

Editorials

## Voter Education Must Follow Registration

While we applaud the effort of "a large coalition of social, political and religious interest groups," who have joined with two national civil rights organizations to generate interest in increased voter registration across this state, we do have some serious reservations about this effort.

Our reservations are not critical in the sense that we think the pilgrimage from Alabama to Washington, D.C., including rallies and voter registration drives in North Carolina should not take place.

Rather, we wish to point out that the organizers of this effort must be cognizant of the many obstacles they face between trying to get new eligible voters on the registration books, and getting these same new registrants to the polls on election day.

We think that too often people who understand the importance of the political process deride and belittle eligible voters who are not registered. Many people are unregistered because they frankly don't see the relationship between their day-to-day needs of food, clothes, shelter and some type of "fun" out of life and whether they push or don't push a lever in a voting booth.

Sometimes, this view grows from their sad experience, often going back to their parents, who voted faithfully and died with their lives basically unchanged.

While we don't condone this view, we also don't pass it off simply as apathy. These people who will come through North Carolina, and those local and statewide folks who have joined their efforts, must work to leave behind them an education process that carefully and patiently explains to new registrants the importance of voting.

Sad experience shows that eligible names on a registration book does not always produce voters.

## Thanks, Mr. Clement

In another editorial in this column, reprinted from our Raleigh "sister", *The Carolinian*, the efforts of William A. Clement on the board of the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority on the behalf of black people are clearly explained.

We just want to take this opportunity to say THANKS.

Too often, we send our representatives off to do battle in the wild jungles of institutionalized racism and fail to either recognize or applaud their efforts. But the first time they err, we call them to task with the zeal born of "righteous" indignation.

For the record, institutionalized racism is defined as "those well intentioned efforts, decisions and commendations, often by whites, that though not overtly anti-black, fail to consider blacks as viable aspects of the efforts, decisions or commendations."

There are indeed times when our representatives sidestep these "little" but sometimes nasty confrontations to wait for the bigger fights. But these things are important too, and it is indeed to Mr. Clement's credit that he carried the day.

Again, we say THANKS.

## Other Editors Say From The Carolinian

### Clement On His Toes At RDU

Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority (RDU) member, William A. Clement, the authority's lone black member, should be applauded for bringing to the attention of the authority in a most effective way a typical oversight so often perpetrated on the black community.

Clement, a Durham resident, by registering his opposition to the RDU installing an Exchange Club "Freedom Shrine" of 28 historic documents in the airport terminal, delivered a valuable bit of education to other influential authority members, the Exchange Club (a national organization established in 1949) and the Triangle area community.

Clement, noting the absence of any documents which "would show up the contributions that blacks have made to this great country of ours," emphasized that "so much of our history has been overlooked."

Mr. Clement, when making his observations, was probably conscious also of the fact that overlooking black history is not an Exchange Club "Freedom Shrine" phenomenon, but is characteristic of the American educational system and American mainstream history traditionally.

Therefore, and conceivably, when Mr. Clement states, "I was just taken aback that there were no selections that would point up the great accomplishments black people have made in this country," he is speaking not just personally, in effect, but reflects an outlook held by millions of blacks.

We appreciate the response to Mr. Clement by one Exchange Club member that "Certainly, this is something the national club is going to have to revise."

We would also note that the black community would have no objection to "waving the flag on early American history," but we would urge the larger community to be aware that the black experience on these shores has been a unique one, that we are conscious of it, respect it for its virtues, and are proud of it as an integral part of the building of this nation.

We would paraphrase authority chairman A.C. Elkins' comments: "We think the entire community should be just as proud of all the early documents, from the black and white communities, that are important in the formation of our country as we are."

You, Mr. Clement, are doing a fine job of "staying on your toes."

## Things You Should Know

### Charles Henry TURNER

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, February 3, 1867, he attended school there and won his Master of Science degree in 1892. He did so well in the field of biology that he was awarded a Ph.D. summa cum laude in 1907! His far reaching discoveries on the habits of bees and ants are world famous.

Continental Features—



## Affirmative Action:

## Black (Political) Power

By Gerald C. Horne, Esquire

The word that the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) had the best record on sample votes opposing Reaganomics, again underscores the critical importance for all poor and working people of having black political representation.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that a number of black congressmen have been singled out by right-wing hit squads for defeat in November.

Gus Savage, the outspoken former newspaperman, based in Chicago, has been a particular target. The Reaganites have taken particular exception to his sharp attacks on U.S. foreign policy and his repeated call for slashing military spending. Some have been reminded of the assailing of Martin Luther King because of his anti-Vietnam War stance.

William Clay of St. Louis, a fierce critic of Administration policies, is facing the possibility of having to run in a district vastly different from the one he serves now. The 1980 census and the redistricting it requires has put a number of black congressmen under the gun.

The assault on the CBC is symptomatic of the pressure faced by all black elected officials. The number of black elected officials in the United States increased by 2.6% between July 1980 and July 1981, according to the Joint Center for Political Studies' annual survey. Last year's increase was 6.6%.

The 1981 increases were concentrated narrowly in a few states. Similar to last year, Mississippi had the largest net increase in the number of black elected officials, 52. Georgia gained 43; Illinois and Kentucky each gained 17; Ohio gained 13 and Tennessee, 11. Texas had a net loss of 33 black elected officials.

On the brighter side, the number of black officials has increased every year since the JCPSS study was first published in 1970. In 1969, three scant years after passage of the Voting Rights Act, there were 1,160 BEO's in the country; as of July 1981, there were 5,038. Yet, blacks still hold a minuscule 1.03% of all elective offices in the United States.

Presently, 340 blacks hold state-level offices; 36 hold regional offices; 465 hold county offices; and 542 hold judicial and law-enforcement offices.

Quite revealing is the fact that by far the largest category of BEO's remain municipal officials: this year there are 2,383, up slightly from last year's total of 2,346. The second largest category of BEO's is education officials. The 1,255 black education officials represent 25% of all BEO's.

What this panorama of figures shows is that, although there have been a few gains, blacks do not hold meaningful levers of political power and that there is a concerted effort to reduce what little power is held.

As noted, the battle over redistricting will have specific impact on black political power over the next decade. In the south, where the majority of blacks continue to reside, this issue is posed dramatically. This region is roughly 22% black and black numbers in state legislatures swelled to 126 in 1980, or 7% of all state legislative seats, up from 32 in 1970. But now, there are preliminary signs that this positive tide is shifting.

According to Steven Suits, executive director of the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council, "White legislators in the south who were hostile to black voters have learned constitutional law very well and they are crafting districts that are still keeping black political strength at a minimal level. In every southern state we've looked at, the protection of black voting strength is carried forth only as far as they think the Justice Department or Constitution requires and not one inch further."

Exacerbating the situation is the fact that the number of black majority counties in the south is decreasing. Since whites are still reluctant to vote for black candidates, this issue is decisive in determining how many blacks will hold elective office.

The number of black majority counties in the south is decreasing at the rate of 2.4 per year, according to a recently released study by the Voter Education Project.

The study shows that the eleven southern states had 284 majority black counties in 1900, while today there are only 89. The greatest loss since 1900 occurred in Georgia, which lost 47 counties, and the least loss in Tennessee, which lost one.

Says the study, "Of the 89 majority counties presently, 40 are experiencing declines in black population and if the present rate of loss continues, additional counties will lose their black majority by the end of the eighties. Blacks now make up only five per cent of county governing board members and the decrease in the number of black majority counties suggests that blacks will continue to be severely underrepresented at the county level."

This dismal bit of news is complicated by the fact that Big Business is increasingly coming into conflict with black in-

terests on the electoral front.

The Securities and Exchange Commission does not require disclosure of spending to influence legislation and this has been used to steamroller and bludgeon certain progressive ballot initiatives. Rent control initiatives have been a particular target and the fact that so many blacks do not own their homes has meant blacks have been hit especially hard by business' actions.

Fortunately, blacks have not been quiescent on this front either. Black Congressman John Conyers has initiated the "Parker-Coltrane Political Action Committee", named after the celebrated jazz saxophonists Charlie Parker and John Coltrane.

"There are quite a few liberal PAC's in existence," he said recently, "but I have found, unfortunately, that none of these will focus on the south; nor will they pay attention to black candidates."

The PAC's first major fundraiser was held in a Washington Jazz Club, Blues Alley. Conyers sought to clear some \$12,000-\$14,000.

Parker-Coltrane is distinct from the still-newer Congressional Black Caucus Political Action Committee. "I like to think we influenced, in a positive way, the formation of the CBC PAC, which, of course, will focus on incumbents, rather than the support of new candidates. I should mention that Parker-Coltrane is a necessary complement to the CBC's political strategy of networking and pressure politics," said Conyers.

Conyers' idea is necessary because blacks have less money to donate to political campaigns. A 1980 survey by the University of Michigan found 6.5% of white voters contributed to politicians, compared with only 0.6% of blacks.

Another hopeful sign is the development of the National Black Independent Political Party. Their August 1981 Congress involved 1,000 blacks from thirty states. Though NBIPP is not about the business of electing blacks to public office at this time, they are organizing. Their program is advanced and the party has caught fire, particularly in the south. They challenge the two-party monopoly.

NBIPP and Parker-Coltrane PAC are just two of the more hopeful recent developments that may help to reverse the precipitous decline in black political representation. The November elections must be focused on by the entire black community if this trend is to be reversed decisively.

## To Be Equal

## College Cuts Flunk Test

By John E. Jacob  
Executive Director, National Urban League

The Administration's plan to take the hatchet to programs aiding college students gets an "F" for fairness and sound economic sense.

It flunks on economic grounds because all education aid amounts to a national investment in the future. Helping to expand the ranks of skilled, educated people pays off in increased productivity, technological strength, and higher future tax receipts.

You would think that devotees of "supply-side economics" would recognize the supply side advantages of a better-educated population, but if these planned cuts are any indication, their version of supply side has no room for vital human investments.

The planned cuts also fail the all-important fairness test. They move us toward what NYU President John Brademas describes as a "two tiered system... offering elite private education for the rich, and state and municipal

colleges for everyone else."

Most of the fire aimed at the cuts is directed at proposals to limit guaranteed loan programs and to exclude students from middle income families from various aid programs.

The tremendous public outcry will make it tough for Congress to go along with the Administration's program, especially in an election year.

But it would be premature to assume heavy cuts won't be made in student loan and aid programs. And if those cuts go through, they could be devastating to black students and black colleges.

Some black college presidents point out virtually all their students are able to attend college only because of those programs. Eliminating or drastically cutting them would mean sharp declines in black college enrollment and endanger the existence of many schools.

Congress should ensure that low income youths get a fair chance to complete their education and that the schools serving them have the resources to provide quality education.

Aside from the attack on loan and general aid programs, the Administration has targeted cuts at programs aimed at the poor, such as the Educational Opportunity Centers and programs.

This program provides disadvantaged adults with information about continuing their education and helps them to apply to schools. Well over 100,000 people were helped in a program slated for elimination. This small program easily pays for itself by helping many move from the welfare rolls to college and then on to tax-producing jobs.

Another program the administration wants to end is called Talent Search. It locates and encourages disadvantaged youth to enter college and provides counseling and placement services. Last year it helped over 70,000 young people to enter postsecondary schools, most of them from families below the poverty line.

Special Services for Disadvantaged Students is another program in danger. The Administration wants to cut its modest budget by ten per cent, really twenty per cent when one counts inflation's eroding effect. That will mean this important counseling, tutoring and placement programs will serve fewer than the 15,000 whom it helped last year.

And the Upward Bound program, which helps give low income ninth and tenth graders skills and motivation to go on to college, would be cut by almost two-thirds. Like many of the Administration's planned cuts, this one would chop a program that works. Studies show Upward

Bound participants are four times as likely to graduate from college.

I'm concerned about the defects the Administration's budget cuts will have on students and colleges in America, but I'm most concerned about the ruthless attempt to destroy programs that mean so much to poor people and yet cost the national treasury so little.



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