

Heavy regulations stifle some Charlotte entrepreneurs

By Clint Bolick
SPECIAL TO THE POST

There's nothing more American than apple pie. But try to bake one at home for sale in Charlotte and you'll find yourself crosswise with the law.

That discovery astonished Thelma Connell, a Charlotte senior citizen who was planning to can some homegrown fruits and sell them at the nearby farmer's market. She didn't

encounter trouble until she called the city's health department to inspect her kitchen. Don't bother, the health officials told her: If you live in a residential area in Charlotte, zoning laws absolutely forbid anything other than "customary home occupations." And that doesn't include making anything for sale.

As a consequence, when Thelma Connell visits the farmer's market with her friend,

Louise Koller, who makes knitted and crocheted goods, they can buy home-baked goods and handicrafts produced outside county limits, but can't sell their own. Instead, they have to cross the state line into South Carolina. Though farmer's market officials say they aren't about to enforce the silly restrictions, the two women refuse to engage in civil disobedience.

"I know I was breaking the law, and I can't live with myself

knowing I'm breaking the law," says Mrs. Connell.

Louise Koller agrees. "I don't have a police record, and I don't want one."

In many ways, Charlotte exemplifies the "New South": prosperous, progressive, pro-business. It's a growing city, and entrepreneurial activities are growing with it. But too often, government gets in the way through anachronistic and anti-competitive regulations

Charlotte zoning officials have outlawed home-based businesses that produce goods for sale, while placing capricious restrictions on home-based offices. The sum of the regulations is to restrict severely home-based businesses in most instances and to preclude them altogether in others.

CLINT BOLICK is vice president and director of litigation for the Institute for Justice in Washington, D.C.

How much of Clinton White House for sale?

By Walter R. Mears
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Don't ask, do tell was about the way it worked in the White House political fund-raising operation.

No blatant requests for money while the president had prospective or past donors over to the White House for coffee or overnight visits. Tell them later, after they've left, that the Democrats need contributions for the 1996 campaign.

And big ones. The people on those guest lists would have been expecting it anyhow.

President Clinton said it was all entirely appropriate and strictly legal.

Still, his personal role in the money hunt was far more direct than he had acknowledged earlier. The political planners set targets of up to \$500,000 in Democratic proceeds from people who attended White House coffees with the president.

White House memos referred to events as fund-raisers, which can't legally be held there. One suggested that Clinton's staff briefings should be abbreviated or elimi-

nated to make time for more fund-raising early in 1996.

All of which pushes close to the brink of propriety, and perhaps legality, deepening the controversy over his and his party's money hunt for the 1996 campaign.

That is the product of a 500-page sheaf of documents on the fund-raising affairs, which included the names of 938 overnight White House guests during the president's first term.

No strangers, Clinton said, most of them friends, not all of them donors. But enough were contributors to produce millions of dollars in Democratic contributions, \$6 million according to a Washington Post computer analysis, more than \$10 million according to one conducted for The New York Times.

"Look at the list of people," Clinton said last week. "We put it out there." The public release of the documents was a matter of political tactics, since they already had been surrendered to a House investigating committee.

"Some people did come and stay with me who helped me, and I think that's entirely appropriate," the president said. He said people who backed him and his programs shouldn't be disqualified as overnight guests.

His handwritten instructions on a Jan. 5, 1995, memo

from the Democrats' finance chairman was not so genial. "Ready to start overnights right away," he wrote then, and asked for the top 10 donor list, along with the roster of \$100,000 and \$50,000 contributors.

Presidents and their parties always have used the position and the White House as fund-raising attractions. Clinton's spokesman, Mike McCurry, said Democratic efforts to raise campaign funds mirrored what Republicans already were doing.

Access to the powerful is the most lucrative form of political flattery. And while it works for both parties, nothing matches the lure of the White House and the president.

Clinton said Democratic donors weren't asked for money while they were there.

"There was no solicitation at the White House, and the guidelines made clear that there was to be no price tag on these events," he said.

"Did the people hope that the folks who came to the events would subsequently support me? Yes, they did," the president said.

WALTER R. MEARS is a vice president of The Associated Press.

USDA discrimination yields a bitter harvest

By Bennie G. Thompson
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

If Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman is serious about putting an end to the discriminatory practices at the United States Department of Agriculture, and I believe he is, then USDA should immediately develop a process to pay remedies to those individuals who have lost their farms as a direct result of USDA discrimination.

Second, USDA needs to establish and implement an independent system — a "watchdog" — to monitor field activities and enforce civil rights laws and regulations. The present system of complaints and appeals, in which the accused USDA agency investigates itself, is thoroughly inadequate.

Third, those USDA officials and field supervisors who have consistently demonstrated more allegiance to maintaining "good ole boy" networks than in promoting fairness and equity, should be immediately dismissed and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Fourth, Congress, once again, should revisit the county committee system, which is controlled by a few farmers who receive a majority of the benefits, and reform the policies and regulations that perpetuate a system which allows minority, female, and small producers to

be discriminated against.

A series of "listening sessions" recently concluded by the Secretary of Agriculture in my district, and elsewhere, revealed that racism and discrimination continues to run amok at USDA. The agency has made a mockery of Titles VI and VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and other laws which are supposed to ensure fairness and equal opportunity.

Blacks, whites and female farmers in Mississippi told Secretary Glickman, and his recently appointed "Civil Rights

Action Team," that USDA county committees slam their doors in the faces of those who are not a part of local cliques. The listening sessions have served as a vehicle to expose how serious and widespread the discrimination at the department has been.

USDA is now a national disgrace, a catalyst to the tragic, in some cases even criminal, loss of millions of acres of land, and wealth, by black farmers. Estimates are that black farmers have lost over 12.5 million acres of land since 1920, with only 2.5 million acres left today.

In some cases, land acquired by black families in the decades after slavery has been transferred, with USDA's help, to the coffers of wealthy farmers.



Thompson

When robbing the descendants of former slaves of their legacy has become a status quo practice for the USDA, it is easy to understand why employees and farm-

ers refer to it as the "last plantation."

Secretary Glickman's "listening sessions," have given farmers and employees hope that change is coming. But USDA's bureaucracy and its protectors have historically resisted real change — just ask former Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy.

President Clinton needs to let us know where eradicating racism and sexism from the USDA ranks as a priority in the agenda of his second term, and Secretary Glickman has to give us more than warm platitudes and feel-good quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the USDA's founding father, Abraham Lincoln. The time for rhetoric is over.

Every American that wears clothing or eats food has a vested interest in eliminating the decades-old policies of discrimination at the USDA. The agency's history of racial bias and antagonism towards minority and female farmers is well documented. It is time for President Clinton, Secretary Glickman, and Congress to take decisive action, rebuke these antiquated practices, and restore the American people's faith in this \$60 billion federal agency.

BENNIE G. THOMPSON of Mississippi is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committee.



Alexis Herman deserves a chance to win labor secretary position

By Donald M. Rothberg
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Ruffled, gruff, street-smart Paul Tully always opened the meetings with exaggerated politeness. "Madam, and how are you today?" Slender, cool Alexis Herman unfailingly responded in her soft Alabama drawl, "I'm just fine, Paul."

Then the battle began, Tully demanding more money for Democratic campaigns and Herman keeping a firm hand on the purse strings.

In that 1992 campaign year, Tully, then the Democratic Party's political director, smelled victory and was always looking for more money for this or that House or Senate campaign. As party executive director, Herman was the one who often had to say no.

Now, President Clinton is pressing a Republican-run Senate to say yes to Herman's

nomination to be secretary of labor.

"She deserves a hearing and if she gets a hearing she's going to be confirmed," Clinton said last week. Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, has said he will not schedule a hearing until he gets answers to questions about Herman's past activities.

Herman, in a chance encounter with reporters at the White House, was asked if she would stick with the fight. She smiled and said, "Of course."

As so often is the case with Herman, most of the questions involve money and politics, particularly her work for Democratic causes while on the White House staff.

Among the questions being asked: What role did she have in arranging the White House coffee klatch that gave political contributors from the banking industry a chance to chat with the president and the govern-

ment's chief banking regulator?

White House officials say documents show that Herman did not attend the event and did not know that it was arranged by the Democratic National Committee and that Comptroller of the Currency Eugene Ludwig was on the guest list.

Herman's strongest supporters describe her as highly organized, a master of detail.

"Alexis is a very strong manager," said Mark Steitz, who was communications director of the DNC when Herman was executive director and Tully was running the political division.

"The skill of knowing how to understand people, understand situations and manage them, those were the things that

allowed her to be the tough cop to Ron Brown's always smiley, funny cop," said Steitz. Brown, who later became Clinton's commerce secretary, was party chairman and Herman's political patron.

When Clinton took office in 1993, Herman was named director of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

Clinton has described Herman as one of Brown's closest advisers. When the commerce secretary was killed in a plane crash in the Balkans last April, Herman played the lead role in making arrangements for his funeral.

Herman's White House job involves building coalitions around issues and working with constituency groups, especially when they are unhappy. Her ability to mingle and sooth ruffled feelings earned her the sobriquet "Queen of Schmooze."

"I feel like I've known Alexis forever," said Bill Lynch, who



Herman

Letters to The Post

Clinic restrictions discriminatory

It is more appalling to have read with dismay certain actions taken by Carolinas Medical Center. We refer specifically to the article entitled "CMC's exclusionary act isn't good for black patients," by Dr. Yele Aluko, which appeared in The Observer on Feb. 18.

The action by CMC to restrict the cardiac catheterization laboratories to one clinic appears to be discriminatory at the very least. This action can deprive citizens of free choice. We ask this question, does CMC receive federal, state or county funds? In our view, the action taken by CMC:

- Deprives citizens of free choice
- Fosters economic oppression
- Restricts qualified physicians in the use of some of CMC's facilities
- Negates goodwill and positive relations
- Advocates a monopolistic system

It is hoped that the city/county leaders who are organizing various task forces to study the pulse of the community will deem the "exclusionary act" worthy of study. We therefore call upon our leaders to seek ways to rectify the apparent inequity.

ANNA HOOD
Charlotte

What's on your mind?

Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail — charpost@clt.mindspring.com. All correspondence must include a daytime telephone number for verification.

Why you get what you get

By John W. Templeton
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

I was listening to an African-American businessman report that in 1997 — for the first time — advertiser spending targeted to African American consumers would exceed \$1 billion.

Although it sounded like a lot, something made me ask, "Compared to what?" It took a few weeks to nail down the number I was looking for — the total amount spent on advertising in the U.S., \$115 billion in 1997, according to investment house Veronis Suhler and Associates. What difference does this make to you? Well, if you think your black newspaper should have more color pictures or a bigger staff, or if you wonder why your local television station has no shows that cover your community or only shows them after midnight, then these figures make a big difference to you.

charge of recruiting for the research and development division of Procter & Gamble Co.

Herman was hired to help employees "develop the skills to help them function in the corporate environment."

Harper cited the case of a black woman with a doctorate in biochemistry who was having difficulty fitting in at Procter & Gamble.

"A good scientist but having trouble working into the system," he said. Herman pointed out the need to get the woman plugged into the informal company network that involved socializing over lunch or at the company fitness club.

"Alexis was able to make that kind of thing happen and this young lady now is probably at the associate director level," said Harper.

DONALD M. ROTHBERG has covered politics and national affairs in Washington for The Associated Press since 1966.