

Editorials & Comments

Commissioners Lack A Sense Of Priorities

By Hoyle H. Martin Jr

When Pete Foley and Bob Walton, aided by Bill Booe, voted themselves into the chairmanship and Vice-chairmanship of the Mecklenburg County Commission on December 5, we suggested that they had won a hollow victory.

Our suggestion of a "Hallow victory" was based on the questionable manner in which fellow Democrat Liz Hair was ousted from the chairmanship and our belief that the entire episode would undoubtedly serve to further divide the board and thus diminish the quality of available service to the citizenry.

Now, less than four months later, chairman Foley has decided after getting the most time-demanding position on the board of county commissioners, he no longer has time for public service. On the other hand, Vice-chairman Bob Walton is engaged in another verbal war with a new opponent, Republican County Commissioner Ed Peacock.

Foley announced on Monday, March 20, that he will not run for reelection because growth in his business beyond expectations and the accompanying demands upon his time for management would leave him little time for public service.

Host Of Problems

All of this appears reasonable except for one thing, Foley failed to withdraw his January 12 filing for reelection before the deadline for the Commissioners' primary on February 6. Failure to make this timely decision is creating a host of problems that in the long run will create some cost and inconvenience for the electorate.

While much has been said about Mr. Foley's sincere desire to get off of the ballot, we believe his grab for power in ousting Liz Hair, his consideration given to running for Congress and how the bad timing for getting off of the May 2 Commissioner's primary, reflects a selfish quest for personal advancement and show a callous disregard for the needs and concerns of the citizenry of Mecklenburg County.

County Commissioner Ed Peacock, a Republican, was one of at least two commissioners who criticized a \$402 travel expenditure that fellow commissioner Bob Walton used to defray part of his expenses for a trip to West Germany sponsored by the U. S. Youth Council for public officials under the age of 35.

Peacock, who indicated that he thought the trip was unrelated to county business, reportedly said Walton was "stretching reason when he expects the people of this county to pay for a trip to Germany."

Walton reacted to this by saying "I

feel sometimes Commissioner Peacock is bordering on racism." Furthermore in a 5-page statement defending his trip and explaining what he learned, Walton said "Commissioner Ed Peacock, who is a man of low principles and believes in this kind of low-level politics."

Walton's Reaction

Peacock's criticism and Walton's reaction appears to indicate some hostility between the two commissioners that goes beyond the use of \$402 for partial cost of a trip abroad. We believe therefore, Peacock's criticism should have been directed towards the system under which commissioners can receive money for travel. We further believe Walton's labeling of Peacock as one "bordering on racism" and a "man of low principles and...low-level politics" was hardly justified in this case.

Finally, we believe that the citizens of Mecklenburg County can and will benefit from commissioner Walton's European trip, however, it will be up to each voter to determine the extent of that benefit. Unfortunately, the benefit we may receive will be clouded by the Peacock-Walton feud over the use of a mere but properly used \$402.

Underlying all of this is our concern with the affectiveness of county government. Pete Foley has made himself a lame-duck chairman before fully settling into the position. In addition, we'll probably have a continuing three-man verbal war involving Bill Booe, Ed Peacock and Bob Walton.

We hope that through a renewed maturity in public service, through a renewed commitment to the kind of leadership the voters have a right to expect from our elected officials and through a reordering of priorities, the Mecklenburg County Commissioners can begin to devote its energies to the needs of the electorate now and in the future.

Victory In Defeat

In the weaning seconds of the NCAA Basketball Championship Game on Monday night, Kentucky's coach Joe Hall had taken some of his top players out of the contest. However, as Duke's Blue Devils stormed to within four points with only 12 seconds left to play, Hall sent his star wildcats back on to the floor to protect a victory that might have slipped away. That incident is just one of many that tells why Duke can and should be proud of its trip and participation in the NCAA Basketball Championship Finals. Their effort was truly a victory in defeat.



The Refugees "Do Not Forget Us!"

by Bayard Rustin
Special to the Post

A new "invisible man" has been born within our midst - the Southeast Asian refugee. Shunted from country to country, over 150,000 of these "invisible people" cling to a precarious existence in scores of refugee camps which do non-communist Asia. They have a simple and solitary message for the international community: "Do not forget us!"

Some well-meaning people have said to me: "The black community suffers from record high unemployment. Why should blacks be concerned about Southeast Asian refugees? They'll only take jobs and housing which black people desperately need." Such an attitude is understandable, but allow me to describe the enormity and urgency of the refugee problem.

Two months ago while serving on a delegation organized by the International Rescue Committee (an organization which has provided much assistance to the victims of apartheid and repression in Africa), I had an opportunity to speak with many refugees currently living in Thailand. They all told the same stories; they all had the same fears. If they return home, they said, the Communist regimes will almost certainly kill them. Many complained about the lack of food in the Thai camps, yet they fear their own governments more than they fear starvation.

Of all the refugee groups I encountered, the Cambodians were the most determined to resist returning to their now desolate homeland. When the brutal Khmer Rouge forces

seized control of their country over two years ago, more than 15,000 people fled to Thailand, frequently with only the clothing on their backs.

At present, thousands of Cambodians are crowded into four camps in eastern Thailand. Most of these destitute people have lived in these poorly equipped camps for two years or more. Resettlement programs have advanced at a snail's pace; few foreign countries have any interest in "undesirable" and semi-literate Cambodians. Moreover, recent border clashes between Thailand and Khmer Rouge troops have made the Cambodian refugees suspect in the eyes of the Thai government.

Cambodia's neighbors to the east - Vietnam - has produced thousands of its own refugees, many of whom have taken to the high seas in dangerous little boats. These courageous "Boat People" have suffered heavy losses in their quest for freedom. According to several reliable sources, as many as half of these people perish at sea (about the same mortality rate suffered by black slaves crossing the Atlantic from Africa), either through starvation, drowning or exposure. Merchant ships which pass these imperiled human beings rarely, if ever, offer assistance. And the Thai government has become increasingly reluctant in granting them landing rights on Thai shores.

Vietnamese "Boat People" who somehow survive the rigorous sea journey presently live in two temporary camps has risen to over 2,000. Another inland camp serves 1,500 Vietnamese who escaped thro-

ugh Laos.

I talked to several Vietnamese and they all described the "New Vietnam" as a harsh and oppressive society. Common people, they told me, have been uprooted and forced to re-locate in areas far from friends and family. Others have been sent to the so-called New Economic Zones. And still others have been compelled to change occupations. Trade unions, religious groups (both Buddhist and Christian), and student organizations - all of which once flourished in South Vietnam - have all but disappeared.

Two ethnic groups from Laos - the Lao and Hmong peoples - have even more refugees in Thailand than the Vietnamese and Cambodians combined. At present, over 72,000 Laotian refugees live in nine densely populated camps in the northern sections of Thailand. The refugee community includes urban and rural people, as well as a contingent of former military and government officials.

Conditions in Thailand's refugee camps, at least the ones I visited, are far from uniform. Certain camps have better facilities than others, but none of them deserve to be called "homes." Given its limited resources, the Thai government has, I believe, made an honest effort to provide decent facilities. Yet, most refugees lack toilets, adequate food and clothing, and even personal privacy. All of these amenities, which most of us consider indispensable, have become highly-priized luxuries. Indeed, life itself has become a costly luxury for these people.

TO BE EQUAL



Polls Need Careful Reading

Even public opinion specialists will admit that public opinion polls are delicate items, subject to misinterpretation and vulnerable to all sorts of misreadings.

A number of recent polls results that have been widely publicized have led many people to the wrong conclusions about important issues affecting race relations. For example, a national news magazine recently published the "results of a nationwide poll conducted for US News and World Report" that asked the wrong question, and thus got a misleading answer.

The question: "Companies should be required to hire a quota of minority members, by race and or sex, regardless of their qualifications compared with other potential employees." A whopping 84 percent of respondents disagreed.

And well they might. For the question appears to have been specifically designed to elicit a negative response. It's a phony - no one "requires" companies to hire "a quota" of minorities, nor is there any affirmative action plan in existence that requires such hiring "regardless of their qualifications."

A quota is a rigid and fixed number. Most affirmative action plans use numerical guidelines as targets to aim at, with no penalty if good faith efforts fall short of the target.

And I've never heard of any kind of plan that totally disregards minority qualifications. Plans do assume more flexible guidelines in assessing qualifications so that arbitrary standards won't screen out minority applicants. But minorities hired under affirmative action plans meet the requirements for performing the job or can do so with some additional training.

So that question is a red herring, bearing no relation to reality. Another question in the poll was similarly worded, but applied to college admissions. Again, by misstating the real workings of affirmative action it distorted the responses and helps lead observers to glib statements that people are opposed to "quotas." That was a blatant example of the misuse of polls. Sometimes poll results demand more subtle analysis. For example, widely publicized poll results indicate that Americans are becoming "more conservative."

That was based on people identifying themselves as "conservative" or "liberal," and comparing the results with past polls. But larger numbers of people identifying themselves as conservative now doesn't mean there's a swing to the right.

The same individuals wound up supporting federal job-creation and job-training programs and other steps traditionally associated with liberal attitudes. Both the Harris and Gallup Polls report support for food stamps, racial equality, welfare reform and other measures cutting across the ideological spectrum of respondents.

Often polls will show support for general principles, such as racial equality, while at the same time showing opposition to specific steps designed to achieve that equality. But even then, such attitudes are not fixed in stone.

as i see it

Spears' Comments Off Line

By Gerald O. Johnson

We at the Charlotte Post took exception to the recent editorial comment made by Mr. Rufus Spears, National Alumni President of Johnson C. Smith University.

Mr. Spears bombasted the communications media in general, WSOC in particular for not giving Johnson C. Smith University proper exposure (or shall we say, equal exposure) in comparison with local white schools. He further stated that WSOC was prejudice in not covering the championship game of the CIAA.

Our comments concerning Mr. Spears' statement are numerous. First, we feel it is not the responsibility of WSOC or any other media to give Johnson C. Smith University exposure or coverage. This responsibility is solely the institution's. Proper exposure is a delegated duty of the public relations department of the institution. The people in public relations have to service the media and in turn the media releases information that has been collected PR people.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Spears, as do a lot of other black individuals, feel that the media exposes particular institutions. This is absolutely not true. Institutions are expo-

sed by public relations departments.

Moreover, it is unfortunate that Mr. Spears' comments hinted at racism. From the article we felt Mr. Spears was implying that because Johnson C. Smith was a black institution, white media failed to give them equal treatment.

We say to Mr. Spears and to others involved with the black educational scene that if you want to be treated like the white institutions then you should start functioning like one.

The means to this end is money. This money could be used to build a public relations department with qualified journalistic personnel, who would spend their days gathering information about the school and their nights distributing it to the media. Furthermore, dining and wine people of the media is a PR function. Your PR people must play up to the media because the exposure helps you not the media. Not a day goes by when this office does not receive news releases from UNCC. The information covers all aspects of UNCC's campus life. The white press works on a similar basis. Reporters are not delegated the duty to go to Johnson C. Smith and dig up some news.



Gerald Johnson

PR is big business! Until black institutions understand this, then they will always receive second rate exposure. But, the main issue here is that the obligation of exposure is the institution's and not the media's.

We take exception to Mr. Spears' comments, also because it points out another fallacy we as black people have. That fallacy is we continue to run to the white man for help without an attempt to first help ourselves. WSOC didn't show the CIAA for two reasons. One it was not economically feasible to show Hampton playing Norfolk State. No advertiser would pay for it. Since the game was a local

broadcast it would have had to have local advertising support. Secondly, the game had no local appeal. We would estimate the black viewing audience locally is about 12 percent. Out of this 12 percent, a program director could estimate only 20 percent of these people would watch it. This low viewing audience wouldn't merit showing the game. Even if Smith had made it to the finals, it wouldn't be economically feasible to show the game locally.

Why then, we wonder, would a black person complain to a media that is 100 percent owned; 100 percent supported; and 88 percent subscribed to by whites, for equal coverage? It is completely irrational. What makes the situation worse is Johnson C. Smith does not have 100 percent campus support in all of its efforts, let alone 100 percent Black community support,

yet the white media is ridiculed for not giving equal coverage. To look at it in another light, we ask you to attend a JCSU event and count the number of white people in attendance. Go to a UNCC event and count the number of blacks in attendance. You will find that UNCC's appeal goes beyond racial barriers, while JCSU's does not. This can be

attributed to several factors which go beyond the intent of this article consequently, it is not feasible to think in equal terms with other local schools when it comes to public exposure. The inequality is not racial. It's economical.

Before ridicule and blame is dished out, we think that the school should go through a three phase process. 1-commitment; 2-programs; 3-management. The Commitment phase deals with attitudes. If all phases of the institution are committed to a goal then it becomes achievable. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni should commit themselves to certain goals and then work like hell to achieve them. But to have the alumni interested in one thing, the students interested in something else, etc. will result in spinning your wheels and going nowhere.

Once a goal is determined then programs to realize those goals must be developed. Without a firm commitment from the university as a whole the program phase will fail. The management phase is the carrying out of the developed programs. We think that one of the institution's goals should be that of a top notch public relations

department. The beauty of this goal would be that it is self supporting if set up properly. The PR would stimulate interest campus-wide, city-wide, and state-wide. This interest would result in high gate receipts at athletic events. With this type of stimulation of interest then there would be grounds for equal exposure.

In conclusion we feel that as national president of the alumni association, Mr. Spears should be aware of these problems and therefore should be addressing them appropriately. His comments gave us the impression that the institution is not a cohesive unit and as a unit does not understand its problems or is incapable of solving them. It would seem that an institution of higher learning that has been in existence for over 100 years could stand on its own.

Poison Prevention

The Mecklenburg Pharmaceutical Society will sponsor a Poison Prevention Campaign Saturday, April 1, at Charlottetown Mall as a public service to the citizens of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Booths will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 1. Stop by Charlottetown Mall...

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