

SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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Challenges Facing
Social Security

The cash crisis currently confronting the Social Security system arises from a broad array of problems—some of them economic, some political, some demographic, some sociological. Many of these problems were never contemplated, since their development was not foreseen by the architects of the system.

People are living much longer today than they did in President Roosevelt's time, and thus are collecting Social Security benefits longer. They are also retiring earlier, thereby discontinuing payment of their Social Security taxes sooner and collecting benefits over longer periods. Costly programs have been added to the system. Benefits have been vastly increased and coverage has been extended to many more beneficiaries.

Unemployment has cut sharply into the number of potential Social Security taxpayers, and giving unemployed people 62 and older a reason to retire and collect benefits. And inflation has further drained the system's funds under legislation tying the size of the benefits to increases in consumer-price levels.

There are many ways of measuring the enormous impact such factors impose on the funds designated for paying Social Security benefits, but perhaps the most striking assessment is provided by these statistics. Just 12 years ago, annual Social Security benefit payments totaled \$31.9 billion. In 1983, they will run an estimated \$182.8 billion. That figure amounts to 26 percent of all expected federal expenditures.

The initial legislation provided coverage only for workers in commerce and industry, their spouses and dependents. It did not cover such others as the self-employed, service workers, farmers, government employees and their spouses and dependents.

Since then, however, the law has been revised to provide benefits for such persons as the self-employed (including lawyers, doctors and dentists), farm and domestic workers, employees of state and local governments, members of the armed forces, ministers and their spouses and dependents.

Thus, everyone from a retired day laborer to a multi-millionaire may collect Social Security. Almost all of those who have ever paid Social Security taxes and even some who haven't are eligible for benefits. Spouses who have never worked outside their homes and thus never paid Social Security taxes are given at least partial recognition for their service to society in the form of benefits equal to half of those earned by their spouses.

Still other changes in the original Social Security law, which have added further programs to the system, have also placed strains on the available funds. The disability program, for example, was started in 1956 and its eligibility requirements have gradually been liberalized over the years. It now pays benefits totaling over \$19.8 billion a year. Medicare pays another \$43.6 billion.

Many diverse developments—including American's greater longevity, earlier retirements, the expansion of Social Security programs, and stubborn problems in the nation's economy—have combined to produce another danger signal for the system. In 1950, there were 16.5 workers paying taxes into the Social Security funds for every one person receiving benefits.

Today, only 3.2 workers pay taxes for every one person receiving benefits. Obviously, such an adverse change in the ratio between those paying into such a fund and those drawing money from it is bound to exert severe pressure on the available reserves.

In 1975, the first year that benefits were indexed to compensate for inflation, Social Security's pension fund paid out more money than it collected. Within the next two years, the cash drain worsened so seriously that the solvency of the entire system appeared threatened. Congress reacted with the imposition of an additional Social Security payroll tax expected to raise \$227 billion over the succeeding ten years.

Congressional sponsors of the new tax legislation assured the public the measure would ensure the Social Security System's solvency for at least a half century. Actually, however, it did not ensure solvency for even four years.

In spite of the increases in Social Security tax rates, tax collections lagged because of recession and unemployment. The effects of unemployment on the system can be devastating. For every American worker who loses his job, the system is denied an average of \$157 a month in taxes that he and his employer no longer pay.

At this point, it is difficult to forecast what lies ahead

for Social Security. But despite warnings in some quarters that the system may fall into bankruptcy, that seems most unlikely. No matter what its ills, political leaders have long recognized that Social Security is considered sacred by Americans.

If Social Security is to overcome the series of challenges ahead and come closer to fulfilling its original purpose, greater assumption of responsibility by individuals will be an essential element. The vehicles for assumption of that responsibility are in place—company pension plans, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and Keogh plans.

When it was initiated, Social Security was never intended to be the chief source of income for most pensioners. Early in the program, Social Security pensions averaged about 30 percent of a retired person's last monthly paycheck.

The current average is about 56 percent. About 1 in 5 of today's Social Security recipients also receive private pensions. About one-fourth of the beneficiaries rely on Social Security checks for 90 percent of their income. An estimated 16 percent have no other source of income.

Thus, the consensus is that some means—yet undetermined—will be found to save and reform the system, and authorities are confident they are within the nation's capacity. Even with all the uncertainties that exist, with adequate precautions Social Security can be expected to continue indefinitely to fulfill Franklin Roosevelt's vision of providing "some measure of protection to the average citizen and his family...against poverty ridden old age."

WATCH FOR SOCIAL SECURITY OPEN
HOUSE COMING SOON

Georgia Sea Island Singers
Perform In Seattle Area

The Georgia Sea Island Singers performed at the Rainy Town Folk Music Club in Ballard last week.

These talented singers offer a unique glimpse into the Afro-American Folk heritage. They perform songs, games, dances, and stories handed down for over two centuries in the isolated communities off the coast of Georgia. Far from being esoteric, this material has been woven so thoroughly into the general American cultural experience that it strikes a familiar chord with people of all ethnic backgrounds and ages.



Frankie And Douglas Quimby

Audience participation is the keystone of a performance by the Georgia Sea Island Singers. Each song has a chorus or clapping response for the audience. Several times in each set the performers will bring a dozen audience members on stage and teach them a children's play or courting game.

Elements of these "slave games," so called because they harken back to the ante-bellum South, exist today in children's folklore throughout North America. Using the Sea Islanders records and "Step It Down," Bessie Jones' book with Bess Lomax Hawes, educators across the country have incorporated portions of their repertoire into school curricula.

The group consists of Frankie and Douglas Quimby. Frankie comes from one of the few

American Black families that can trace its ancestry to a definite location in Africa. Her family came from the town of Kianah in the District of Temourah, in the Kingdom of Massina, on the Niger River in what is now Nigeria. They were members of the Foulah tribe. Many of the family were slaves on the Hopeton and Altama Plantations on the Georgia coast.

Frankie was born in Brunswick, Georgia, in 1937, and was raised on the Georgia Sea Islands. The old slave games were handed down to her from older children, and she played them after school

with her friends. It was not until she met Miss Bessie, however, that she learned many of her childhood favorites were actually as old as her slave ancestors.

Douglas Quimby was born in Lester, Georgia in 1936. He has been singing as long as he can remember, spellbinding audiences since he was four.

During the 1950s, Doug's family sharecropped in southwest Georgia, earning as little as \$9.25 for a year of work. They later moved out to coastal Georgia to escape the sharecropping system.

The Georgia Sea Island Singers have been

selected to represent the nation's Afro-American heritage at Carnegie Hall, President Carter's Inauguration, and at the Olympic games in Mexico. But regardless of whether they are on a major concert stage or in an inner-city classroom, Sea Islanders Frankie and Doug Quimby bring such warmth and joy to their performance that it may be several days before the audience realizes that it has also received an intense lesson in American history and cultural dynamics.

Fundraising
Event At

Sonics' Game

CAMP is co-sponsoring "The Great Kingdome Brick Break" along with the Greater King County Food Bank Alliance, at the March 30, Seattle Super-Sonics Basketball game at the Kingdome.

The event will feature Bill Corbett who will break bricks with his bare hands for the benefit of the five largest food banks which serve over 60% of all food recipients.

Help the efforts of the food banks by making a small pledge for each brick Billy can break in a three-minute period. You can pledge 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents, \$1.00 or more per brick broken. Pledge cards are available at CAMP, 722 - 18th Avenue. Call Bruce Wilson at 329-4111.

HELP US
HELP OURSELVES

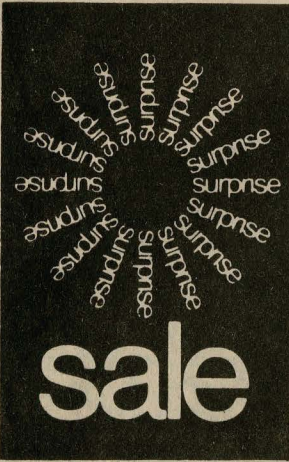
Black Americans Need the NAACP Now More Than Ever.

The mood of the nation has swung to the right. Reaganomics has erased many gains we had made. Black Americans need the NAACP's strong voice now more than ever. The payroll deduction method is one way you can support the NAACP painlessly.

Please tell your employer (city, county, state government or major corporation) that you'd like to give to the NAACP/SCF (Special Contribution Fund) through a payroll deduction plan. (Your contribution is tax deductible!)

Support your NAACP—HELP US HELP OURSELVES.

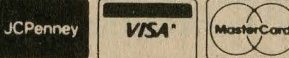
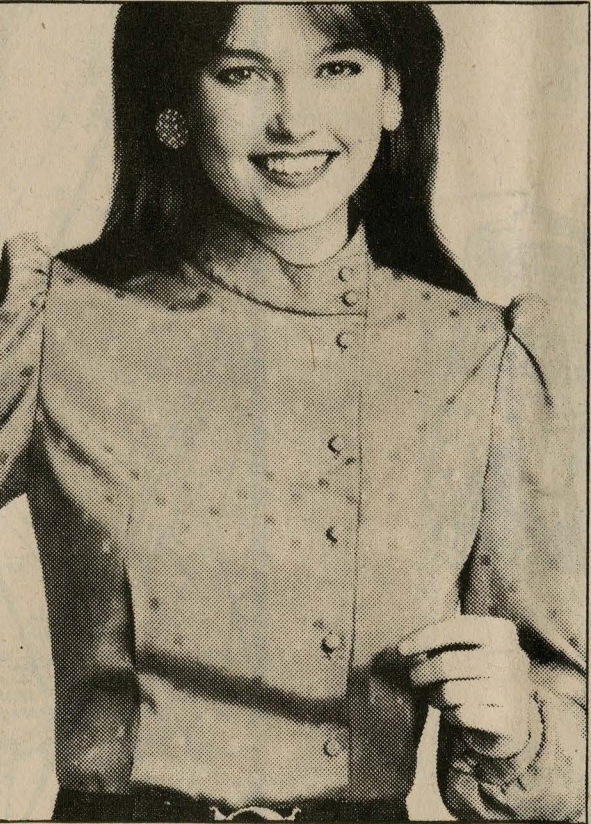
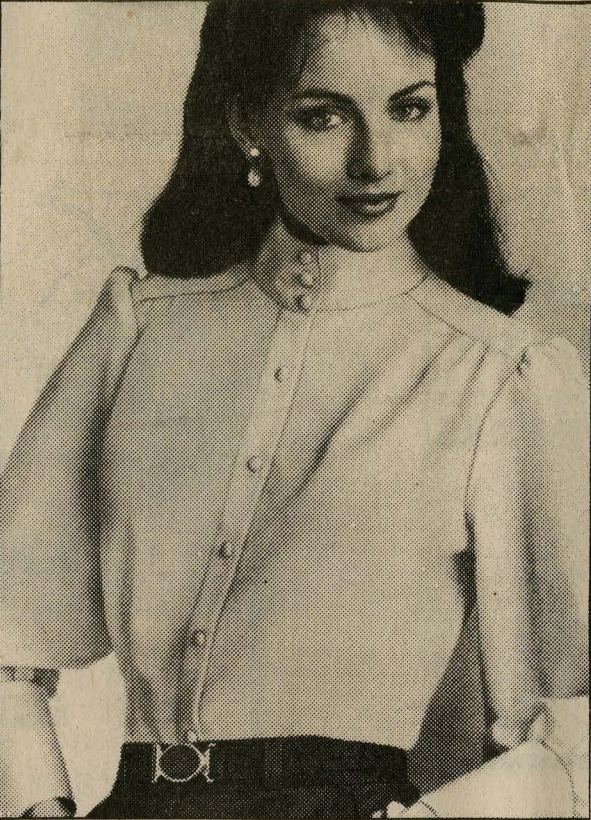
NAACP



Surprise
Sale

Our fresh spring bouquets of fashion
are ready to pick. At very special savings.

Spring is in the air. And so are great savings. Our Surprise Sale is here with a crop of bright ideas to start the season off beautifully. The kind of clothes you'll want to live in, now through this summer. Fresh spring coordinates and junior bottoms. Plus, smart looking tops like these. All in easy care fabrics, like polyester, poly/cotton and more. In a season's worth of delightful colors. For petites', juniors', misses' and women's sizes. Quantities limited. Not all styles available at all stores.



JCPenney

Charge it at all Puget Sound area stores.
Sale starts Thursday, March 17th.