

OPINION

EDITORIAL

HUD chief resigns in midst of crisis

Almost as when Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans, another key Bush appointee has come up short in the midst of a crisis.

Alphonso Jackson resigned this week as head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the mother ship of the Federal Housing Administration, the lead agency in trying to stem the onslaught of foreclosures. Depending on which rescue plan passes Congress, FHA could be responsible for hundreds of billions more in taxpayer dollars to refinance struggling homeowners.

The secretary leaves under a cloud of controversy. He is the subject of FBI, Justice Department and HUD investigations into allegedly steering large HUD contracts to his friends and for having work done on his vacation home by the recipient of a HUD contract. Separately, Congress and HUD's inspector general are investigating whether Jackson retaliated against the Philadelphia Housing Authority for refusing to turn over a valuable piece of property to a Jackson friend.

Jackson was part of President Bush's original circle of Texas friends who came with him to Washington.

It is unclear whether Jackson was pushed or left by mutual agreement. He conferred with White House aides last week, met with Bush on Saturday and resigned Monday. He said he was quitting to attend to personal and family matters, but it's hard to see him voluntarily leaving a post he reveled in with only 10 months left to go.

Bush, loyal to a fault, might have stuck with his beleaguered secretary if Jackson last month had not contemptuously stonewalled a Senate subcommittee investigating the awarding of HUD contracts.

In a letter to the president, outraged Democrats demanded his resignation and Bush apparently decided to cut his losses.

With the clock running, Bush must now find somebody, perhaps from within the department, who can pass congressional muster and take up the task of stabilizing the housing market.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bud wrong to link Obama, terrorists

Bud Stevenson's comments about Sen. Barack Obama's casual contact with Mr. Ayers are very disturbing.

It's disturbing because Stevenson in his devious subliminal efforts to influence the public that Sen. Obama supports terrorism in any form by anyone is just plain un-American. This is an all-time low for Bud Stevenson.

Stevenson indicated that he was at or around the Greenwich Village bombing, right across the street; I wonder did he see Sen. Obama there. The Weather Underground defined by Webster Dictionary was a terrorist group. They opposed racism, sexism, police brutality, the Vietnam War,

the Kent State killings. They decided to use violence as way to bring about change in the country.

Sen. Obama's life and his accomplishments dealing with change in America should not be associated with this group, subliminally or outright. Stevenson should be ashamed of his words. Sen. Obama is not a Weather Underground sympathizer and it is reprehensible for Stevenson to imply this.

Sen. Obama is a man who dealt positively with a society that allowed a vast majority of its people who were relegated to slums and ghettos and were brutalized by a police force, which use deadly force against them. And a criminal justice system that was totally oblivious to their rights or needs and a wholesale disenfranchisement on a monumental scale.

I thank God every day for peo-

ple like Sen. Obama, Martin Luther King Jr., John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Medgar Evers. These people were the light in a sea of darkness that covered this nation. They were the hands that uncovered the humanity of this nation and set us free.

Bud Stevenson with his efforts to demonize Sen. Obama only serves to drag us back to a time when some individuals felt the need to overthrow this government. A time that almost destroyed this nation from within. A time when the word "human" was totally absent from the word "humanity."

I have this message for Bud Stevenson: Don't destroy the men of light, thus the darkness returns.

James E. Forney
Suisun City

COMMENTARY

Success is all in the follow through

'Sh Boom Sh Boom' to "Macarena" spans four decades of one-hit wonders.

These beauties zoomed like meteors up the Top 40 charts while their composers fizzled on the launch pad. Authors and athletes have also had their share of a solitary shot heard round the globe.

Harper Lee's only novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird," sold 30 million copies and the film version garnered Oscars. Bill Mazeroski is the only player in history to end a seventh game of the World Series with a walk off home run. All are singular moments of brilliance.

Follow-through was missing while carrying some project or intention to full completion. In sports, it's the final part of a stroke after smacking or releasing an object. Fail to do it in golf and your shots may be scenic and hysteric. Fail to follow through during a backhand tennis volley and you'll bury it in the net.

The end of the swing reflects the beginning of the attack and the excellence of the intent, with people and sports. Omitting the "last full measure" of excellence will lead to chaotic morale, corruption of quality and eventual failure.

Fire the employee in need of a little attention and you'll pull the trigger so often there'll be no one left to shoot, except you.

Caring for the last inch ensures the sanctity of the first miles. Starting projects with the end in mind gives vision to see over hori-



Kevin Ryan

zons as well as dissect close-up details. In pool and politics, snooker and snookering, if the follow-through of the stroke is off, you might as well retire your cue. Follow-through breeds mutual back-scratching and sets standards of consistency by honoring commitments.

We model those who do it and acknowledge their authority to lead.

Folks fail at follow through for many reasons: Lack of organization, incorporated cultural fear, poor communication, little experience with the fruits of courage or ownership of finished tasks and too much familiarity with just getting by. Overwhelmed or unfamiliar with change, we let promising projects slowly die. Talent is often not matched to terrain.

Fairfield support for the arts was about to be cut. A compromise was struck and a resolution passed, promising money and forgiveness of some fees. If the city follows through with infrastructure reengineering and smart business practices, an arts consortium can succeed.

The consortium is not just about the arts, just as the Artys Theme Song Contest and New Playwright Contest were both tangible as well as symbolic. Both were intentional public proofs of principle by their designers of what can happen when you follow through.

Soon, experts and opinion leaders will form a team to build a consortium. Its first proof of principle will be a gala on May 22nd. The

city will honor its word and forgive fees for "tent-tech-ticket and toilet." In addition to cable and Web access, the consortium will consistently need a little of the time and talents of crucial city staff afforded through smart business reengineering. The goal is an E-ticket ride that educates, enthralls, entertains, enlarges and excels.

The arts are one inroad to better governance, better life, less apathy, safer streets, revitalizing the city and delighting customer voters to become engaged.

Comprehensive plans that are practical, job-saving and revenue generating that require smart business decisions are being reviewed right now by our new city manager, Sean Quinn and Community Services Director, John De Lorenzo.

Fairfield needs a symphony of solutions soon, not just the one-hit wonder of a laudable but unfinished resolution. Will the city be a superb financial steward who can wow and delight its customers? Will city leaders be agents of change and invention and ingenuity?

This is not just about the arts. It is about keeping faith, good management and leadership, keeping jobs, saving money, rebuilding downtown and acting like a smooth compassionate business.

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CALIFORNIA FOCUS

Ignoring home-school questions

The knee-jerk uproar that's followed a state Court of Appeals decision to require credentialed teachers for every schoolchild in California -- including those in home schooling -- was fully predictable, but ignored some vital questions.

The ruling essentially means that every child in the state must attend an accredited school, public or private, or be

taught at home -- or at least be supervised -- by a credentialed teacher, something that many take as a threat to most home schooling.

Every objection coming from newspaper editorialists and politicians from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger down focuses on the rights of parents to provide whatever education they like for their children.

"Every California child deserves a quality education and parents should have the right to decide what's best for their children," the governor said. "Parents should not be penalized for acting in the best interests of their children's education." He called the court ruling "outrageous" and predicted it will be quickly overturned by the state Supreme Court.

Newspapers followed with lines like this: "(Parents) should continue to exercise guardianship in terms of where and how their minor children are educated."

But pause for a moment and substitute the word "nourishment" for "education" in all this. Do parents have the right to provide as much or as little nourishment for their children as they like? If they don't provide adequate nourishment, don't they at some point become guilty of child abuse?

These questions lead to another: What about the rights of children to a quality education? Sure, many of the approximately 175,000 home-schooled California kids do get quality instruction from their parents.

But what about children whose parents speak little English? What about those whose parents have less than a high school education of their own? How can they possibly be getting quality education in these circumstances?

Yet, there is nothing in current practice to prevent totally unqualified parents from taking over the education of their children. And there is little to assure that even teaching by parents with college degrees will cover all the ground required for a solid education.

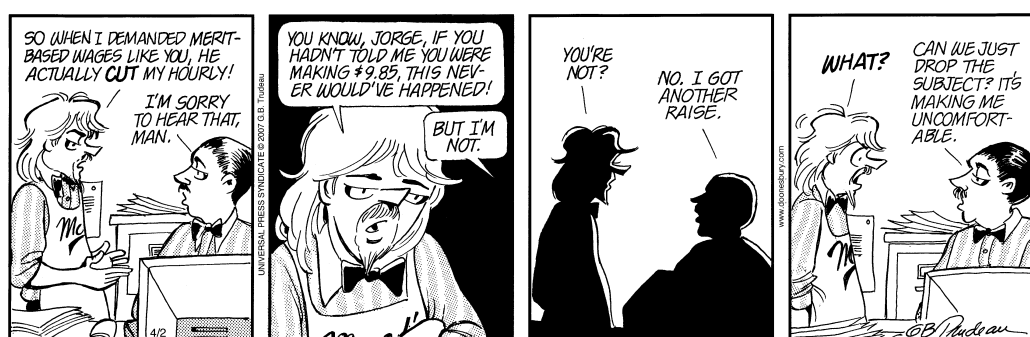
Without either close supervision or the presence of a qualified instructor -- read "credentialed teacher" -- no one even knows how many of the home schooled have a chance to become success stories and how many will be doomed to unskilled labor for life.

The strongest objections to the appeals court decision, of course, have come from religious groups that dislike many ideas taught in public schools and most private ones.

One legitimate question about children home-taught in programs like these is how they will eventually interact and compete with contemporaries who have had more standard educations. It's unknown right now how well most will cope, in part because home schooling has only taken off as an openly acknowledged mass movement within the last 15 years.

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BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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