

2/19/82

COMMENTARY BY BENJAMIN L. HOOKS

FOR

CHANNEL 5 NEWS, WNEW-TV

President Reagan, wittingly or unwittingly, has launched a divisive, cynical assault on the programs established to promote the general welfare and social justice. He has cut job training, housing subsidies, student financial aid, legal services for the poor, aid to the cities and mass transit. His economic policies have produced higher unemployment and still higher federal deficits. The burden of sacrifice falls on the poor and marginally middle-income. And he has achieved more tax breaks for the rich. In sum, the President has taken from the needy and given to the greedy!

The President recently granted tax exemptions to private schools that practice racial discrimination and then asked the Congress to go in the opposite direction. In so doing he sent a dangerous signal to the bigots and confused the general population about the law of the land.

The President has also refused to support the passage of the Voting Rights Act passed by the House. He has stalled federal civil rights enforcement by seeking to appoint dubiously qualified persons. He has spoken against court-approved affirmative remedies to discrimination.

This is a dismal record. The National Conference of Christians and Jews has announced that President Reagan will receive its highest award.

As a trustee of NCCJ, I cannot approve this, and I am asking the NCCJ trustees to reconsider this matter. I had not intended to go public at this time, but in light of the article in the New York Times of February 19, it has now become a public controversy, and it must be publicly decided.

I'm Benjamin Hooks.