

The Charlotte Post

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You asked for changes at Post

GERALD O. JOHNSON

As I See It



For the last two years we have been spending a lot of time listening to you and your complaints. Not only did we log complaints that we heard on the streets, but we held focus groups to make sure we had a good cross section of opinions. Based on this input we have made some significant changes and are positioning ourselves for even more changes.

You complained about the print quality of the paper and that pictures were horrible. We even missed out on several national awards because the judges complained about the print quality of the paper. The printing of our publication is out-sourced. We contract this

task to printing companies. We switched printers in September. Based on the numerous calls we have received, I guess you have noticed. We are very pleased with the quality of the product. But we are also pleased with the expanded capabilities the new printing company will afford us, especially as it relates to color.

You complained about the paper not being readily available in all parts of town. We are in negotiations with several companies to resolve this problem. If all goes well, we should finalize the arrangements within weeks. The arrangement will add over 1,000 new distribution points to our current network. This will mean that anywhere within a 50-mile radius of Charlotte you will find our publication. This includes all major food chains, all major drugstore chains, and practically all convenience stores.

Moreover, we will be

adding a Universal Pricing Code (UPC) to the newspaper so that it can be scanned for pricing. We hope to have everything in place by December of 1996.

You complained about not receiving your paper in the mail on a timely basis, or not receiving it at all. This problem we are dealing with, but we have less control over this than most people think. Once the newspapers are printed, we rush them to our mail distributor, who labels the publication and gets them to the post office usually by mid-afternoon Thursday. This means that the majority of you should receive the paper on Friday. The rest of you should receive the paper no later than Saturday. Once we get a complaint from you, the only recourse we have is to complain to the Post Office. They in turn will put a trace on the paper to attempt to find the breakdown. This problem occurs so often that we have complained to the

Postmaster General and to our congressmen. We are reviewing other alternatives for getting you the newspaper on a more timely basis, but for now we are stuck with the postal service. We will gladly re-mail the paper if this situation happens to you.

If you have other problems with us or our products, please do not hesitate to call and complain. Your complaints are heard and are acted on. You might not see immediate results of your complaint, but rest assured it will be acted on. Your complaints let me know that you are reading our products and that you are concerned enough to let us know what you do not like. I personally like that. So, keep those complaints coming. Every now and then it would be nice to throw in a compliment, but you got the idea.

Peace.
GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Charlotte Post.

Trojan horses: Education gifts and its choices

By Walter C. Farrell, James Johnson
Alex Molnar and Marty Sapp
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

For the second straight year, Milwaukee's Bradley Foundation has stepped up to the plate to bail out those parents who were counting on the expansion of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to include religious schools. With the continued injunction against religious school participation in the MPCP, many low-income parents would have been unable to afford the tuition payments for their children.

The Bradley Foundation donation, up to \$2 million for the 1996-97 school year, followed a 1995-96 grant of \$1.8 million to fund similarly situated parents. Both grants were made to Partners Advancing Values in Education, an organization which grew out of a statewide Catholic faith initiative in 1992 to access public dollars for religious education. A majority-controlled entity, financed by the downtown business community and other private sector interests, PAVE awards tuition scholarships, mostly to low-income white children who attend religious schools.

Since 1992, it has given more than \$12 million to educate children from low-income families (including the current school year). Across the nation, private and business interests have provided such educational gifts, ranging from \$750 to more than \$3,000 annually, for low-income children in Little Rock, Ark., Indianapolis, Atlanta, San Antonio and Milwaukee.

The general rationale for these initiatives is that: (1) many low-income families are not being served well by the public schools and (2) the scholarships are being allocated to low-income families to enable them to select schools of their own choosing. At the same time, PAVE and other such organizations are aggressively lobbying state legislatures throughout the nation for public funding of private and religious schools via educational vouchers. They want to replace the private educational gifts they now provide with public tax dollars. These initiatives appear to be thinly disguised attempts to raid the public coffers for the financial support of private and religious schools. Therefore, if we view these scholarships as part of an overall choice strategy, designed to dismantle public education as we know it, the Bradley Foundation's school choice gifts are sound financial investments.

The approximately \$4 million the foundation has invested in the PAVE program, and the million or more dollars it has contributed to inner city and other private schools, may eventually yield a significant financial return. It will largely flow to religious schools since they have more empty seats than their non-religious counterparts. For instance, if the injunction against the inclusion of religious schools in the MPCP had been lifted in a recent court hearing, there would have been \$60 million available for tuition reimbursement to private and religious schools. Since many of these schools were experiencing serious financial problems, this fiscal windfall would have stabilized their bottom lines.

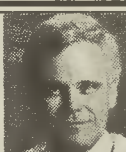
In addition, given their past screening practices, as documented by Wisconsin State Rep. Annette Polly Williams, a leading school choice advocate, these schools would also have been able to select the best of the low-income students - creaming those with high parent participation, high attendance rates, minimal discipline problems, and higher overall academic achievement, and leaving behind in our urban public schools the most economically and socially distressed children. Historically, conservatives have been principally responsible for a variety of policies that have severely disadvantaged inner city minorities and the poor: school segregation, low wages, urban de-industrialization, export of jobs to third world countries and to places in the U.S. where few minorities reside, lax enforcement of voting rights laws, anti-affirmative action, punitive welfare reform, etc.

Thus, it is ironic, indeed, that they now claim to be advancing an educational agenda to improve their quality of life. Since the overall objective of the school choice strategy is to dismantle public education and to make public education dollars available to the Free market, irrespective of a family's income status, the educational gifts offered by the Bradley Foundation and other conservative organizations are, in our view, simply Trojan horses to advance conservative objectives. The fact that conservatives are able to align themselves with the urban inner city poor, and their civic and political representatives, makes for an interesting coalition. It brings together some very strange bedfellows - individuals and groups whose historical interests have never coincided.

The authors, each Ph.D.s in education, researched the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program for this editorial.

Jimmy Green's demise no solace

DG
Martin



It was no fun, late last month, reading about former Lieutenant Governor Jimmy Green's guilty plea to income tax evasion.

In North Carolina, where we celebrate every day our good record in the honest administration of government, I don't enjoy being reminded that things here are far from perfect.

There is another side to Jimmy Green. Some of my political friends knew him when he was a political powerhouse. Listen to some of their comments.

"He was the best presiding officer the senate ever had. I said the best - not the fairest."

"He just has so much respect among people down there where he lives. Folks are devoted to him. I am not condoning what he did but you just have to realize how people feel about him."

Green was speaker of the

house of representatives for two years.

Then, as lieutenant governor for eight years, he presided over the senate longer than anyone else in memory.

"He would come into the session every day dressed to the hilt - designer suit, perfectly tailored, freshly pressed, flower in the lapel. Every was hair slicked back and in perfect order. From the podium, he just performed. It was something to behold."

"Oh, how he knew the rules! Backwards and forwards. He could make one up, too, if he needed to. And you would never know the difference. He could beat you so many different ways."

Why, I asked, didn't he cooperate with the prosecutors? Surely he would have a better chance to avoid going to jail. I told them it looked like Green, by declining to cooperate, was just thumbing his nose at the prosecution.

No, I learned, that is just part of his ethic. Even though he is in trouble, he is not going to try to bring anybody else into it. He won't hurt his friends and

neighbors just to get an easier deal for himself. He wants everybody to know that.

The income tax evasion charge against Green arose because he didn't report income from tobacco sales outside the government's price support system.

Why did he get involved in such a scheme? Of course, I don't know.

But such activity is almost always a consequence of any government rationing system. Where there is a prohibition or a limitation, there will always be contraband, smuggling, and black markets.

Most of us, in one way or another, have gone around government regulations and restrictions that got in the way of our getting what we thought we were due. (Are you having a hard time agreeing that you ever did such a thing? When was the last time you ordered something from a catalogue? If the catalogue company didn't collect sales tax, you were supposed to pay the equivalent directly to the North Carolina Department of Revenue. Did you? If you didn't, maybe you shouldn't rush to throw the first

stone at Jimmy Green.)

None of this is to justify what Green did - or to rationalize it by saying "every one was doing it, so it was OK."

No. The points I am trying to make go in the opposite direction. Here they are:

First, if a powerful and effective governmental leader can be brought down so hard it ought to get our attention. If he played so close to the edge that he couldn't keep from falling off, shouldn't we examine ourselves? Shouldn't we ask, just how close to the edge are we playing? Is it too close?

Second, the value of North Carolina's heritage of "good government" is enormous. Our high standards for government and for government leaders in North Carolina are real. We are not perfect, but we are right to be proud. When illegal payoffs, graft, and corruption are out of the picture and when government is managed by honest professionals and political leaders, everything works better.

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs for the University of North Carolina system.

Turning evil into good by becoming instruments of change

Marian
Wright
Edelman



Saint Augustine of Hippo tells us that God permits evil so it can be transformed into greater good. As a person of faith, I believe this. I trust God to turn the 1996 election year - political abuse of children, poor families, and legal immigrants, through pernicious welfare legislation -

into a greater good, into a mighty movement to leave no child behind.

We must be instruments of that greater good so desperately needed by our children and our country. We must stand up for what is right and just for our children. So while my heart is broken at the betrayal of our children by a majority of political leaders from both parties, my spirit is not broken.

At the Stand For Children rally last June at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., we let the world know in no uncertain terms that we are

committed to improving the lives of children in America. I am, and I hope you are, more determined than ever to stand up, to stand strong, and to stand together to make sure that no political leader of any party - in our White House or state houses, in our Congress or state legislatures, in our county boards, city councils, or city halls - will ever again feel free to act deliberately to impoverish and mistreat millions of children.

If 3,727 local, state, and national organizations could come together and mobilize hundreds and thousands of par-

ents, grandparents, young people, and community and religious leaders to Stand For Children, we can stand up for children now and say to our political leaders that we will not let our children be hurt. We can:

- Spread the word. Hand out copies of the Stand For Children "Citizen Action Guide" to neighbors, friends, relatives, and colleagues, as well as to teachers and business people we know. (Call the Stand For Children Action Center, 1-800-663-4032, to obtain free copies).
- Conduct voter activities. Hold vigils outside local candi-

date forums. Train children and adults to ask questions on child and family issues at candidate forums. Write candidates a letter, explaining children's needs and asking them to make a specific commitment to children. Get involved in voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

- Vote. Go to the polls on Nov. 5 to make sure that political leaders get the message that we want children and other vulnerable citizens protected, nurtured, and treated justly. I am ashamed that so many political leaders in the richest nation on

earth think it is morally and politically acceptable to make cuts that target the poorest and weakest among us. We can and must change that, by speaking out for children and fighting back with all our might.

Let's turn our shame into effective action, seek just policies for children, and stand up to those in power who vote and act to hurt children.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is the president of the Children's Defense Fund, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children.