

# Utah's leftist lobby of last resort?

Sound politics begin with a rejection of the leftist maxim that the personal is political. Therefore it must be acknowledged that the members of the state Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Commission, which visited Orem on August 11, as part of its Project Outreach, are as personable and sincere as their cause is questionable.

The Human Rights Commission was established last July 30 by Governor Bangert. The body's stated purpose is to encourage appropriate ceremonies and activities honoring the King/Human Rights Day every January. But the group also claims the amorphous mandate to (advance) the principles of non-violence through training and education. This includes the creation of workshops and training in human rights to be utilized by public and private sectors and school systems.

The King holiday is meant to be a celebration of pluralism — but pluralism in theory almost always yields monism in practice. There are many who have sound reservations about the desirability of another government holiday, and others (like myself) who question King's worthiness as a public icon. But Representative Joanne Milner, a commission member, has urged a uniform observance of the King holiday, because, after all, it's an observance for peace. Accordingly, Project Outreach could be interpreted, in part, as an effort to stifle objections to the holiday — not through confrontation, but through suffocating solicitousness.

The commission has also been actively involved in legislative efforts. During the



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## At Home and Abroad

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last legislative session it supported two measures. The first, a fair housing bill, was merely questionable. The second, the hate crimes law, was genuinely abhorrent. The commission supported the most expansive version of the hate crimes law, one that would define homosexuals as a protected group. In spite of the fact that the sexual orientation provision was stricken from the final law, the commission still supports the original version of the law.

Is not the commission exceeding its mandate by becoming involved in legislative efforts? Is it not exceeding that mandate further by supporting a version of the hate crimes measure that was rejected by the Legislature?

It may be difficult to determine the limits of the commission's mandate, but it is impossible to establish the body's accountability. The document that enumerates the commission's goals declares that the group will seek to involve all sectors, private and

public, in a conscious effort to recognize, resolve and resist racism. Nestled among these alliterative phrases is the assumption that the commission can inject itself anywhere it wants, in any fashion it considers necessary, to combat racism.

Utah does not have a conspicuous problem with racism. But the remarks of some of the commission members suggest a willingness to insert a racial subtext into incidents and tragedies that are not obviously rooted in race. For instance, commission members have suggested that the shooting of Stevie Manzanares should be considered a racist incident.

Representative Milner has said that the commission will take an interest in issues of disproportionate representation of ethnic groups in the corrections system, as well as minority under-representation in the justice system. This could easily become an effort to bring about affirmative action in prosecution and sentencing. The commission's ally in such matters, according to Milner, will be the newly-established William Andrews Committee on Equal Justice, which was organized at an August 3 meeting of the Utah NAACP. The Andrews Committee will tabulate incidents of individual and institutional racism and educate Utahns about racism.

Thus a body established by a conservative governor to educate the public about "justice" is making common cause with a lobby named for a murderer. The commission will quickly become Utah's leftist lobby of last resort.