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RED SPRINGS, ST. PAULS & FAIRMONT SCHOOLS SUE PARENTS

by Bruce Barton

Following the lead of Red Springs, Fairmont and St. Pauls Schools have countersued the parents who are suing them and the Robeson County System and the Lumberton City School Unit.

An official familiar with the unique school situation in Robeson County termed the legal action "a scare tactic" saying, "It's like if someone wants to sell you a rotten apple...you don't have to buy it if you don't want to..." He was referring to the contention of the school officials that their present dilemma is due to the county's inability to sell school bonds approved by county voters last March 13.

Officials of the 3 school districts are asking for damages from the parents because the parents' discrimination lawsuit is holding up construction of school buildings in the county. Robeson County commissioners have been unable to sell the bonds because of the suit.

Last Thursday, officials of the Red Springs school district filed a similar countersuit against the parents asking for \$2 million in damages. The Red Springs, Fairmont, and St. Pauls school officials have hired a Raleigh law firm and joined together in taking the parents group to court.

Fairmont school officials are asking \$2 million in damages from the parent group because they can't complete a new elementary and middle school without the bond money. School officials are particularly concerned that they had to stop construction of the elementary school before the roof could be completed.

Lumberton is not a party to the suit; neither is the Robeson County School System.

St. Pauls officials are asking for \$2.5 million in damages because the lawsuit has held up the start of construction of a new school classroom building. The district has already received bids for the

\$1.3 million school, but has a deadline next month for letting them. Construction has not begun on the school.

The parents allege in their lawsuit that the county school districts and the county commissioners have perpetuated racially segregated schools, and charge that poor quality education exists in the five systems. All five districts and the commissioners denied the charges earlier this month.

The suit is being handled by Raeford attorney, Phil Diehl.

The Parents' suit was filed against the Red Springs Board of Education along with the Boards of Education of Robeson County, Lumberton, St. Pauls and Fairmont. Additionally, the County Commissioners, the State Board of Education and the Federal Government through the Department of Education and Health and Human Services have been named defendants.

The suit seeks to correct the abuses

that have existed for generations in the Robeson County school systems. Further, the suit alleges many of the inequities within the Robeson County school system are based on the simple fact that there are five separate school systems operating within the county, each of which has its own administration and each of which causes the duplication of many expenses to the detriment of the county tax payers as well as the slicing of the county into small segments that has resulted in a pattern of small schools throughout the county that cannot provide adequate curriculum or proper educational benefits to the children of the county.

According to an official familiar with the case, "The suit itself does not seek to enjoin the sale of any bonds on behalf of Robeson County. The Robeson County commissioners are free to sell the bonds at any time they so desire."

According to one of the participants in the famous double vote law suit no suit has aroused the attention of those either for it or against it like this one has.

He notes, "everyone is playing for

keeps...this is not a game. It is serious business...it could, like the double vote suit, change the whole political and social fabric of Robeson County society as we now know it. That is why everyone is so deadly about it."

This is not the first time Phil Diehl, the lawyer for the parents has taken on the establishment. He recently caused a policy to be written revising the policy of school fees in Robeson County in behalf of some Robeson County parents.

He also successfully sued the Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation in behalf of Rev. Elias Rogers and won in federal court a few years ago.

Said another attorney, "Diehl is competent...that scares a lot of people in Robeson County."

Robeson County School System is not a part of the legal maneuver by Fairmont, Red Springs and St. Pauls although they have asked that the bond monies allotted to them be released so that they can renew their building program.

PEOPLE AND PLACES AND THINGS

PLATE SALE PLANNED

The Burnt Swamp Baptist Church of Route 4, Lumberton will have a plate sale (chicken and barbecue) on Friday, Oct. 3. All plates are \$2.50. The sale will be held in the fellowship hall of the church from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. Proceeds will go into the church building fund program.

LOCAL TO PERFORM IN COLLEGE PRODUCTION

David Oxendine, son of Mr. and Mrs. Grady Oxendine of Pembroke, NC will perform in the Catawba College production of "Godspell." The play will run Sept. 24-28 and Oct. 3 and 4 on the college campus.

David is a junior drama major at Catawba. He has performed in a number of previous productions at Catawba, including "The Beggar's Opera," "The Crucible," "The Tempest," and "Tartuffe."

Catawba College is a small liberal arts college in Salisbury, NC. The School is widely recognized for its strong program in the theatre.

FORMER LIBRARY EMPLOYEES DISPUTE "BUDGET CUTS" AS REASONS FOR FIRING

Two former employees of the Robeson County Library appeared before the board of trustees Wednesday afternoon to protest their dismissals for so-called "budget cuts."

Both Yvonne Hutchison, formerly an administrative secretary, and Jean Becker, until her dismissal coordinator of library volunteers, disputed claims of library administrators that they were "let go" because of a shortage of funds.

Ms. Becker explained to the trustees that her position would have only required an outlay of \$1,000 because of a federal grant which funded the position on a yearly basis up to three years.

Ms. Hutchison, in response to a query from a board member, said that she believed she was "fired" because of "a difference of opinion" with the librarian, Ms. Diana Tope.

The two women were "let go" along with five other employees in June and July because of a supposed lack of funds.

The dismissal of the employees have caused a furor in Robeson County political circles because the library recently approached the city and county asking \$80,000 to match a state grant. The monies would be used to refurbish the old fire station which was given to the library by the city of Lumberton.

Although the city agreed in principal to put up \$40,000 the county commissioners tied their approval to a rehiring of the dismissed employees. Herman Dial, chairman of the board of commissioners, has been a critic of the abrupt firings, saying "I will always put people first when it comes to them or a building."

Ms. Hutchison especially blamed "personal reasons" for her dismissal saying, "It's been labeled budget cuts...I know and you all know that there have been no budget cuts." Ms. Hutchison said that she believed she was fired because of her involvement in the firing and later rehiring of a library employee, Mrs. Mattie Locklear, who was initially dismissed for refusing to work on Sundays due to her religious convictions. Ms. Hutchison recommended against firing Mrs. Locklear.

Robeson County presently elects its county commissioners and board members representing the Robeson County Board of Education by district. Mostly board members are elected by district to assure that all three races are represented. Until district voting no Indian or Black ever served on a county wide board or commission or elective office.

Robeson County too is subject to the Voting Rights Acts of 1965 because of proved and systematic voter discrimination against mostly Indians and Blacks. The Justice Department must approve any act that results in changing the electoral process.

INDIAN HERITAGE WEEK TERMED A "HUGE SUCCESS"

by Bruce Barton

Officials of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs termed Indian Heritage Week "a huge success" as the week of scheduled activities came to an end.

Locally, the memorial erected in honor of James E. "Jim" Chavis and the unveiling of the portrait of Brantley Blue were well received.

The historical marker was dedicated last Friday morning with the late and beloved Jim Chavis' family in attendance. His widow, Mrs. Edna Chavis, was the revered guest as well as a number of the children and friends.

Organizer Carnell Locklear gave the dedicatory address in honor of "Mr. Jim" and lauded his long life of service.

Locklear spelled out "Mr. Jim's" name with virtues and goodly attributes...for instance, he spelled out "J-I-M this way..."



Coharie Indians from Clinton perform 'Maiden Dance' in Raleigh

J is for "Joy" ...I is for "Integrity" and M is for "Maturity." That seemed to spell out Mr. Jim's life pretty well. He was, indeed, a joyful and mature man with lots and lots of integrity.

The historical marker erected in his honor stands on Highway 711 almost directly in front of Old Main beside the parking lot fronting the railroad that cuts through the campus.

Mr. Jim passed away in 1979 at the age of 84; he left a mark for many of us to aspire to. He was associated with the great Indian leader, Joe Brooks, back in the 30s and 40s. They and their mighty "Siouan Council" put events into motion that are still coming to pass.

For instance, they were responsible for a spark of Indian activism that resulted in the "Lumbee" name change although they championed the name "Siouan" and then later "Cheraw." Too, they developed the old Red Banks Resettlement lands and championed Indian recognition for the Indians of

Robeson County.

Internecine feuds within the Indian camp have kept the full power of the Indian recognition fight of the 30s from coming to full fruition but the recognition of the "22" as 1/2 or more Indian blood by the Bureau of Indian Affairs is their most lasting achievement.

Said one familiar with the situation, "As soon as the Indians quit their fighting and feuding they can have the full benefits of federal recognition, thanks to Joe Brooks and Jim Chavis and men like that, the work has already been done." Too, a federal law suit in the early 70s brought by famous attorney Tom Tureen demanded that the federal government give federal services to the surviving members of the "Famous 22."

The inability of the Indians in both the Lumbee and Tuscarora camps to achieve unity seems to have bruted the impact of the federal suit brought and won by a Tuscarora group in behalf of the surviving 22.

Friday was also a day to honor Brantley Blue, the famous and influential Lumbee barrister who passed away in 1979 also.

The portrait, painted by Lumbee artist Craig Locklear, will hang in Old Main, on the Pembroke State University campus. Brantley Blue was one of the warriors who saved Old Main by his efforts in behalf of the "Save Old Main" movement.

Brantley Blue was the first Indian to serve on the U.S. Indian Claims Commission. He constantly charged his friends and associates with the query: "What have you done for your people today?"

Brantley Blue was an advocate for all Indian people, especially Indians living on the eastern seaboard of America.

Old friends Adolph Dial and Lew Barton gave remarks in his behalf (see Lew Barton's column "Anecdotes Illustrative" elsewhere in this issue for additional comments).

Appropriately enough, the week was begun with a prayer breakfast at the Pembroke Jaycee Hut with Rev. Mike Cummings speaking. As he noted, religion is part and parcel of the Robeson County Indian heritage.

LISA CUMMINGS CROWNED MISS GNAA DURING POW WOW



Miss Lisa Cummings was crowned Miss GNAA during GNAA's fourth annual Community Day and Pow Wow which was held Friday and Saturday, September 19 and 20, 1980 at the YMCA Retreat Center, on Hill Point Road in Greensboro, N.C.

The new Miss GNAA is the daughter of Delores and David L. Cummings of

High Point. She is also the granddaughter of Hayworth Cummings and Mr. and Mrs. Broncy Cummings of Robeson County. She won out over 6 other contestants.

The Pow-Wow was sponsored by the Guilford Native American Indian Center, 400 Prescott St., Greensboro, N.C.

Cherokee Methodist Church Homecoming Sunday

The Cherokee Methodist Church in the Wakulla community, will hold their Homecoming Sunday, October 5, 1980. All former members are invited to attend. Lunch will be served in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a singing in the afternoon. Singing groups are invited to come. Rev. Julian Ransom is Pastor.

SENIOR CITIZENS OUTING

All senior citizens are invited to an outing on Saturday evening, October 4, 1980, fifty-five years of age and up. The event is sponsored by the Mt. Airy Jaycees and will be held at Tyner's Pond. If you are planning to attend, please come to Mt. Airy Baptist Church at 1:00 p.m.

County-wide Meeting Scheduled Oct. 3rd at Jaycee Fairgrounds

According to local news reports there will be a county-wide meeting held Friday night at the Lumberton Jaycee Fairgrounds on Highway 41. The Carolina Indian Voice has been notified of the meeting and is also reporting according to local news reports.

Carl West, spokesman for a group billing itself "The Tri-Racial Committee for Tax Reform" has called for the meeting in a personal column he writes for the Robesonian, the county daily newspaper.

The meeting will begin, according to West, at 7:30 p.m. West has, in the past, called for electing the county manager by popular vote and electing