

WINSTON-SALEM CHRONICLE

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Impact Of The Black Vote

It is clear from past experience that election analysts will deduct a lot from the recent North Carolina primary election. One only hopes that the impact of the black vote in that election is given the attention that it rightly deserves.

Whatever anybody may think or say, one thing is very clear: no one who is seriously considering elective office here can afford to ignore the black vote. It just may well happen that the black vote will be the difference between a win or a loss in all future elections.

It is with this in mind that all black people must register and vote in all elections. Until those seeking public office realize what impact the black vote has on their prospect to win, very few of them will care to address themselves to the issues that concern the interests of black people.

Up until now, some office seekers have handled the issue of the black vote like a young man dating an ugly girl: sneaking behind the back door and refusing publicly to identify with the issue. What the black vote or lack of it will do in an election will soon force some office seekers to come out into the open and court the black vote. Like everybody else, black voters will then demand that their interests be protected, that issues that concern them be openly discussed, and vote seekers come to them like they go to every other voters.

But until black voters register and vote like they are supposed to do, let no one expect a miracle. It will not happen. Dog handlers, and everybody else will continue to be seen and talked to before we are considered. The point is that those other people register and vote. We too can do the same. And our votes make a lot of difference.

Sudden Exit Of Mr. Wilson

The sudden resignation of Mr. Harold Wilson as the prime minister of Britain was not as unexpected as some will have us believe. The barometer of British opinion was clearly reading a sign of danger for the Labor Party and Mr. Wilson in England. A week before his resignation the government which he headed was defeated in a major debate in the British Parliament. Ordinarily, this kind of defeat would have meant the resignation for Mr. Wilson's government according to British parliamentary procedures. But a vote of confidence saved him from that embarrassment the next time. That Mr. Wilson chose a week after that vote to resign is not probably without reason.

True, Mr. Wilson ruled Britain longer than any other prime minister in the post World War England. He had involved in the politics of Great Britain for about 30 years and for eight years had been the prime minister of that country. As the leader of British Labor Party, he led his party to election victories at a trying and difficult time for his country. He was a strong advocate of the Common Market and stood for a greater tie with the rest of Europe.

But there are observers who see Mr. Wilson's recent resignation as that of a captain abandoning ship in the middle of a storm. The British pound is at all time low, British economy is at a low ebb. It was during Mr. Wilson's primership that

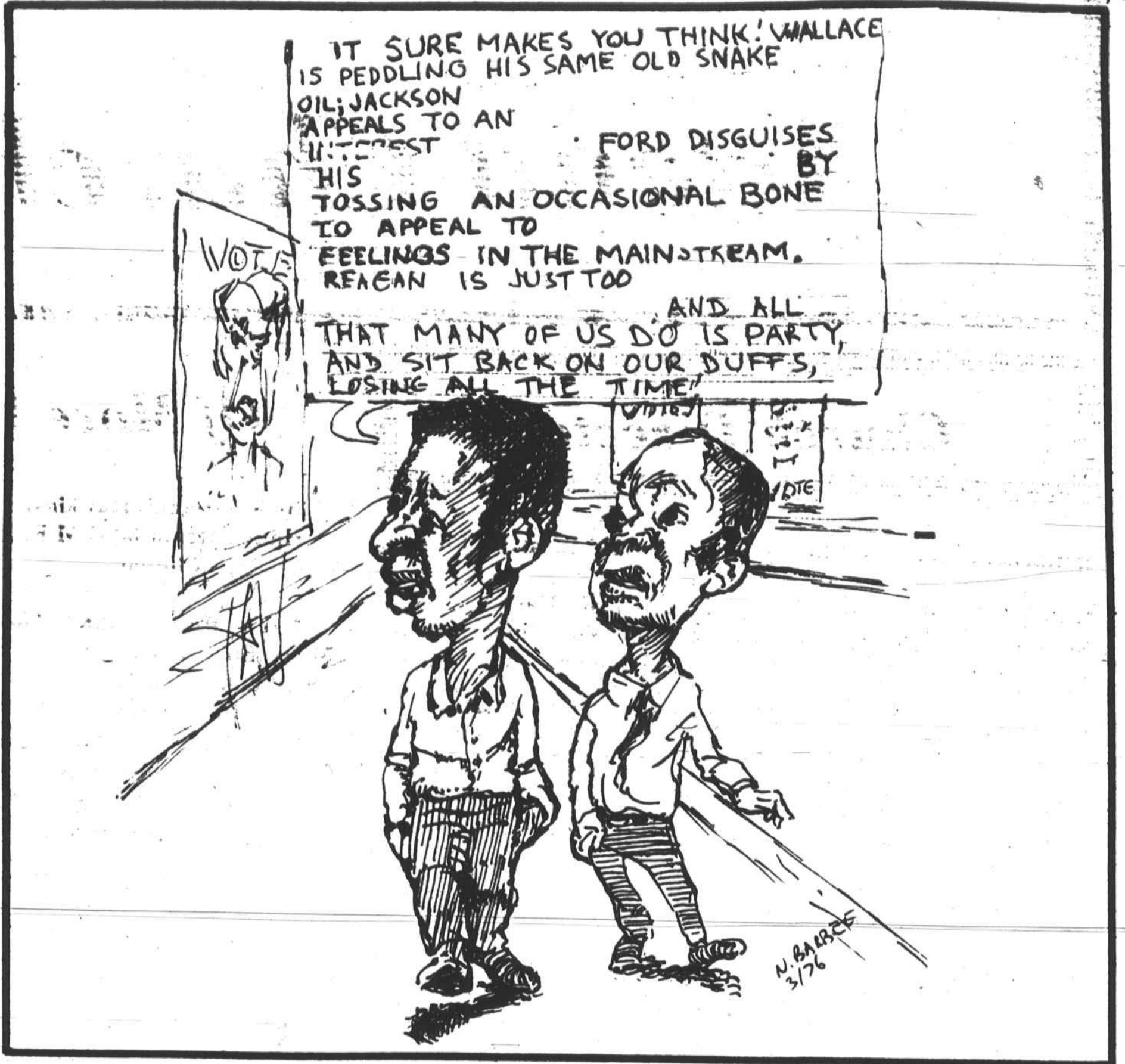
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To Be Equal B y Vernon Jordan, Jr.

Perhaps the most insistent of all the demands for government subsidies comes from the arts community. From theatre groups to symphony orchestras, the well-documented financial pinch causes performers and administrators to look for outside funds to keep culture alive.

Few people would argue against more public support for cultural institutions, but many would suggest that such institutions, devoted as they are to humane instincts, have a special responsibility to overcome racial discrimination in their ranks.

Among the most blatant offenders in this area are America's symphony orchestras. A recent study by the National Urban League and the Symphony of the New World, an integrated orchestra, reveals a pattern of persistent exclusion of black musicians.

The poll of 54 orchestras, including all of the major ones, revealed only 67 minority musicians out of a total of almost 4,700. Nationwide, minorities probably account for less than one-half of one percent of all musicians employed by the country's 110 major and Metropolitan orchestras.

This is a disgraceful record, especially when one considers that many of these minority

performers were hired relatively recently.

And the question of minority hiring also goes beyond matters of equity -- it is an economic issue as well.

The top 28 major symphony orchestras spend over \$75 million each year, much of it for salaries. If only ten percent or orchestral salaries went to minorities -- a smaller percentage than the proportion of blacks in populations of the cities served by those orchestras -- it would mean almost \$5 million dollars in salaries to the minority community.

These major orchestras totalled about \$8 million in government support and played before nearly 11 million people. Clearly they qualify as public institutions, that ought to be serving all of the people, not only the majority community.

Discriminatory patterns in this field have been under attack for years, but change has been slow or nonexistent. One major orchestra that faced anti-discrimination suits a few years ago still has only one black member.

The recent rise to prominence of a number of fine black conductors helps illustrate how, even in the face of rigid discrimination, black musicians prepared themselves for the most difficult and demanding of positions.

There are black associate conductors of some major orchestras and Henry Lewis is music director of the New Jersey Symphony and a star at the Metropolitan Opera.

Blacks are not newcomers to the classical music scene. In the mid-Nineteenth Century blacks were regularly seen as performers and as soloists, and after Jim Crow took over, blacks were often prominent in European musical circles.

The Symphony of the New World is an example of an integrated symphony orchestra, with almost half of its members drawn from minorities and performing under the leadership of a talented black conductor Everett Lee. Incidentally, Lee, like some other black conductors, has led concerts in Russia, while American orchestras were importing Europeans to conduct them.

Discrimination in the concert hall is no longer conscious. Most orchestra managers sincerely believe they are "color blind," but they have yet to understand the importance of overcoming the effects of blatant discrimination of the past.

Orchestras, no less than steel companies and banks, have to inaugurate affirmative action programs that will make their organizations more representative of the communities they serve.