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THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

PEMBROKE, N.C.

"Building Communicative Bridges
In A Tri-Racial Setting"

ROBESON COUNTY

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A Front Page Editorial

INDIANS CONFRONT RACISM AND CONDESCENSION IN METHODIST CAMP

METHODIST COLLEGE--Vernon Tyson, superintendent of the Wilmington District of the Methodist Church, stated the case bluntly: "If the individual (Rev. Simeon Cummings) were not a Native American we would not even be discussing this....I've seen his resume and it's not all that great. He's a good man but he's not qualified to be superintendent...." Tyson also noted that Rev. Cummings is not "a seminary graduate."

Tyson seemed to express the sentiment of the majority of North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church which convened last Sunday at Methodist College in Fayetteville for four days (June 5-9). The annual convocation determines actions and ministries of the Methodist Church for the future.

The conference acted upon a number of resolutions, including a resolution to prohibit homosexuals from entering the ministry, security and peace in Central America, public utility rates and their impact upon poor people, drunk driving and the needs and concerns of the aged and poor.

But one resolution that was seemingly ignored was one presented by delegates from Robeson County asking for appointment of an Indian superintendent to the Rockingham District, even though more than 200 Native American Methodists held a protest march and peaceful assembly Sunday afternoon to support the appointment of an Indian (specifically Rev. Simeon Cummings) as District Superintendent. The protest was ignored as the conference appointed Rev. William W. Sherman, Jr. as superintendent of the Rockingham District, the district that the predominate Indian Methodist Churches in Robeson County belong to.

The protesters are expected to present a resolution today asking that an Indian

be appointed superintendent by 1984. And the conference is expected to ignore and deny that resolution. Too, the condescending attitude of the conference delegates and administrators and bishop has left a bitter taste in the mouths of many Indian Methodists.

Barney L. Davidson, president of the church council, said Sunday that a Native American had never been appointed to the church council (made up of the 12 district superintendents and Bishops which make up the Eastern District) because none had ever been qualified.

Davidson was quoted as saying, "Normally someone from a large church and a large congregation (is chosen). The cabinet was unanimous. We just don't feel they (Native Americans) have anyone qualified."

But the Indian protestors disagreed firmly, carrying signs that read: "Think!"; "Native Americans are loyal Methodists," "After 100 years, still no superintendent," "If not now...when?" And similar messages.

And the Native Americans marched nobly around the auditorium where the conference was being held, with bearing and dignity. This editorialist did not observe a single Methodist (including Bishop William R. Cannon, or District Superintendent Joseph Bethea, a black... (Rev. Bethea is finishing

up his term which concludes with this conference) offer a visible expression of concern. Most seemed afraid to be seen with the Indians. The delegates went about their business, seeming to be modeled after a political convention with lots of ritual, resolutions and old fashioned politicking.

It seemed to us a sad commentary, speaking to the worst in our Methodist brothers. We saw few expressions of Christian love. The callous disregard,

lack of expressed love, and denigrating of character (like publicly holding Rev. Cummings up to public scorn as being in their opinion, "unqualified"), did not elevate the Methodist convocation to greatness. And it reminded us of something a Black leader said once: "Things seem better on the surface but worse underneath in the region of a man's heart where he truly resides."

Said Harbert Moore, a leader of the protest, "The church's attitude is what causes white people to think minority people aren't as good as they are." Moore noted sadly, "To us it's a form of racism."

Adolph Dial, Chairman of Pembroke State's Indian Studies Department, and like Moore a member of Prospect United Methodist Church (one of the largest Indian churches in America) said, "at first they said it was the money...but I think it's pure racism. There's an oligarchy system in this conference that's really strong. But we're not going to stop. We'll keep trying; if we don't get it this week then next. We'll have a district superintendent in five years." "We must obey our conscience and our better judgement," said Davidson. "We examined at length the man they felt should be district superintendent and we were in full agreement. We don't think he or any other Native American Indian meets the qualifications."

Charles Smith, another district superintendent piously said, "It saddens me that so much anger and disappointment is being expressed...." But Rev. Simeon Cummings corrected him, "Charlie, that's not anger...it's love!"

Rev. Cummings, now 62, and long active in Methodist circles, stood quietly by the entrance way to the auditorium as the demonstration took place. Formerly a delegate to the national convocation of the Methodist Church, he is now director of the Robeson County Cooperative Ministry (encompassing Sandy Plains, Philadelphus, Collins Chapel and Ashpole Churches). He also serves as full time pastor of Sandy Plains United Methodist Church and was pastor of Prospect United Methodist Church for twenty years. Prospect's membership increased from 250 in 1953 to more than 600 in 1973 when Cummings became coordinator of Outreach Ministries for 5 years for the North Carolina Methodist Church, representing 65 churches in 56 eastern North Carolina Counties. Said a layman knowledgeable about Methodist affairs, "the only thing they can use against Cummings is the fact that he did not graduate from a seminary...and they're going to hold to that...." Said an Indian participant, "It's a sad story but we ought not to be surprised. It is a culmination of 200 years of mistreatment of Indians in this country. And it took this for many of us to open our eyes wide with understanding. Racism and condescension can wear robes-too. Remember the Sanhedrin?"

And if Rev. Simeon Cummings is not qualified then there is something wrong with the Methodist qualifying process, as we see it. And, too, is it not also a matter of the heart? Of commitment to a proud people?

And can an Indian ever be qualified if white, conservative clergy continue to make, enforce, and interpret the rules of inclusion?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Be sure and read page 9 and 10 of the Carolina Indian Voice for an indepth interview with James A. Jones, Principal of Prospect School.

This interview appeared in the School News Service BULLETIN and was submitted to us by Walter G. Oxendine, Public Information Coordinator for the Robeson County Schools.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Prospect Graduation Ceremony held



Gina Locklear



Brian Jones

Prospect School held their final graduation ceremony on Sunday, June 5, 1983 in the school gymnasium. The graduating class of 1983 was the last graduating class of Prospect School because of the consolidation of Maxton High, Prospect High and Pembroke High into the new West Robeson High School.

As has been traditional at Prospect School, the commencement address was delivered by the valedictorian, Brian Jones, and the salutatorian, Gina Locklear.

Miss Locklear is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hezekiah Locklear, Jr. She has been a member of the following clubs during her years at Prospect High: Spanish Club (9-10); SECME (9-10); Christian Youth Club (9); Society of Distinguished American High School Students (10-12); Beta Club (11-12); a member of the Annual Staff (9-12); a member of the Basketball Team (10-12); a member of the Softball Team (12); and an H-CAP participant (12).

Awards and honors include: Marshal (9-11); Editor of the School Yearbook (12); World History Award (10); Biology Award (10); U.S. History Award (11); Army Award (11-12); Senior Superlative: Most Studious; Advanced Biology Award (12); Enigh IV Award (12); I Dare You Award (12); and Most Dedicated Athlete.

Miss Locklear will further her studies at East Carolina University where she will begin as a freshman in the fall. She plans to seek a major in a health career.

Reprinted below is the speech Miss Locklear delivered at the last Prospect Graduation Ceremony.

Parents and special guests, I would like to welcome you to our final graduation ceremony at Prospect High School. Our class has the distinction of being the last graduating class at Prospect School and we feel honored.

As I look back at my past years at Prospect, I have a feeling of regret when I think of graduating. While in high school, I have had the chance to meet and make friends whom I will miss dearly. Also I have broadened my horizons and expanded my knowledge due to the caring of the faculty and staff of Prospect. Often when teachers would assign homework, we would complain but thanks to their persuasion we would do the assignment. At this time I would like to thank each teacher for putting up with our continuous complaining among other things, and for urging us on to develop our potentials to the fullest. Also I would like to thank my mother who was always there when I needed her, supporting me in all my endeavors.

We have just finished one stage of our life and whether we are prepared or not another stage is about to begin. Because

Continued Page 2

PEOPLE AND PLACES AND THINGS

BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC
Pembroke Rescue Squad will be holding a Blood Pressure Clinic-Saturday, June 11, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of Piggly Wiggly Store, Pembroke. This will be a free service to the citizens of Pembroke and surrounding communities.

SPONSORS NEEDED
Any business person, merchant, professional or individual interested in sponsoring a contestant in the 1983 Miss Lumbee Pageant, please contact Mrs. Florence Ransom at LRDA Center for the Arts Annex, 521-2401.

THANK YOU
The Department of Social Service greatly appreciates volunteer service rendered by the citizens of Robeson County in the May 14th distribution of surplus commodities. The volunteer turnout was great in all of the areas. They would like to thank each person and church who had a part in making the distribution a success in Fairmont, Lumberton, Maxton, Parkton, Pembroke, Red Springs, Rowland and St. Pauls.

Guest Speaker at Awards Banquet



Dennis Lowery

One of the highlights of Lumbee Homecoming 1983 will be the Lumbee Awards Banquet. This banquet will be held at the Pembroke Jaycee Building on June 30, 1983 at 7:30 p.m. The purpose of this affair is to present four (4) prestigious awards to Lumbees who have dedicated their lives to the plight of the Lumbee People. These awards are: 1.) Business Person Award, 2.) Henry Berry Lowry Award, 3.) Distinguished Service Award, 4.) Advancement of Education Award.

Guest speaker for this affair will be Mr. Dennis Lowery, President and Owner of Continental Industrial Chemicals, inc. based in Charlotte, NC. His company is the largest minority owned chemical company in the United States with sales of \$26 million annually. The son of Mr. & Mrs. Zeb Lowery of Pembroke, our Guest Speaker is well known throughout Robeson County since he grew up here, graduated from Pembroke Senior High and Pembroke State University (B.A. Degree) in 1964.

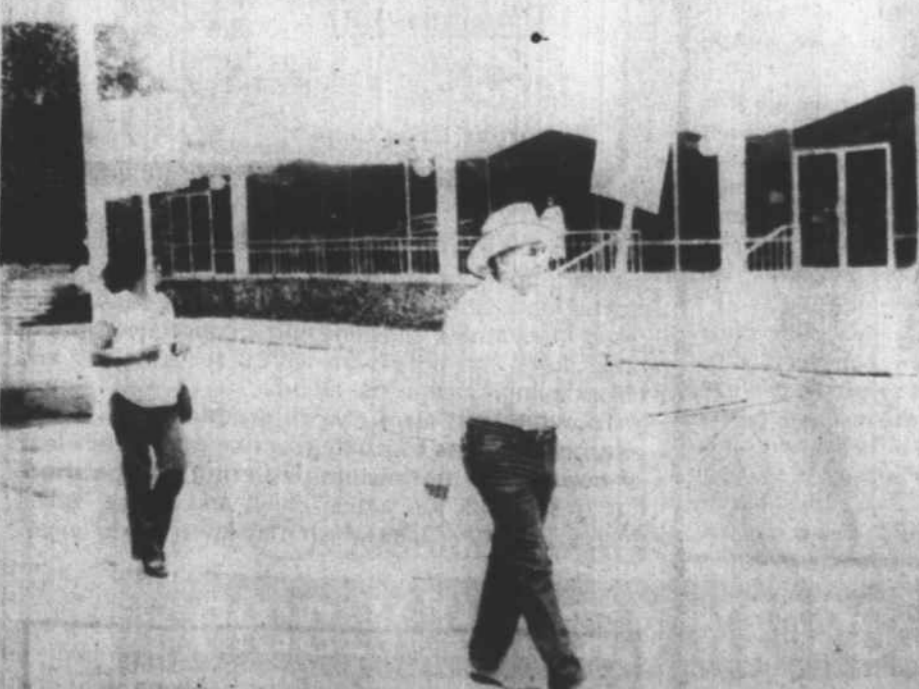
Mr. Lowery has distinguished himself as one of the leading businessmen in the state of North Carolina. Presently, he is Chairman of the Board of two (2) companies: 1.) Indo Corporation, 2.) Specialty Chemical Company. He has received the following awards: 1.) Small Business Person of the Year for North Carolina, 1979, 2.) North Carolina Outstanding Business Company Award, 1982, 3.) Recipient: Distinguished Alumni Award, Pembroke State University, 1982. He and his wife Judy are the proud parents of three (3) children: Shelley, Dana, and Brandon.

A buffet dinner will be catered and upon completion of the program agenda, entertainment will be provided by R & R Disco, Inc. Tickets (\$7.50 per person) for this banquet can be obtained from LRDA Personnel or by contacting Gary Deese, ANA Coordinator, at LRDA's ANA/CETA Complex between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. See you there!



Organizers Adolph Dial, Harbert Moore lead march around the auditorium to protest lack of Indian presence in

Methodist Church Council. (Bruce Barton photo)



Dr. Reginald Oxendine was another of many, many Indian Methodists who

showed their concern by "marching for justice." (Bruce Barton photo)