

Politics of Color

...Page 13

The Naked Truth

...Page 19

Vol. 10, No. 9
February 1996

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper Printed on Recycled Paper FREE

NC gays must decide who can best oppose Helms

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

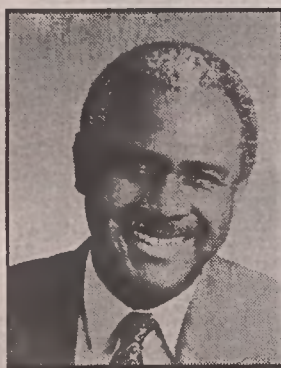
North Carolina gay activists are in the midst of deciding whether to support Harvey Gantt or Charles Sanders, or anyone, in the May 7 primary election to select the Democratic opponent to Sen. Jesse Helms in the 1996 general election.

Defeating the virulently anti-gay Helms has been a priority of activists here for many years. It is believed by many that either candidate for the Democratic nomination could mount a strong campaign against Helms, although Gantt has a record of supporting gay civil rights and got strong gay support in his close 1990 race against Helms, and has strong ties to the Democratic Party. Charles Sanders, a retired pharmaceutical company executive, is virtually unknown in the gay community and new to electoral politics. But Sanders is presumed to be very wealthy personally and able to spend and raise a significant amount of money for the campaign.

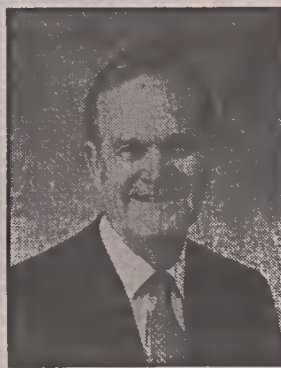
The country's largest lesbian and gay political organization, the Human Rights Campaign based in Washington, DC, has already

decided what it will do. The Campaign will not endorse any candidate in the Democratic primary, according to David Smith, the Campaign's communications director. "We think we can reach more voters earlier by conducting an independent expenditure campaign" starting in the primary race, Smith said. Independent expenditure federal campaigns can educate voters about issues, but cannot endorse or work with specific candidates, nor work or communicate with organizations that endorse candidates.

This is a change from the 1990 US Senate race in which the organization endorsed Gantt in the primary and general elections because of his gay-friendly positions, and contributed



Harvey Gantt



Charles Sanders

\$5,000 to Gantt for each race, the maximum allowed under federal law.

"We will be reminding people that North Carolina can make a major contribution to public health by retiring Senator Helms in 1996," Smith

told *Q-Notes*, because "Helms represents extremist politics in its most raw form. Helms is not a positive influence in public policy decisions of this country and is a toxic influence in the whole public policy arena."

NC Mobilization 1996, currently an informal coalition of activists interested in the election, will hold a statewide meeting in Raleigh on February 10 that will include a discussion of what to do in the primary and general elections.

An early look at the two candidates shows some of the things that activists and gay voters will have to consider as they try to balance their desire to support a strong candidate to defeat Helms with their desire to support candidates who support the positions that they care about.

Harvey Gantt has a long history of encouraging a respect for diversity and supporting civil rights generally and lesbian and civil gay rights specifically. He accepted the endorsements of gay groups in the 1990 US Senate race and attended several fundraisers sponsored by openly-gay organizers. Gantt addressed the Charlotte City Council in 1992 in support of a proposal to protect gay people from discrimination in the city's public accommodations law. In an interview with *Q-Notes* last year, Gantt disagreed with President Bill Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy of allowing the military to discharge service members because they are gay and said that Clinton should have been more forceful in defending his original pledge to ban discrimination in the military based on sexual

Continued on page 8

NCCGLE executive director seeks local post

by Susan Tedder
Q-Notes Staff

DURHAM—While Triangle area papers warn residents of the "big dyke" seeking a position on the Durham County Board of Commissioners, Kenda Kirby is pushing her qualifications. Kirby, executive director of the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE), has been attending commission meetings for some time as an observer, and feels that her presence there is a sure sign that she would be heard as a valid spokesperson for the county on issues that affect every resident.



Kenda Kirby

"I'm out there; I've been there doing the work for the community," Kirby said. She feels that winning a seat on the Board of Commissioners will give NCCGLE more recognition as an effective coalition building force. Her press release was designed, however, to refocus the constituency on the issues rather than on her sexuality, which is where the mainstream press is trying to concentrate.

Kirby said she would be a "partner in progress" when she filed for candidacy. "I am running because I am a well-qualified candidate who cares deeply about our Durham community. I will be a partner in progress in improving education for our children, making our community safer, and attracting good jobs."

As a former educator and an extremely experienced civic leader, Kirby offers much to the Durham community in her three-plat-

form stance — on education, violence prevention and economic development.

"I believe that education is the single most important way government can improve our community. A good education provides economic opportunity and a sense of self-worth. I care about education. While the Board of County Commissioners does not directly control the schools, it does have the responsibility of providing adequate resources, and therefore has the job of ultimate accountability," Kirby said.

In her work with NCCGLE and various local commissions on violence, Kirby has encouraged long-term, community-based solutions to the problem. "We must first change attitudes — we must instill an understanding of and respect for the sanctity of life, and we must begin to fully appreciate the beauty in diversity. I also believe that any real solutions must involve the total community and address the complex aspects that contribute to the problem. For example, problems of addiction and economic insecurity must be addressed if we want to solve the problem of violence in our society."

With economic development as the third key issue, Kirby stated, "I will ask tough questions to make sure that the kinds of jobs we attract are the kinds of jobs we need. I will advocate for growth in places like Durham's Downtown Historic District where we have the infrastructure to support growth, a ready employee pool, and transportation routes to ensure that people can get to work." While recognizing the importance of economic growth in the Research Triangle Park area, Kirby is also keenly aware of the responsibility for environmental stewardship in planning for new business and the development it brings.

Kirby's desire to serve is apparent by her level of community involvement. She said, "I bring to an elected position professional expertise in the issues we all care about."

"I can't stress enough how important it is for everyone to register and get out and vote in the May 7 Democratic primary. Undeclared voters can vote in the Democratic primary as well as those who are declared Democrats. There are a lot of important races affected by this primary...this one, a school board race...it's just real important."

Promise Keepers confirm Carolinas rally

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—According to a January 19 press conference, Charlotte Motor Speedway will host a gathering of up to 150,000 men this summer when Promise Keepers, a conservative Christian men's organization, brings its controversial message to NC.

The event will occur June 21-22 and is expected to be the best attended rally in Promise Keepers' six-year history. In comparison, the two largest previous gatherings drew slightly less than 75,000 men each. Like those prior rallies, women will not be allowed to attend this event, although they will be allowed to help organize it.

Jack Munday, the head of Promise Keepers' Carolinas Chapter, has the responsibility for most of the organizing and will oversee

the headquarters' upcoming move from Greensboro to Charlotte.

Charges of homophobia are routinely leveled at Promise Keepers, while many women's groups believe that they are indisputably sexist as well. At the press conference, it appeared that these concerns weren't shared by track management. President H.A. "Humpty" Wheeler stated that Charlotte Motor Speedway is picky about who it hosts — making the venture sound more like an endorsement than a simple business deal.

Q-Notes asked Jerry Gappens, a speedway spokesman, who initiated this arrangement. "Promise Keepers approached the speedway," he said. "We lease out our facility, and it's utilized about 280 days a year. They approached us about the size of our facility."

Continued on page 4

President signs military HIV ban

by Susan Tedder
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON—1,500 healthy servicemembers who are infected with HIV will apparently soon be civilians again, due to the efforts of Rep. Bob Dornan (R-CA), Sen. Dan Coats (R-IN) and Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS). These congressmen added a provision to the FY 1996 Department of Defense Authorization Bill (S. 1124) which instructs the Pentagon to discharge all servicemembers who test positive for HIV, even if they are healthy and show no signs of illness.

As *Q-Notes* goes to press, President Clinton is expected to sign the bill, which not only mandates immediate discharge of HIV-positive enlisted personnel, but denies them access to the medical and disability benefits available to other servicemembers who are discharged for medical reasons.

In December 1995, President Clinton vetoed the authorization bill because of this provision, but apparently he has succumbed to the pressure placed on him by the Republican dominated Congress and the recent government shutdowns.

AIDS advocacy groups are extremely troubled by the President's change of heart. "It is shameful that Bob Dornan, Dan Coats,

and Trent Lott cajoled their congressional colleagues into including in the defense bill this unconscionable ban," said AIDS Action Council Executive Director, Mark Barnes.

"We are disappointed that the President of the United States intends to sign his name to a bill that would, through this extremist provision, cut short the military careers of these patriotic men and women who have served our country proudly and with distinction. AIDS Action urges President Clinton, at the very least, to right some of the terrible wrong committed by taking bold administrative steps to guarantee these soon-to-be discharged servicemembers access to the same medical care and disability compensation afforded to other service members retired for medical reasons."

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force also responded forcefully to the breaking news. Task Force Deputy Director Kerry Lobel issued this statement: "We condemn the provision in the defense authorization bill that will discriminate against servicemembers with HIV. The measure is unsound AIDS health care policy and is discriminatory to the hundreds of brave and courageous members of the Armed Forces who have admirably served their country."