

Recovering a Lost Generation

The answer lies in rebuilding the economy.

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

Wayne Embry is vice president and general manager of the Cleveland Cavaliers, the first black in sports to hold such a lofty position. Associated with the Milwaukee Bucks for 17 years, he was named their vice president and general manager in 1972. A former NBA player, Embry's career included seasons with the Bucks and the 1968 World Champion Boston

Celtics. Embry sits on many corporate boards and is a trustee for Miami University of Ohio—his alma mater—for the Professional Basketball Hall of Fame and for the National Urban League. Embry will be guest speaker at the NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner this Saturday evening, Oct. 13, at the CUNA Mutual International Building, 5810 Mineral Point Rd. Tickets are \$35 and may be purchased by calling 257-3777.

"Let me say this at the outset. We are losing a generation of people in this country, most of them black.

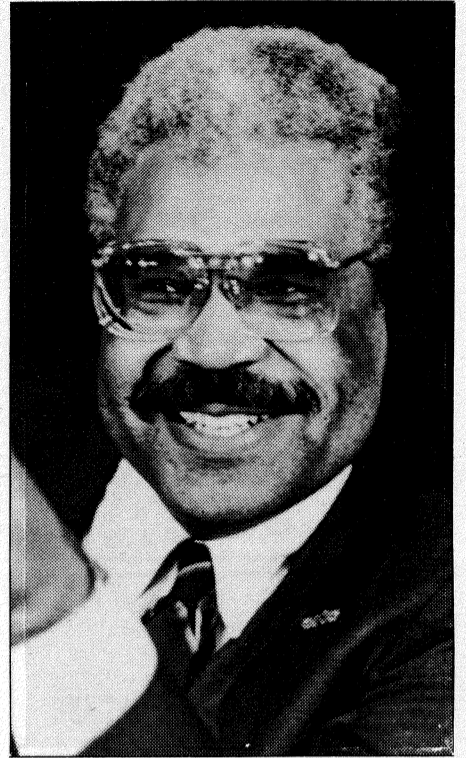
"I think the reason is that while we can promote education for young people, if that education does not provide some rewards after their efforts—like jobs and hope and op-



portunity—then education, by itself, is not enough.

"I also think that young blacks are sometimes victimized by the quality of education they receive, and we need to improve that education. We need to improve education kindergarten through 12th grade. We have to find a way to pay teachers more and insist that they train and retrain to provide quality education.

"Drug use is a symptom of hopelessness, a symptom that kids are giving up on the system. Very



Wayne Embry: Education is not enough if it doesn't provide rewards like jobs and opportunity.

definitely. Of course, drug use is not restricted to any race or to any class of people. Drug use is common throughout our society.

"But we've found that there's more focus on drugs in the black community because it appears easier to arrest those in the black community, and yet, only 20% of drug usage is in the black community.

"We're also finding in the black community that more and more, drugs are an economy. Young people have learned that they can drop out of school and make \$1,000, \$1,500 running crack-cocaine in many of the urban centers. You cannot make that turning burgers at McDonald's.

"Now, just as it's unfair to generalize, to stereotype and blame all blacks for this, I also think it's unfair to generalize, to stereotype and blame all whites for this.

"When you consider that just in the automotive industry alone, there are 600,000 less jobs than there used to be, you can see the problem we have in this country.

"The solution to the plight of young blacks—and blacks in general—is economic development. Our cities have to be rebuilt. There has to be another period of reconstruction like the one this country had after the Civil War.

"I think everything is related to economics, and there have been hopeful signs. I see economic development happening. I see some major corporations taking special interest in helping to develop minority businesses. I see signs of more blacks being named to corporate boards.

"Of course, even though we see the signs, the bigger solution has to be that not everybody is going to be named to a corporate board and not everyone travels on to the National Basketball Association.

"We have to do something to effect change. That means jobs for those who are less skilled and who have no desire to be chairman of Fortune 500 companies.

"But that chairman of the board must help us develop the resources that we have right here in our country, as opposed to shipping the work and the jobs offshore.

"We blacks, as a race of people, must also help ourselves and retain the pride and perseverance that our forefathers had. Yes, racism is a problem, and we have to recognize and acknowledge that, but part of being successful is being perceptive, and if you are perceptive about the maladies that exist in our environment, then you will know that you must persevere to overcome those maladies. Sure it's tough. It requires mental toughness. But I have faith in us. I have faith in our country." ■