

Editorials

Mel Watt-The New Breed We Need!

Last week, on a five to three vote, the State House Judiciary I Committee passed a bill that would allow county governments

to reorganize the delivery of health services. The action was taken after receiving comments from Mecklenburg County, public health representatives, and members of an increasingly common divided Mecklenburg County legislative delegation.

The Committee's action increases the authority Mecklenburg Commissioners received in 1973 when a law was enacted allowing county government to abolish

state-required health boards. Mecklenburg Commissioner Fountain Odom told the Committee that the many restrictions in the current law prevent adequate authority.

However, Rep. Howard Barnhill, D-Meck., and representatives from two state nurse's organizations argued that increasing county government's power would endanger public health.

Stealing the media spotlight from the debate began when Barnhill, a former public health instructor at UNC-Chapel Hill, said that the Mecklenburg delegation had not met to discuss the bill. Rep. Jo Graham Foster, the county delegation chairperson, expressed support for the bill and said that the delegation had met on the issue.

Resolve The Issue

After the meeting, the conflict mushroomed into a near shouting match. Foster reportedly said to Barnhill that he "misrepresented" the delegation on the question of their having met on the issue. Barnhill replied that she was falsely accusing him. Rep. Jim Richardson, D-Meck. who also spoke against the bill, joined Barnhill and reportedly said, "She's weak." Foster, overhearing Richardson, returned to question what he had said.

Likewise, this debate or argument reminds us that it took the Mecklenburg County legislative delegation of six Democrats and six Republicans over four months to resolve the chairperson issue. It has been clearly evident already that the time lost arguing over partisan party claims to the chairpersonship has lowered the delegation's impact on issues of concern to Mecklenburg voters.

While Mecklenburg County voters are undoubtedly less than enthusiastic about their delegation thus far, there is one encouraging thought - Sen. Mel Watt. In his own words, Sen. Mel Watt, D-Meck., did not expect to be a "high-profile senator." Nevertheless, Sen. Watt has begun to receive attention as an alert, intelligent legislator who does his own thinking.

Last week, Watt opposed planned cuts in abortion spending, arguing that such cuts for "political expediency" would deny con-

stitutional rights to the poor.

Two weeks ago Sen. Watt cast the only vote against a multi-million dollar tax cut bill. Pleading for state needs, Watt asked the senators to reject "this mania for cutting taxes."

Being tactful and knowledgeable when he speaks, Mel Watt, even as a freshman senator, is gaining a sense of respect that is a bright light among the county delegation.

Recognition of this led Sen. Charlie Hipps, D-Haywood, to remark that Sen. Watt is "probably becoming sort of the conscience of the Senate. He said some things that needed to be said when everybody was afraid to say them. I would say he's probably the most effective freshman legislator in either the House or the Senate."

Maybe, just maybe, it's time to begin thinking of electing more Mel Watts, that is, people sensitive to the needs of their constituents, having the courage of their convictions to speak out without fear of so-called political consequences, and knowledgeable and articulate enough to command the attention of his legislative peers when he does speak.

Sen. Mel Watt has demonstrated, too, a rare quality seldom seen in politicians, that is, the ability to be humble by living by his word to not seek to be a "high-profile senator," as most lawmakers are. Specifically, when the advocates of a recent bill sought Watt's help in introducing the measure, he in turn sought out a more senior member closer to the Senate leadership in the person of Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland.

On the move, Watt said, "The name of the game is not personal success, but legislative success. It really doesn't matter who gets credit for something" as long as the people are served.

Yes, maybe it's time to elect more Mel Watt types, i.e., those who put public service ahead of personal glory. Right on, Mel Watt, right on!

Black Families

Rewritten From The Carolina Times

Families, some experts believe, are the building blocks of a society. They provide all the character development traits necessary to produce successful human beings.

But that assertion is clearly under fire today, particularly in black American families as problems assail this unit of society.

Black American families are divorcing and separating at an alarming rate, leaving men adrift to "sow wild oats," and women alone to socialize the children.

More and more mothers, both those who live in married couple homes, and others, are working, leaving more and more children, particularly teenagers, to fend alone for several hours each afternoon.

Quality Of Life

Black People Are In Need Of A Behavior Change

By Ahmad Daniels Special To The Post

The late Malcolm X, advocate of black self-sufficiency, has stated; "Once you change your philosophy, you change your thought pattern; once you change your thought pattern, it changes your attitude; and once you change your attitude, it changes your behavior pattern."

Who can deny that Americans in general, and black people in particular, are in need of a behavior change? Our lifestyle (living habits) is not only killing us in numbers out of proportion to the rest of American society, but is dangerously affecting the quality of our life. When the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust met last year, it tackled with, among other things, the following dismal statistics on black health:

-A black baby is twice as likely as a white baby to die before its first birthday.

-The life expectancy for a black person is 68 years, compared with 74 years for whites.

-Black women are about two and one half times more likely to die from diabetes than white women;

-Black men are seven times more likely to be murdered than white men and have a greater chance of cancer and heart disease.

Each week I will share information concerning our health and how to take responsibility for it.

Black America cannot and should not expect the government to save us from the ravages of economic deprivation. We should also not expect the government to provide us with health facilities to tackle the staggering number of illnesses affecting blacks. Indeed, just as self-



Daniels

help is the answer to the economic woes of our people, it will take self-help through self-awareness to begin to combat the chronic degenerative diseases afflicting our people (heart disease, cancer, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, arthritis, and chronic lung disease). No government or any other outside source can do for us - or any other group - what we are unwilling to do for ourselves.

The objective of this column will be to get us to think about our lifestyle and the impact it has on our mental and physical health and to do something about it. Topics concerning how to increase our level of HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol that helps transport the LDL or "bad" cholesterol out of the body), why dieting without regular exercise does not work, why sit-ups won't flatten a fat stomach, etc., will be reviewed. We will take a look at the role potassium plays in the life of

the hypertensive taking a diuretic and how unphysically fit our youth are today and what that portends. Many school children have high blood pressure, a significant number have elevated blood fats and an even greater number are overweight and cannot pass a bona fide fitness test! These issues and others will be reviewed in the weeks and months to come. This is your column, so if there is a topic you would like to read about, send me a letter in care of this paper and I will, depending on how relevant it is to the general public, address it.

In closing, let me say that I am not a physician and do not profess to be. However, I am a 36 year old black man who has been running for 23 years and is very concerned about the poor health of his people; concerned about the significant number of blacks falling prey to heart disease, hypertension, stroke, obesity, etc.; illnesses that are chiefly the result of how we live day in and day out and not because these illnesses are part of getting old. One need not be a doctor to know that maintaining a desired weight is good sense. One need not be a doctor to know that vigorous exercise 15-30 minutes, at least, three times a week is wise. And it certainly does not take a doctor to know the damage fat, sugar, and salt can inflict if used excessively. In fact, health has never been and never will be determined by what doctors do. Health is, however, directly related to the way people live and the decisions made each day.

The elitist notion that only people with formal training and professional degrees have legitimate answers must be challenged at every

turn. If degrees were the prerequisites for a healthy people, black people would not be in the dire straits we presently occupy. The power to bring about change is in our hands, but the right thought is not in our minds.

Join me each week as we try to put the right thoughts into the minds of our people.

Have a good day and remember, always go for the quality of life.

Black Leadership

The North Carolina Black Leadership Caucus will hold its Eighth Annual Conference in Fayetteville on July 19-21.

Featured speakers at the conference will be William H. Gray III, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Budget Committee; Bishop John Hurst Adams, Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, business leaders Percy Sutton and Theodore A. Adams; and Joseph E. Madison, Director of NAACP Political Action Department.

On Sunday, July 21, former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm will be the speaker. Cost of the three-day conference at the Holiday Inn (Hwy. I-95 and 53) is \$40 for members and \$50 for non-members (on-site \$5 higher).

For information or registration, contact Bob Davis, 588-8861, or Cathy Hughes, 588-0133. After 6 p.m., 786-2111, ext. 3812 (0).

Arthritis Luncheon

The first Arthritis Interact Luncheon Session will be held Thursday, July 18, at noon at the Community Health Services Building, 1401 East Seventh Street.



A HURRICANE SWEEPS ACROSS THE LUSH LAND OF THE GULF COAST AND IT BECOMES A DISASTER AREA. A DROUGHT DRAGS ON IN THE MIDWEST, AND A DISASTER IS DECLARED. AND BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT FLIES UP TO 35% IN SOME CITIES, AND IT IS DESCRIBED AS A RESULT OF A TURNDOWN IN THE ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT DOES NOTHING.

SIMS

7/10/80

Time For Action ... Mr. President

The Decision To End Childbearing

The choice to end childbearing is a decision being made by more and more couples in the United States. The primary basis of the decision is that the couples feel that their lives and families are "complete" with the present offspring.

Who usually submits to the surgery? Up until the late 1970s the wife would be the chosen one. However, men are catching up. Why? Because many couples view a vasectomy as being less of a risk of complications than female sterilization.

Sterilization today is the leading form of birth control; the proportion has more than tripled since 1965. In 1983 15 million adults in the United States were surgically sterilized. The statistics being 450,000 men and 622,000 women. Twenty-eight percent of currently married women 15-44 years of age are protected via sterilization, either by their state, 17.5 percent, or their husband's at 10.5 percent. Nearly half of couples with three or more children have been sterilized.

Another basis for choice in who is sterilized is that traditionally men are more re-



Sabrina

sistant to having their reproductive organs tampered with than women - who are supposed to be used to it! But this is not true. Many women are seriously concerned or just as concerned about losing their womanhood as men are concerned of having their manhood threatened. One partner in the marriage is usually more frightened or resistant than the other. Women usually know the procedure will not affect their sex life - men are afraid it will and are happy to know it will not.

Doctors do agree that vasectomies will likely become more popular due to

the facts that they are safer, simpler, cheaper and reversible. In a study done by the American Journal of Public Health, it was found that women face up to 50 times the risk of complications after sterilization. Also the study reveals a lower vasectomy failure rate. A rate of 15 per 10,000 as opposed to 28 per 10,000 sterilization failures among women. In addition to the failure rate, there are 50 times less complications for vasectomies; four per 10,000 for tubal ligations (female sterilization).

The decision to seek sterilization for a man or woman is based on that it should not be approached lightly. It is a big decision. The partner who opts for sterilization should be prepared for whatever happens and that includes thinking about the very unpleasant possibilities of life (the death of a child or divorce) and the thought of not being able to bear more children.

For the many or the few who do seek reversal after sterilization, there is hope. New techniques in micro surgery have helped to improve the success rate.

The majority of the couples who choose sterilization have no regrets. To them the psychological after effects of the one sterilized has no bearing on the individual or the couple's relationship. What happens is acceptable for these people.

Of course, with every issue there is a flip side. What happens when a sterilization does not work? Although the failure rate is low in sterilization, pregnancy may occur. When that does happen, is it the doctor whose at fault, the individual, or just circumstances? Many couples choose sterilization to end child bearing due to the cost of rearing a child, others for health purposes. If the sterilization does not prove to be effective, should the doctor who performed the operation undertake it again - free of cost? The point of the matter is that there is a failure rate in sterilization - a small failure rate - but it is still evident.

As couples seek sterilization as their means of contraception the above are just a few viables that doctors present to them. Sterilization is a serious matter and should possibly be viewed as permanent. If truly is, or can be, a life altering decision.

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