

# Endorsements

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"We give as much information as we can and let the public make a decision," said Johnson. "It (endorsements) is like telling people what and who to vote for."

Added Herman Horn, editor of the *Iredell County News*: "I don't think black people like to be told what to do. We like the value of the little freedom we have."

## Endorsements Play Valuable Role

On the other hand, T.C. Jervay, publisher of the *Wilmington Journal*, said a newspaper should provide both facts on its news pages and editorial direction on its editorial pages.

"We always endorse candidates," Jervay said. "They (endorsements) play a very prominent part in the election. We reach more people in the black community than any other one institution. We need to keep on hitting some of the things that ought to be corrected in the community."

*Chronicle* Publisher Ernest Pitt agreed.

"Any respectable newspaper has an obligation to its readers to make endorsements based on information that we have," he said. "If we do our job decently, we ought to be able to enlighten our readers."

Endorsements, said Pitt, as meant to serve only as guides to the voters, and in no way are intended to tell voters this is the only way to vote.

"We're telling the readers that if we, meaning the newspaper, could vote, we would vote for the people we endorse," said Pitt. "We're not out for political gains. It's a statement of where the paper stands."

John Marshall Kilimanjaro, publisher of the *Carolina Peacemaker*, said he has mixed emotions concerning endorsements. If the endorsements are made simply as another service to readers and not as their sole political guide, and if the paper is in tune with its readers, Kilimanjaro said, endorsements are valid. But if endorsements are made with very little thought or investigation of the person receiving the endorsement, Kilimanjaro said, he dislikes them.

All of the editors and publishers agreed that time and thought need to be given to endorsements so as not to send negative signals to the black community -- and that deception is taboo. For example, in 1968, a newspaper, thought to be black-owned, endorsed George Wallace for president. Investigations after the fact found that the paper had been black-owned until shortly before the campaign began, when whites bought it and altered its policies.

# Hayes takes oath

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hope I will be worthy of the oath I have given you."

Hayes was named Forsyth County's sixth District Court judge by Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. last month. The new judgeship was created by the General Assembly earlier this year.

Although Hunt did not appear at the swearing-in, Ben Ruffin, the governor's special assistant for minority affairs, was on hand to praise Hayes.

"When the position became available, he (Hunt) looked for a person who was intelligent, ... who was firm but fair, and he found a rare breed in Forsyth County," Ruffin said.

Hayes also received warm words from his fellow attorneys, represented by Jim Armentrout, president of the Forsyth County Bar Association.

"We come today to honor a good friend," said Armentrout. "I feel a distinct pleasure for me to preside at this swearing-in ceremony. He (Hayes) is a man of integrity and hard work."

Shortly after Hayes had slip-

## A Few Choosing For Many

Jordan said it matters little to him by whom and how they are made. He dislikes endorsements, he said, because the rationale for them is based on faulty reasoning.

"The first theory says that, in order for the vote to have impact, it must flow in a certain direction," said Jordan. "And the second theory says that everybody is not smart enough to choose the right direction and, in order to preserve the impact of the vote, some few folk choose the direction."

"I'm opposed to any small group making an endorsement, even if it happens to be my newspaper."

Johnson said he has problems with endorsements because most of them are one-shot deals.

"I think endorsements are good if you follow up," Johnson said. "Giving a name without following up with any work is worthless."

Kilimanjaro agreed with Johnson and Jordan, but added that a paper's track record determines the value of its endorsements.

"If it (black newspaper) has played a civic role in trying to affect the lifestyles of its readers, then it is justified to give some kind of direction," Kilimanjaro said. "I worry about people or groups who try to tell people how to vote when they don't demonstrate that civic role any other time."

Kilimanjaro's newspaper endorsed candidates for the first and only time during last spring's Democratic primary, when it backed Tom Gilmore for governor and Jesse Jackson for president.

"I've been active in politics," said Kilimanjaro, who has run unsuccessfully for Guilford County commissioner. "I felt like it was very good to go out on a limb for (Gilmore). But going out on a limb for somebody when I don't know what that individual will do, I can't."

Although Jordan and Johnson said they won't make any endorsements for the Nov. 6 election, Horn, Pitt and Jervay said they will and Kilimanjaro said he wasn't sure.

## Endorsements Abound This Year

"This is probably the biggest election this year," said Kilimanjaro. "This is such a crucial election. I suppose those of us might be considered derelict if we didn't make endorsements."

And if he does decide to endorse candidates, Kilimanjaro said, he will base his choices on the issues, not the parties.

Horn said he can say for certain that his paper will endorse Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. over Sen. Jesse Helms. But he couldn't say if any other candidates will be included.

"We make endorsements in certain races, but we don't make a practice of endorsing a full slate," said Horn. "We try to smoke out people that need to be smoked out."

Unlike some of his peers, Kilimanjaro said, he considers endorsements, regardless of where they come from, valuable. And he said most politicians also know their worth.

"A wise person says, 'I want everybody's vote,'" said Kilimanjaro. "But that doesn't mean I will do whatever he says." A thrifty candidate who knows his business will take an endorsement from Satan."

Just as politicians can't afford to take black voters lightly, they can't afford to take the endorsements of black newspapers that are in tune with those voters lightly, either, Kilimanjaro said.

"If the black leadership backs a candidate, that candidate should be home free in that community," he said.

The *Iredell County News* Horn said people often will vote against whom the paper supports.

But if endorsements are made without malice and without expecting any personal gain, then the community usually follows the newspaper's lead, said Jervay of the *Wilmington Journal*.

"It depends on whether the newspaper has been sincere, with no selfish gains and represents the best interest of the people," Jervay said.

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