

commentary

Editorial

Where? And How? Now

Whether or not one likes Mr. Willie Lovett, all must give him credit for heading the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People for ten years. He will step down from the post at the end of this year. Whether or not one admits it, heading the DCOABP is like trying to control a Bengal tiger by holding steadfastly to its tail. We commend Mr. Lovett for the battles he has fought — sometimes winning, sometimes losing.

Times have changed and people have changed since the DCOABP was founded. They have changed dramatically during the last ten years. Once upon a time, Durham's African American community could be described as "monolithic," with people of all hues and stripes, from all segments of the race, pulling together for a common cause. No longer is that the case. Sadly, significant numbers of African Americans think the struggle for first-class citizenship is over. To the contrary, it has simply become more insidious and subtle. It is still here in a more devastating form. Those who believe it's over are deceived. They are consequently lulled into a false sense of security and have unconsciously become parts of the problem. To a great degree, some of them have been Chairman Lovett's most vociferous critics. Mr. Lovett should be given credit for recognizing this to be the state of many late 20th century African Americans. Time and events will be the final judges of Mr. Lovett's tenure.

Of utmost importance now is where and how does the Committee go from here.

Recognizing the many uncertainties it faces, the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People must now set about several tasks, no matter who is ultimately chosen to steer its ship through dangerous and uncharted waters.

The Committee must find a way to control its selection process for endorsements, while at the same time maintaining its policy of openness to all in its community. It must find a way to say "NO!" to unqualified aspirants who want to run for public office to satisfy their own selfish ego needs. There is such a thing as winning the battle but losing the war. Winning the battle is where many aspiring politicians have put African Americans as a group, while they satisfied their personal desires by conniving to get endorsement. It is silly and destructive to expect that someone ought to be endorsed by the Committee simply because he or she is black, or brings a crowd of hand-picked folks to the meeting just to vote for him or her. The war is not over, so that's not good enough, and they ought to be told, rather than have the whole race become a laughing stock when the Committee endorses somebody who has no (or insufficient) qualifications for running for any given office or position.

There is no doubt that we need the Durham Committee, but, we need a committee that harkens back to its roots of unselfishness and total credibility.

For want of a nail, the proverbial horse was lost. For want of unselfishness and sincerity, the Durham Committee seriously risks losing what credibility it has left. Narrow-minded, selfish, ego-starved folks who don't mind selling their souls must not be allowed to destroy this vital committee by selling their own race down the river for personal gain.

The Committee needs — now — to make clear to everybody its aims, purposes and objectives. When we say "everybody," we mean just that — everybody.

Let's not get what we go for and lose what we had. That would be hustling backward. From the man/woman in the street, to the college-trained elite, and everybody in between, everybody should know, believe, understand and trust the aims of the Durham Committee now more than ever.

The Committee needs to find a way of fund-raising that would dispel the perception that it will sell out to the candidate who contributes the most money or the cause which promises personal gain to a handful of individuals. Whether or not this is the case in actuality, it is the perception in the general population. Such perception threatens the integrity and worth of the Committee.

Hot on the heels of finding that uncompromising way to finance its program should come frequent and complete financial reports open to everybody.

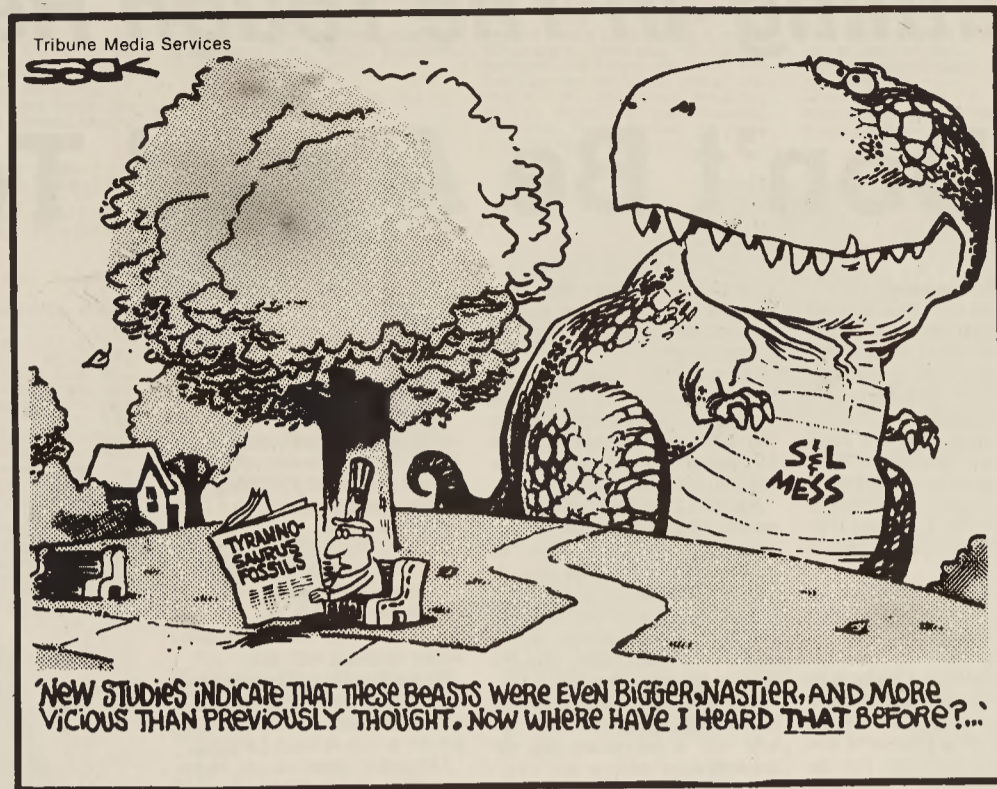
Durham is full of talent, so chairmanship terms ought to be limited. Such limitations would guard against the old saying that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The Durham Committee must avoid even the appearance of shenanigans.

Seats on the executive committee should be assigned to presidents of civic groups — Elks, Masons, fraternities, sororities, etc., representatives from West End, East End, College Heights, Pearsons town, North Durham, and every other section of town.

It can be done.

Decisions must be made for the good of the total community not for some individual's or clique's selfish gain or program.

Many of us have exalted opinions of ourselves and our importance. Some "play" with the credibility and integrity of the Durham Committee. Some will argue that "that's the American way." Well, maybe it is, but it is unprofitable for us as a group. We have a choice. We need not embrace that which is non-productive in this society. All of us need to look beyond our personal desires to a higher plane — what is the best decision for, or who is the best person to, represent the entire race. We must ignore the low road and middle road and opt always for the high road. Our struggle is not over yet, and we cannot afford to forget that. That is, if we want to progress; if we plan to succeed.



Tony Brown's Comments

Tennessee State Now An Educational Kuwait And Black Leaders Can't Be Found

By Tony Brown

A federal judge ruled last month that Louisiana's system of predominantly one-race colleges and universities is not illegal. The 5th U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled previously that Mississippi's similar system is also legal because students have the right to go to the college of their choice.

In essence, a 16-year-old lawsuit ("Adams") by white liberals and black integrationists to "desegregate" black colleges out of existence has failed.

West Virginia State, Bluefield State and Lincoln (Mo.) are already casualties of "desegregation." They are now run by white people with a 95% white student body.

Others still are fighting off the dragon of death-by-desegregation in court. Southern and Grambling universities went to court and successfully defended their rights to educate over one-half of the black college students in Louisiana. Alabama State and Alabama A & M universities have sued the state to retain their heritage and mission of graduating the majority of blacks in Alabama. Another "Save Alabama Black Colleges" mass rally is scheduled for January 20 in Huntsville.

And to attract "other-race students" to these excellent schools, a "minority" (whites) scholarship of tuition, room and board is offered free to any white in Alabama. Whites, resenting black control and suspecting black intelligence, have rejected this offer outright. White Alabama colleges, of course, make no similar offer to blacks.

But Tennessee is a puzzle. The intent to punish blacks for wanting integration by destroying desegregated black colleges is as evident there as it is in Alabama, Louisiana, Texas or the other "Adams" states, but unlike these other states, there is no organized legal resistance.

The Nashville Chapter of the Tennessee State Alumni and student-led groups at TSU have resisted. But those you would expect to lead the fight — the ministers, politicians, educators — are, for the most part, silent or, in some cases, suspected of collaboration with the racists.

Whether the blacks know they are being used in this death-from-within-Trojan Horse-scheme is another matter, but the results are the same. Clearly, higher education for blacks is being dismantled in Tennessee — an educational Kuwait. And like Kuwait, there is no army of resistance.

President George Bush must have had Tennessee's white preference program in mind when he vetoed the 1990 Civil Rights Bill because of racial quotas. In 1989, the white chancellor of the Board of Regents told the black vice president of Academic Affairs at TSU to hire two white deans. In my opinion, TSU violated the federal and state anti-discrimination laws and discriminated against all black applicants when it chose the winners solely on the basis of race.

Under a dubious "settlement" to "desegregate" TSU and bring in 50% Whites (bringing in 50% blacks to a white college would start a second civil war), Tennessee suspended the Constitution for blacks.

There's more. The former black president of TSU, Dr. Otis Floyd, the man who in 1989 watched the white chancellor run his school by hiring white people from a distance, is now the chancellor. But without the same powers.

When Floyd came in as chancellor, so did two white men in newly created positions: one took over the community colleges, the other the state university system. "One could ask what Floyd is in charge of?" wrote Dr. Elizabeth Daniels, a TSU alumna and a reader of this column in the Norfolk Journal and Guide.

"It was suspected that Floyd was appointed as chancellor so he could appoint TSU's first white president," she reports. She said:

"On November 10, Floyd said he was nominating a black man as president of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). This will be MTSU's first black president. It seems more evident than ever that Floyd will appoint a white to be president of TSU in December. They will likely pretend that this 'presidential game' is logical.

"Many years ago some blacks felt that desegregation was a means to better educational opportunity for everyone. I don't know of anyone who

felt that desegregation was to be an end in itself. Of course, the president at MTSU will likely be of little or no use to the educational opportunities of Tennessee's black youth."

"On the other hand, a white president at TSU can destroy the administrators, faculty members and the atmosphere desired by students. This racial exchange of presidents will not and is not intended to help us accomplish our objectives," Dr. Daniels added.

We know where the black preachers, politicians and educators in Alabama and Louisiana. They are in court stopping white racists violating anti-discrimination laws and the Constitution.

But where are the black leaders in Tennessee — the preachers, NAACP, the politicians? We know where the black educators are: are losing their teaching jobs and some are speeding the process.

Rumor has it that the statewide Tennessee NAACP has refused to and a group of black Tennessee lawyers, who agreed to help TSU alumni protect blacks from the racist takeover, joined the Trojan scheme instead.

Whatever happened, nobody but nobody — is legally opposing blatant and racist discrimination at TSU. Come December when a man might appoint a white president of TSU to finish it off, institution that serves the black community — don't blame racism doing what they have always done.

Blame the absence of black leadership in Tennessee. Tony Brown Journal tv series can be seen on public, television in Durham on Channel 4 (WUNC). Please consult tv listings or phone station for air time.



To Be Equal

Cities In Trouble

By John E.

America's cities are in deep trouble.

Philadelphia's budget crisis brought it to the edge of bankruptcy. New York faces deep cuts in the city's budget and its services. A nation's capital, Washington D.C. is another in the growing list of cities facing budget crunches, service cuts, and tax hikes.

America's cities are up against terrible social problems like drugs, inadequate housing, and understaffed health care facilities.

Their schools are often in disastrous shape, some producing dropouts than graduates.

Their transportation systems are in trouble — with steep deficits on public rail and bus lines, and clogged roadways jammed with autos.

Streets and parks are camping grounds for the visible homeless. Many urban families are really the invisible homeless. They doubt live with friends or relatives — since affordable housing is all but nonexistent.

The crack epidemic has ruined once-solid neighborhoods. AIDS crisis threatens to swamp public health facilities.

That's a bleak picture. And the current economic slow-down pushed some cities to the brink — their economies are nose-diving and need for crucial city services increases.

Today's urban problems have been festering for a long time, with government neglect and withdrawal during the go-go years of the 1970s and the nation's refusal to tackle serious social problems that undermine urban vitality.

During the 1980s, national policymakers just walked away from urban problems and implemented policies that increased poverty and inequality — putting more pressure on already strained cities.

Recently, an urban summit meeting of 35 big-city mayors in Washington to reverse the decade-long process that has stripped America of federal funds.

According to the National League of Cities, federal aid to cities was slashed by over 75 percent in the last ten years.

Those cuts came in the face of sharply increased urban problems. In effect, we've asked city governments to meet national challenges in education, skills training, affordable housing, health care, and others while at the same time slashing the resources available to meet those challenges.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Washington has made a habit of

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