

OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE

ERNEST H. PITT Publisher/Co-Founder
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The late, great Bill White.

YMCA Photo

Serving Others is the Ultimate Gift

We at The Chronicle are deeply saddened by the news of the passing of William G. White Jr., the man for whom the Central YMCA was recently named.

White, 79, was a local resident who saw service to others as part of his purpose here on earth. Though he enjoyed a successful and lucrative career as a bank executive, White never forgot about those who were less fortunate than himself.

He championed the merits of YMCAs, which offer a variety of important services to people of all income brackets, both in America and abroad. He never relented in his work of establishing fine facilities that serve the greater good.

Here in Winston-Salem, we are fortunate to have many local residents who, like White, do for others because they care about the plight of their fellow man and woman. Open any edition of *The Chronicle*, and you're likely to find dozens of residents who are working to improve the lives of people who are in need of a little help, hope and encouragement.

Names like Ciat Shabazz, Tracy Maxwell, Nan Griswold, Keith Grandberry and many more have become synonymous with the work of serve those in need, as have churches like Wentz Memorial, Center Grove Baptist, Agape Faith, Piney Grove and the list goes on and on...

Countless others whose names may not be as familiar are working tirelessly in their respective communities to bring about positive change, as well.

It seems that anywhere there is pain or destitution in this community, there are people willing to lend a hand, and, we're proud to note, many of them look like us.

In the age of change, on the cusp of the Obama Administration, things that have long been out of reach suddenly seem possible.

As you reach for the stars in your professional and personal lives, we urge you also to dedicate your time and unique talents to helping others. It is said that the reward is far greater for those who give than it is for those who receive, and we believe this to be true.

In this Season of Giving, and in the lean months that will surely follow it, let's not forget those who need us most. Regardless of our situations, we all have something to bring to the table.

God bless you and yours this holiday season!



Volunteers at Piney Grove Baptist feed the hungry during a recent dinner.

File Photo



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Economy will be my main concern

To the Editor:

As I prepare to become governor, I will continue to focus on the critical issues facing our state, and the economy is at the top of my list. That's why I'm reaching out to leaders and citizens to ensure that North Carolina is focused on the challenges the global economic crisis has caused for us like jobs lost and home foreclosures.

I have held economic roundtables with community and business leaders in Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro and Greenville focused on jobs and the economy.

I met with President-elect Obama and Governors from the 50 states to discuss a federal economic stimulus package. I urged President-



Bev Perdue

elect Obama to make sure that the stimulus package focuses on creating jobs and providing relief to struggling families. As I wrote in an op-ed for the *Charlotte Observer*:

...Now is the time to take advantage of low interest rates, and reduced construction costs, to invest in our infrastructure and to position North Carolina for future prosperity. Doing so now will create jobs, stimulate the economy, and provide relief to North Carolina's families.

When I call upon the president-elect and Congress to provide quick, aggressive action to assist North Carolina and other states in this economic crisis, I expect the federal government, through our tax dollars, to partner with states for the future. Federal money should be invested at the state level, where it's most needed and where it can do the most good. ...

Additionally, I have held 14 open public forums on the topics of aging, commerce, corrections, crime

control, cultural resources, environment, education, energy, health, administration, mental health, military, revenue and transportation. These forums were moderated by professional facilitators and produced a series of recommendations on each topic.

In these critical times when many of our families are struggling to make ends meet, I want you to know I'm not going to wait until I take the oath of office on January 10th to focus on what needs to be done to help turn around our state's economy and keep our people working.

I also know that not all the best ideas come from government. Please share with me your ideas at our online suggestion box: bevperrdue.com/suggestionbox.

Governor-Elect Bev Perdue

Automakers held to double-standard



George Curry
Guest Columnist

Nothing has been more interesting to watch in recent months than the contrast between the way Congress has treated the Big Three U.S. auto manufacturers seeking a bridge loan to keep their troubled industry afloat and the overly generous handouts used to reward Wall Street greed.

Considering the different constituents, one would have thought the most hostility would have been directed at the fat cats on Wall Street, many of whom profited by betting that some mortgage-backed investments would go belly up. But that hasn't been the case.

When CEOs of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler flew to Washington on corporate jets to make a plea for help, windbags in Congress stepped over one another trying to express the most outrage. Nevermind that some of those legislators have themselves flown on corporate jets, never mind that they have traveled free on military jets, never mind that they enjoy health benefits and other perks far beyond the reach of most Americans. It was the equivalent of Jesse James complaining about the crimes of Frank James.

Whether you believe that the U.S. auto industry should receive a loan or feel they should be forced into bankruptcy in order to reorganize, it should be noted that car manufacturers and Wall Street were seeking two markedly different forms of federal assistance. The Big Three were asking for a loan while Wall Street was seeking — and got — a handout.



Chrysler CEO Bob Nardelli at a 2007 event.

The Bush administration, after being given a \$700 billion pot to pretty much spend as it wants, has evidently adopted the motto: No Bank Left Behind. Take the case of Citigroup, Inc. It recently received a \$20 billion infusion of cash from the feds and a guarantee of \$306 billion against its high-risk assets. That's on top of a previous \$25 billion the federal government had doled out to Citigroup. In exchange, the federal government will receive preferred stock shares with an 8 percent dividend.

We're in the middle of providing nearly \$1 trillion to Wall Street yet no one has talked about Wall Street executives' use of corporate jets, or their coming up with an acceptable plan before receiving the money or removing the inept leaders that plunged the industry into this morass.

The heated debate over helping the U.S. auto industry has not been advanced by sloppy news reporting.

As Media Matters, the watchdog group, notes: "Several media outlets have used data that combines the average cost of current wages and benefits and future benefits to falsely assert or suggest

that autoworkers make \$70 or more per hour. But, as analysts and some media outlets have noted, the figure includes not only future retirement benefits for current workers, but also benefits paid to current retirees."

Dean Baker, co-director of Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, wrote on his blog, "The New York Times told readers that GM's autoworkers are paid \$70 an hour (including health care and pension). This is not true. The base pay is about \$28 an hour. If health care cost per worker average \$12,000 per year, that adds in another \$6 an hour. If the pension payment takes up 25 percent of base pay (an extremely high pension), that gets you another \$7 an hour, bringing the total to \$41 an hour. That's decent pay, but still a long way from \$70 an hour."

Most of those opposed to helping the Big Three supported the Wall Street bailout plan. That's the same group that railed against welfare for the needy but voted to support corporate welfare for the greedy.

Republican lawmakers have strongly objected to

granting a loan to U.S. carmakers. Senators Richard Shelby of Alabama and Bob Corker of Tennessee have been helping lead that effort.

While they oppose loans to Detroit, they didn't object to taxpayers in their respective states subsidizing foreign automakers. According to Good Jobs First, a non-profit group that monitors corporate subsidies, more than \$3.5 billion has been used to subsidize foreign manufacturers that built plants in the U.S.

Alabama, for example, used \$258 million to subsidize the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance., \$252 million to support Hyundai in Montgomery, \$248 million help Honda in Lincoln, and \$30 million to assist Toyota in Huntsville.

Corker, the former mayor of Chattanooga, Tenn., neglected to point out that Tennessee gave up \$577 million in subsidies to encourage Volkswagen to build a plant in his hometown and \$233 million to Nissan in Smyrna and another \$200 million to them in Decherd, Tenn.

"As elected officials debate aid for the Big 3, taxpayers have the right to know the full extent of government involvement in America's auto industry," said Greg LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First. "And while proposed federal aid to the Big 3 would take the form of a loan, the vast majority of subsidies to foreign auto plants were taxpayer gifts such as property and sales tax exemptions, income tax credits, infrastructure aid, land discounts, and training grants."

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.