

Editorials & Comments

District Representation Now

By Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Executive Editor

We noted in this space last month that local historical records show that Charlotte's experience with the "Ward System," or what we call today district representation, worked quite well from its inception in 1851 until 1945. In that year Bishop Dale, a black political leader, nearly won a council seat from the Second Ward. That "scare," according to many long-time black residents of the city, resulted in a quick abolishment of the ward system. Thus, it was not corruption or inadequacy but racism that led to the demise of the ward system.

We noted further our belief that as a city, Charlotte has matured beyond racism, at least to some degree in the area of power politics. Our optimism on this point has been damped by a recent article in the CHARLOTTE OBSERVER with this headline: "District Plan: Will Blacks Gain Clout?" The article begins by saying, "More blacks might be elected to the Charlotte City Council...if either of two proposed district representation plans is accepted by the Council."

Either consciously or unconsciously, the story undoubtedly created certain mythical racial fears and considerable misunderstanding about the purpose and intent of district representation. For example, with regard to who will gain or lose "clout" under the two proposed districting plans, the OBSERVER article merely implies - to the careful reader - that southeast Charlotte may lose a little or that northeast Charlotte's predominantly white areas may gain. However, specific comment was made with regard to potential black gains under both plans. This in our opinion is plain and simple biased news reporting.

District representation as we view it in the final analysis is not a matter of race, income or social standing, rather it is a plan to provide more

equitable geographic representation within the City Council. Ideally, as the two proposed plans indicate, it would be nice if all socio-economic groups were to be represented in the law-making chamber, but geography is the primary determinant in district representation.

Strangely, the current push for districting is the result of a citizen's petition binding the City Council by law to hold a referendum on the issue after the council (some members) failed to support an election campaign pledge to promote the issue. The basic concept of district representation is sound and consistent with our belief in democracy and equality of opportunity.

The arguments against districting include charges of sectionalism, too large for effective law making, "eroding the good local government we have," and we should wait for consolidation. Yet, no one has been unduly upset with southeastern Charlotte sectional domination. The charge of eroding good government is in itself an insult to the intellect of all citizens. Thirdly, there is no evidence to support the view that an 11-member law-making body is necessarily less efficient than a seven member body. Lastly, the argument to await consolidation lacks merit because that is already taking place in a number of ways.

The concept of district representation involving seven districts of 41,000 residents each with one councilman and four at-large councilmen appears to us to be a good plan for Charlotte. We believe this type of government will be the beginning of more than token representation in public office for blacks, beginning representation for all geographic areas and socio-economic groups and possibly a significant move toward a smooth transition to consolidation.

We urge all Charlotteans to support the concept of district representation.

Yes, The System Works!

It has been said that government at all levels does not care nor respond to the needs of the people. Those who make such arguments contend that politics is a rough and dirty business engaged in by self-seeking individuals who make campaign promises that they do not keep once elected to office. Evidence of this, such critics claim, was seen in the "Watergate" mess, the recent conviction of a state governor for income tax evasion, and the failure of some of Charlotte City Council members to keep their election campaign promises to support district representation.

In spite of these weaknesses - not in our institutions of government - but in the frailties of mortal men - our system of government works.

We saw the system work when Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. started a social revolution that now continues to unfold with the aid of government. We saw the system work in the smooth transition of

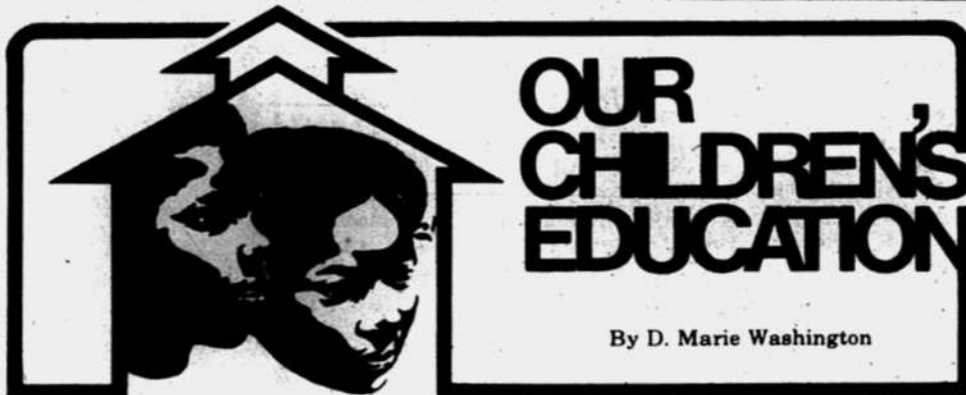
power from Gerald Ford to Jimmy Carter. More to the point, we saw the system work when a community petitioned for rezoning to protect their property values and we saw it work when a group of neighborhoods banded together to get a referendum on district representation.

Our central point is that our system of government works and works best when people sufficiently express their needs and concerns to those mortal men and women who hold public office.

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO SAFETY
IN THE STREET, HALLWAYS,
APTS. AND BUSINESS PLACES
OF OUR COMMUNITIES.
VINCENT BAKER - N.Y. NAACP



The Level Of Fear Is Shocking...



Learning To Read

Experts in the field of children's reading have long been aware that children who have had books read to them during their preschool years usually learn to read very quickly and easily. Not only do these children require very little instruction, but many of them enter school knowing how to read, and they seem to have taught it to themselves. This phenomenon has fascinated researchers, for if educators could ever learn exactly how this happens, they could take those findings and apply them in the schools and the reading problem would be greatly reduced.

One of the most promising clues seems to lie in the area of motivation. Educators have speculated that children who have been introduced to books and stories at an early age have gained so much enjoyment from the stories that they develop a natural desire to want to learn to read. Acting on this theory, many children's stories have been

placed on filmstrips, slides, records and tapes and are being used in the classroom with the hope that the children will become eager to read the books containing those stories. The result has been that the children enjoy the stories immensely, but they do not necessarily get any burning desire to want to read the book. They do, however, want to see and hear more stories on

filmstrips, slides, records and tapes.

It is highly possible that there is nothing deep, mysterious or complicated about learning to read. We know that children learn hundreds of things without any instruction whatsoever. For example, we do not know how children learn to walk or to talk - but they do learn these things. Also, we know that children seem to learn what they want to learn much quicker than they learn the things we want to teach them. Perhaps if we take what we know about the way children learn, and add it to what the researchers have found about children learning to read, we might get a glimmer of the solution.

When children are read to in the home, they are not just being introduced to books and stories; they are being introduced to a new medium of communication - printed symbols. It is probably the best of all possible ways to be introduced to this new medium, for sharing a book with a parent in the familiar surroundings of his own home can be a very pleasant experience for a child. Through this experience, the child begins to form his own concept of the value of printed symbols. Mothers who have read books to their three and four year olds tell us that when a child enjoys a storybook, he likes to hear it over and over and over again, never seeming to tire of it.

Unfortunately, the person who has to read it to him over and over and over again gets very tired of it, and does not want to read it quite as much as the child wants to hear it. The child is quick to learn that he cannot get the story for himself by simply looking at the pictures, because the story is locked inside the printed symbols. The only way he can get the story as often as he would like to have it is to learn to read it for himself. This suggests that the real secret of reading motivation is - necessity.

Children who have not had this kind of experience not only miss this pleasant introduction to printed symbols, they also miss the motivation which this kind of introduction gives. Their problem is further compounded when they enter school and are bombarded with our attempts to teach them how to read before they discover any real reason for wanting to do so.

Could it be that our theories, programs and instructional methods are all cluttering and confusing the issue? Rather than keeping our attention fixed so firmly on methods, devices, and other gimmicks designed to teach reading, perhaps the time and money would be better spent seeking to provide them with ample supplies of printed materials and enough pleasant experiences with it so that they will feel the necessity for learning to decode printed symbols.

TO BE EQUAL



Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

Cities Under The Gun

The struggle of the cities to survive continues, but unless some changes are made in the way funds are distributed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, that struggle will become a lot tougher in the coming years.

Under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, federal urban programs, including Model Cities and urban renewal, were consolidated into a new Community Development Bloc Grant Program.

Funds that were allocated to cities for specific projects or developments in the past were now lumped together to be distributed to cities and some counties on the basis of a formula that included poverty, overcrowded housing and general population. The number of grant recipients has increased by 50 percent, diluting the available funds.

Like the revenue sharing program, such a distribution system has an inherent flaw in that money would not go to the places that need it most or to places that demonstrated the capability of using it for needed programs. To deal with the likelihood that many cities, especially the largest and neediest, would suffer drastic cuts in federal funds, lawmakers inserted a "hold harmless" proviso.

This meant that for three years after enactment of the bill, no city would get less grant money than it averaged in the five years preceding the change in the law. The three years are up this year. From here on in, unless there's a change in the law, federal funds to those cities will be phased down gradually until, by 1980, no city would get a dime more than it is entitled to under the standard formula.

What this means is that urban centers still reeling from general recession, from federal cutbacks, from deteriorating housing stock, and from general paralysis of new construction, face a new round of cuts in the scarce dollars they get from Washington.

Thanks to the "hold harmless" provision, those cities haven't been hit as hard as they're going to be. In 1975 more than four out of every five dollars of the community development bloc grants went to metropolitan cities, primarily to the central cities. This year, the split will be about three out of four dollars to central cities, one out of four to suburbs.

But then the ratio will continue to change, to the disadvantage of the central cities. By 1980, they'll be getting only a little over half the funds.

There will be a regional shift as well, with the hard-pressed older cities of the Northeast losing and newer cities in the South and West gaining. Since such older cities are already suffering the effects of disinvestment, loss of jobs and increasing poverty, that means they'll have less funds with which to deal with their problems. And that in turn means yet another round of disinvestment, job loss, and higher poverty rates.

That's prescription for urban suicide. One of the prime jobs facing the new Congress is revision of the allocation formula for community development funds to avert the disaster facing the older, poorer cities.

There's another side to this, too. Cities are not using the money they presently get for programs in poorer neighborhoods. Bloc grants are being diverted from lower income to higher income neighborhoods.

as i see it

Scarcity Of Resources

By Gerald O. Johnson

A few years ago when we were going through the boom age, energy companies were pushing their products down our throats. "Burn our clean and easy to use gas." "Heat your home with our convenient electricity." "Use up our resources until your little heart is content."

All of this advertising got us doing just that. We used up the resources until our little hearts were content.

Now, the creeps are coming on strong telling us we have used up the resources. "Cut back your heat, stop using our easy to use gas, our convenient electricity is not so convenient anymore."

What kind of madness is this? It is no wonder that no one trusts these eggheads of energy. They are more inconsistent than politicians.

Now, they have gotten ridiculous. Closing schools, cutting off gas to businesses, and God only knows what else is in

store for us energy using consumers.

Well, don't be surprised when I tell you that the scarcity is more monetary than reality. The resources are there but the investors are not. So, the country has a choice. Either we can go to Hell freezing or we can make a few men richer.

The problem is one of investor against government and we, the middle men (the ones affected by all this), can watch from the sidelines. You see, most energy enterprising is done by private investors. Digging for oil, gas or what have you is done by private citizens of the U.S. of A.

But, after this is done and the energy resource is located and made ready for shipment, the government steps in. The government regulates, mainly, the price that can be put on the resource for selling purposes.

Now we have reached the problem this country faces



Gerald O. Johnson

today. Investors say that the government prices are so low that it is not worth their investment. In other words they can not make a profit with the current prices. This means that no one is looking for new energy resource outlets.

The government could deregulate energy and let the investors have their way and

gas would be flowing tomorrow.

Or the investors could take the enormous tax break they already receive along with the earnings and reinvest without being greedy.

What will happen? Join us next week as we continue the thrilling episode of "Up your nose with the gas." (Smile.)

No shucking folks, we are over the barrel with this problem. This contrived crisis to force prices up is not my idea of good business practice. When you consider that less than one-tenth of one percent of this country's population is responsible for such a crisis, it makes me shudder. What's worse is the crisis is one for monetary gain for the one-tenth of one percent. It makes me cringe. When I know that I am not one of those one-tenth of one percent I get down right angry.

It was corruption that caused all of the great empires of the past to crumble. The lust and love for wealth. This

country, after celebrating its 200th birthday, will be lucky if it makes it to its 300th. But if you read your history and read your current events, it will become evident that we are brewing the same ingredients that caused great powers like Rome to crumble. Great Britain lost its stronghold on the world because of corruption within. The list goes on and on.

We might be witnessing the beginning of the end of a great world power.

HODGE PODGE

The reason for all of this snow is that I finally agreed with something Paul Harvey said on his television editorial. I didn't think I was prejudiced until I started watching "Roots" Sunday night.

Black people with position like the title and salary of their jobs but not the work.

I finally realized what was meant by the saying "When there is smoke from the chimney there is fire in the stove" as I located a gray hair in my

head.

There is a new fad in town - Retail Distribution. Everyone I know is hustling either Amway, Mary Kay, Fashion 220, or the like. What happened to the days of being invited to someone's house for cards or fun. These days you are invited to a show. Oh, boy!

Have you noticed how well Charlotte has functioned in spite of the City Council. Maybe we can get up a petition to do without that governing body permanently. Officially, anyway.

Happiness is not getting a tax audit. Did you know that it has been proven by several independent associations that no two people will fill out their tax return exactly the same? The results included people from the IRS. Some reporters took receipt stubs to several tax agencies, including the IRS, to have their forms filled out. Using the exact same data in each case, they didn't get any two forms filled out similarly. That is strange!?!?

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