Criticism of OCR

Leon E. Panetta, the director of HEW’s Office for Civil Rights in Nixon’s first year, has renewed his criticism of administration policy.

"Administration policy in civil rights," Panetta wrote in The Washington Post, "continues to be fashioned from neither a moral commitment to equality or a legal commitment to enforcement of the law. In this vacuum of leadership, the only guidance is political and the result is a fluctuating policy that depends on the source and strength of pressures brought to bear." Panetta, now a New York city official, accused the administration of "twisting logic" and "slowly destroys the dedication and morale of countless federal enforcement officers, resulted in the erosion of Title VI enforcement on school desegregation, the retreat on legal services for the poor, and threatens to result in further weakening of enforcement of housing discrimination laws."

An informed source in Washington told RRIC that a recent attempt by OCR staffers to cite a Florida school district for selling buses to private schools was blocked by HEW’s Office of Legal Counsel. The proposed citation reportedly was refused on the basis that the OCR staff "failed to show that the private school which bought the buses has a racially discriminatory admissions policy." * * *

New black tabloid

Black Times, a tabloid-size newspaper, has been inaugurated with the declared aim of providing "a good cross section of what Black America is doing and especially in a responsible way from all over America," Theodore Walker, the editor, and Khymme Kyongae, the owner and publisher, say they are "of the Carl Stokes" school of thought that the Establishment must be improved (or changed, if you prefer) from the inside. The newspaper will be published every other week at first, with the intention of changing later to weekly publication. (Black Times, Box 6253, Albany, Calif, 94706. $10 for 52 issues.) * * *

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