

MINISTERS DISAPPOINTED WITH HUNT OVER CHARLOTTE THREE

By Pat Bryant
RALEIGH—A bi-racial group of fifteen ministers met with aides to Governor James Hunt Monday in an attempt to secure release of the imprisoned Charlotte Three and Wilmington Ten defendant Rev. Ben Chavis.

After an hour long meeting with Hunt aides Jack Cozart and Ben Ruffin, Rev. James Barnett, a Charlotte minister and spokesman for the group, said to reporters waiting outside, "At this point, we are really disenchanted."

"This meeting that we had today just sort of drained me of all hope," Barnett continued. "I think that the governor is still playing politics with the Charlotte Three. I don't think that he is going to do anything for Rev. Chavis. I think he is planning to use the Charlotte Three as a political stepping stone."

Those comments were quite different from remarks made by the ministers six weeks ago after they met with the same aides. Then Barnett said he believed that

Governor Hunt would take action on the Charlotte Three case within 30-45 days.

Aide Benjamin Ruffin said, following the earlier meeting, that he expected Hunt to act within a reasonable time.

The Charlotte Three were convicted in 1972 of firebombing a horse stable and sentenced to a total of 55 years in prison. But in 1974, their convictions, *The Charlotte Observer* discovered, were obtained by testimony of government informants paid

more than \$8,000 by the United States Justice Department. All appeals have been exhausted in the courts, and several groups, including the Charlotte City Council, have asked Hunt to pardon the civil rights activists.

After the Monday meeting, it was reported

that Raleigh minister, Rev. W.H. Brock, questioned Ruffin extensively on what messages he was relaying to Hunt.

The ministers said Ruffin would not disclose the substance of conversations between him and Governor Hunt, saying the discussions were confidential.

Ruffin could not be reached for comment Monday and Tuesday. Messages were left for him to return the call. His receptionist said Monday he was out of town, and Tuesday he was on the phone.

One Durham minister spoke up for Ruffin saying he felt that the former civil rights activist was doing what he could.

In another matter affecting Hunt, the Charlotte Three and the Wilmington Ten, 74 faculty members at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte sent a letter to Hunt last week asking action on request for a pardon of the Charlotte Three and Wilmington Ten defendant, Rev. Ben Chavis, before Hunt speaks at the campus's commencement on May 12 at 10 a.m.



Some people have believed that wearing diamonds saved them from being poisoned.

Charlotte Three defendants I.J. Reddy and Charlie Parker, as well as Wilmington Ten defendant, Rev. Benjamin Chavis, are alumni of the school.



The art of knitting is said to have originated in Scotland.

NOT ENOUGH

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Dr. John Gamble, D-Lincoln County and chairman of the House Finance Committee, agrees that the \$40 million does not adequately treat the needs of the black campuses. But Gamble, seemingly like a majority of legislators, doesn't favor spending the \$40 million or more money, for that matter, to upgrade the five black campuses.

Those legislators generally question whether the state can afford sixteen campuses, and now propose to study the efficiency of the sixteen campuses as a way of developing a plan to phase out and merge black institutions into white campuses.

"We are just throwing a lot of good money at a problem and it doesn't nearly satisfy the problem," said Gamble. The Lincolnton physician continued, "I'm not in favor of that amount of money if all it is going to do is put a salve on a sore. We are just throwing a lot of good money at a problem and it doesn't nearly satisfy the problem."

Representative Kenneth Spaulding, D-Durham County, doesn't agree with Gamble, that spending more money at black universities is throwing good money for bad. But Spaulding is among a minority of legislators who want equal funding of black and white institutions.

Spaulding favors spending the \$40 million on the black campuses, saying "it is a beginning point... but additional funds are definitely going to be needed."

Neither Spaulding nor Dr. Lyons supports the proposal to study the effectiveness of the campuses. Lyons says black people and black universities have been "studied to death" and Spaulding says he is "not in favor of any study that leads in that direction (closing of black universities)."

While no one talks about the amount of money it would take to adequately fund the black campuses, or a plan for that matter to get adequate funding, there is much talk about the contributions of the universities and a need for equal funding.

The Central Alumni Association, says Evans, is fighting for appropriations equal to the predominantly white institutions. He uses a familiar comparison of the \$40 million offered by UNC to settle with HEW, and the \$80 million allocated for the veterinary school at North Carolina State University in Raleigh and the medical school at East Carolina University in Greenville.

"The only thing they can find, apparently, for five black schools with an enrollment of 15,000 people is \$40 million over four or five years, and that is not equitable," says Evans.

Lyons, too, speaks of equal funding and catch up money. "After all, for a hundred years we haven't been getting equal funding. And catch up money means there ought to be a sum of money over a period of time to help to defray or to make up some of those deficiencies that we have."

Whether Spaulding and

other black legislators will be able to get additional funds for the black campuses is questionable. But unquestionable is that for significant change to be made upon the conservative leadership in the General Assembly, increased voter registration and political action by the supporters of black universities will be essential to their survival.

That's the direction Bill Evans says NCCU's Alumni Association is headed.

"You go to the ballot box, as far as I am concerned," Evans said. "To me that is the key. To indicate to the people who are making these decisions — whether they be political, educational or what — that we as black people are in this community also. Our money is being spent to support this

whole university system and we want a bigger voice in how it is spent and certainly how the black institutions are dealt with in this state."

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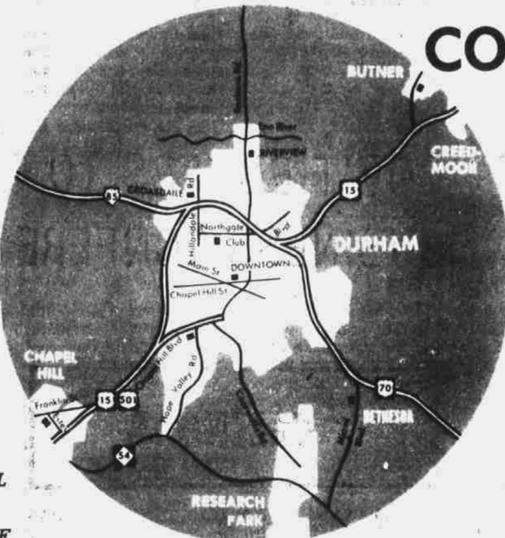
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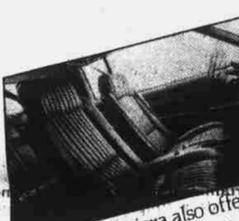
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