

WHAT NEXT???

People Of Good Will Can Solve Robeson's Problems

We were surprised by the comments attributed to Mr. McDuffie Cummings, Town Manager of Pembroke. Apparently, he "feels certain groups and individuals owe the sheriff and other officials in the county an apology".

In our opinion, those individuals who have stood up to ask questions about some of the actions of our Sheriff are certainly within their rights to do so. Whether Mr. Cummings realizes it or not, public officials are accountable for their actions!

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In the past couple of weeks we have witnessed an influx of "concerned" people who have arrived on the scene, held press conferences, and made proclamations. While we appreciate their concern and assistance we would also like to point out that several of these individuals carry "negative baggage" that will, in the long run, hurt our efforts to bring about much needed change.

We would like to remind non-Robesonians that the problems of Robeson County are our problems and while we welcome their assistance and support, we are determined to work out these problems ourselves. We have lost two great leaders, Mr. John Godwin and Mr. Julian Pierce, but we will endure since their spirit remains with us!

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It is unfortunate that advisors for Hatcher and Jacobs have instructed them to appeal to the leader of the Soviet Union for assistance. While we understand the strategy of raising Indian and political issues at the upcoming summit, we feel it is ill advised to attempt to work with those who currently oppress many people of the world.

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At the precinct meeting held at West Robeson High School last week, we were once again impressed with the thoroughness and wisdom of Mr. Dexter Brooks. In clear and concise terms he explained current election law and the options available to the supporters of Julian Pierce.

We were not surprised at the words of Joe Freeman Britt when he expressed his opposition to a special session of the legislature for the purpose of correcting a flaw in the election law that allows Mr. Britt to become a judge without opposition.

WHAT NEXT???

EDITORIAL EXPRESSION

Mary Russ Letter Dramatically Illustrates The Climate & Beliefs Of Some Individuals

We recently published a letter from a "Ms. Mary Russ of Lumberton". We later learned someone used this fictitious name to conceal their identity. The writer of the letter attacked the character of Indians as a people and suggested that Indians belonged out west.

We published the letter as the legitimate and sincere expression and belief of a fellow Robesonian. However objectionable and personally insulting the letter was to us, we felt it deserved publication since it dramatically illustrates the climate and beliefs of some individuals in Robeson County.

Unfortunately, some individuals acted in just the way the writer of the letter probably hoped. Some individuals made threatening calls to one, Mr. Danny Russ of Lumberton. Mr. Russ lost his mother two years ago and his mother's name was Mary Russ.

Most Robesonians are concerned about the present tense situation in our county. Most of us want to do something constructive so as to put this tension behind us. We need only address ourselves to the problem in order to determine the solution.

The current tension can be traced back to the killing of Jimmy Earl Cummings by Deputy Kevin Stone. At the hastily-called inquest, upon the urging of District Attorney Joe Freeman Britt, the Coroner Chalmers Biggs refused to postpone the hearing in order to give the Cummings family enough time to hire an attorney and prepare for the hearing.

By the time of the murder of Julian Pierce, the situation had gotten so bad that many immediately believed that somehow Joe Freeman Britt was behind the killing. It was felt that Julian was the front-runner in a race that he was not supposed to win, and that the political establishment could not allow him to win.

At the outset, most political observers did not give Julian much of a chance of winning against Joe Freeman. They underestimated the depth of the anti-Britt sentiment in the black, Indian and white communities. Joe Freeman is a man of strong convictions who has never had to win an election at the polls.

Based upon what we know about the death of Julian and the individuals involved we do not believe that Joe Freeman Britt was in any way responsible for the murder. While Joe may be cantankerous and a zealot about capital punishment, a murderer he is not.

Because of an unfortunate incident in our youth we had to appear before a panel of the Board of Law Examiners before receiving our license to practice. As district attorney Joe came to our assistance with the considerable prestige of his office. At the time we were very much involved in fighting the controversial double-voting system for electing the county board of education and seeking to reapportion our county commissioner board to assure more minority representation so Joe Freeman's endorsement was not popular in some quarters.

People who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. All of us will agree that the inquest into the Zabitosky killing was handled much differently from the Cummings inquest. On Saturday morning, March 26, 1988, Joe Freeman was actively campaigning in the Pembroke community when he learned of the death of Julian. Joe doubtlessly recognized to his credit that he had an image problem that had to be overcome if he was to become superior court judge.

We are now confronted with the question of what is to become of the new superior court judgeship in the wake of Julian's death. The seat has assumed an importance in the minds of most people unwarranted by the power of the position. A superior court judge is not nearly as powerful politically as the sheriff or the district attorney.

At times during the orbital motion of Uranus, the north or south pole is aligned nearly face on toward the Sun. During those times, the poleward hemisphere receives nearly constant sunlight, while the other hemisphere languishes in decades-long darkness.

We can and do fully sympathize with him and his family. However, we cannot accept the accusation that we have "caused great turmoil in our community". The turmoil has existed for decades. Newspapers are not responsible for the evil that occurs everyday in our world.

We find it somewhat ironic that The Robesonian declined to print the letter in question. The Robesonian stated that "because the letter was in such poor taste and irresponsible, we will not reprint it" but they chose to print responses to the letter.

Mr. Russ, we are sincerely sorry for the pain you and your family has suffered. We would hope you would receive just as many calls apologizing for the irresponsible actions of a few. But we still reject your contention that we are somehow responsible for the evil that exists in Robeson County.

school boards seeking more equitable black and Indian representation. It was our aim to bring similar such voting rights litigation against the county commissioners if they did not agree to reapportion their board on a more equitable basis.

It is apparent to all of us that Julian through his death has indeed changed our lives and our county forever. We now feel that we must put the bitterness and divisions of the past behind us. The offering of a reward by the Town of Red Springs for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Julian's murderer epitomizes this new sense of brotherhood.

This spirit was evident on Thursday night, March 31, 1988, when over 600 persons of all races gathered at West Robeson School to discuss how people throughout Robeson could organize from the precinct level to make the political process more responsive.

If the judgeship is so important why not have the General Assembly to delay the primary election until May of 1990? This would give any minority attorney who is now interested in the position the time to close out their practice and to convince the public that they have qualities for the office other than the fact that they are running against Joe Freeman Britt.

We submit that the county does not need the divisiveness of an election for the judgeship at this time. Robeson has endured a stage of siege for so long that most of us are suffering from combat fatigue. We all need a time of healing from the wounds of the past.

People of goodwill, in the spirit of Julian, must continue the process of healing already set in motion by the Red Springs officials and countless others. Government works best that is representative of all. On Tuesday, May 3, 1988, each of us can personally support this effort.

Gary Locklear is running for a newly-created district court judgeship. He enjoys and merits the unanimous support of the Robeson and Scotland Park. Presently three whites and one black sit on the district court bench; simple fairness and good sense will be served by his election.

We must learn to respect candidates for public office as individuals rather than as racists seeking to "take over" or preserve the old order. No racial group can dominate Robeson. We are all minorities in the sense that we need each other to make a majority.

Prior to the killing of Jimmy Earl Cummings Sheriff Hubert Stone enjoyed immense black and Indian support. Let us remember that without fanfare the Sheriff totally integrated the personnel of his department: one-third black, one-third

Indian and one-third white. No other law enforcement agency and no other county department can make that claim. His recently promoted chief of detectives is Indian. Upon learning of Julian's death to his credit the Sheriff immediately requested the assistance of the FBI and the SBI.

The most important law enforcement problem confronting all of us is not unsolved murders but the pervasive drug dealing and usage that is destroying our county. The problem is simply too much for local law enforcement to handle.

Let us not be too quick to condemn nor come to hasty conclusions before all of the facts are known. We are reminded of how the concerned citizens lost much credibility when they seemed to equate the Edward Zabitosky and Jimmy Earl Cummings killings. If law enforcement learned from the Cummings inquest then the concerned citizens should have learned from the Zabitosky inquest.

Cannot we recognize that as human beings all of us are subject to error and mistake? What is needed now more than anything else is a spirit of cooperation among our local people of all races and communities. Our problems can best be solved by ourselves rather than by outsiders, especially General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union.

In a democratic society people ultimately have the kind of government that they deserve. Public officials are responsive to an aware citizenry that exercises the right to vote. In May of 1990 there will be a primary election for our most important county offices. During the next two years we will have the opportunity to consider the responsiveness of these officials.

Upon reflections most of us will agree that few persons are all good or all bad, including our public officials; many positive changes are occurring. Well before the current tension our clerk of court appointed a black and an Indian as magistrates.

If the supporters of Joe Freeman Britt are opposed to holding an election for that superior court judgeship, then, in a sense of fairness and compromise, could not we all support the creation of an additional seat to be filled by a qualified minority attorney? The need is already here.

The positions of district attorney and sheriff are the most powerful local offices in our system of justice. If Joe Freeman Britt becomes a judge we will need to replace him as district attorney. Why not fill that position with a qualified minority attorney? There are several such attorneys who enjoy the confidence of the local bar, most notably Arnold Locklear.

There is no problem too difficult for people of goodwill to solve. Lumbee Regional Development Association (LRDA) has been holding a series of community hearings in order to determine the concerns of Indian people. After the conclusion of these meetings the Board of Directors of LRDA plans to adopt a political agenda behind which Indian people can rally.

Robeson not only needs a human relations council but also a summit conference between the supporters of Joe Freeman Britt and Julian Pierce. We have nothing to lose but our prejudice and our poverty. Together we can make our nation and our state proud of Robeson County.

Dexter Brooks  
Pembroke, NC

ON HUMAN ISSUES

Here in Robeson County one hears a lot about issues. There are political issues, legal issues, economic issues, health issues; all kinds of issues. And then there are the issues associated with certain groups: Indian issues, Black issues, elders' issues, children's issues, teachers' issues, parents' issues, city-residents' issues, county-residents' issues, any.

READERS' FORUM  
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Brushing Up on Dental Care

If you have good dental care habits, it's probably due—at least in part—to your dentist's advice about brushing, flossing and using fluoride toothpaste.



Dentists help people prevent tooth problems by teaching them to brush and floss properly.

Many Americans benefit from their dentist's care and attention. The staff at the Princeton Dental Resource Center, which reports breakthroughs and forecasts how research will affect dental practices, advises us that scientific advances are giving teeth a new lease on life.

Dentists recommend that patients brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride in an ADA approved toothpaste is the single most effective weapon in the battle against tooth decay.



Steak is 74 percent water by weight.



To convert kilometers to miles, multiply by 0.6.

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