

# Editorials & Comments

## Johnson Is An Excellent Choice

By Hoye H. Martin Sr.  
Post Executive Editor

Clifton Johnson, Mecklenburg County's chief district judge for nearly four years, was sworn in on the first day of this month as a resident superior court judge. Much fan-fare has been given to this appointment because Johnson is the first black to have been named to such a position in North Carolina and he's the first person to receive a judgeship under Gov. Jim Hunt's "new merit selection."

Considering the tokenism that is still a part of some affirmative action and/or equal opportunity programs, Johnson's historic promotion could have lost much of its glitter and the joy with which it has been received by the people aware of and concerned with a humane and equitable criminal justice system.

This did not happen because Johnson's 8 years on the bench have been a demonstration in ability, efficiency and fairness. Judge Johnson himself has indicated he views his appointment as primarily a matter of ability and that in effect he'd rather have attention focused on his being possibly one of the "best" rather than the "first."

Gov. Hunt's comments about his recent judicial appointments, including Johnson and the first black on the State Court of Appeals, indicates a sincere commitment to

having only the "best" for North Carolina. He has reportedly said, "I've appointed...men that I believe see themselves as servants of the people and that is one of the most important qualities I've been looking for in a judge."

The Governor said further, "the whole matter of a sense of justice, a sense of caring about that individual and making sure he's treated fairly in the system is something I would have to find in any individual that I put on the Bench at any point."

Judge Johnson certainly fits these qualities, qualities that should have particular significance for blacks since the absence of these qualities within a so-called efficient judicial system has led to a disproportionately large number of blacks being convicted and placed in our penal institutions.

Yes, we applaud the appointment of Judge Johnson because he represents much that our criminal justice system needs. His abilities and sense of fairness are examples that should be followed by others, in whatever profession, who hold the fate of people in their hands.

Judge Johnson has a right to be proud of himself and his accomplishments and the community should be proud of him too, because more of us can now feel that justice has moved another step away from the hollow meaning that has too often characterized the term.

## Justice Eludes The "10"?

During a recent visit to Charlotte U.S. Attorney Griffin Bell told the Press his office has an interest in the Wilmington 10 case. Subsequently, a Bell assistant met with Gov. Jim Hunt reportedly requested a pardon for the "10." More recently, on Friday to be exact, Hunt indicated that he might take some action with regard to the controversial case by the Spring of next year. Then Saturday, the very next day, the Rev. James Barnett and 17 other Charlotteans left the City in 28-degree weather on a 152-mile walk to Raleigh seeking to plead the "10" case before the governor.

Why have these development and many others - some from foreign countries - taken place on behalf of the Wilmington 10? The answer to this question is that nine black men and one white woman were convicted, some believe unfairly with unusually long sentences, for unlawfully burning a grocery store on February 6, 1971, during racial disturbances in Wilmington. The woman has since been released on parole.

Specifically, the "10" case has drawn international attention because of the credibility of the state's witnesses, the unusually long sentences given to the defendants ranging five to 30 years with all the men getting at least 20 years, and the allegations that the defendants were really convicted for political reason.

Add to that the continuing valid concerns that blacks and some whites have about the dual system of criminal justice that still exist in many parts of America, then you can understand the uproar about the "10" case.

Finally, Gov. Hunt's own response to the pressures from civil rights groups and others who feel that fairness and justice were absent when the "10" were tried is being timed to avoid any possible political repercussions during his bid for re-election.

As one lets these observations pass through their mind, it is quite easy to come to the conclusion that justice in terms of a fair and unbiased jury trial was not available to the "10." Even now, the pressures being built to rectify this past injustice is, and we believe will, be based on the political concerns of others both at the state and national level and not on the merits of what justice is or should be.

Considering this deplorable state of affairs, The POST believes strongly that the "10" should be pardoned or paroled now. In our opinion the "10" have already suffered enough and will carry for a lifetime the stigma of it all because justice did not prevail in a nation and at a time when mankind talks of human rights, and human kind. Let justice prevail now.

BLACK COMMUNITIES THAT CARE ABOUT THE BLACK FUTURE, SHOULD HELP IMPOSE ORDER WHERE NEEDED.



## Health Care - Illusion Or Reform

By Bayard Rustin  
Special To The Post

President Carter has promised to outline the principles of a national health insurance program sometime early next year. Ordinarily this would be cause for rejoicing. However, there is a growing uncertainty that the administration will propose an adequate and acceptable program. These doubts are particularly disturbing because national health insurance is a long overdue reform. The goal of making adequate health care a right instead of a privilege has been on the agenda of reform since the 1930s. Continually frustrated by the fierce opposition of the American Medical Association and private insurance companies, national health insurance is surely an idea whose time has come.

Health care is one area where the American people are so concerned that there is substantial support for a new and major government program - and with good reason. Only one-fourth of all personal health care bills are paid by health insurance, while less than one-half of our citizens are reasonably well-protected against high medical expenses. Although the United States spends a much greater percentage of its national income on health care than any other industrialized country, we lag far behind on most measures of health. No other aspect of the cost of living has risen as fast as hospital and medical costs in recent years and the end is not in sight. According to one recent study, health costs, under the present system, will double again in only five years. Many Americans, particularly minorities and the poor, lack adequate access to medical care. In short, most Americans are underserved

and overcharged by the present system of health care.

It is no wonder that people want something done about medical care and that they expect President Carter to do it. Unfortunately, it is hard to know how the President will respond. The administration still appears to be debating which fundamental approach to take towards the health care issue. There is reason to be concerned that the administration may be tempted to propose a weak bill on the mistaken notion that it is possible to satisfy both the supporters of national health insurance and those who have always been fundamentally opposed to the concept. During the last decade, as the case for national health insurance has become stronger and clearer, corporate and medical interests have tried to sidetrack genuine health reform with dozens of phony compromises. These so-called compromises would provide for no cost controls, no quality controls, and total reliance on the private health insurance industry. An approach very similar to these earlier "compromises" is one of the proposals the administration is considering.

If the Carter administration retreats from the bold reforms that are needed it will be doubly tragic because an effective bill would have an excellent chance of passing and because a "compromise" measure would do little to solve the problem. The major factor delaying a national health insurance program has been the lack of Presidential support. There is widespread public backing for national health insurance; in one recent poll it was favored by two-thirds. Moreover, the concept has strong support in the

Congress and vigorous backing from labor, civil rights, and religious organizations. On the other hand, a weak bill would only create the illusion that something meaningful is being done, while perpetuating an inadequate and inefficient system and delaying the task of real reform.

The President may yet decide that now is the time to seek a fundamental reform of the health care system. If so, the requirements for a national health insurance program that meets the needs of the American people are clear. The program should be based upon the principle that health care is a right for all Americans and not a privilege for the few who can afford to pay. Real reform should provide universal coverage, a single comprehensive standard of benefits, no financial barriers to health care, and fair and equitable financing. It should create new mechanisms to finance and organize health care in the United States. It would establish incentives to reform health delivery systems, strong cost and quality controls, and administrative costs lower than in existing private insurance programs. Of the many health insurance proposals, only one has so far met these standards: the Kennedy-Corman Health Security Act. This bill, which already has wide support in the Congress, provides a measuring rod to evaluate the administration's proposal. As President Carter and his advisors prepare the administration's program, they should keep in mind that only a national health insurance program based on the approach adopted by the Health Security Act can provide a real answer to the medical needs of Americans.

By Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

## TO BE EQUAL



Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

## Tax Cut Debated

President Carter is talking about a tax cut next year. Administration spokesmen have been floating trial balloons for a tax cut in the range of \$15-25 billion.

Earlier, it looked like any tax cut would be linked to a broad tax reform package that would get rid of some of the inequities of the present tax system. But with Congress tied up with other important issues, that seems to be on the back burner now, dead for next year at least.

While cutting taxes is the kind of government action most people applaud, it is a complex issue that deserves careful thought.

There are some powerful reasons for a tax cut. The first is the sluggish performance of the economy. Unemployment is still far too high, business spending on job-creating plant and equipment is much too low, and consumer spending isn't picking up the slack. So it's thought that a tax cut will loosen business and personal spending, leading to more jobs in the private sector.

Another reason is the expected "fiscal drag" of higher social security taxes, higher energy prices, and higher taxes paid by people whose pay raises put them into higher tax brackets, although their buying power isn't higher.

The social security payroll tax rise, for example, is expected to put a \$5 billion hole in people's pockets in 1978, which means they'll have \$5 billion less to spend on goods and services that create jobs.

Without a tax cut to restore the effects of that "fiscal drag," economists suggest that the economy will not only lose what momentum it has, but will very likely go into a tailspin.

On the other hand, there is a powerful argument against a tax cut now. Our nation has vast unmet needs and reducing the resources available to the government to deal with those needs will further delay realistic - and costly - solutions to the problems of the cities, the poor and the unemployed.

If taxes are cut, it is argued, then federal spending also may have to be cut. And if the government chooses to absorb a larger budget deficit while maintaining present spending levels, then the deficit itself becomes an excuse for not launching new programs.

Almost as important as whether to cut taxes or not is the question of which taxes to cut and how. A cut in the income tax benefits only those who make enough money to pay taxes; it does nothing for poor and moderate income workers.

And if it makes sense to relieve taxpayers of the added burdens of the higher social security tax, doesn't it make more sense to partially fund social security from general revenues instead of going through the acrobatics of a tax cut that has the same ultimate result?

Well, not quite the same, since a very large group of workers will be trapped into bearing a double burden - they will be paying higher social security taxes, yet won't earn enough to really benefit from a general tax cut. Needless to say this double bind affects lower income people most in need of extra cash.

And what kind of tax cut will business get? An across-the-board cut that increases cash flow may just lead to a rash of mergers but few real job-creating investments.

## as i see it Crashing, Not Flying, Bothers Our Columnist

By Gerald O. Johnson

It is no secret that one of my favorite traveling modes is the automobile. Hence, it took no one by surprise when I acted like a fool about flying to Orlando, Florida for a conference recently.

But after all was said and done I ended up flying. Note that I only ended up flying after I was literally dragged to the plane by my traveling companions. Don't get me wrong though, I am not afraid of flying. Crashing is what bothers me.

However, I am an infrequent flyer. I think I have traveled by plane 20 times in my life. I might add that I am not anxious for my 21st flight. Each time that I fly, once I get above the clouds I start seeing angels. The host of angels gather around my window and start singing "Nearer My God To Thee." I've always wondered why I thought like this since the plane would be headed towards hell if it crashed.

But the funny thing is, when you fly no one wants you to know that they are afraid.

When you board the plane everybody is so friendly. Even the bigots act friendly. Everybody is talking and having a good time. Then the plane taxis to the runway. The engines roar, the wings extend, and like a bat out of hell, zoom, you are airborne. If you look around you, all the talking has ceased. Everybody is pretending to be asleep. As soon as the plane levels off and everything appears to be O.K. there is a mad rush to the bathroom. The reason for this is taking off scares the ... out of you.

Now everybody is gay again; laughing, joking, having a good time. All of a sudden you hit an air pocket. The plane jerks, jumps, and then sputters. Silence enters the cabin again. A few people get up and go back to the "John." Then somebody lets out a sheepish grin and the fun starts up again.

I think I know how a pair of "fruit-of-the-loom" feels when it gets washed. Hitting an air pocket must be synonymous with that.

Anyway, everybody continues to have a good time until



the plane is ready to land. Then everybody starts yawning and immediately falls off to sleep. Once on the ground everybody returns to his original character and starts pushing and shoving, ignoring and the works. It is like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Your entire flight takes 30 minutes and now you have to wait an hour for your baggage.

merchials paint such a lovely picture of the stewardess. A lovely, shapely, creature who is there to make your trip more comfortable. Untrue on both accounts.

On my flights the stewardesses were frightening. They looked like casualties of a plane crash. I mean looking at those young ladies was enough to make me want to go to the "John."

I asked one young lady if I had to change planes in Atlanta after the pilot had just announced that they would be continuing on to Los Angeles from Atlanta. She looked at me coldly for about a minute as if to imply "no fool, you can stay on and go to L.A." And then she shook her head in the affirmative.

Seriously though folks, there is probably no safer and no more efficient mode of transportation than flying commercially. If you think about it for awhile you will soon realize like I did that the fears are based on limited exposure.

We know about automobiles because practically everyone owns and operates one. But only a limited few get a

chance to travel by plane. Consequently, our fears are more lack of knowledge than fear.

For example, deaths caused by automobile accidents far exceed those deaths caused by commercial airplane crashes.

Only well qualified people are licensed to fly airplanes, whereas any and every fool can and does operate automobiles.

Automobile mechanics are for the most part improperly trained. Most learn from experience with no formal training. Commercial airplane mechanics must go through formal training before they are allowed to work on airplanes.

Moreover, airplanes are usually checked out on a daily basis to ensure that the machine is operating properly. It is probably true that every automobile on the road has a mechanical flaw in it. Most people will not bother to have their cars checked yearly, let alone daily.

Furthermore, automobile engineering is not as sophisticated a discipline as arial engineering. The reason is a

lot of money has been poured into the aero-space program and the research findings are directly applicable to commercial flying. Hence, the most modern equipment is currently being used by airlines.

Last, but not least, is the density problem. There are many, many, many more cars on the roads than there are planes in the air. Consequently, there is much greater chance of accidents occurring on the ground than in the air.

So you see, if you can afford to fly - then fly. Your chances in the air are far better than your chances are on the road.

Fear is not a rational excuse for not flying. After all of this if you still aren't convinced that you should fly then I just hope I happen to be going your way when you crank up for your next trip.

Rock Easy!

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