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Benjamin Hooks, NAACP Head, to Speak at UD November 13

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DAYTON, Ohio, November 6, 1978 --- Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, will be the second guest in the University of Dayton's Distinguished Speakers Series. He will give his address Monday, November 13, at 8 p.m. in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

Long projecting what he calls a "country preacher" image, Hooks said he shed that identity when he was appointed as the NAACP's executive director in 1976. As a minister, lawyer, businessman, and former judge, Hooks maintained that "America ought to be the pre-eminent moral leader of this world. And the major reason we don't occupy that position is because of the way we've handled the race question."

In an interview with CBS correspondent Bruce Morton, Hooks said, "Unless we solve the colored problem in this country, we will never achieve the greatness our founding fathers envisioned for it."

Unemployment and discrimination will be two of the topics Hooks will touch on in his speech. Others include the psychological effects of the Bakke decision, implications of Proposition 13, and increasing Klan membership.

A panel of UD Law School students and a professor will direct questions to Hooks after his address. Panelists will be Richard B. Saphire, assistant professor, and Law School students, David Allen Barnette, Kathryn Lamme, and Michael Coleman.
Regarding Black communal support of Jimmy Carter, Hooks commented in a recent interview, "We're not overly impressed with how effective he is, but he's more effective than a Republican opponent may be. It is my judgement that the Republican party will nominate the type of person such that support (for Jimmy Carter) will be what it was before.

"When it comes to the whole gamut of concerns for Black Americans, we have a different bottom line than do other groups. If Jimmy Carter runs for re-election, we'll be looking at how his record stacks up against the record of the Republican party during the eight years it held the presidency."

Moving then to the effects of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, which was recently signed into law, Hooks stated, "We would have wanted it to be in a much stronger form, but we are very happy the bill passed. For the first time in history, it commits this nation to constructively doing something to relieve unemployment."

Hooks did exhibit concern over what he calls "a growing conservative element in this country. Whenever this phenomenon occurs, people openly avow their membership in the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi groups -- they are willing to be visibly seen. This represents a growing consensus that it is now a little more respectable to be members of those organizations."

Overcoming this conservative faction is Hooks' goal as director of the NAACP. "Our main job is combatting a feeling that the majority of white Americans feel enough has been done to help minorities and that we now should go on as if everyone were equal," said Hooks.

"It is obvious that Blacks are still at the bottom of the totem pole; this also includes Asians, Mexican-Americans and all minorities."

Hooks foresees the NAACP's objectives as following those established in 1969: the inclusion of Black people into the mainstream of American life.

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"In the past 10 or 12 years we have made some efforts to remedy the obvious inequalities -- segregated buses, drinking fountains, and the like. The questions now are: Not only do we have a seat on the bus, but can we drive the bus? Now that people are attending colleges, do we have teaching positions available?

"We took so much time in eliminating obvious inequities that people think the fight is over. But minorities still enjoy the lowest incomes, live in the worst section of town, and can look forward to lowered life expectancies. "There was a calculated plan to keep Blacks out -- we need a calculated plan to get Blacks in. That fight is one we are still engaged in," he said."