

Winston-Salem Chronicle

Founded 1974

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OUR OPINION

'Huntgate' continues

AMID MOUNTING public pressure and embarrassment, the Winston-Salem Police Department has reopened the Deborah B. Sykes murder case and several other unsolved murders.

Police Chief Joseph E. Masten made the announcement at a press conference last week, flanked, in a heavy-handed attempt at PR, by two black officers.

Masten also announced changes in the department's "Crimes Against Persons" section, increasing the number of investigators from four to six and assigning a new supervisor to head the section.

Masten also appealed to the community to assist in the solving of the murders, noting that one purpose of the department is "to promote a cooperative effort between the police and the community to accomplish the department's purposes."

Although Masten clearly made the moves after pronouncements from the city's powers that be that he'd better, they still signal a rare triumph of decency and fairness during what has evolved into Winston-Salem's version of Watergate.

The police's behavior during the investigation has not been simply a matter of human error or honest mistake. What we have here is a frightening mixture of negligence and ineptitude, some of it willful, the rest born of a lack of concern for the fate of a poor black man.

What seemed to have mattered most to the police and the district attorney is to allay public pressure by getting a conviction. That their case was weak and sloppy and that the black man they arrested -- Darryl Eugene Hunt -- may well not have been the assailant were incidental.

Hunt was black and he didn't have a job. Who would miss him, anyway?

Line-ups were conducted irresponsibly, witnesses mishandled. Testimony by police Detective J.I. Daulton, the department's principal investigator of the case, contradict official police transcripts.

As Alderman Martha Wood has said, something is very rotten in this town.

Hunt's supporters, by the way, have said that all along, but nobody seemed to pay them much heed until a report by the city manager's office confirmed their complaints.

Meanwhile, the aldermen's Public Safety Committee is obviously intent on applying pressure on City Manager Bill Stuart and Masten until the department makes more substantive changes.

Thank God. "Huntgate" needs to be exposed for what it is -- justice run amok.

Other observations on the Hunt case:

- Amazingly, everybody wants to ignore the obvious fact these days that the Hunt-Sykes debacle involves racism. Sure it does.

A black man is convicted of raping and murdering a white woman on shoddy evidence during a highly publicized trial.

Though many whites and even some blacks don't care to hear it, that's racism -- and as American a tradition as apple pie. As Casey Stengel would say, you can look it up.

- Obviously fearing for his political future, District Attorney Donald K. Tisdale has gotten desperate, moving from one extreme to the other to avoid the heat for his part in the Hunt trial.

Only weeks ago, Tisdale told the *Chronicle* that many unresolved questions concerning the Sykes murder bother him and called his key eyewitness, Johnny Gray, a liar.

Tisdale even expressed some concern for the man for whom he had asked the death penalty, noting, "If there is evidence to exonerate Hunt, I will open the cell door on him."

Tisdale seemed intent on doing two things at the time: absolving himself of blame in the Hunt case by placing more of the blame on the police, and mending fences with black voters, who never have liked him but are likely to vote against Tisdale with a vengeance in 1986.

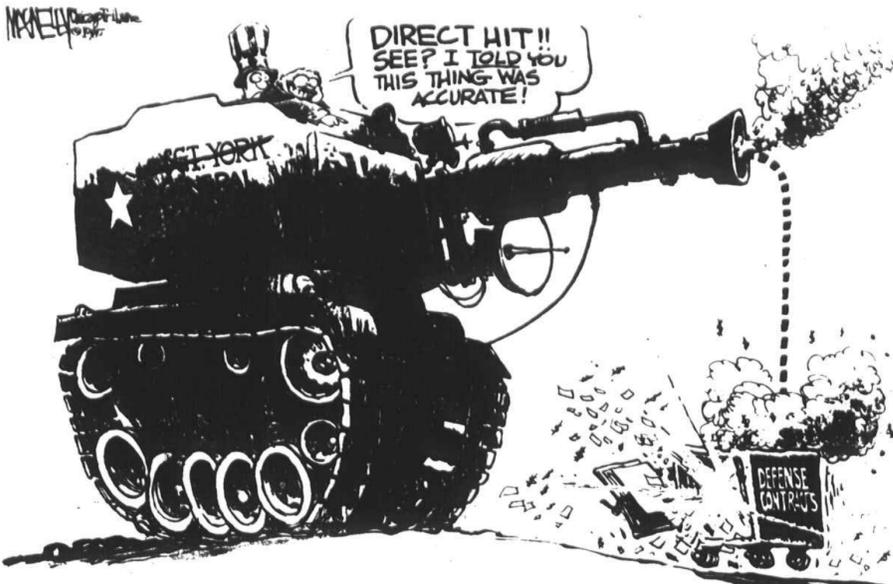
But Tisdale's conciliatory tone apparently didn't wash with this newspaper, or among black people, who are smarter than he thinks, so he has shifted back to race-baiting.

When the city manager's report was released, Tisdale responded by personally attacking Assistant City Manager Alexander R. Beatty, a black man, rather than City Manager Bill Stuart, who is white.

Also last week, Tisdale showed utter contempt for Hunt in an interview with reporters, saying that Hunt "has never done a decent thing in his life."

Which, if it were true, we suppose, makes it OK to convict Hunt with wafer-thin evidence.

- Former North Ward Alderman Larry D. Little deserves
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A black business struggles to survive

NEW YORK -- Efforts of the Buy Freedom campaign in Columbus, Ohio, have not saved the nation's largest black-owned supermarket -- but we did keep it from closing before Thanksgiving.

It will not, of course, be saved until about 10 percent of the black people in Columbus who spend \$2.5 million a week shop at Singletary PlazaMart every week. The drive, however, is bringing out the best and the worst in our community.

The worst you know about: jealousy of another African-American; petty, bourgeois excuses for not shopping with a black business ("too far to drive"), and a preference to make anyone but a black successful.

But all of those short-sighted and reactionary excuses were absent at our recent Freedom Rally Referendum. The 800 who responded to our call were free of black self-hatred, black envy and black excuses.

They were, instead, full of understanding about the relationship between our money and our freedom -- and the willingness to act on that understanding. (If you want to help or send money, call (614-253-4444).

In fact, the audience donated \$400 to the Buy Freedom drive, which, in turn, was donated to the PlazaMart. Many pledged also to get from 10 to 100 additional weekly shoppers for the embattled supermarket.

The Rev. Phale Hale's Union

TONY BROWN
Syndicated Columnist

Grove Baptist Church bought 10 turkeys for Thanksgiving and sent a telegram to all black clergy in Columbus asking that they encourage their congregations to buy their Thanksgiving food from the PlazaMart.

The Sertoma Club also joined our Freedom Buy-In at PlazaMart by donating \$100 for food for the needy. As the after-

the Columbus community well and went back to Detroit to raise money in the churches for the PlazaMart.

WVCO radio originated a live broadcast at the store and WCKX radio interrupted programs to announce the progress. The *Columbus Call and Post* kept the rally on the front page and provided the only media outlet for this column in Columbus.

It also broke the story of the mayor's agent attacking me and

"Two black women from Cleveland came to shop in response to a sermon. From Detroit, 10 members of the Buy Freedom Committee there came and did their Thanksgiving shopping."

Freedom Rally crowd jumped to 2,500 shoppers from the 500 the day before, many said they were sorry for not knowing before that their shopping there made a difference.

A white supplier, moved by the new black support, gave a modest amount of credit to help stock the near-empty shelves. A white couple from Northern Ohio heard my plea on a radio show and committed to shop at the PlazaMart each week.

Two black women from Cleveland came to shop in response to a sermon. From Detroit, 10 members of the Buy Freedom Committee there came and did their Thanksgiving shopping. They drove for six hours, had car trouble, shopped, wished

the owner of the PlazaMart while attempting to absolve the mayor of his callous role in pushing the city's major black business into bankruptcy.

The mayor's spokeswoman claimed the mayor was "100 percent" behind the PlazaMart. If that were true, why did *The Columbus Dispatch* report on June 16 that the city's own consultant to study a bailout loan for the PlazaMart was so enthused about loaning the store more money that he offered \$100,000 of his own, only to be stopped by the mayor's veto?

Mayor Dana G. Rinehart "killed" the proposed \$560,000 bailout loan, the *Dispatch* reported. "Soon afterward, Please see page A14

Mixed signals from November's results

HAMILTON, N.Y. -- Last month's elections produced mixed results for the black community. Most of the post-election publicity has focused on Lawrence Douglas Wilder, the black state senator who was elected lieutenant governor of Virginia. Wilder was given little chance of winning at first. Earlier this year, a secret caucus of 11 senior white Democrats demanded that Wilder withdraw from the race. Wilder had a campaign staff of two people, and his Republican opponent blasted his record as "ultra-liberal." Nevertheless, Wilder won by 4 percentage points overall, almost 50,000 votes, and he received 44 percent of the white vote.

Harvey Gantt, the first black mayor of Charlotte, received a smashing mandate of 61 percent in his re-election bid. David Berryhill, the white Republican challenger, was unable to obtain significant backing from Charlotte's conservative Democrats. In Hartford, Conn., Thirman Milner, New England's first popularly elected black mayor, was elected to a third term. Milner received more than 60 percent of the vote.

And, as expected, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young won an unprecedented fourth term in office, defeating challenger Thomas Barrow by a 61-39-percent margin. Young is now the longest-serving mayor in

FROM THE GRASSROOTS
By DR. MANNING MARABLE

any of the nation's 10 largest cities.

Elsewhere, an election in Buffalo should have produced the city's first black mayor. George K. Arthur, a widely respected civic leader, was endorsed by Gov. Mario Cuomo, U.S. Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan and Geraldine Ferraro. The black Democrat had

Griffin, who was the candidate of the Republican, Conservative and Right-to-Life parties, defeated Arthur by 53 to 43 percent, with 4 percent going to a minor-party candidate. Arthur's loss was attributed to several factors: the racist deployment of police as poll watchers in the black community, the extensive



the official backing of many unions, and the popular support of community organizations.

Incumbent Mayor Jimmy Griffin, a white conservative, had acquired many critics during his eight-year tenure for his unpredictable and erratic policies. And Arthur was running in a city where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans 4 to 1.

efforts of one local bank to promote the incumbent, and the nearly unanimous backing of the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce of Griffin. But the bottom-line assessment is unambiguous -- white, working-class Democrats in a Northern city voted overwhelmingly against Arthur primarily because of race. Please see page A13

CHILDWATCH

How being poor kills children

By MARIAN W. EDELMAN
Syndicated Columnist

WASHINGTON -- To the millions of American children, black and white, who are poor today, poverty means many different things. It could mean not having enough to eat or living in an ill-heated building or a temporary shelter. For many poverty means growing up without the support, care and nurturing they need to take their places in the adult world.

But for some poor children, poverty does not just harm. It kills.

Poverty is the leading cause of death among children in 1985, affluent America. More American children die each year from poverty than from cancer and heart disease combined.

Poor children suffer higher death rates throughout their childhoods, several doctors reported in a study of Boston children recently published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The contrast in death rates between rich and poor children is largely paralleled by a gap between black and white children.

It is in the first hours and days of babies' lives that the gap in risk between rich and poor is most glaring, according to the findings. Among Boston's newborn babies, the poorest were found to be 42 percent more likely to die than those from the wealthiest backgrounds. This is because poor infants are more likely to suffer from low birthweight, the leading cause of early infant death.

But poor children continue to run a much higher risk of death in their first year of life -- for many, because their small size at birth has started them off at a disadvantage. Undersized infants are more likely to suffer from respiratory diseases, a leading killer of infants under 1 year old.

Even poor babies born at normal weights are at increased risk of premature death, largely because they often leave the hospital to enter an environment that cannot support a fragile and vulnerable newborn.

As children get older, the gap in the death rate between rich and poor children does narrow somewhat, with some exceptions. Poor children are more likely to die in fires. Poor adolescents are more likely to be killed in homicides.

These findings represent "a revealing, if not tragic, expression of social inequity in a city or in a society," the doctors note. They conclude that even top-notch medical care cannot save all children whose lives are threatened by poverty. They suggest that prevention programs -- such as improved prenatal care for poor pregnant mothers -- could help save lives.

There is no stronger argument for fighting child poverty than the conclusion of this study: "If the death rate among the poorest group had been similar to that among the wealthiest, then more than one of every three deaths in the poorest group would not have occurred."

Saving children's lives is a powerful motivator.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, a national voice for youth.

About letters...

The *Chronicle* welcomes letters from its readers, as well as columns. Letters should be as concise as possible and typed or printed legibly. They also should include the name, address and telephone number of the writer.

We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and grammar.

Submit your letters and columns to *Chronicle* Mailbag, P.O. Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102.