

# Editorials & Comments

## Non-Voting And Why

by Hoyle H. Martin Sr.  
Post Editorial Writer

As the November elections approach us, we are reminded that this column has devoted more words to explaining and suggesting why people should vote than any other topic.

In retrospect, we have begun to wonder whether it has all been worth the effort. This is not to say that we are any less enthusiastic about the importance of voting, but rather, to note our feeling of discouragement when we receive increasing reports of non-voting and equally important, why people don't vote.

Ratification of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1971 was expected to bring heavy voting by 18-to-20 year olds. Yet, in the 1972 and 1976 presidential elections, the youth vote was far lower than any other age group. Furthermore, the youth vote has declined even more since 1976. In addition, widespread voter apathy has appeared among blacks and some other minority groups. All this adds up to what political analysts call voter apathy that runs deep. These experts contend that this year's election turnout will be at the "discouraging" level of 1974, despite public outrage about taxes and inflation.

Voter apathy, or better, what explains who votes and who doesn't vote is seen in the basic factors of the extent of commitment of the voting process, the degree to which one's interest is affected and the level of our faith in the American political system. These have been put to the acid test in recent years and none has fared well. For example, the supporters of

California's Proposition 13 tax revolt and the reported 10 million Americans who are refusing to pay their income taxes are examples of a declining faith in our political system. Secondly, a group of Charlotte nightclub owners who supported the liquor-by-the-drink vote are now threatening to seek an injunction against what they think is discriminatory in the proposed news rules. This relates to a concern about personal interest and the failure of the system to protect such interests. Lastly is the loss of favor President Carter has experienced with blacks for not keeping his political promises to lead the fight to reduce unemployment and aid black business. He has, for example, failed to act on the Small Business Administration (SBA) legislation that would restructure the "Black capitalism" program initiated during the administration of Richard Nixon.

These developments have created a credibility gap for government and the political process. Thus, it will take more than television ads, newspaper editorials and voter registration drives to turn the tide of the growing voter apathy.

Thus, to get non-voters to vote, they must be able to see that elections can and do make a difference in their lives. "To get these people to vote," Mel Ravitz writes, they'll have to be persuaded that the system of voting can work for them and-or that their critical interests will be adversely affected if they don't vote."

You vote, don't you? If not, try it, and make the system work for you, and it will work.

## Only The Rich Need Apply

A week before the mixed drink vote, we wrote, "exactly how liquor-by-the-drink will affect Charlotte-Mecklenburg will depend largely on the state ABC board writes. The ABC board indicates that the rules will be strict, it appears that you don't know the ground rules under which that issue will be implemented. Thus, it's difficult to believe that rational citizens will vote blindly on the mixed drink issue, yet that appears to be what will happen." In fact, that is just what did happen, and now a group of citizens-nightclub owners are threatening to seek a court injunction to prevent the adoption of the new ABC board

proposed rules. The clubowners, members of the Mecklenburg Club Owners Association, claim that the new rules are only suitable for the more wealthy country clubs and that ordinary working people will be denied mixed drink privileges. The clubowners believe the proposed rules are so discriminatory against them that most would be put out of business if the rules stand.

The lesson to be learned from this is to vote, but be sure you know what you are voting for on any issue in any election. Never give someone a signed blank check and never let the blind lead the blind. To do so is to vote or act against your own best interest.

## Justice Eludes "10"

We received with sadness the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to hear an appeal in the Charlotte "3" case of T. J. Reddy, James E. Grant, and Charles Parker, having exhausted all other appeal avenues, the only hope for the "3" now is a pardon by Gov. Hunt.

grant such a pardon because there is still considerable doubt in the minds of many people, in spite of the court decisions, that the "3" are guilty of firebombing the Lazy B Riding Stables that killed 15 horses. There appears to be here a real argument that the "3" are true political prisoners, however defined.

We hope that Gov. Hunt will



You Can Help Keep The Black Community Clean

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR A Vote For Park Bonds

Dear Sir:  
The enclosed position paper represents the stand taken by the Central Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club on the November 7, Park Bond Referendum.

I am passing this out to all the news media, city and county officials, other concerned groups and people. If you should have any questions concerning our position, please contact me.

"Not blind opposition to progress" has long been a motto of the Sierra Club. With this in mind the Central Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club has decided to take a stand in support of the November 7 City-Council Parks Bond Referendum.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has the lowest acreage used for recreational purposes per capita in the state and yet we remain the largest and the fastest growing area in North Carolina. This is shocking, as we compare Charlotte-Mecklenburg with Asheville or Greensboro and find 87 acres and 27 acres respectively per 1,000 people being used to that of just 7 acres in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

We can easily see the day when another energy crisis is going to become far worse than the last one. People are going to be looking within their own communities for recreation. These areas are already overcrowded and there exists a great demand for more parks of all types. The need for parks has never been greater as the influx of new businesses, industries and people are creating a demand for more amenities.

We also feel that the goal of planning for natural preserves should be to locate and acquire those areas which exemplify the best and most representative examples of the natural heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Natural areas are defined by the presence of biological factors such as species diversity and richness, lack of disturbance and - or rarity. Unfortunately, many of the potential natural areas in Mecklenburg are yet unidentified.

Thus, the first priority of a comprehensive park plan must be to fill in the gaps of our knowledge of the county's natural areas. An inventory of the potential park-natural preserve sites in the county would be the best way to remedy those omissions. Once completed this study would allow the city and county to do comparison shopping, evaluating areas on the basis of environmental quality, topography, location, cost and biological

### Park Bond Referendum

Gentlemen:  
I write you in regards to a very important Bond Referendum which the residents of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte will be voting on December 7, 1978. I personally feel the County as well as City Park Commissions have done an excellent job of planning and developing a program to establish future parks and recreational areas in the City of Charlotte plus Mecklenburg County.

Being President of the North Carolina Rugby Football Union, I know of the drastic need of various fields and facilities for amateur athletic non-

importance. A further factor for consideration should be the ability to acquire the site as it was when evaluated and not after it has been altered by timbering, dredging or filling. This inventory should be a careful and thorough study, but by using local university and colleges expertise and manpower, it does not have to be expensive. In addition, knowledgeable volunteers from conservation groups including the Sierra Club, could be effectively used. We feel that it is important that this prime land be acquired now before its desirable natural characteristics are altered.

The Executive Committee of the Central Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club urges its members to support and vote for both the City-County Park Bond Referendums on November 7, 1978.  
Susan E. Seaver  
Chairperson of Parks Committee

profit organizations. I personally have had several conflicts in trying to obtain fields for various Rugby Clubs to practice and play their games.

I personally feel the Bond package that has been proposed is a good one. I feel that the allocated monies that will be assigned to the various neighborhood school parks, district school parks, greenways, and natural preserves will be a taxpayer's money well spent.

Thank you for hearing my comments.  
Dan Guandolo  
President North Carolina Rugby Football Union

## TO BE EQUAL



### "Olympic Jail" A Mistake

Relatively few Americans are aware that under the guise of building housing for athletes participating in the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, the U.S. is building a prison.

Construction is under way on the prison right now, but it is not too late to change the intended use of the facility. The athletes will be there for a few weeks, but after they leave plans call for their rooms to be converted to cells that will hold poor, largely minority offenders from inner cities.

In itself, this is a mockery of the Olympic spirit. Just think what our reaction would be if Russia planned a similar conversion of Olympic facilities. Here's another instance in which our verbal backing for human rights is contradicted by actual practice.

Not only is that prison the wrong facility in the wrong place at the wrong time, but it is in violation of the U.S. Bureau of Prison's own guidelines. The origin of the prison lies in Congress' mandate that any facilities built for the Olympic games be convertible to other use. It has been suggested that the Lake Placid, N.Y. facility could serve as a permanent training site for athletes.

But that idea gave way to another one—turn it into a prison. There are two major reasons for this. First, the region around Lake Placid is economically distressed, and a permanent prison would open up well-paying jobs for prison guards and other workers while boosting the town's economy.

Second, the Bureau of Prisons has been looking for places to build new prisons as part of a huge prison-building program that's sweeping the nation. The shrill cries about rising crime—actually the crime rates are beginning to slow down—has resulted in new prison facilities.

The Prison Bureau admits that most of the inmates will come from big cities in the northeast—New York, Boston, Philadelphia and others. And it also admits that its own regulations stipulate that prisons be built near major population centers to enable family visits and to utilize nearby supportive services.

Located more than 300 miles from major cities and serviced by only one bus a day from the city, the Lake Placid site effectively means inmates will be cut off from their loved ones.

In addition, a large portion of the inmate population is expected to be black and Hispanic while the local population and the guards drawn from the region will be rural whites. This introduces a racial factor that has resulted in earlier prison tragedies—friction between guards and inmates who don't understand each other and the inevitable surfacing of racism.

The Olympic prison is just the tip of the iceberg—visible because of the Olympic connection and the gross violation of a federal agency's own rules. But the problems is nationwide. Politically-inspired calls for getting tough with offenders have led to longer sentences and the adoptions of determinate sentencing.

These have increased the number of people in prison, resulting in massive overcrowding of existing facilities. Authorities are building prisons as fast as they can, although the best that can be said about prisons is that they make it easier for youthful offenders to learn illegal trades.

**THE CHARLOTTE POST**  
"THE PEOPLES NEWSPAPER"  
Established 1918  
Published Every Thursday  
By The Charlotte Post Publishing Co., Inc.  
1524 West Blvd.-Charlotte, N.C. 28206  
Telephones (704) 376-0496, 376-0497  
Circulation, 9,915

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Second Class Postage No. 965500 Paid At  
Charlotte, N.C. under the Act of March 3, 1878

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Member National Newspaper Publishers  
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Deadline for all news copy and photos is 5 p.m.  
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(212) 489-1220              Calumet 5-0200

## Freedom: Not For Whites Only

by Bayard Rustin  
Special To The Post

For many Americans, particularly poor people and blacks, the idea of "Freedom" has become something of a hoax. Faced with high unemployment, steadily rising prices, and rather uninspiring political leaders, many people have concluded—erroneously, I think—that basic civil rights and constitutional government are nothing more than fancy icing on a stale, crumbling cake. "Freedom," they insist, is meaningless for the oppressed.

But those who so readily despair of freedom forget one central reality—in today's world the worst oppression, worst discrimination, and worst deprivation all exist in societies which decidedly lack freedom as we know it. Indeed, the absence of freedom is almost a certain guarantee of wretched poverty, scandalous inequality, and rampant political repression.

My point about freedom is not based on impressions, or a casual reading of the newspaper. Rather it is based on a carefully researched study entitled Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties. (available from Freedom House, 20 West 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018). A brief examination of the

unfortunate situation in Post-Colonial Africa helps to illustrate my point. According to the Freedom House study, the vast majority of black Americans continue to endure discrimination, brutal exploitation, and quiet—almost unnoticeable—political subjugation.

While we all know and abhor white minority rule and the apartheid systems of South Africa and Rhodesia, we sometimes ignore the self-serving and occasionally gruesome dictatorships which seem to cover the African Continent from shore to shore.

Because of Idi Amin and his well-publicized excesses, much media attention has been diverted from the less colorful and slightly more humane African dictators, such as the rulers of the Central African Empire, Angola, Burundi, and the Congo. All these countries, according to the Freedom House report, are roughly on par with Uganda, South Africa, and Rhodesia in consistently violating basic civil liberties and human rights.

Consider for a moment the situation in Burundi. This small, inland country of 4 million people is ruled exclusively by members of the Tutsi tribe, a group which represents only 15 percent of the

overall population. Meanwhile members of the majority Hutu tribe have no rights whatsoever. In a sense, Burundi has established a governmental system as cruel and as discriminating as the oppressive white minority in South Africa.

A similar situation exists in the Congo (Brazzaville) where virtually the entire ruling elite is drawn from a single tribe representing only 15 percent of the population. Similarly, small military or civilian cliques rule in countries like Benin, Togo, Somalia, Rwanda, Niger, and Malawi. In most instances, these relatively young African nations have only one political party; elections usually involve only one political slate; and debate is closely monitored, if not forbidden altogether. Additionally, independent trade unions face severe restrictions, and all types of citizen organizations are carefully controlled.

This distressing movement toward one-party dictatorship has been resisted by some sturdy—and commendable—anti-authoritarian states like Gambia, Senegal, Kenya and a handful of others. Yet the prospects for freedom and constitutional government in Africa, as well as other parts of the third world, are far from promising.

Some people, of course, keep telling me that my concern about the state of human rights and civil liberties in Africa is misplaced, and even unwarranted. African people, they assert, cannot handle the complexities of democracy. Nor can Africans hope to achieve a modicum of economic prosperity unless they willingly accept iron-clad authoritarian rule.

These arguments—or clichés—harken back to the days when Southern blacks had

little or no political power. White segregationists constantly argued that blacks could not be trusted with the vote. Black people, they said, did not understand democracy. And some whites even tried to prove that blacks fared considerably better before the destruction of the degrading slave system. Now, many African leaders have unfortunately adopted the irrational arguments of our own segregationists.

As I see it, black Africans

must be freed from the oppression of white minorities, as well as black minorities. Without some degree of liber-

ty and democratic rule, the great mass of Africans will never break the terrible chain of slavery. As black Ameri-

cans, we have a special responsibility to help foster and defend human rights in Africa. To do anything less would be a betrayal of our African brothers and sisters.

## ASC Administers "City Arts" Program

Charlotte is one of only 10 cities in the nation that has been invited to participate in a new experimental program called "City Arts." Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, "City Arts" was made possible by a \$30,000 grant from NEA's Expansion Arts Program which has been matched with an additional \$30,000 from the Arts and Science Council of Charlotte.

"City Arts" is the first program of its kind in which the Community plays a direct role in distributing federal funds for community and neighborhood arts development. Since Charlotte is the only community arts council participating in the program, that has had

previous experience in sub-granting funds, Katherine Prior, a representative from the National Endowment for the Arts, will be in Charlotte for the granting process.

The type of groups that will be eligible to receive "City Arts" funding include Spirit Square, the Summer Pops, the Community School of the Arts, and the Afro-American Cultural Service Center. In discussing the program, Mayor Rash, President of the Arts and Science Council, stated, "I think 'City Arts' is one of the most exciting programs in which we have been able to participate because it will enable our groups to develop new and creative programs to

serve new audiences that have never had an opportunity to experience the joy that the arts can bring."

"City Arts" funds are a part of the Arts and Science Council's Project Pool.

