

Editorials & Comments

Vote May 2 For Equality

By Hoyle Martin Sr.
Post Editorial Writer

In 1965, 100 years after the end of the Civil War, the Voting Rights Act was passed by the U. S. Congress in an effort to eliminate the last barriers to voter registration and thus to guarantee to every adult American the right to vote. This 100-year period began with the Reconstruction era that resulted in blacks becoming registered voters in unprecedented numbers. However, by 1900 the situation was reversed as Jim Crow laws and exploitation by Yankee carpetbaggers had combined to disenfranchise black Americans. Then, as a partial outcome of the civil rights struggles of the early 1960s led by the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Voting Rights Act was passed.

Now, in 1978, some 13-years later blacks comprise nearly 4,000 of the nation's 525,000 elected officials. While this number represents less than one percent of the nation's elected office holders, black voters nevertheless were a prime force in putting Jimmy Carter in the White House, Jim Hunt in the governor's chair and Ken Harris in the Mayor's Office. Furthermore, the black voter turnout in Charlotte last November was vital to placing three blacks on the City Council.

While these are modest political gains that blacks have had to struggle and die for to achieve, they are nevertheless gains and indications that with determination the democratic process will work for all people regardless of racial and economic differences.

Blacks Have Achieved

To report, blacks have achieved some modest political gain, however they could be called remarkable when you consider that only 61 percent of all eligible blacks in the South and 56 in the North were registered to vote in 1976 presidential election. Furthermore, only 51 percent of blacks voted in 1976. In the Charlotte mayoral election of 1977 a high of 38 percent of the black electorate voted.

"The difference in the 1976 presidential race," the Rev. Jesse Jackson has noted, "wasn't just black votes, but enthusiastic, choice-making black votes." However, on a distant end from these active participating voters are over seven million unregistered black potential voters. Among the unregistered is the middle-aged black woman who, when asked by WGIV Radio personality Jim Black recently, "Are you registered to vote?", replied "Vote for What?"

The occasion for Mr. Black's question was a drive to get more blacks registered to vote in the local elections this fall called "Operation Clout."

The project was sponsored by WGIV Radio Station and the local

chapter of the NAACP. Specifically the "Clout" Project attempted to attract blacks to register by getting the Elections Board to agree to register people at the Soul S. Record Store in downtown Charlotte in February where the Parliament Funkadelic, a soul rock singing group, was offering autograph pictures. The musical group, formed at the Coliseum that evening where a further effort was made to get those in attendance to register. The effort led Jim Black to say, "I'm a little disappointed" due to the small number that actually registered.

We commend the efforts of "Operation Clout" project, but we reflect on the gravity of the problem it appears to us that it is going to take a total attack on the problem of black voter apathy if more people are to become registered and actually vote.

Black Leadership

The Post has said repeatedly in this column that Charlotte's black leadership needs to develop a philosophical statement of purpose and intent designed as a framework to improve the quality of life through greater economic and political opportunity for black people. We have noted that a primary part of such effort should be a planned, systematic attack on black voter apathy, voter registration and voting. "Operation Clout," nor any other group, can successfully attack voter indifference alone, a total community effort is needed. We believe that the black churches of Charlotte probably have the greatest potential for educating and encouraging blacks to register and become active participants in the voting process.

It is long past time for the responsible black leadership to stand up and answer the question "Vote for What?" They need to say that the ballot box is the only way to make the gains of the 1960s a lasting reality, that it's the only true means that blacks have for influencing their own destiny, that better jobs, housing, zoning and freedom of expression can only be gained through political action, that elected officials don't respond or care about the apathetic, that equality and justice in reality a reaction to people's demands for equality and justice and that the "system" works only for those who work the system. Finally, let's tell the lady who asked, "Vote for What?" that voting was the power that built the Charlotte Coliseum and voting was the power that allowed her to freely witness that a soul group freely express their feelings in music.

Vote for What? Vote to preserve what you have and to gain what your potential may offer. Vote in the May 2 primary!

Several weeks ago, many black newspapers throughout the country mournfully and mistakenly reported the "death" of the venerable Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. While it is certainly true that 83 year old union of black porters signed a merger pact with the much larger Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, the old Brotherhood is far from dead.

At the time of the merger decision last February, A. Philip Randolph, who is celebrating his 80th birthday this month, explained the significance of the merger. "The merger," Mr. Randolph pointed out, "does not signal the end of the Brotherhood. Instead, it will provide the union with a renewed strength and additional resources to better represent its members."

In deciding to affiliate with a larger and much more powerful railroad union, the sleeping car porter did not dissolve their historic union. Instead they once again displayed a keen understanding of the principles that have guided their immensely successful organization since 1925. For in linking arms with other union members, the porters have reaffirmed their fundamental belief that the struggle of black workers cannot and must not be separated from the struggle of all workers.

When Mr. Randolph and his friends proposed this "coal-

ition" and even today, given the social and racial attitudes of the time, such a reaction is quite understandable.

The old craft-dominated American Federation of Labor, the only significant labor group in those days, had few black workers in its ranks, and it showed the black community, both North and South, there was little or no understanding of the tremendous potential of mass organization as an indispensable weapon in the black struggle for social, political and economic liberation.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Mr. Randolph and his union brothers moved ahead, ignoring the counsel of the ever present pessimists and defeatists. During the early days of the Brotherhood, the small band of activities pursued their objectives at great personal risk. Not only did they face almost certain dismissal from their Pullman jobs, they also feared for their personal safety. It was no easy task to organize their brothers spread across the vast United States.

Unlike some other unions of the time, the Brotherhood was more than an economic movement. It was also a civil rights movement. Although the porters recognized the importance of uniting workers of all races, they never pulled their punches in criticizing the bothersome racial practices of some AFL unions.

At every AFL convention, except the Vancouver meeting

port for resolutions demanding the elimination of "color bars" and other discriminatory practices used by certain Federal affiliates. On occasion, the charges and counter-charges became somewhat bitter. But, like the porters, the AFL soon came to the realization that a racially divided work force benefited neither white nor black workers. Racial division, the Federation and Brotherhood understood, only strengthened the position of employers against all workers.

The recent merger agreement between the Brotherhood and the Railway Clerks is a landmark in the labor movement and the black community.

Today, "color bars" have become curious anachronisms, and Jim Crow local "Auxiliaries" have completely disappeared. Trade unions are as I have argued before, the most fully integrated institutions in America. And, even more important, they have shown themselves to be the most dependable allies of black people in the quest for social and economic equality.

The fact that a black union like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has sufficient self-confidence and courage to merge with the predominantly white railway and airline clerks is, I believe, the most convincing testament that real change—and not just superficial change—has been realized in the labor movement.

OBITUARY



Eastland Leaves Dismal Record

James O. Eastland of Mississippi is a major step that will sharply upgrade the record of the United States Senate. He is retiring after 37 years as one of the Senate's major opponents to civil rights and other progressive legislation. Senator Eastland is leaving public

office when a legislator retires after a long career it becomes the occasion for statements on his accomplishments. But in Senator Eastland's case the plain, unvarnished truth of his career is enough to bar any warm feelings.

Eastland's career on opposition to black rights was a mighty road block to black progress. He bitterly opposed civil rights legislation and measures to help poor people. When the Supreme Court handed down the Brown decision that desegregated schools, Eastland fought it with all his might. At the time of the University of Mississippi riots against the admission of black students, he issued demagogic statements that fanned the flames of racial hatred.

Senator Eastland was just another extremist blowing off steam from the pulpit of the South. We might ignore him. But he is one of the powerful men in the upper house. His power derives from longevity as a force in the South and from his stranglehold on political appointments as head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, a position that also gives him life and death power over much legislation affecting black people's lives.

Eastland used that power to stack federal courts in the South with avowed segregationists. Everyone was appalled when President Kennedy appointed segregationist William Harold Cox to the federal bench back in 1961, but that was the price Eastland forced Kennedy to pay in order to get other judicial appointments out of committee.

That's a game he's still playing. His valedictory present to the Congress is a measure to split the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in a way that would weaken federal civil rights enforcement.

Despite his fervent efforts, the South has changed. Over Eastland's vehement objections, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, blacks in the South used their newly won voter and southern politicians recognized black ballot power.

In fact, the presence of nearly half a million potential black voters in Mississippi and the changing racial climate in that state may have helped Senator Eastland to decide on retirement. The policies and politics he stands for have gone out of style in today's South, and politicians of Eastland's persuasion no longer can count on automatic election.

Eastland's reactionary partners of the old southern bloc realize this. How else do we account for Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond's sending his child to an integrated public school, and for other legislators adding blacks to their staffs and moderating their rhetoric?

While black and liberal breathe a sigh of relief at the Senator's retirement, we should recognize that there are some important conclusions to be drawn from his career. One is that he is not alone in opposition to progressive measures. Racists still walk the halls of Congress and it would be a mistake to personalize the work of one man except as a symbol of other still active.

Another is the importance of maximizing black voting power. Mississippi's blacks have had the vote for over a dozen years, now but if their voter turnout level remains at only about 30 percent they'll have little protection against another Eastland.

Another is the need to continue to reform the seniority system in Congress. It's still strong in the Senate, and it means that people wield enormous power on the basis of years served rather than competence or devotion to their constituents.

as i see it

Integration Crunches Role Of Black Colleges

By Gerald Johnson

The effect integration has had on predominately Black institutions of higher learning is beginning to surface. Unfortunately the smell is not coming up roses.

The well prepared black students coming out of high school are heavily recruited by better facilitated white universities. After the smoke clears what is left is recruited by the Black institutions.

Black institutions of higher learning have found themselves with the unenviable task of spending a lot of time and energy in preparing remedial programs.

I find it unfortunate that many funding institutions have used the above problem as a reason for discrediting Black institutions instead of a course to help strengthen them.

Before continuing I think a complete description of the problem is in order. Since Blacks have been able to eat at any restaurant, stay at any hotel and all the other goodies that came along with integration, Blacks have been able to send their children to institutions of higher learning of their choice. Hence, Blacks with money ultimately send their kids to the Dukes, Harvards,

Yales, University of Penns, and the like. Those Black parents who were fortunate enough to have children that were academically or athletically gifted didn't even have to worry. The white institutions supplied ample monies to cover the cost of an education. If you were really gifted you could even get a couple of cars, girls, the works, thrown in on the deal. Coupling this with the fact that these white institutions have all the facilities, the best professors, what else can I tell you.

So then who is left to go to the Black Institutions? I thought you'd never ask. The Black Institutions thereby has to recruit those students that probably otherwise wouldn't have attend college at all. The average parental income of these students ranges from \$4,000 - \$6,000 dollars per annum. The average scholastic aptitude test score is less than 500. These students are recruited by Black Institutions under the name of "open admission," meaning that no minimum criteria is needed to be admitted. So, students come to school who can't afford it. This student needs special educational attention, special counseling --



Gerald Johnson you name it and he needs it--special. Yet he has no money to pay for the special needs.

Therefore, Black Institutions are forced to educate these students from funding institutions, federal and state government, church associations, and industry.

Whenever funding institutions decided to tighten the old purse string, the Black institutions are the ones to catch it first. This is odd because total funding to all Black institutions is less than one tenth of one percent of total funds allotted for education by the funding institutions. It seems useless in trying to keep an

overloaded plane from crashing by emptying the ashtrays out of the window. Because of "open admission" funding institutions are constantly pressuring Black institutions to become lower divisional schools (two year institutions) or merge with a nearby institution.

It seems to me that funding institutions are insensitive to a critical social problem that minimum funding will not solve. Black institutions were born out of a need to educate

Black people. At one time they were the only institutions to educate Black people. Even then it was done with a minimum amount of money. The change in society has shifted the role of Black institutions to a special purpose institution. Its job becomes that of giving those people a chance who 5 years ago would not have had that chance. But funding institutions must realize that an acceleration of funds and not a deceleration is what is needed to help these

institutions meet the challenge.

Laws must be instituted to better regulate financial aid to students, a topic I will discuss further at a later date. Thus Black institutions are just as important now as they were in the past. However, the challenge that faces these institutions is a demanding one. Few are prepared to meet the challenge. I will discuss this at length in an article titled "What Black Institutions Must Do."

Pill Nearly 100 Percent Effective

Over the past number of years, oral contraceptives have become the most popular form of birth control. Available by prescription from a physician, the pill is easy to take, safe and very effective.

When taken according to the directions, the pill is nearly 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy. If pregnancy does occur, it is usually because the woman has skipped a pill or two.

The pill contains two hormones, estrogen and progesterone. These act to prevent the release of an egg cell from the ovary during the cycle in which the pills are taken.

Some women experience unpleasant side effects from the pill that are not dangerous and are not likely to damage health. Breasts may feel tender, vomiting may occur, and there may be either a gain or loss of weight. In addition, menstrual periods may be shorter and lighter.

Formation of blood clots in the blood vessels of a woman taking the pill is a possible side effect but its occurrence is relatively rare. Should this happen these clots may threaten life if they break loose and lodge in other vital organs such as the brain. About one in 2,000 who is

taking the pill suffers from blood clotting conditions each year. Even so, the risk of death from the side effects of the pill is far less than the risk associated with normal pregnancy. Women who have had blood clots in their legs, their lungs, or elsewhere should not use oral contraceptives.

There are other rare side effects, including an increased risk of heart attack and liver tumors and increased blood pressure. There is, however, no proof that oral contraceptives cause cancer in humans. In general the pill is safe and effective but there are possible side effects.

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