

EDITORIAL AND OPINION PAGE

"We cannot know where we are going if we do not know where we have been."

As I See It



by Bruce Barton

COUNTY'S "NEW" SCHOOL DISTRICT PLAN IS RACISM IN REVERSE, AS I SEE IT

As many of you know the Robeson County Board of Education has tentatively approved a "new" proposal redistricting the county province which would assure folks in the Clyburn Pines-Country Club areas a seat on the board of education, if things go according to plans.

The tentative plan would combine the Clyburn area (formerly in the Lumberton School system) and the Raft Swamp and Burnt Swamp areas (formerly in the fourth district). This new district NUMBER 10-would elect one school board member.

Following the recent public hearing (after the fact and after the plan has been favorably reported and tentatively accepted) Chairman David Green suggested "we have a cooling off period." So it looks like the on coming board members will have some input. The problem is I don't believe they will have enough time to change the plan appreciably. It seems to have already been decided. And the "cooling off" period seems a mere ruse. It seems just a matter of timing now. But it ought not to be that way.

As I told you last week, the committee that came up with the plan is made up of two lame ducks (one of whom chaired the committee), two board members who have never faced the wrath of an angry electorate and Green who barely won his seat in his last election. A lame duck is one who is serving out his present term after being defeated for re-election.

Even when double voting was in force county school board members were elected county-wide. That's the way this board ought to be elected too. Electing school board members by district is, as I see it, un-American. It's a civil rights dodge, an attempt to placate the power brokers among us. And I note that minorities are always hampered by the political device.

The county school board ought to abandon this demeaning and condescending scheme and treat everyone

the same. We broke double voting to assure equality, and the absence of racial discrimination. This scheme effectively dilutes the Indian's vote, generally speaking, and returns us to educational cotton fields. We cannot work toward total merger until we clean up our own back yard.

Folks are saying that the district plan cannot be undone, even that the justice department has already approved it in principle. If so, someone has broken the law. The justice department should not be contacted until after the people have had their say. You might note that the plan was "tentatively approved," then a public hearing was called for. The public hearing raised some significant questions and this scheme ought to be put on hold until all questions are answered. Dilution of any one person's vote is an abomination, a civil rights violation.

It is interesting to me that when Indians assume the mantle of responsibility or power the rule makers begin changing the rules. Right now, if this plan passes muster, you will be allowed to vote for only that person who lives in your district. You ought to be allowed to vote on all of them. If Robeson County had one system, instead of five, you would hear little talk of districts--no way!

As it now stands, the Indians are low man on the totem pole again. It's a new device, even more effective than double voting. Even without adding District Ten, it is virtually impossible for an Indian to be elected chairman of the school board even though Indian students are the majority populace in the school system.

It looks to me like the school board will eventually consist of four Indians, four Whites and three Blacks. That kind of composition is not what we broke double voting for. Indians would be in the minority again.

Repetition is the key to the Universe. And it's time for a new slogan, a new call to arms. **THIS NEW DISTRICT PLAN IS AS WRONG AS TWO LEFT SHOES.** This "new" plan smacks of racism in reverse. And the Indians will be the odd party out. We have to be careful. History has a way of repeating itself.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY PLANS UNDERWAY
Plans are underway for our tenth anniversary celebration. I hope you will share this special moment with us. (See page 9 in this issue).

The Carolina Indian Voice will celebrate ten years of continuous publication on January 20, 1983. This will be the biggest issue we have ever printed, complete with history, pictures, and commemorative ads. This issue will be a collector's item.

And we are planning a celebration, an extravaganza on January 22, a night to remember as we recall ten

Letters To The Editor

Prisoner Claims

He Is Not Guilty

Your name is Smith. Flashing lights and a shrill siren pierce your absent thoughts as you follow the highway home on a Saturday afternoon. They aren't hurrying past, they must want you to pull over to the side, which you do while searching back for a stop sign, some light you might have missed. Before you can begin to step out of your 1980 Ford car to discover your apparent blunder, a rush of lawmen are pointing threatening shotguns, shiny revolvers directly at you from seemingly a hundred directions. As you're slammed against the car, handcuffed, and ordered to "Shut up, Mr. Smith," little do you know that your troubles have just only begun.

Later, during the trial to follow the arresting officer convincingly details your certain guilt to a jury. He mentions, "I didn't give him time to say anything because I wasn't interested in what he had to say at the time." You do not have a criminal record, you've never been in any trouble with the law, and right now--you truly are innocent. They say you were involved in a bank robbery at about 10:00 a.m., nearly a hundred miles from where you were arrested at 2:40 p.m. Through all of your worst fears and disbeliefs, you hang on to the American assurance that in courts, guilty men go to jail, innocent ones are found innocent. Not necessarily so.

It seems like the trial is going along alright. Now, over the weekend, the past several weeks of jail flash past; a continuing nightmare, the beginning of a scar that will never fade away. Would anyone ever know about the decisions you have been forced to make? You know your life will never be the same when you finally fall into a light sleep, there is only one guarantee that you will awaken to again be stunned that this is not all a terrible dream. Your family's house has been burned to the ground. Your wife and children are homeless; they absolutely don't know what to think about your arrest, these impossible charges, this scary trial where prosecutors and law officers are so certain about your guilt. There is no way for them to know now that you have been sternly warned the day after the fire: If you testify, you'll never see them again. Period. All you know is that there was a person driving a "switch car" who is not on trail--and you have been assured that this person was you.

Your family wasn't able to raise money for a good lawyer, but the attorney who as appointed to represent you, seems to be doing alright. He doesn't stand up and object like the others, he doesn't ask you questions like the other one does with the man they sent into the bank--the one whom has been convicted of bank robbery before, and a lot of other crimes, but then again, they haven't said much about you. The jury must be hearing what you are hearing. There's no doubt that the others have been under investigation for a long, long time--and the investigators had no knowledge of where you lived; this "switch car" is described as "...75, 76, 77 Dodge Dart," and you were driving a 1980 Ford Fairmont, the bank they keep speaking of was robbed at 10:10 a.m. and you want to get up and say where you were then--surely that is enough to end the nightmare. Then, as you glance back at your family sitting behind you, the decision to remain quiet again takes over, and the nightmare goes on...

Although wedding anniversaries these days may not signify the beginning of life, they're still important romantic milestones. Holidays, especially Christmas, are another season for romance. It's a time when lovers remember each other with special gifts. Many may find the words of a lovely song on their lips as they shop for that special gift this holiday season. It's George Gershwin's "Embraceable You," the theme song that's synonymous with a favorite of romantics everywhere, the fragrance of Tabu. This haunting Oriental scent by Dana appeals to women of any age...and to the special men in their lives, as well. It's a fragrance that has stood the test of time and romance.

A love affair that might have changed the course of history...that's what happened in the winter of 1777-78 when the British could have attacked George Washington's depleted army at Valley Forge. The British commander, General William Howe, was distracted by his romance with a lady in Philadelphia and delayed his attack until too late.

The trial is over. One lawyer says that his eleven year old son could have defended you better. The main law enforcement officers try to calm your wife and family; they tell them they're very very sorry that you had to be involved in this trial--they didn't think that you had been guilty from the beginning.

None of that matters at all now. The jury has said that you are guilty and that alone seems to be the final say. There will be no appeal bond, and you, Mr. Smith, are going to spend many many cold months--in prison.

This has happened. There are just a very few instances where the wheels of justice fail to turn--and this time, John D. Locklear has been caught in the turnstyle. Law is to a large extent a game. Any lawyer will vouch for this fact. If a lawyer plays by the rules and plans a careful strategy, he can either win, or preserve errors in such a way as to win on appeal. Primarily due to Locklear's refusal to testify, his lawyer was unable to effectively assist him and plan such a strategy. He will never know if he has saved his family's various lives. HE does know that his wife has divorced him, he has nearly lost touch with his children and other family members, that he has been in jail and prison (hundreds and hundreds of miles from home) for over 27 months, and that he has still a minimum of 21 more months to go. He has tried everything--to no avail. While it later turned out that perhaps his greatest issue on appeal should have been ineffective counsel, the same lawyer at the trial was assigned to his appeal, and he certainly didn't cover that issue.

Immediately prior to sentencing, the Judge said that he didn't know who was guilty and who wasn't. The government failed to bring up at trial the fact that tire prints had been made of the "switch car" and that they didn't match the prints of the car in which the government said Locklear used as the "switch car"--the car in which he was arrested.

John D. Locklear prays with all his might now that you will review the enclosed motion, Magistrate's Recommendations, and his objections to those recommendations. The motion was not prepared by a lawyer--just a friend of John's who has tried as hard and diligently as possible to help him. A friend who has been in prison for many years-- who has never seen a case, having known thousands of different situations, where an individual is actually, truly innocent, except for this one. Everyone says that there's "just no way that they could be guilty, that they have proof, that there was a terrible mistake, an unbelievable injustice..." But deep inside, there's simply no doubt that they were rightly found guilty. But not John D. Locklear. His boss at the Federal Correctional Institution in Ashland, Kentucky, Mr. John Gobel would, after having John D. work closely as his number one man for over two years, and after working here some twelve years, firmly state that he has never seen or heard of a case where every fact and point-pointed more towards an individual's innocence. Locklear's counselor (Warren Dety) has again and again tried to help John find ways to present the truth--in feeling, after more than 23 years in the Bureau of Prisons, that John truly is innocent.

John D. Locklear further prays that you might take just a few minutes--to call or write to Attorney Michael E. Lee, of Lee, Johnson and Williams, P.O. Box 20027, Greensboro, NC 27402. Michael Lee represented a defendant who was clearly guilty, knows exactly what happened at trial, behind the scene, and who felt strongly at the time that John D. Locklear absolutely had to be innocent. John's sister is eager to assist in answering any questions or providing any information which might be helpful in looking into either the case or the preparation of a potential article about John's plight: Mrs. Lucille Brock, Elmore St., H.P. Lot F-2, Lumberton, NC 28352. (919) 276-8837. John D. Locklear contacted

several attorneys after his arrival in prison. They were all far too expensive and most were burdened with heavy case loads. He attempted to turn to the Guilford Native American Association in Greensboro--his letters were never answered. He sent several long letters to Senator Jesse Helms, Congressman Charles Rose, Congressman Stephen Neal, and to Governor James B. Hunt. They all returned courteous letters, informing John D. that they would have their respective staffs look into the matter--but they could do nothing more.

In Columbus, Ohio, the mother of a young girl convicted of murder, has hired two of Cleveland's finest attorneys and investigator to bring the truth of her daughter's innocence to light. It appears now that they will be successful. Unfortunately, John D. Locklear's family aren't in such a nice financial position--they are not able to hire those who would demand justice in John's case.

The Magistrate has not addressed the questions John D. Locklear raised in his motion. Perhaps the motion was not prepared less than correctly. The bottom line fact seems to be that you, the media, stand as John's last and only chance. We suppose truly guilty individuals have often tried in many different, seemingly conscientious, convincing pleas of unjust prosecutions, of overlooked innocences, etc. Please look into this case--you'll find that there is truth to his story. He is innocent.

One would think that where a situation arose--where a man who is in federal prison, just might well be innocent, that there would be a "hearing" to insure that an innocent man has not been imprisoned. John's nightmare continues. There is not too much more that can be said at this point. If you are interested in looking into John's case further, to inquire deeper into the case of John D. Locklear of Rowland, NC, please call his sister, or Michael Lee, or write to John at the following address: John D. Locklear, Reg. No. 11713-057, Federal Correctional Institution, P.O. Box 888, Ashland, Kentucky 41101.

A man has lost everything. He has been placed in the middle of a situation which should not be; which according to this Country's system of jurisprudence, cannot happen. Yet it does occasionally happen, and unfortunately it has happened to John D. Locklear.

Your help is desperately needed--and will be forever appreciated.

Most respectfully and faithfully yours,
John D. Locklear

Writer charges Equal Employment Has no Meaning

To the Editor:
What is the employment outlook for workers in the St. Pauls School System? Favorable? Good? Maybe. If you do your job well, does that guarantee job security? What if you do your job well and stand up for what is legally, morally right in any job? Do you still feel secure in your job? Where are those teachers who opposed the school administration a few years ago?

This school term two cafeteria workers were fired. One had been employed for five years, the other for fifteen years. Length of employment and years of service is indicative of the fact that they must have been good workers. The question of why they were fired is of all St. Pauls school System employees should address to themselves.

Examine the facts: the letters received by these two workers stated the cafeteria was being reorganized, therefore, their services were no longer needed. However, when applying for unemployment benefits they learn the reason given for their dismissal was "unsatisfactory work."

Reorganization of a department in order to cut back is often necessary in these unstable economic conditions, but does cut backs apply only to Indians and Blacks in the St. Pauls School System? The lady who had worked for fifteen years in the system is Black, the other with five years of service is Indian. Is reorganization the reason there are only a few Blacks and no Indians employed in the high school? Or could investigation show they are deemed "unsatisfactory workers" by the administration? The two cafeteria employees requested at the time of their dismissal a hearing before the board of education. As of today, no word has been forthcoming on their request. This case has been placed

before the Equal Employment Commission which has had one hearing with all involved parties. At which time part-time work, five hundred dollars, and a job next school term were mentioned, "if" there was an opening.

I don't believe it takes a better-than-average aptitude or a great deal of common sense to realize that a grave injustice has taken place. This denotes that the St. Pauls administration has a long way to go before it can lay claim to equal employment opportunities. Beware of your job security in the future. Formal training, span of time in employment, or laws which protect the employee has no meaning with the St. Pauls School administration.

W.P. Revels
St. Pauls

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