

FAIR REPRESENTATION IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY POSSIBLE WITH SINGLE MEMBER DISTRICTS IN OL' ROBESON

by Bruce Barton

The N.C. General Assembly's redistricting plans have been rejected by the U.S. Justice Department for the most obvious reasons—to "dilute minority voting strength" period. For instance, in the case of the house districts, it is because of the large number of multi-member districts in which voters are chosen from lists of at large candidates. Invariably, as in the case of the last democratic primary in our district, incumbent Robert Davis, a Black, was rejected by Bill Gay, a white. Adolph Dial, a reputable Indian candidate, finished out of the money in the '78 elections.

Under the current apportionment scheme, Robeson is combined with Hoke and Scotland Counties. The Indian population of this three county district is only 26.0 percent, thus, making it impossible for an Indian candidate to be elected unless he or she receives substantial black support (which is not always forthcoming) as the vast majority of Robeson whites do not vote for Indian candidates (nor do such white voters support black candidates).

If Scotland and Hoke were split off from the present district to create a new single member district, the black population would comprise 38.4 percent of the total population as contrasted with only 29.7 percent in the present district; furthermore, the black-Indian population in the new district would be 47.2 percent of the total. Thus, the black strength in the new districts would be increased while the total minority population (blacks and Indians combined) would be substantially equal to the white population.

After Hoke and Scotland are split off from the present district, Robeson could be split into two single-member districts. An East-West split would create a majority (55.0 percent) Indian district in the West, however, the eastern district would be majority (58.1 percent) white. Another option, more favorable to blacks, would be a North-South split. The northern district would be 46.4 percent Indian while the southern district would be 31.3 percent black (the present district is only 29.7 percent black). It should be noted also that if a black-Indian alliance will work in the present district which is 43.8 percent white, then surely such an alliance would work in the Southern Robeson district which is only 44.7

percent white; this is especially so as Indians in the northern district would require black support in order to elect an Indian to the State House. Thus, a natural alliance (founded upon a stronger basis than the present one) between blacks and Indians would be created: An Indian candidate could win in the North with black support while a black candidate could win in the South with Indian support. This arrangement would lead to a truly tri-racial legislative delegation for Robeson: A black and an Indian representative with a white senator. Nowhere else in the state is such an arrangement possible; therefore, as the use of single-member districts throughout the State is bound to substantially increase the black representation in the 120-member State House, surely such an arrangement deserves a chance in Robeson where it will assure the State's Indian population that at least one of their own will represent them.

How can such a plan be implemented? Why not ask those officials who will be meeting on February 9 in order to redraw the map to satisfy the objection of the Attorney General? Our Senator, of course, is Sam Noble. Incumbent representatives are David Parnell, Horace Locklear and Bill Gay. The Carolina Indian Voice will ask them for you. As soon as we find out their answer, we'll print it for our readers.

We have a right to know... especially before we cast our vote after reapportionment becomes a reality.

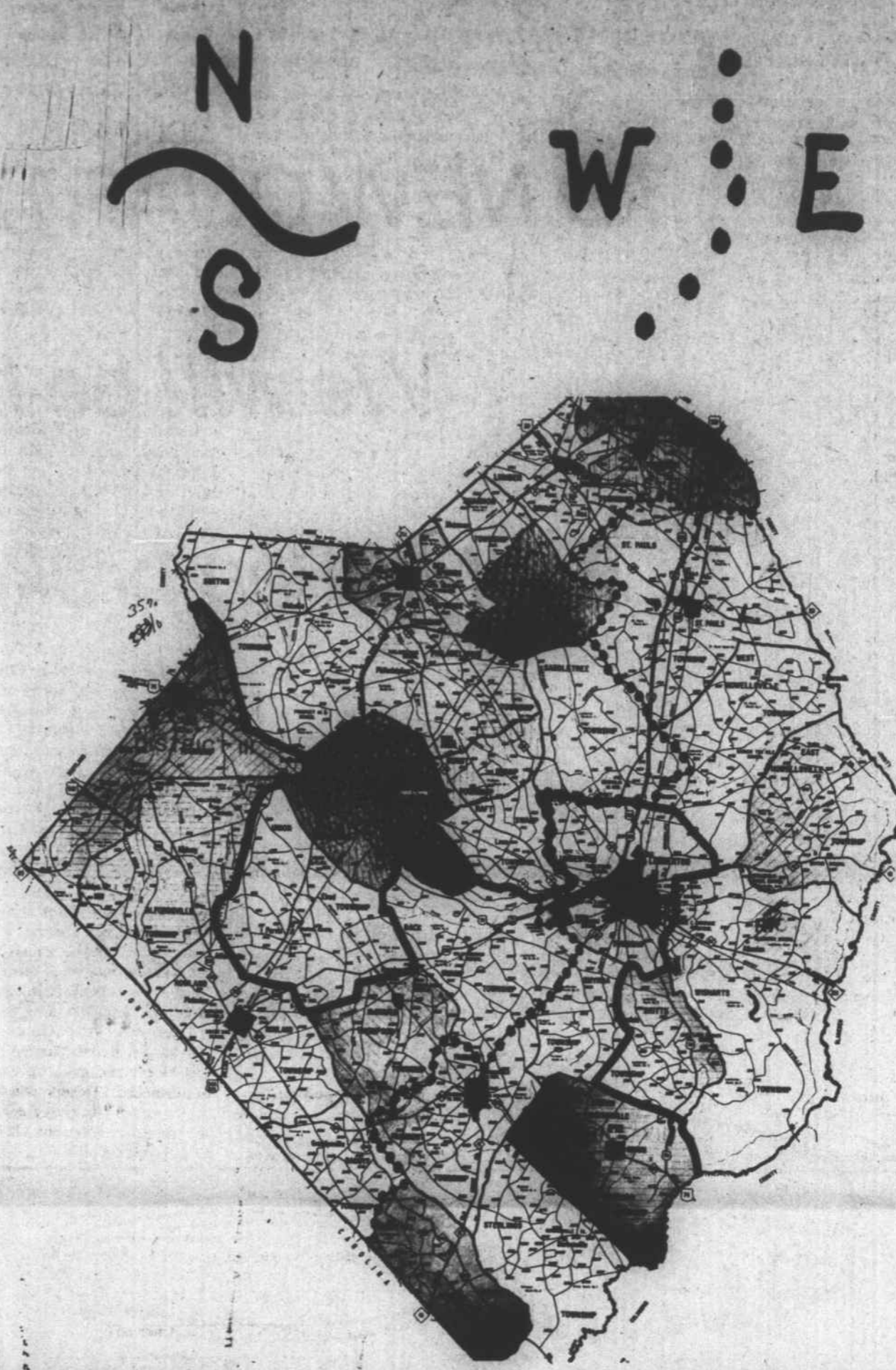
THIS ARTICLE MAY INCLUDE EDITORIAL OPINION OF THE WRITER

STATE HOUSE RAAPPORTIONMENT

Hoke Population: T-20,383; W-8,838; B-8,875; I-2,578; O-92.
Robeson population: T-101,577; W-39,989; B-25,590; I-35,511; O-487.
Scotland population: T-32,273; W-18,746; B-11,361; I-2,062; O-104.
Hoke & Scotland District: T-52,656; W-27,584 (52.4 percent); B-20,236 (38.4 percent); I-4,640 (8.8 percent); O-196.
Hoke, Scotland & Robeson District: T-154,233; W-67,573 (43.8 percent); B-45,826 (29.7 percent); I-40,151 (26.0 percent); O-683.
West Robeson District: (Smiths, Maxton, Alfordsvilles, Red Springs, Lumber Bridge, Shannon, Parkton, Rennert, Saddletree, Philadelphus, Pembroke, Burnt Swamp, Union, Rowland, Thompson, Back Swamp, Raft Swamp & Gaddys): T- 51,065; W-10,658 (20.9 percent); B-12,032 (20.9 percent); I- 28,084 (55.0 percent); O- 291.
East Robeson District: (St. Pauls, East Howellsville, West Howellsville, Wisharts, Lumberton, Smyrna, Britts, Fairmont, Orrum, Marietta and Sterlings): T-50,512; W-29,331 (58.1 percent); B-13,558 (26.8 percent); I- 7,427 (14.7 percent); O-196.
North Robeson District: (Smiths, Pembroke, Union, Red Springs, Philadelphus, Burnt Swamp, Raft Swamp, Shannon, Rennert, Saddletree, Lumber Bridge, Parkton, St. Pauls, West Howellsville, East Howellsville, Wisharts & Britts): T-50,535; W-17,160 (34.0 percent); B-9,959 (19.7 percent); I-23,474 (46.4 percent); O-306.
South Robeson District: (Sterlings, Marietta, Fairmont, Orrum, Gaddys, Rowland, Alfordsville, Smyrna, Thompson, Back Swamp, Maxton & Lumberton): T- 51,042; W-22,829 (44.7 percent); B-15,995 (31.3 percent); I- 12,037 (23.6 percent); O-181.
T-Total Population.
I-Indian; B-Black; W-White; O-Other.

ROBESON COUNTY

North Carolina



Rather than continue to futilely fuss with the Justice Department, the N.C. General Assembly ought to get on with the business at hand and come up with an electoral process that guarantees fair representation to all races; in Robeson that includes Indians, Blacks and whites.

Robeson County, with its unique tri-racial populace, ought to take the lead by agreeing on a map of single member districts and volunteer it to the general assembly for its consideration.

THE ROBESON COUNTY INDIAN CAUCUS HAS COME UP WITH JUST SUCH A PLAN...

At its January 5 meeting the Robeson County Indian Caucus went on record supporting single member districts in Robeson County. The plan makes a lot of sense.

Really, Robeson County, unlike any other county in NC has enough Indians (35,511, according to the 1980 census) to almost elect one of their own, without the help of any other racial group. The ideal house district requires approximately 50,000 persons.

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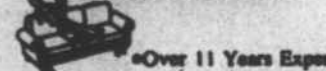
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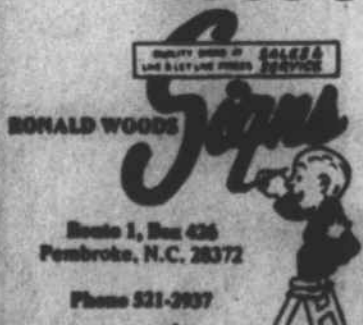
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