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EDITORIALS

Days of absence

RESIDENTS have stayed away in droves from the first four in a series of East Winston Area Plan drop-in sessions.

The first session drew 11 people, the second three, say planners. The third, held Monday afternoon at the East Winston Branch Public Library, did considerably better, attracting 25 people, but most of those were students taken to the session as a class by a Winston-Salem State University professor. Much the same happened during Tuesday's session at Piedmont Recreation Center. Thirteen residents dropped by, but 10 were members of a Boy Scout troop brought to the meeting by their Scout leader.

All of this despite a concerted effort by the Planning Department and the *Chronicle* to let residents know how important the predominantly black community's first-ever area plan really is.

More drop-in sessions are scheduled, and planners hope that attendance will pick up. In the meantime, a litany of whys remains:

- Why the small numbers?
- Why the curious absence of black elected officials at the meetings, especially Aldermen Vivian H. Burke and Virginia K. Newell, whose wards contain the study area?
- Why haven't more members of the East Winston Area Plan Review Committee attended the sessions?
- Where are the black ministers? Though they, like other community leaders, have more than full schedules as it is, surely they realize that a plan that addresses housing and economic development directly impacts their congregations.
- Where have the Urban League and NAACP been? Both need to at least send representatives to some of the sessions.
- Where are the black businessmen?
- Where are those who have complained about the lack of more shopping opportunities in East Winston, the need for more affordable housing or the reluctance of developers to come to East Winston?
- Above all, where has East Winston been?

Fortunately, two sessions remain. The first will be held on Thursday, April 16, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the 14th Street Recreation Center.

The second will be a special session co-sponsored by the *Chronicle* on Thursday, April 30, from 1 to 7 p.m. at the East Winston Branch Public Library.

As is the case with the other meetings, copies of the area plan will be available and planners will be on hand to answer your questions.

What's more, the sessions are not formal meetings. There won't be speeches. You don't have to stay. No one will ask you for money. You can browse, ask questions and leave. At your convenience.

The important thing is that your voice be heard. "I think it's important that people come," Senior Planner Ann Massey told the *Chronicle* two weeks ago. "If they want to make East Winston better, if the image of East Winston is going to change, then it's going to take the involvement of all the residents, churches and businesses."

That involvement, thus far, has been sorely lacking.

A good idea

IN light of its continuing presence on the public agenda, the Voice of Minority Contractors, an organization that expresses the concerns and protects the interests of area black contractors, would do well to send an advocate to every aldermen's meeting -- as well as the meetings of other local elected boards.

Part of the problem facing black contractors and suppliers in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County is their lack of communication with their elected officials.

That lack became sorely apparent in the still-simmering controversy involving Larco Construction Co., a white contractor, and black-owned Camel City Construction Co.

Amid charges and counter-charges, it was hard to sort out whom to believe, especially where the intricacies of construction are involved.

In another instance, one black contractor recently complained that a white general contractor claimed that he couldn't involve more minorities in a job hauling asphalt because no black firms had the right types of dump trucks to carry asphalt.

"That's crazy," the black contractor said. "You don't need a special type of dump truck to handle asphalt. I've done it enough to know."

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REAGAN'S BACK!



VERNON ROBINSON

Not giving still hurts

A recent article in the Joint Center for Political Studies newsletter, *FOCUS*, summarized the analysis of a poll of black and white Americans on the topic of charitable giving. This analysis belied the claim that blacks only receive charity and never give.

Unfortunately, the results also show that blacks give only 1.1 percent of their charitable donations to political organizations -- far less than whites of the same income group.

This report validated something I have felt for some time: Black people don't give to support their political institutions, and that lack of financial support causes many worthy candidates to lose needlessly.

Such support should not be mistaken for *carte blanche*. Candidates, elected officials and political organizations must be accountable to those who support them.

However, failure to financially support political action means that you will not have elected officials from your community, accountable or otherwise.

The Jewish community has an interesting interpretation of giving. Western understanding of giving is that it is an optional act, done to help others. The Hebrew word for giving is *tsedakah*, and it means obligation -- something required of civilized members of the community.

How does this *tsedakah* cut with regard to political giving? The Jewish community's actions speak for themselves. This community contributed half of the money raised by the Democratic Party in 1984, one-fourth of the money raised by the Republican Party -- and Israel is secure regardless of who wins office.

The black community must live up to its obligation to invest in political action.

I really like fund-raising, especially political fund-raising. But sometimes it's really tough. I've heard every excuse for individuals' not living up to their obligation.

Some say they would rather give to the candidate than to a political action committee, but then give to neither.

Some say they can't give because of a new mortgage, a new baby or a new college student; one must wonder what kind of school system the baby will enter, given the fact that his parents are asleep at the wheel.

We all have obligations. Other communities are not exempt from babies, mortgages or college students, yet they find a way to invest in political action to lower infant mortality, build adequate infrastructure and maintain security in their neighborhoods, and insure that Brandeis and Notre Dame will receive government support. The black community must do so as well.

The 21st Century PAC of North Carolina networks citizens who are ready to meet these obligations and provide the independent financial base necessary to play major-league ball.

One sage has said that politics is the only game in America where the spectator loses. It costs a lot to play the political game. It costs a lot more to watch. Failure to invest in political action confines us to the political equivalent of the pee-wee sandlot league.

I would like any people who are reading this column to turn inward and ask themselves whether they have given their fair share for political action and, if not, when they will move to correct this oversight.

Someone once said to give until it hurts. We are not giving enough to political action -- and it still hurts.

Vernon L. Robinson is chairman of the 21st Century Political Action Committee of North Carolina and a faculty member at Winston-Salem State University.

Jackie Robinson: Social pioneer

NEW YORK -- This spring marks the 40th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's streaking around the base paths in the flannels of the Brooklyn Dodgers, carrying on his broad shoulders the future of professional athletics in America.

In these times, it would do well for America to pause and consider what this republic would be like if Robinson had lost out to Dixie Walker. The Dodgers' outfielder floated a petition demanding that Branch Rickey and the front office keep the 27-year-old Robinson off the team. Professional baseball, Walker argued, must remain what it always had been, a white man's game.

The media, with very few exceptions, sided with Walker. "Blacks have been kept out of the big leagues because they as a race are poor ballplayers," wrote New York sportswriter Joe Williams, typically.

To field an obviously unqualified black player, the baseball world argued, would be to take a job away from a white. Racial discrimination had nothing to do with it, they said. Teams had the right to field the best teams. And blacks like Jackie Robinson simply weren't qualified.

In Branch Rickey, Robinson had an advocate of quite some influence. The front-office manager would ignore Walker and his petition, drive past the other baseball owners' 15-1 vote against him and bring his gifted player up from Montreal. His final step was to ensure that

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Robinson was steeled for the white-hot crucible he would face.

"I need a man who will accept insult, take abuse, in a word, carry the flag for his race," Rickey reportedly told Robinson in their first meeting. "If a guy slides into you at second base and calls you a black son of a bitch, I wouldn't blame you if you came up swinging. You'd be justified. But you'd set the cause back 20 years. I want a man with courage

"Adversity hardened Robinson to his sense of mission. In this crucible, he was transformed from an athlete to a symbol. To children, men and women in every black hamlet in America, Jackie Robinson became their proud hope in knickers."

enough not to fight back. Can you do it?"

Robinson reportedly thought about it for a long three minutes before answering. Finally he promised he would walk away from all incidents. Having disarmed himself, Robinson stood ready for the warm welcome of the civilized white world of baseball.

A black cat was heaved onto the field in Syracuse as a fan yelled: "Hey, Jackie, there's your cousin." This and other upstate New York fan behavior, according to one historian, would have "shamed a conclave of the Ku Klux Klan." It was no better on the field.

Pitchers threw high, hard and often at Robinson's head in those days before batters wore helmets.

Base runners brandishing their spikes slid murderously at the black second baseman. For the most part, Robinson's teammates, as they had in Montreal, stood idly by, uninterested spectators.

Adversity hardened Robinson to his sense of mission. In this crucible, he was transformed from an athlete to a symbol. To children, men and women in every black hamlet in America, Jackie Robinson became their proud hope in knickers.

His spectacular play, all the

more striking for his treatment, pushed back the racial frontier. He probably never changed the bigots' minds, in general, but he stripped them of their uniquely American notion that whites, and only whites, can achieve competency.

After Robinson pushed in the envelope, in sprinted Willie Mays, Roy Campanella, Don Newcombe and Hank Aaron.

Since Robinson was a rookie in this white man's game, 48 percent of the batting champions in both leagues have been black. So have 44 percent of the RBI leaders and 63 percent of the stolen base leaders. Further, although Babe Ruth retired years before baseball

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Affirmative action for whom?

NEW YORK -- The response to the Supreme Court's recent affirmative action decision has been almost as interesting as the decision itself. The decision affirmed that it was legal for an employer to promote an employee, with equal qualifications, over other employees in order to achieve a better balance of women and minorities in the workforce.

Terry Eastland, the Justice Department's top spokesman, sharply criticized the decision and said that what the Supreme Court needed was "a new appointment or two."

His comment might be considered just a bit presumptuous, given the fact that the Reagan administration has already made two appointments to the Supreme Court. The administration's anger is understandable, however. For this is only the latest in a series of Supreme Court rulings to refute Reagan's hell-bent opposition to affirmative action.

In February, the Justice Department sided with white Alabama state troopers who were fighting a court-ordered action plan. The Supreme Court upheld the plan, noting that Alabama had refused to hire any African-American troopers until forced to do so in 1972, and that even since then, Alabama had continued to

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resist court orders to hire more African-Americans.

Of course, the Justice Department's response to affirmative action is predictable, given its

African-American and 12 are Hispanic; however, 26 are female. In fact, women have generally fared better than African-Americans in the Reagan administration. Last year, for example, white women held more than 200 of the top federal posts



own record in this area.

The *New York Times* obtained figures which show that not one of the Justice Department's major divisions is headed by women or minorities, and of the 94 U.S. attorneys, only one is African-American, one is female and two are Hispanic.

Of the 300 federal judges appointed by Reagan, only five are

controlled by the administration, while African-Americans held fewer than 50.

This brings me to the second response to the Supreme Court decision -- that of women, specifically white women.

The decision was based on a suit filed by a white male who scored two points above his white

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