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ROBESON COUNTY

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REPORT REVEALS THAT RACISM IS FOUND IN ROBESON COUNTY DISTRICT COURT ROOMS

by Bruce Barton

Carl W. Sellers, a research assistant at the N.C. State University at Raleigh, recently completed a research paper dealing with the district court system, principally in Robeson County. His findings are not surprising.

Completing his studies in anthropology and sociology, Sellers found that "racial bias does in fact exist in the district court system of Robeson County."

Sellers said, "I am very interested in further developments along the lines of my report, and I am willing to participate actively in articulating the problem...in any way that I can. I think this is a major problem and one that should concern all citizens in North Carolina -- if the district court system is allowed to run roughshod over one group, then what is to prevent the same kind of development in other areas?"

Sellers noted, "These findings, of course, are my own and do not necessarily represent a formal endorsement by N.C. State University where I am now employed as a research assistant."

Sellers found that although Indians comprise approximately a third of Robeson's population (more than 26,000 according to the 1970 census), their relative numbers in district court cases appear to be far greater than their proportion to the total population.

During the period of January 1979 through April 1979, Sellers investigated the possibility that distribution of justice in the district court system in Robeson County was biased along racial lines. The study consisted of personal interviews with citizens of Robeson County, observations of courtroom proceedings, and analysis of documents relating to cases tried during the period of investigation.

INTERVIEWS: The respondents were both male and female; White, Black, and Indian; farmers, storeowners, secretaries, attorneys, administrators, and a university professor. Some spoke openly and freely while others were hesitant about speaking openly to an outsider; and still others answered specific questions with specific answers but volunteered nothing further. The intent of the interviews was to develop a feeling or a consensus of opinion relating to interracial attitudes and to the relationships between various races and law-enforcement officials and courts.

RESULTS: Whites--generally see themselves in a higher socio-economic status than Blacks and Indians; and believe law-enforcement officials and courts treat all races equally.

Blacks--believe Whites enjoy higher socio-economic positions and Blacks and Indians share lower but equal positions. They believe law-enforcement officials and courts are biased against Blacks and Indians.

Indians--believe they share the same socio-economic positions as Whites, but higher than Blacks. They believe law-enforcement officials and courts are biased against Indians, are unbiased against Blacks, and favor Whites.

Sellers noted, "It should be noted that the responses to all questions show a wide range of variation, but the results presented above are representative of majority opinions."

COURTROOM OBSERVATIONS: Sellers observed five district court sessions during the research period at Pembroke, Rowland, and Red Springs. Prior to each session, he obtained a court calendar listing names, offenses, pleas, findings, and sentences. In each case that was tried, he noted the findings of guilty or not guilty. In cases where the defendant's racial background was unknown, he made the determination by questioning the defendant or someone who knew him or her. He noted the defendant's race beside each case that was tried.

RESULTS: Based on 171 cases, 110 were Indians, 32 were Whites, and 29 were Blacks. The number of convictions were: 106 Indians, 9 Whites, and 25 Blacks.

Sellers said, "A Chi-Square statistical analysis of courtroom justice in terms of race versus convictions and nonconvictions revealed a figure of 41.25 which indicates a very powerful probability that racial bias exists in the district court system of Robeson County. In a percentile analysis of the defendant population, it was determined that 65% were Indians and the remaining 35% was divided nearly equally between Whites and Blacks. The rates of convictions racially were: Indians--96%, Blacks--86%, and Whites--28%."

Sellers concluded his report by saying, "During the period of January through April 1979, there were very strong indications that the distribution of justice in the district court system in Robeson County was biased along racial lines. The fact that a much greater number of Indians were apprehended than either Whites or Blacks indicates that a serious problem exists between law-enforcement officials and Indians. Once in the courtroom, Indians have a very small chance of escaping a finding of guilty and Blacks have only slightly better odds, while Whites seem to have a very good chance of receiving a finding of not-guilty. It would appear that the consensus opinion of the Indians regarding racial bias on the part of law-enforcement officials and courts is very close to the mark."

Richardson Named new District Judge

Governor Jim Hunt Tuesday named Herbert L. Richardson of Lumberton as District Court Judge for the 16th Judicial District, which is composed of Robeson and Scotland Counties. He replaces Judge Samuel E. Britt of Lumberton who was recently appointed Special Superior Court Judge by Governor Hunt. Richardson will serve a term ending December 5, 1982.

Richardson, 27, is an assistant district attorney for Robeson County. He received his J.D. degree from N.C. Central University in 1976. He is a member of the N.C. District Attorney's Association, the N.C. Academy of Trial Lawyers and the N.C. Black Lawyers Association.

Edmisten to visit Pembroke

Attorney General Rufus Edmisten will be visiting in Pembroke at the home of Pembroke Councilman Sam Dial on Jones' street from 6 until 8 p.m. August 23rd.

Councilman Dial, a long time admirer of Edmisten, said, "Everyone is invited to come and meet with Rufus Edmisten, a dedicated attorney general."

Later Edmisten, accompanied by Dial and other supporters will attend "Strike at the Wind!"

PEOPLE AND LAND THINGS... L A N D T H I N G S ...

BURNT SWAMP BAPTIST CHURCH TO OBSERVE CENTENNIAL

The Burnt Swamp Baptist Church will observe its Centennial Sunday, August 19, 1979 at 10:00 a.m. Guest speakers will be past pastors of the church.

Burnt Swamp was organized with only 12 men and women in the Union Chapel Community, moving to its present location in 1904.

A covered dish luncheon will be served at 12:30. A special afternoon singing beginning at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

LOCKLEAR REUNION PLANNED

The family of the late Charlie and Rosa Lee Locklear are planning a family reunion Sept. 23, 1979 at Sandy Grove Holiness Church near Maxton. All relatives are asked to attend. For more information, call Cathleen Revels at 521-9486 in Pembroke or Alfair Bullard of Maxton at 844-5750.

FALL SOFTBALL LEAGUE

The Fall Softball Organizational Meeting for Women and Men is scheduled for Thursday, August 23, 1979 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Conference Room in the Lumberton Recreation Department.

Managers are urged to attend.

COUNTY SOFTBALL TOURNEY SCHEDULED

The Robeson County Recreation Department's County Softball Tournament will be held the week of August 27, 1979. The location of play will be determined by the number of teams that enter. Entry fee will be \$25 per team and must be paid no later than Tuesday, August 21, which is the deadline for signing up.

This tournament is designed for these teams that played in the 1979 Summer Softball Leagues of the Robeson County Recreation Department or the City of Lumberton Recreation Department.

No player will be allowed to participate with two teams in this tournament. For those players who played on more than one team in regular season, they must designate which team they are going to play with.

The rules of the tournament will be the same as your regular season rules.

SHANNON JAYCEES TO HOLD INSTALLATION BANQUET

The newly chartered Shannon Jaycees will be holding their installation banquet Saturday, August 18 at 7:30 p.m. at the Shannon Community Center. The event is sponsored by the Saddletree Jaycees. The price is \$3.00 single. Shannon Jaycees President is Odell Lowery.

Couples will pay \$5.00 for the banquet.

REGISTRATION FOR PEMBROKE SCHOOL DISTRICT

All students, except those students who will be registering at Pembroke Junior High School, who have not registered for the 1979-80 school year who are now living in the Pembroke School District, should come out and register for the 1979-80 school year on Friday, August 10 between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Students in grades K-7 will register at Pembroke Elementary School. Students in grades 10-12 will register at Pembroke Senior High. Then on August 13-14 between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., students in grades 8-9 will register at Pembroke Junior High School. This registration applies only to new students who have moved into the Pembroke school district during the summer.

WILKINS ENTERS HOSPITAL



John Henry Wilkins

Plans Plate Sale

The Pembroke Rescue Squad will sponsor a chicken and barbecue plate sale on Friday, August 24 at the new Pembroke Rescue Building located on Union Chapel Road. The sale will begin at 11 a.m. and last until... Proceeds from the sale will be used for construction of the new building.

In last week's issue of The Carolina Indian Voice the newspaper carried a story recounted by John Henry Wilkins, a disabled man from the Union Chapel Community who claims he was mistreated by a highway patrolman, M. Humphrey, when he stopped him initially for an errant signal light that would not quit blinking.

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Miss Millie Fashions Celebrates 1st Birthday



Miss Millie fashion observed its first year of operation Tuesday, August 14 at the site of the manufacturing company in Pembroke. An anniversary party was shown in observance of the occasion. Shows shown, left to right on the Center Millie fashion line... Miss Millie is owned by Mrs. Wilkins. Miss Millie is owned by Mrs. Wilkins.

Prospect Citizens Protest Lack of School Board Representation

by Connee Brayboy

Accompanied by over 100 members of the Prospect and Oxendine School Districts and representatives of the Philadelphia Precinct, L.H. Moore delivered an oratory to the Robeson County Board of Education on Tuesday. Prior to his presentation, Moore displayed a hand-written sign which said: "Justice For All... 'Gentlemen,'" he said. "That's all we're asking for." He then launched into an impassioned plea for the board to reconsider their present districting plan. Said Moore, "We are the only high school attendance zone which will not have the opportunity to elect a member to this board. We want to know why we were left out?"

The plan Moore referred to was a part of the Proposal to merge the Maxton City Schools and the Robeson County Schools. The proposal included a plan whereby members of the board of education, beginning in 1980, will be elected by district. The plan specifies that there will be eight districts. Those districts are: District I composed of Parkton, Lumber Bridge and Rennett Precincts- one member; District II will be composed of Philadelphia, Burnt Swamp, Raft Swamp, Saddletree, West Howellsville Precincts- two members; District III composed of Maxton- one member; District IV, composed of Alfordville, Union, Pembroke and Smiths Precincts- three members; District V composed of Rowland- one member; District VI composed of Gaddys, Thompson and Back Swamp- one member; District VII- composed of Britts, Orrum, Sterling, Smyrna- one member; and District VIII, composed of East Howellsville and Wisharts- one member.

This election by district will become effective in 1980. Presently, David Green represents District I; Laymon Locklear and Ronald Hammonds represent District II; Rufus Graham represents District III; Lillian Locklear, Jerry Lowry, Simeon Oxendine and Tommy D. Swett represent District IV; District V has no representative at this time; Ralph Hunt represents District VI;

E.B. Morton represents District VII; and J.R. Muscolivite represents Dis-

trict VIII, with the 1980 election one of the four members representing District IV will be eliminated and District V will elect a representative.

OXENDINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Moore introduced Ben Jacobs of the Oxendine School who emphatically stated: "For years people, especially Lumbee Indians, have fought for their rights and for equal representation. When an Indian superintendent and a predominantly Indian Board of Education came to be in Robeson County, the people of Smiths Township were most pleased and hopeful that a system such as this should last forever.

"Although we see the need for improved schools and better educational services in our community, we are pleased with the progress of our present school units. We are aware of the need to consolidate the educational units to give our children the best opportunities to learn. We are prepared for the changes that must come.

"However, our unique school board, for which we had so much hope and trust, has now set up a system in which our community has little chance of gaining representation. Because of this we are very angry and feel that we have been betrayed. I am certain that the newly organized zones from which the citizens will select their representatives to the Board of Education has given unbalanced power to the voters of Pembroke Township. I cannot remain complacent and lose my chance and my children's chances at equal representation without voicing my concerns."

No comment from the board followed Jacobs' spiel. And Moore continued to explain why they were there.

Said he: "Some of us fought long and hard battles against one of the greatest evils Robeson County has ever known and that was double-voting. We finally won and we rejoiced about our victory. Finally at last, all people will be treated equally. But as you know and as we have experienced, this was not true. We are here this evening to ask you to please tell us why as a high school

attendance zone we were not treated as those other high school attendance zones."

Chairman Ralph Hunt responded. "High school areas were not considered.... It was not intentional."

Moore said: "...we are not asking for consideration. We want an answer. We feel like we've been shafted and want to know what you're going to do about it."

Supt. Purnell Swett responded: "We will take a serious look at it and do what we can within our legal power. The question is can we change prior to 1980 or after the 1980 census."

And Moore reacted: "I'm sorry, gentlemen, I just don't have the kind of confidence I need in a system that would treat us like this." He then commended the board for their "courage on consolidation." Said he, "I believe it is one of the greatest steps toward progressive education in my lifetime." And he addressed Assist. Supt. Douglas Yongue: "I want to commend you for giving us a superintendent's job and doing what was best for children educationally."

PHILADELPHUS PRECINCT

Jimmy Goins, a resident of the Philadelphia Precinct then spoke. Said he, "I look at these district lines and it's disgusting. I don't understand why... All I know is that my children will be going one way to school (Prospect) and I'll be voting another way... I am not against consolidation. We're against consolidation without representation... Give us a chance to help out in the consolidation. Don't lose us... I would recommend a district composed of: Smiths & Philadelphia Precinct." He then posed this question: "Could the board not function as an elected at large board?"

And Chairman Hunt responded: "The reason for districting was that Maxton requested a board member for a particular district. The board felt it important that they have one."

And Moore continued: "My mind

goes back to February 1945. A class mate of mine was killed in Germany. You know, several years ago and even today as I visit his grave and look at his picture, I begin to feel bitter towards a system that would do this to a young man, 21 years of age who gave his life for a country where he didn't have an equal opportunity to an education. He couldn't even sit down in the drug store that would sell him medicine and get a coke to drink it with.

"Mr. Chairman, I said that to let you board members know that's about the way we feel you have treated us in the Prospect High School attendance zone."

By mutual consent the board agreed to meet with representatives from the citizens' group and find a solution to the problem.

IN OTHER MATTERS

With Lillian Faye Locklear voting no, the board approved revised work day for school principals, paid assistant principals, 12-month employees and vocational teachers.

The minimum office hours for these employees will be from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. beginning with the 1979-80 school year.

Unanimously they approved the advisory council appointments for Piney Grove. They are Horace Sampson and Mary E. Stevens. Charles M. Britt and Charlie Goban, Jr. will serve the Long Branch School as advisory council members. The board approved the standard fees for the county schools, \$4.00 for elementary and \$8.00 high school. They agreed to meet at another time to discuss special fees being charged by some schools, library fees, band fees, etc. They also approved the free lunch policy. Supt. Purnell Swett stated that approximately 86 percent of the county school students receive free lunches and about 60 percent eat at reduced prices. Said Swett, "Approximately 92 percent of our students are eating either a free or reduced lunch."

The board also adopted a resolution