongoing a process of contacting over 300 people around the country -- opinion leaders, constituencies, organizations, others who we hope will be part of this initiative in the course of the next year.

I think the best thing to say is that the reaction from a number of different people -- and frankly the majority -- was positive in having the President take on this initiative, but also urging the President to take on the hard issues. And that is why the initiative has taken the form that it has.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 12, 1997

PRESIDENT NAMES MEMBERS OF ADVISORY BOARD TO THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE ON RACE

President Clinton today announced his intent to appoint seven members to an advisory board for "One America in the 21st Century: The President's Initiative on Race."

The advisory board will counsel the President on his initiative to promote a national dialogue on controversial issues surrounding race; to increase our understanding of the history of race relations and the common future people of all races share; to recruit leadership at all levels to help bridge racial divides; and to propose actions to address critical areas such as education, economic opportunity, housing, health care, crime and the administration of justice.

President Clinton has cited the nation's most important mission as building one America. "Money cannot buy it. Power cannot compel it. Technology cannot create it. It can only come from the human spirit," he has said.

Advisory board members were selected based on their outstanding leadership on the issue of race and their contributions to America's ongoing efforts to achieve racial reconciliation. The President sought a group that would provide diversity on a number of fronts, be respected in their fields and work well together, exemplifying the relationships he hopes the whole initiative will engender.

LINDA CHAVEZ-THOMPSON, of Washington, DC, is an Executive Vice President with the AFL-CIO. Ms. Chavez-Thompson has 29 years experience in the labor movement. She joined the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in 1971 and became the first person of color to be elected to one of the top officer positions at the AFL-CIO.

SUZAN D. JOHNSON COOK, of Bronx, New York, is Senior Pastor of the Bronx Christian Fellowship Church. She is also the first female chaplain of the New York City Police Department. In 1983, the Rev. Dr. Cook became the first African-American woman to serve as Senior Pastor at Mariners' Temple Baptist Church, the oldest American Baptist Church in New York City. From 1993 to 1994, Dr. Cook was a White House Fellow, working for the White House Domestic Policy Council. She served as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1994 to 1997. Dr. Cook received a B.S. from Emerson College in 1976, an M.A. from Columbia University Teachers College in 1978, an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary in 1983 and a D. Min. from United Theological Seminary in 1990.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, of Durham, North Carolina, is a retired historian and educator, who most recently served as Professor of Legal History at Duke University Law School from 1982 to 1992. President Clinton awarded Dr. Franklin the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995. Dr. Franklin's scholarly work has focussed on the Civil War and Reconstruction era and includes the 1946 landmark study *From Slavery to Freedom*. Dr. Franklin received his A.B. degree from Fisk University in 1935, an M.A. from Harvard University in 1936 and a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1941.

THOMAS H. KEAN, of Madison, New Jersey, is the former Republican Governor of New Jersey. Governor Kean currently serves as President of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. He is the chairman of President Clinton's Campaign to Reduce Teenage Pregnancy. He served on the United States delegation to the Women's Rights Conference in Beijing in 1995. Governor Kean holds numerous awards from environmental and educational organizations, including more than 25 honorary degrees. Governor Kean received a B.A. from Princeton University and an M.A. from Columbia University Teachers College.

ANGELA E. OH, of Los Angeles, California, is an attorney with the Los Angeles law firm of Beck, De Corso, Daly, Barrera & Oh, specializing in state and federal criminal defense. Following the riots in Los Angeles, she served as Special Counsel to the Assembly Special Committee on the Los Angeles Crisis. Ms. Oh received a B.A. and M.P.H. in 1981 from the University of California and a J.D. in 1986 from the University of California.

ROBERT THOMAS, of Coto DeCaza, California, currently serves as President and CEO of Nissan Motor Corporation, U.S.A. Mr. Thomas recently created a partnership with the Los Angeles Urban League to increase opportunities for women and minorities in the automobile industry. Mr. Thomas is also a director of the Nissan Foundation, which issues grants to support community agencies in South Central Los Angeles. Mr. Thomas holds a B.S. in Engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy.

WILLIAM F. WINTER, of Jackson, Mississippi, is the former Democratic Governor of Mississippi and is currently in private law practice with the law firm of Watkins, Ludlam & Stennis. Governor Winter serves as Chair of the National Commission on the State and Local Public Service and the National Issue Forum Institute. While Governor, he fought for education reform, equal opportunity for all citizens and better relations between the races. He received his B.A. in 1943 and LL.B. in 1949 from the University of Mississippi.

The President has asked **CHRISTOPHER EDLEY**, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to serve as a consultant to the advisory board and the President. Mr. Edley has been a Professor at Harvard Law School since 1981 and is co-director of The Civil Rights Project, a recently launched think tank based at Harvard University. Mr. Edley served as Special Counsel to President Clinton, directing a review of affirmative action. Mr. Edley received a B.A. from Swarthmore College in 1973, an M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government and a J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1978.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 13, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN MEETING WITH
THE ADVISORY BOARD TO THE
PRESIDENT ON RACE

The Oval Office

4:50 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to begin by thanking this distinguished group of Americans for their willingness to serve on an advisory board to me to examine the state of race relations in America over the next year, to participate in making sure that the American people have facts, not myths, upon which to base their judgments and proceed, to launching a nationwide, honest discussion that we hope will be replicated in every community in this country and that will lead to some specific recommendations for further actions on our part as we move forward.

I think this is the right time to do this, because there is not a major crisis engulfing the nation that dominates the headlines every day, the economy is strong, crime is down, our position in the world is good. But if you look at where we are and where we're going, we will soon be, in the next few decades, a multiracial society in which no racial group is in a majority. And we are living in a world in which that gives us an enormous advantage in relating to other countries in the world since we have people from every country in the world here.

Already, we have five big school districts in America with children from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups; soon we'll have 12, within the next year or so. And also, if you look at the rest of the world, all the wonders of modern technology are being threatened by the rise of ethnic and racial and religious and tribal conflicts around the world, we'll be in a unique position to show people, not just tell people, but show people they don't have to give in to those darker impulses if we can create one America out of this incredible diversity we have.

So you all know this has been a big concern of mine for a long time, but I just believe that this is the right time for us to try to prepare for the new century and to take this time to look at it, and I have a very great group of people here, and there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands more who would like to participate in this debate, and we intend to give them the chance to do it.

Q How bad do you think race relations are in this country today? I mean, what are the real tensions?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they're much better than they used to be, but I think there is still discrimination, I think there is still both illegal discrimination and discrimination that may not rise to the level of illegality, but certainly undermines the quality of life and our ability to live and work together.

And I think there is still great disparity in real opportunity, particularly for racial minorities who are physically isolated from the rest of us in low-income areas with high crime rates and low rates of economic and educational opportunity.

MORE

I also believe there are glaringly different perceptions of the fairness of how various aspects of American society operates -- most clearly the criminal justice system, but a lot of other areas as well.

I also believe that we have not taken enough time to think about the implications of what it will mean when our racial questions are not primarily issues between African Americans and white Americans, although still there is a lot of unfinished business there, but of the entire texture of American diversity.

So I think that there are problems. I think things are better than they used to be, but I think that we have a lot of work to do in order to be one America.

Q Mr. President, we have an interesting phenomenon in that a lot of Americans work in integrated work environments, but they aren't friends. I mean, they are colleagues at work, but they're not friends at home, they don't socialize together, they don't voluntarily associate with each other. Is there anything that you can do about this, is there anything you should try to do about this?

THE PRESIDENT: It's certainly nothing you can legislate, but I think that one of the things that I would hope that the board and I will be able to do is to show America examples where people are working together outside the workplace as friends to build their communities, and to demonstrate that in cases where that has occurred, not only are communities stronger and social problems reduced, but the people involved are happier people.

I think that's one thing I hope we'll be able to talk about. It may be a little old-fashioned and Pollyanna, but I basically think that we'll all be happier as Americans if we know each other and we feel comfortable with each other and we're getting along with together. I think that it will make -- I think we'll have more fun. I think we'll feel better about ourselves -- not just we'll feel like we're good or noble or anything, but we'll feel like we're doing what makes sense and what ought to be the better part of human nature.

Q Mr. President, given how you've been criticized in the past on how you selected an Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Lani Guinier and how you've been criticized by your close friend, Marion Wright Edelman on welfare reform and how she essentially said it would leave poor minority children out in the dust and also how you struggled to come to a position on affirmative action that brought some rather tense moments between you and the Congressional Black Caucus and, lastly, now you were criticized on being in Texas, giving a speech on race relations on the day of The Million Man March, how much credibility do you think you honestly bring to the issue of race relations, and how much do you honestly think you can accomplish in relation to your goals?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I ought to congratulate you. In 30 seconds, you've probably got 100 percent of the criticisms that have been leveled against me.

Q Oh, there's a new one today. The Speaker --

Q Besides the Speaker saying that's -- (laughter) --

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I was invited a long time ago to give that speech in Texas, and I think it was a very important speech. I've had -- secondly, more importantly, anybody who looks at my entire public life can see that it's been dominated by three things: economics, education and race.

If there is any issue I ought to have credibility on, it is this one, because it is a part of who I am and what I've done, and I don't feel the need to defend myself. I think all you have to do is look at the way I constitute my administration, look at the way that we've changed the Federal Bench and look at the policies I've advocated. And I'm very proud of the process through which we went to develop the affirmative action policy -- with Mr. Edley here, was a part of that -- and I think we did it right. After all, we not only had to come up with a position, we had to come up with a position in a way that we could defend it against those who thought we were wrong and who were determined to undo it, and we wanted to give everybody a chance to be a part of it; so I'm rather proud of that.

And on the welfare issue, time will prove whether Marion Edelman is right or I am. That's all I can tell you. All I can tell you is, even before the Welfare Reform Bill passed, we moved more people from welfare to work than at any time in American history and the Council of Economic Advisors says that 36 percent of them -- about 30 percent of them moved because of initiatives taken by states to help people move from welfare to work. We kept the guarantee for medical care, we kept the guarantee for nutrition for poor children, we kept the guarantee that the money had to be spent on poor people, we gave the states more money to spend on welfare than they would have today under the old system. They have 20 percent more money to spend on poor people today than they would have had if we hadn't changed the law -- today. And we're going to get, under the Budget Agreement, \$3 billion more to create jobs for people who don't have them. So let's -- give me a couple of years to see whether -- who is right on this. She was sincere and honest in her position and I'm sincere and honest in mine, and time will see who was right.

Q Mr. President -- going to be worried that this is going to be all talk and no action. Are there going to be concrete proposals that are going to come out of this? In what areas?

THE PRESIDENT: I expect there to be concrete proposals. I also wanted to say there will simultaneously be concrete proposals that will be debated in the context of the budget that will directly bear on this. For example, one of the things that troubles me about those in favor of getting rid of affirmative action is, I don't recall any of them coming up with any alternatives. Nor do I hear any voices assuming some responsibility for the apparent resegregation of higher education in Texas and California and some places as a result of it.

So, yes, I think we are duty-bound to come up with some policy, but I also think we're duty-bound to try to mobilize the energies and the attention of the rest of America so that everybody can be a part of this.

Q Does this mean you will specifically denounce Proposition 209 tomorrow?

THE PRESIDENT: I've already done that, but I will make my position on that issue clear again tomorrow.

Q I assume you've seen the Speaker's comment that he's looked at the Advisory Commission and assumes that it will come up with the, I think he said, same old, tired, liberal big government proposals. Would you like to disabuse him of that impression?

THE PRESIDENT: One of the things we did in 1993, which was not an old, tired, liberal, big government proposal -- Ronald Reagan said it was the best antipoverty program in American history with the earned income tax credit -- we doubled it in 1993 to help the working poor, to reward -- here is another thing I wanted to --

most minorities work for a living, they are not on welfare. And there are a lot of people out there working, not making much money. So the earned income tax credit says we're not going to tax people who work into poverty.

This new tax program that has been proposed by the Speaker's Ways and Means Committee would penalize the working poor and especially working poor mothers. So I would say that I'd be glad to have his advice, but this is a case where he needs to neaten up his own house a little bit and get those -- if he's for work and empowerment and not the big government solutions, then they ought to change that tax package and stop punishing the working poor.

Q What did you think of the Republican leaders all voting against the disaster bill? Wasn't that odd?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm just glad it passed. Mayor Owens, the Mayor of -- I visited out there in North Dakota called me last night after I signed it and said how glad she was the people were going to get their aid, and that's all I have to say. This never should have been political, and I don't want the politics to continue and I don't want to talk about victories or defeat here. People are going to get help; that's all that counts. We've got to go back to working on this budget and all these other issues.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

4:05 P.M. EDT

MORE

E. J. Dionne Jr.

What If We Had a Serious Conversation?

Any president calling for a "national conversation" on race would take flak. Right from the start, the idea of a "national conversation" sounds like a contrivance, more a made-for-television production than a heart-to-heart over the back fence.

And President Clinton is doomed to being suspected of politics and positioning, of making a self-conscious play for the history books, of trying to do something that looks "big" but requires little real money or political capital.

Now, maybe the "conversation" will, indeed, be seen as nothing more than the Gasbags and Posturers Empowerment Act of 1997. But pause for a moment to consider the alternative: What it would mean to take the conversation seriously.

First, the conversation will not always be fun because part of America's "race problem" is passionate disagreement over just what "the problem" is. Is it "white racism" and "the legacy of slavery"? Or is it the widening gap within the African American community between those able to take advantage of the post-civil-rights era and those stuck in poverty?

And think about this classic debate: Is poverty primarily the result of family breakdown and crime? Or are family breakdown and crime the fruits of poverty, unemployment and discrimination?

You can bet that if you argued about such questions in a racially or ideologically mixed group, you'd quickly provoke discord, maybe even shouting. Thus the first rule: If we paper over rather than clarify disagreements, we're not having a conversation about race.

Rule Number Two: Most airy

phrases used by "men and women of goodwill" beg big questions. In his speech, the president asked: "Can we be one America, respecting, even celebrating, our differences, but embracing even more what we have in common?" Yes. But is the emphasis on the "celebrating differences" part or the "in common" part?

Three points of view are contending here. The "multicultural" answer implies that our differences are greater than our commonalities. Multiculturalists build politics and social action around particular identities (African American or Latino, for example). Building a common American identity is seen as forcing minorities to conform to a culture dominated by whites (and males).

The "unicultural" answer says that everybody should melt into a single American identity. The uniculturalist argues that groups clinging to ethnic or racial identities marginalize themselves. And uniculturalists oppose, on principle, groups advancing themselves as groups.

Neither of these answers has worked well in American history. The successful alternative is pluralism. Pluralists accept that members of groups pursue not only individual routes to success but also collective action. One hundred years ago, the Irish in many cities advanced together through political machines. Thirty and 40 years ago, African Americans pushed their whole group forward through the civil rights movement. Pluralists also accept that members of minority groups often hold on to their particular traditions.

But pluralists insist that a common American culture shapes us all. That culture includes a strong commitment to democracy and civic equality

and is not simply a cover for white male dominance.

Clinton will have to be explicit about the pluralist idea that lies behind his "one America" rhetoric. That will mean arguing with the multicultural and unicultural views.

Clinton should get some points for defending affirmative action. It's not a popular position. But then he raised a large issue when he declared "the best example of successful affirmative action is our military."

True. But what does it mean for the rest of society? The structure of advancement in the military is more rule-bound than in the private sector. You can't apply the military's rigid structure to hundreds of thousands of private employers hiring tens of millions of people. But the military has also created highly successful training and education programs designed to combine merit promotion with affirmative action. They could have broader application.

Thus, another question for the president: If he is proposing the military as a model, he is proposing a very different, more intensive, more expensive but potentially more popular approach to affirmative action. What would such a program look like?

The president said that neither "talk" nor "disconnected acts of policy" would be enough to ease the nation's racial divide. Well, sure. But the talk, if it's not empty, should lead eventually to connected, coherent acts of policy. We should have a better idea of what to do and not simply what to say. The man who started the conversation will have to lead it and answer the questions he would have us ask ourselves.

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1997

William Raspberry

Beyond Black and White

Edwin Dorn has rescued me (temporarily, at least) from my skepticism, and I'm prepared to accept that President Clinton's call for a dialogue on race just might do some good.

I never saw it as a cynical gesture. My fear was that any attempt at a national conversation on race would quickly degenerate into a dead-end fight over affirmative action: dead-end because (for too many of us) affirmative action has become a sort of litmus test by which we determine not just who makes sense but who is worth talking to.

Dorn is undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, a Ph.D. from Yale, and the next dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. More relevant to my call to him, he's very smart.

He acknowledged at the outset that the president's idea won't be easy to carry out. "Having a good conversation about something important is one of the hardest things people do," he said. "It's so difficult to get people to understand the distinction between the sort of thoughtful conversation the president has in mind and the mindless rhetoric that too often passes for thought."

Assuming we can negotiate that hurdle, Dorn sees two necessary components for a useful conversation: It must be about the future and not about the present or the past, and it must be "in color, not just black and white."

"Perhaps the best way to avoid the rancor and posturing," he believes, "is to focus the conversation on where we want to be as a nation—not who is suffering or who's at fault, but what this society should look like 20 or 50 years from now."

In fact that may be the only way to move the conversation on affirmative action beyond the present locked-horns impasse. Once we reach some consensus on what sort of America we'd like to share, then we might be able to work backward to the current issues. I told you Dorn is smart.

As for the need to push the conversation beyond black and white, he thinks it is fortuitous—or maybe a shrewd bit of planning—that the speech launching the call for dialogue was delivered at the University of California (San Diego). The point: "We'll have to take note of the huge demographic changes that have occurred and will continue to occur in

this country and acknowledge that many of our arguments about civil rights have been almost exclusively about black and white.

"True, this is our defining relationship, but projecting into the future, we must take into account the aspirations of fourth-generation Chinese Americans and first- or second-generation Pakistani Americans. That produces a much richer, much more complex dialogue. Nobody's figured out how to do it yet, but that doesn't mean it's not possible—or necessary."

How do you get such a complex conversation underway?

One key, Dorn believes, is to make sure the right people are involved.

"The worst thing that could happen," he says, "is for everybody to tune in and watch the president lead three or four multiracial, televised 'town meetings' and then judge how well he's done. The point is not for Clinton to have a conversation on race but for all of us to join in."

"Community groups, foundations, educational institutions and churches throughout the country need to use the president's leadership as a kind of jumping-off point. You know, we did a lot of this in the '60s, when the National Council of Churches and others tried to lead us in understanding racial issues. That needs to happen again. People like those at the Kettering Foundation have mastered the art of public conversation. Jim Fishkin at the University of Texas is expert at teasing out what people are thinking when they really are thinking—as opposed to public opinion polls that mostly tell you what people think when they're not thinking."

Dorn almost has me thinking that some good can come of simply talking about how we might improve relations among various races and ethnicities. My own thought has been that we'd have a better chance of improving race relations by pursuing that goal indirectly—for instance, by working on some problem of mutual interest.

"Not a bad idea," says Dorn. "In fact, I think the president considered using such a surrogate—and rejected it. Marriage counselors will tell you it can be very helpful for people to work together to solve a common problem. But every once in a while, it's well to have a conversation about what's really bugging you."

Craig Pattee

No Relief From Cynical Politics

I spent the week in which the drama of the disaster relief bill unfolded with a growing sense of sadness. It's not that this was the first time Washington has played politics with important legislation, it's just that our leaders have perfected an unusually cynical approach to government. The line between government and politics appears to have blurred, and the worst part of all is that for many in Washington, there remains no remorse at all—no compunction that this political posturing comes at a price. The game appears to have become more important than the results.

Let's be honest: Despite the words of indignation from the White House and Senate Minority Leader Daschle in particular, this exercise wasn't about helping the people of North Dakota, and it wasn't about expediting federal assistance for disaster relief. It was about winning and losing, the cycle of Washington political posturing that seems to be taking a pathetic turn. And the level of duplicity, cynicism and pandering so evident in it sets a new benchmark for Washington.

What bothers me is that everyone involved in the legislation knew this disaster relief was not to provide critical emergency services for the flood victims. Given the level of impassioned rhetoric, you'd have thought there were children starving all along the Red River. Of course they need help and compassion. But the cold, hard truth is that the people of Grand Forks, N.D., have gotten on with their lives. They are not starving, and they are not sleeping in tents. Yes, they need long-term help to rebuild their lives, and that is what this legislation is primarily about: low-interest loans to make repairs, business loans to help get the local economy started again, and funds to help rebuild the city's infrastructure. But let's be realistic. How trite for Senate Democrats to set up a disaster relief "vigil" on Capitol Hill. If they wanted to help people in Grand Forks, they should have hopped on an airplane to Bismarck and filled sandbags three months ago.

It bothers me because of the president's high-minded refusal to sign legislation that included "extras" such as the Republican language related to the 2000 census. In the end, the legislation still contained census language, only it is the provisions that the president preferred

all along, and a promise to review Republican concerns during Commerce Department appropriations. How sanctimonious to decry the presence of amendments to the disaster legislation when in the end, he was happy to sign as long as they were his.

It turns out that the need for a "clean" bill was nothing more than a sound bite. Actually, these other things are important, and everyone knew it. In the end, the language signed by the president included \$600 million for transportation funding, \$928 million for veterans' compensation, \$1.9 billion to finance Bosnian peacekeeping operations and \$268.5 million for "other" appropriations—language the president was sure to include. But given the level of rhetoric, you would never know this was about anything other than starving children. In fact, funding for some of these initiatives was increased. So let's be honest, this wasn't about disaster relief, it was about political advantage.

It's sad, but political advantage became more important than the disaster relief, transportation funding, money for Bosnia, the census or preventing another government shutdown. Our leaders made an issue out of human suffering, which this bill had little to do with, so that they could try to win political points.

In the end, Republican leaders are doing their best to perfume a pig, actually claiming to have "won." (A hollow victory, but they did get promises from congressional Democrats not to delay legislation that would prevent another government shutdown—that had cost them too much political capital last year.) After all, the legislation was little different from that initially vetoed by the president.

Of course Democrats can barely contain their glee—they are still trying to act all serious about the plight and suffering along the Red River. But it must be getting hard to keep a straight face. They took the high road, and "won."

If everyone claims to have won, who lost?

It makes me sick, but in the end, it's the American people who lost. The worst part of this whole debacle is the way in which this has only served to further deepen the cynicism of the American electorate. The cost of this political posturing is a further loss of faith by the American people in the institutions of democracy. That's a sad thing.

We live in a country where only half the people vote, where disdain for Washington is at an all-time high, and where people are increasingly frustrated with the ability of our political and government institutions to get things done. Perhaps the good news in all of this is that Americans are becoming less reliant on these institutions. But we do expect government's help in times of real need and disaster, and the jockeying last week most Americans must find pathetic.

The writer is a Republican consultant and former Bush administration coordinator for the Los Angeles Riot Recovery Task Force.

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1997

In America

BOB HERBERT

Racism's Nine Lives

In Fayetteville, N.C., a black man and woman walking down the street are shot and killed by white supremacists on the prowl for "niggers" to torment.

In Orange County, California, an Asian-American man who has just earned a master's degree at Georgetown University is attacked while rollerblading and stabbed to death. Police say the two young men arrested in the killing had decorated their apartment with Nazi symbols and white-supremacist posters.

In Syracuse, a group of Asian-Americans and a white friend are refused service at a Denny's restaurant and then are attacked and beaten in the parking lot by a group of white men yelling anti-Asian slurs. The beating continues until a group of black patrons intervenes.

In Fort Washington, Md., a black teen-ager shopping at an Eddie Bauer outlet is detained by police officers and forced to strip off his shirt because he cannot prove that it isn't stolen.

In rural Siskiyou County, California, unrelenting racial harassment forces an Asian-American student to leave high school and continue her studies at home.

Welcome to the enlightened 1990's, an era in which many people, most of them white, have declared that racism and discrimination are no longer much of a problem. That noise you hear is college doors being slammed in the faces of black and brown applicants in states where affirmative action is being destroyed. The only discrimination worth worrying about, we are told by the politicians and commentators in the nation's sociopolitical comfort zones, is discrimination against white men.

Now comes Bill Clinton, who has worked so many sides of the race issue he sometimes confuses himself. Is he a demagogue or a visionary? Is he shoring up his bona fides with Reagan Democrats by consigning a million additional children to a miserable and wholly unnecessary stretch in the prison of poverty, or has he stumbled upon a moment of sincerity, which has prompted him to gaze earnestly into all of our eyes and ask, "Can we be one America?"

It is very hard not to be cynical. The best guess is that the President, who has never met a group he felt he couldn't romance, now has his mind and heart set on the historians. It's legacy time. So, presto, a Presidential advisory board on race relations.

Let's all be nice to one another.

The problem is that the cynicism gets us nowhere. There is a vacuum of high-level leadership that needs to be filled. And as weak and periodically demagogic as Mr. Clinton has been, he is a substantial improvement over the racially poisonous Reagan-Bush era. That period began with Ronald Reagan brazenly kicking off his 1980 Presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Miss., where the civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney had been slain in 1964, and ended with Clarence Thomas

Clinton woos history.

making a mockery of Thurgood Marshall's seat on the Supreme Court.

Those who yearn for progress in race relations may not like it, but they don't have the luxury of turning their backs on Mr. Clinton. Despite improvements over the past several decades, bigotry and other insidious threats to the interests of ethnic minorities remain intense. Newt Gingrich announced on Wednesday that after much thought he had overcome his reservations about ending all affirmative action. Get rid of it, he says. If you don't have a racial problem, who needs racial remedies?

Mr. Gingrich's stance is a reflection of what Theodore Shaw of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund describes as the refusal of many whites to acknowledge that bigotry continues to permeate American life.

"Racism is still endemic," he said. "My God, you have to be willfully blind not to see it."

Randall Kennedy, a Harvard law professor and author of an excellent new book, "Race, Crime and the Law," said he hoped Mr. Clinton's initiative would lead at the very least to an honest discussion of the extent to which racism remains a problem. One of his students kicked off a spirited discussion recently by saying she did not believe there was as much discrimination in the United States as Professor Kennedy contended.

It turned out that several other students felt the same way, Mr. Kennedy said, "but just weren't saying it." □

The New York Times

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1997

At Home Abroad

ANTHONY LEWIS

'You Can't Despair'

LONDON

When Irish Republican Army gunmen killed two Ulster policemen this week, Prime Minister Tony Blair suspended British contacts with the I.R.A.'s political wing, Sinn Fein. "Their cynicism and hypocrisy are sickening," he said. "Their actions defy normal understanding."

Exactly. Anyone who expects the normal logic of political movements to govern I.R.A./Sinn Fein behavior does not understand.

The I.R.A. returned to the gun just when things seemed to be moving its way politically. Mr. Blair's new Labor Government, changing Conservative policy, had resumed talks with Sinn Fein. Voters in Ireland had opened the way for a new Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, who was also ready to talk. Sinn Fein itself had won seats in the House of Commons and the Irish Dail.

The killings undid those political gains. They outraged even some who had voted for Sinn Fein candidates, who called a Dublin radio station to say so. They undermined the credibility of Sinn Fein and its leader, Gerry Adams, in their claim that they wanted a peaceful, negotiated solution to the troubles.

Why, then, would the I.R.A. take such a step? The answer is that its logic is not the logic of politics. It is the logic of an army: an underground army. When it sees a chance to win a skirmish, it takes that chance.

The dominant forces within the I.R.A. evidently still believe that terror will force Britain to abandon the majority Protestants of Northern

The I.R.A. does not follow the logic of politics.

Ireland and make them part of the Irish Republic against their will. Any in Sinn Fein who really want to take part in a political process do not control policy. So one must conclude.

Another thing has to be said about I.R.A. strategy. It borrows from the debris of Marxism the theory that making things worse in the short run will make them better in the long.

These murders were carried out just three weeks before the Protestant Orange marching season in Northern Ireland comes to a critical test at Drumcree, where the march last year brought terrible violence. And the policemen were killed not far from Drumcree.

The evident design was to arouse a Protestant backlash and strengthen the determination of Protestant ultras to march through Catholic neighborhoods. That in turn would lead more Catholics to give up hope in peace negotiations and turn them to the I.R.A.

The strategy has a certain political logic to it. But recent decades have shown that terror will not move Britain to turn its back on Northern Ireland.

Britain bears a heavy responsibility in history for its policies toward Ireland. It invaded the country over the centuries, suppressed its people and colonized the North. But the Protestants of Northern Ireland are a reality today that cannot be wished away. No imaginable Irish government would want to absorb them against their will.

In truth, the only way to the normal life that practically everyone in the North wants is by negotiation. But is there any point in negotiation after the I.R.A. outrage? I put the question to former Senator George Mitchell, who for two and a half frustrating years has presided over talks intended to bring about a new constitutional settlement. I reached him in London, on his way to a resumption of the talks in Belfast Tuesday.

"You just can't give way to despair," Senator Mitchell said. "The timing of this attack was particularly egregious, but even with this I don't believe it's hopeless."

"Two things have to happen. First, the marching season has to pass without serious incident. Second, in our talks we have to end the procedural wrangling and get to substance. Both are difficult, but not impossible."

"People obviously have deep differences, even hatred — but they don't want to go back to violence."

Senator Mitchell's first point, getting past the marching season, will require unusual restraint on the part of Orange Protestant groups. The marches, for many, make a primal statement: The land on which we march is ours. Which is to say, again, that the beliefs and fears of Northern Ireland do not always fit the logic of comfortable outsiders.

The hope has to be that the parties now in the talks will make enough progress — Senator Mitchell's second point — to draw in the I.R.A. The price of its admission would be a genuine suspension of violence: a chance for the habit of peace to grow. □

On My Mind

A. M. ROSENTHAL

The Traitor Movement

Timothy McVeigh awaits execution. The jurors who convicted and sentenced him have done their duty. The rest of American society has not.

Congress has not. The state governments and their law enforcement agencies have not. America's political parties have not. The President did in the early days after Oklahoma City but then faded back.

The next victims of these failures have been selected, by category. They are officials and employees of state and Federal governments, judges, Federal and local police, and Americans who do fight the gangs of armed racists who conceived and organized the crusade that inspired

Ala. Most arrests were made by the F.B.I. and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Morris Dees, chief counsel of the center, says both are recovering from the shock of denunciation after the Ruby Ridge and Waco cases: attacks that painted violators of the law as heroes and its defenders as monsters.

But state enforcement is largely paralyzed. A long list of state attorneys general refuse to enforce state legislation against militia and paramilitary gangs. Their police are outgunned, or they are afraid politically.

In most states, officials supposed to enforce the law get no encouragement from governors. From the senators and representatives the people send to Washington come nothing, with few exceptions like the Democratic Representatives Charles Schumer and Jerry Nadler of New York.

Members of Congress, like governors, worry that taking on traitors implies restrictions on guns. What does that get you, except oblivion?

Kenneth Stern, author of "A Force on the Plains," a fine study of the militia, points out that the House found time for exactly one day of hearings on the movement, the Senate none. The cowardice is a huge insult to the huge majority of Americans, disgusted by the non-patriots.

In achievement, the Republican and Democratic Parties are right up there with Congress. Neither made fighting the new treason an issue during the Presidential campaign; I can't remember hearing a word.

President Clinton did do his duty just after the bombing. He said America was being befouled by hatred spread by "militia" types and their flacks, and that to remain silent was a sin. Immediately, politicians, lobbyists and journalists who wanted him defeated in 1996 whined that he was a vote-hunting manipulator, so there.

Since then there has been not much leadership from the President against armed racism and rebellion, no plan of action.

It is not too late. Important steps can be taken, and in another column I will list some. But rereading this one, I realize I have skipped over two other parts of society that did not do their duty.

The press failed to report the importance of what was not happening after Oklahoma City. And the public did not raise a gigantic fuss about the country's collective refusal to do anything but shake its head and wipe its eye. □

America fails its duty.

Timothy McVeigh to murder 168 human beings in the Federal building on April 19, 1995.

Since that day, nothing has been done that diminishes the vivid likelihood that these gangs will carry out or inspire other bombings in other cities. They call themselves militia and patriots. But they are exactly what a prosecutor said about Timothy McVeigh — traitors.

They talk and think like sick paranoias, which they are. But they know what they are doing. They are trying to inject civil servants with terror, prevent state governments from functioning, and eat away at American confidence in the ability of government to protect the citizenry and itself.

Since that day, these gangs have been doing what they did before. Across the country, there have been arrests of members of the "patriot movement" on charges involving collection of explosives, refusal to pay Federal taxes, surveillance of Federal buildings, money laundering, robbery, milking government by check and money-order fraud, extortion, attacking law officers, and, in Michigan, murder.

At least 858 groups, including 380 armed "militias," were active in 1996 — a 6 percent increase since before Oklahoma City. They operate in every state, according to Klanwatch, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery,