



Color TV

by Grover G. Norquist

Since 1978, selling radio and broadcast licenses to preferred racial groups has meant a generous tax break for the seller. The tax preferences can reach astonishing proportions: the \$2.3 billion sale of broadcast giant Viacom to a purportedly black-owned consortium would have saved the sellers \$400 million.

Trying to avert a Republican drive to eliminate all racial preferences from the Internal Revenue Service code concerning the sale of radio and TV stations, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) authored a bill that would have quashed the Viacom deal's tax break but allowed racial discrimination to continue in broadcast sales under \$50 million—with the added requirement that the racially preferred buyer agree to hold the property for three years before resale.

All but ten Democrats in the House supported the McDermott bill, but Republicans defeated it, introducing instead an amendment that not only stripped out the Viacom deal but also outlawed the current practice of taxing Americans different amounts based on the color of the people they sell to. Having lost their bid to keep racialism alive, all but forty-four Democrats joined Republicans in passing the measure by a 381-44 vote.

The two proposals demonstrated the political challenge facing Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party. They must support quotas, racial set-asides, and deliberate preferences to keep their party from breaking in two—and to avoid a Jesse Jackson primary or a third-party challenge. Yet they know perfectly well that the majority of Americans oppose such racial discrimination.

This political paradox has existed for thirty years, but it is now under severe challenge thanks to the intervention of two conservative California professors, Thomas

Wood and Glynn Custred. Wood and Custred have announced plans to begin gathering signatures to place a ballot question before the voters of California on the March or November 1996 ballot. Their initiative, the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), would prohibit the state of California from using "race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin as a criterion for either discriminating against, or granting preferential treatment to any individual or group in the operation of the state's system of public employment, public education or public contracting."

The California initiative has brought affirmative action to the nation's attention with a vengeance. Polling data indicate that CCRI will pass with strong support in California. With this initiative on the ballot in our largest state during a presidential election year, all the candidates will have to take a stand on an issue that begs for presidential leadership. For just as Presidents Johnson and Nixon used executive orders to establish affirmative action, so can any president use executive orders to abolish the present system of race preferences. He need not wait for Congress or the courts.

Clinton is presently insisting, "Our administration is against quotas and guaranteed results." Bob Dole has been equally vague, saying, "If affirmative action means quotas, set-asides, and other preferences that favor individuals simply because they happen to belong to certain groups, then that's where I draw the line." The CCRI issue will force both of them—as well as all other candidates—to answer "Yes" or "No" to racial preferences under any name.

California has a history of using initiatives to thrust into the national debate issues that politicians would love to sweep under the rug. In 1978, after the state legislature refused to do anything about exploding property taxes, Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann put Proposition 13 on the ballot; the voters cut their own

taxes by more than half, and the victory spawned similar initiatives in a dozen other states. This tax revolt won Ronald Reagan's support for the Kemp-Roth income tax cut, and helped make it a part of the Republican platform in 1980. After his election, Reagan guided it into law.

It was California's 1992 term-limits initiative that guaranteed the issue, repugnant to most politicians, was front and center in the House Republicans' Contract With America. And Proposition 187, the California legislation restricting welfare spending on illegal immigrants, passed so strongly in November 1994 that a welfare cut-off to illegal aliens is in the House Republican welfare reform package.

A serious reappraisal of affirmative action threatens to tear the Democrats' coalition apart. To keep the Congressional Black Caucus happy, Clinton must support affirmative action in all its forms. Yet a Gallup Poll showed only 11 percent of men and 14 percent of women approve of affirmative action programs for minorities that use quotas. Twenty-six percent of men and 29 percent of women support affirmative action for minorities if there are no quotas. Fully 61 percent of men and 52 percent of women disapprove of affirmative action with or without quotas. And affirmative action with quotas to "help" women is supported by only 7 percent of men and only 12 percent of women.

Affirmative action is particularly offensive to Jews and Asian-Americans. The Democratic Party's death grip on the quota issue will continue to drive Asian-Americans to the Republican Party. Asian-Americans were one of three groups that gave George Bush a majority of their vote in 1992. (The other two groups were evangelical Christians and those earning more than \$200,000 a year.) Jewish voters see their children's future damaged by affirma-

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tive action in education and hiring. The quota issue once again reminds Asians and Jews where they stand in the pecking order of Democratic interest groups.

Affirmative action is also very costly to taxpayers and the economy, and defending it forces Democrats to stand once again as the party of tax-and-spend. Peter Brimelow and Leslie Spencer, in a 1993 study for *Forbes* magazine, calculated that racial quotas cost the American economy an astonishing \$113 billion in 1991 alone. This included direct costs—\$202 million for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, \$53 million for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, \$48 million for the Department of Education, \$112 million for other federal agencies, and \$120 million for state and local agencies—as well as indirect costs such as the compliance costs borne by schools and colleges, which came to a whopping \$11 billion.

Since 1970, affirmative action's drag on the economy has kept GNP 4 percent lower than it would have been under color-blind conditions. A 4 percent drop in GNP cost the economy \$236 billion in 1991, and the cost has grown in subsequent years. Democrats will have a hard time explaining away this essential fact: government racism is expensive.

A prolonged discussion of affirmative action will also highlight the longstanding gap between black Americans and those who claim to speak for them. A 1985 study by Linda Lichter, co-director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, found that 77 percent of black leaders felt that, to make up for past discrimination in hiring, "minorities should be given preference." Twenty-three percent of black leaders believed that "ability should be the main consideration." The same question, asked of all blacks, found the exact reverse: 77 percent of black Americans wanted people to be judged on the basis of ability, and only 23 percent supported racial preference.

While the affirmative action debate divides the Democratic Party, Republicans must avoid taking the bait being offered by some "moderates," who suggest that America replace government discrimination based on gender and race with a system that discriminates in hiring and education based on an applicant's income, economic class, history, or claim to being "disadvantaged."

This deal is being proffered by Democrats and should be rejected by

Republicans for three reasons. First, discrimination by class is no prettier than discrimination by race. East Germany was not an improvement over South Africa. Second, the present affirmative action establishment is well-entrenched and would accept any language change that did no more than change the basis for discrimination from "race" to "class," and would continue all present policies. Most contract set-asides already claim to be for the benefit of the "disadvantaged."

Finally, voters oppose government discrimination, period, no ands, ifs, or buts. A recent Frank Luntz poll gave respondents

three options: Asked if "the government should help people based on economic circumstances but without regard to race or gender," 19 percent agreed. Asked if government should "take race and gender into account in addition to economic circumstances," only 7 percent agreed.

The good news for those political leaders now willing to move away from affirmative action is that fully 74 percent of Americans told the Luntz pollsters that "government should treat everyone equally." That's what most Americans want—and Republicans should fight for it without compromise. □

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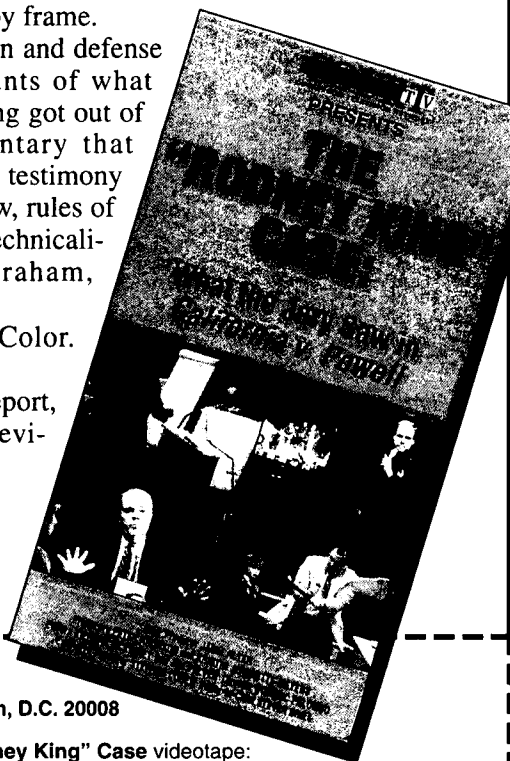
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Shali Graves

by Jonas Bernstein

Bouncing down a road on the outskirts of Nazran in a Russian jeep filled with four drunken Ingush teenagers (one of them at the wheel), and a reggae singer shouting "Hello, Afree-ka!" on the tape player—this was not how I imagined I'd spend Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan. Nazran had donned its Sunday best to celebrate the end of a month of self-abnegation. Neatly dressed men, young and old, promenaded—or staggered—through the city center; others whipped by in Ladas with green, pink, or white flags streaming out of windows. Freshly scrubbed young kids carried bags of candy they had collected door-to-door in a Moslem version of trick-or-treat.

For all the festivities, though, Ingushetia doesn't have much to celebrate. In 1991 it began giving refuge to tens of thousands of its ethnic brethren fleeing neighboring North Ossetia to escape the Russian-armed Ossetian militias. Now this poor republic is housing and feeding tens of thousands of its displaced Chechen cousins. Both Ingush and Chechens say the distinction between them is an artificial one, imposed by their Russian conquerors in the nineteenth century. They are, everyone insists, one people.

Whether one or two, however, they are all well-versed in the agonies of displacement. The mother of my Ingush host described how her family was herded onto a train bound for Kazakhstan in 1944, when Stalin deported every Chechen and Ingush man, woman, and child from their homeland. In 1992 she and her family were forced out of their new home in North Ossetia. Her eyes now failing, she cried as she recalled

how the Ingush were shot, burned alive, and decapitated.

Besides the stream of Chechen refugees, there are other daily reminders of the latest Caucasian war: each morning, Chechnya-bound Russian army helicopter gunships fly low over the Ingush capital, while trucks and armored personnel carriers ferry fresh troops into what the Russians call "the conflict zone."

Early in the morning on the day before Eid al-Fitr, I hitched a ride into the zone on a bus chartered by the Ingush government's Ministry for Emergency Situations. It was a regular run, organized by Pyotr Kosov, adviser to Ingush president Ruslan Aushev and deputy ataman of the All-Great Cossack forces of the Don. Kosov goes back and forth all the time, getting information on Russian and Chechen POWs and bringing in food and medicine for the civilians. He has good relations with field commanders on both sides, and always takes along a bundle of the day's edition of *Izvestia* to give away: it is a prized possession in Chechnya, which is under a Russian information blockade. On this day the destination was the town of Shali, located some 25 km southeast of the Chechen capital of Grozny.

Some Cossacks, their anger fueled by territorial disputes with Chechnya, have volunteered to fight the Chechens: not Kosov. He is unreservedly critical of the war. The night before our trip, Kosov compared the war in Chechnya to what happened to the Cossacks at the hands of the Bolsheviks in 1921-1922. Once a strong supporter of Boris Yeltsin, he does not mince words about the current Russian leaders.

"When the Chechen events began, it was already clear that there wasn't democracy in our country," he said. "A

dictatorship was already in place, and this dictatorship is returning our country to the Stalinist period." Kosov compared the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs—whose *spetsnaz* have carried out illegal detentions, beatings, and torture in Chechnya—to the Stalin-era NKVD, and said that "no fewer than 30,000 civilians" were killed in the siege of Grozny. (Sergei Kovalyov, Yeltsin's human rights commissioner, has estimated the death toll at 24,000.)

Kosov noted that Slovakia and the Czech Republic managed their break-up in a civilized manner. He allowed that Chechnya would always be economically dependent on Russia, but that some kind of special status for the republic could be negotiated. "Even in the Czarist empire, different regions were handled differently," he remarked. "Finland had a parliament, in Poland there was a Sejm, in the Don region there was an ataman."

Kosov insisted there must be negotiations between Yeltsin and Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, something the Russian president has adamantly refused to consider, despite Yeltsin's insistence that he is seeking a political solution to the war—and that these talks must have "international participation." Kosov called Clinton's support of Yeltsin "bankrupt."

Kosov got us through the two Russian posts just east of the Ingush-Chechen border without problems. A series of Chechen checkpoints began at the town of Samashki, just 3 km past the second Russian post, and extended all the way to Shali. It was evident that the Russians did not control this part of Chechnya. But the many roofless houses made it equally clear that the Russian strategy was to bomb and shell indiscriminately.

Yet even in a "conflict zone," life goes on. In Achkoy-Martan, which had been bombed the previous night and was with-

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