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**The Black Press—
Our Freedom Depends
On It!**

The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

Words of Wisdom

"Let us not look back in anger, nor forward in fear, but around in awareness."
—Author unknown

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HAYTI BUSINESSES TORCHED



CAROLINA TIMES PUBLISHER, Mrs. Vivian A. Edmonds, carries out one of the few remaining pieces of furniture. (Photo by Kelvin A. Bell)



COPY AND MAKE-UP ROOM in shambles, beyond which the second and third floors had collapsed on mailing and typesetting rooms. (Photo by Kelvin A. Bell)

Arson Suspected In Fire Of Remaining Buildings

Durham arson investigators say they have not determined whether arsonists destroyed Pettigrew Street buildings which housed the three remaining black owned business in Durham's Hayti District. One fire official, Captain J.W. Beck, admitted that Durham fire and police arson investigators lack modern arson detection equipment which is available to State Bureau of Investigation arson teams. However, police investigator Wyatt Martin, who heads the arson team said outside help is not needed. Buildings occupied by THE CAROLINA TIMES and E.N. Toole and Sons Electrical Company were gutted by the early Sunday morning fire, while a third business, Service Printing Company suffered only water and smoke damage. Two owners charged that firemen did little to extinguish the blaze. Captain Beck indicated that the arson team has narrowed the origin of the fire to a vacant building formerly occupied by a Elvira's Cafe. The cafe is one of three vacant buildings located between Service Printing Company and The CAROLINA TIMES. The buildings were connected by common walls, and a ten inch thick fire retaining wall. Beck theorized that the fire which was first reported at 4:53 a.m. Sunday swept from

Elvira's to THE CAROLINA TIMES and then to E.N. Toole's. Toole discounts Beck's theory, charging that two or three separate fires were set in his building. Further, Toole and Nathaniel White, president of Service Printing Company, charged that firefighters used only one hose in fighting the blaze for some time. Toole said that one fire fighter remarked "these buildings have to go", when he questioned about low water pressure used to fight the flames. Assistant Fire Chief Sherrill J. Smith defended the water pressure and the number of fire hoses. According to Smith and other firefighters, the heat was so intense when firefighters arrived that fire trucks and firefighters could not get close enough to fight the blaze except to spray water from a master stream on a ladder truck. The firefighting strategy was to contain the fire between two thirty foot fire walls separating Service Printing Company and part of E.N. Toole and Sons, Smith said. Modern arson detection devices not available to the Durham arson squad include one device called a "sniffer". The device, when used at the origin of a fire, many times can detect flammable substances such as gasoline and kerosene so well as to identify the

brand and octane of gasoline. Captain J.M. Beck said Durham's arson squad does not have the device but the State Bureau of Investigation does. Wyatt Martin, head of the arson squad, said outside help was not needed. **BUSINESSES LAST OF HAYTI** The three businesses were the last of the once flourishing Hayti business district. More than one hundred business had flourished in the area south of the Southern Railway tracks until the Durham City Council and the Durham Redevelopment Commission had them demolished. Although federal law required adequate compensation for property bought by the Commission, several of the owners were forced to carry their claims to court, and others were squeezed out. The Commission offered the business less than what it would cost to acquire other buildings. Businesses like Toole & Sons, THE CAROLINA TIMES, and Service Printing Company that resisted urban redevelopment were told they should not waste money to maintain their property, as they waited for the Commission to acquire their property. Despite maintenance restrictions, at the time of the fire, the buildings were structurally sound and their owners

were negotiating with the Durham Redevelopment Commission to rehabilitate the structures. Acquisition of property in the Hayti areas nearly completed by the Redevelopment Commission, more than half of the black merchants that once a part of Hayti have been forced out of business. **FIRE "CAPSTONE OF ATTEMPTS TO PUT US OUT OF BUSINESS"** There are as many motives advanced to explain the fire as there were opponents to progress of blacks and poor people in Durham. At the hub of black economic, social, and political progress in the City for more than 57 years and been its communication mechanism, THE CAROLINA TIMES. Founded in 1922 by Publisher Louis Austin, the paper grew with Durham's black community and became known nationally as a champion of civil rights and human rights causes. "The Truth Unbridled" the papers slogan has been retained after Austin's death in 1971. The paper's tradition was continued by Austin's daughter, Mrs. Vivian Edmonds, who has been at the paper's helm as publisher-editor assisted by her son Kenneth, since June, 1975. She described the fire "as probably the capstone of the attempts to really put us out of business."

Unfettered by the town's white or black powerstructure, as editor and publisher, Mrs. Edmonds has directed the paper in exposing the injustices suffered by the Wilmington 10, Charlotte Three, workers in the Durham community, racism in government and industry, dilapidated housing conditions, as well as a long exhaustive series of investigative news accounts of allegations of police

brutality, and insensitivity of public housing administrators. She warns "when a people do not have a voice on the printed page they are voiceless, and THE CAROLINA TIMES has for all of its years been a voice of the voiceless." The attacks by fire upon THE CAROLINA TIMES is not the first of its kind upon black news papers in North Carolina's history. THE WILMINGTON RECORD was burned to the ground in 1898 and its publisher Alex Massey fled the town fearful of losing his life, as did many blacks at the hands of white attackers. Then, in 1972, THE WILMINGTON JOURNAL, the successor to THE WILMINGTON RECORD was bombed by paramilitary whites. Threats of violence have been visited upon other publishers, including THE CAROLINA TIMES.

\$1,000 REWARD OFFERED The response of North Carolina's black publishers has been to offer a reward of \$1000 to anyone providing information which leads to the apprehension of persons or person responsible for the fire. "We feel that this is important because, as I see it, all of the newspapers in North Carolina are vulnerable to that extent," said Ernie Pitt, co-director of the North Carolina Black Publishers Association. Pitt, who is publisher of the Winston-Salem Chronicle, continued saying "we do not want to give the impression that a newspaper, a voice in the black community, can be put out by simply burning the building down. We intend to pursue this very vigorously and our \$1000 reward is the first step that we are going to take to try to uncover the culprit in the case," **NEW SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE LAUNCHED** Despite the fire, THE CAROLINA owners and [Continued On Page 12]

A BIG THANK YOU...

to all who are pitching in to help in so many ways during this difficult period. Our spirits are lifted and you are strengthening our determination to not only survive this disaster, but to serve you more effectively with a bigger and better instrument for justice.

All Of Us At
THE CAROLINA TIMES

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FIREMEN AFTER COAXING — Battle blaze in what is left of publisher's office. (Photo by Kelvin A. Bell)