

# Editorials

## Meaningless Position Is Nothing To Fight Over

The Board of Aldermen decided recently to replace Carl Russell as mayor pro tem. Many people saw this as an "ouster" and a premeditated plan by the other black members of the board.

We don't deny that the move may have been just that. What we are concerned about, however, is that the move as it was "billed" may cause blacks on the board to become enemies. Even if the charge that Mr. Russell did not attend several regular or special meetings held by the board is true, is no reason for a fight. What matters is that black members of that board are too few and far between to become enemies.

The position itself is not one that should cause anyone to risk solidarity for. The position is more glamorous than meaningful.

That depends, of course, on the position you take. If you were a federal agency representative and you came to town and was greeted by a black who represented the city, then you may think that everything in this town is alright. But, if you were the one who really ran the town, then it wouldn't matter to you who greeted officials or grinned at the public.

The position of mayor pro tem has gone to a black for several terms now with little discussion. Maybe we should now concentrate on "higher ground" instead of fighting over a position that has little or no clout.

## Public Officials Hide Behind Coattails

Public officials are using Bethesda Naval Hospital these days to escape prosecution and to gain public sympathy.

Most recently, Wilber Mills, chairman of the powerful Senate Ways and Means Committee, entered the hospital after congressmen talked of censuring him. One senator, Speaker of the House Carl Albert, said negatively of Mills, "He's a sick man."

The same must hold true for former president Richard Nixon and former High Point Police Chief Prichett. Both men ran afoul of the law and both took refuge behind the emergency door.

But, there is no sympathy for these men. They were entrusted with upholding the rights and laws of this land. They violated that trust and should be dealt with strongly. If they are allowed to hide behind the doctors coattails, what can America expect next?

By the same token, does mere exposure constitute "punishment enough", as some higher ups have indicated? Where then lies the justice in this land? Why is justice so hard on the poor and the oppressed, who have, if anybody, more reasons to break the law?

Respect for and trust in the laws of this land will continue to be at low tide until justice is served on all with equal strength.

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ALBATROSS

by Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

## TO BE EQUAL

This past summer the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report titled, "Equal Opportunity in Suburbia" that deserves a lot more attention than it's received.

The report is a damning indictment of the growing polarization that locks more and more blacks into city ghettos while more and more whites flock to suburbs from which blacks and other minorities are largely excluded.

"The exodus of affluent whites from the cities has continued unabated," the report states, "along with the large-scale movement of jobs and wealth. The new suburbs have enjoyed an era of unparalleled prosperity, while the central cities have strained to answer growing demands for services for the urban poor and, ironically, suburban commuters."

The population shift is easily seen. From 1960 to 1970 the white population of large central cities declined by 1.9 million people, while their black population increased by 2.8 million. As the central cities became blacker, the suburbs absorbed greater numbers of white families.

A population shift of this

size doesn't just happen. There are two basic reasons why blacks did not join the movement to the suburbs -- past and present racial discrimination in housing, and the suburbs' intentional lack of housing opportunities for lower income families. Even this last reason has racial connotations -- proportionately twice as many poor blacks as poor whites live in central cities.

This situation affects blacks negatively in many ways. First, there is the denial of equal opportunity to live where a family wants to live.

It also means lost job opportunities. Most cities are experiencing a loss in jobs, especially blue-collar jobs most likely to be held by minorities. Not only are old factories moving out of the city into the suburbs, but new industries are also locating there.

This means, for most black workers, an impossibly long and costly commute or the necessity to buy cars or join undependable car pools. Many businesses pull out of the city without any attempt to insure that the suburbs they move to will allow housing for their workers.

Federal and state fair housing laws have proven ineffective. They are not enforced and beyond making a few cosmetic changes, most real estate brokers continue to foster a dual market for housing, shunting blacks into all-black or "changing" neighborhoods. Many banks and mortgage lenders "red-line" such areas too, refusing mortgage money for houses there.

Suburban governments erect barricades behind which few blacks are allowed. Their zoning laws make it impossible to build on smaller lots or to build apartment housing. Often, the Commission found, existing black neighborhoods were demolished by roads and other government-sponsored projects. And most have refused to allow their communities to participate in public housing or rent supplement housing.

The report documents too, the extent to which the federal government has encouraged this trend, starting with official backing for racially restricted neighborhoods and continuing to the present passive role in enforcing anti-discrimination laws and desegregating the suburbs.

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