

Editorials & Comments

Competency Test Reveal Needs

By Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Editorial Writer

A year ago we noted in this column that some knowledgeable observers believe that the quality of public education has declined considerably. Some teachers and some parents are said to be apathetic and "social promotion" has dampened the motivation of too many youth to learn. A partial result of this, we concluded, was that many teachers don't teach and many students don't learn.

Such charges have for too long been ignored by school boards and administrators as well as teachers and parents. These groups have been largely pre-occupied with resisting school desegregation or sacrificing the quest for quality education by being intimidated by undisciplined youth or sharing in popularity contests.

The end result of this deplorable condition is seen in part in a U.S. Department of Commerce report titled, "Social Indicators, 1976." The report notes that while most Americans under 40 years of age have received more formal education than their parents or grandparents, their level of achievement as measured by test scores is not keeping up with their rising aspirations. The report states, for example, that 20 percent of the American people are seriously limited in the ability to function at everyday tasks.

The Post does not claim to have any easy solutions or magic formulas for resolving what appears to be a series of complex problems. However, it appears to us that a basic overall problem is in a breakdown in the parent-teacher and parent-school relationship.

An example of this breakdown is seen in the manner in which some school systems have allegedly responded to the disturbing fact that in 1977 the average American school child spent 400 more hours watching television than he did hours in school. School administrators have reportedly responded to this by starting required basic reading and month competency testing programs as a

Failure By Choice?

The above editorial on the relatively low scores made by black youth on the local school system's trial competency tests should raise some serious questions as to the reasons why.

One consideration as to "why" relates to how youth respond to what is expected of them. Another relates to the examples set by the adults in the young person's family or neighborhood.

Psychologists have said that people often do just what is expected of them and no more. Thus, if school teachers and administrators or parents expect little of students for

condition for promotion. We believe that the California "Proposition 13" tax revolt that calls for greater competency in the public sector generally may be another reason for the testing programs.

Whatever the reason, competency tests and their results have revealed nationwide some glaring problems with the quality of public education. For example, of the black Charlotte-Mecklenburg 11th graders who took the trial competency tests in March, 44.2 percent made scores below 70 percent in reading and 85.5 percent made scores below 70 percent in math. For the state as a whole blacks did no better and there is evidence that they do twice poorly as did whites on these tests.

If we accept the traditional American belief that education can help to eliminate differences among people and guarantee equal access to higher education and equal employment opportunities, then something must be done to enable or motivate black youth to improve their educational achievement levels.

The Post believes that tough-minded disciplined school leadership, committed to using national standardized tests to measure student programs and progress, is a necessary first step. A second part of this leadership would be to require that teachers clearly state in writing before each class precisely what the day's objective of the class is and assign at least three homework projects weekly. Parents should visit the schools to confer with teachers frequently, pick-up report cards, insist that their children complete homework assignment and promote by example high educational values.

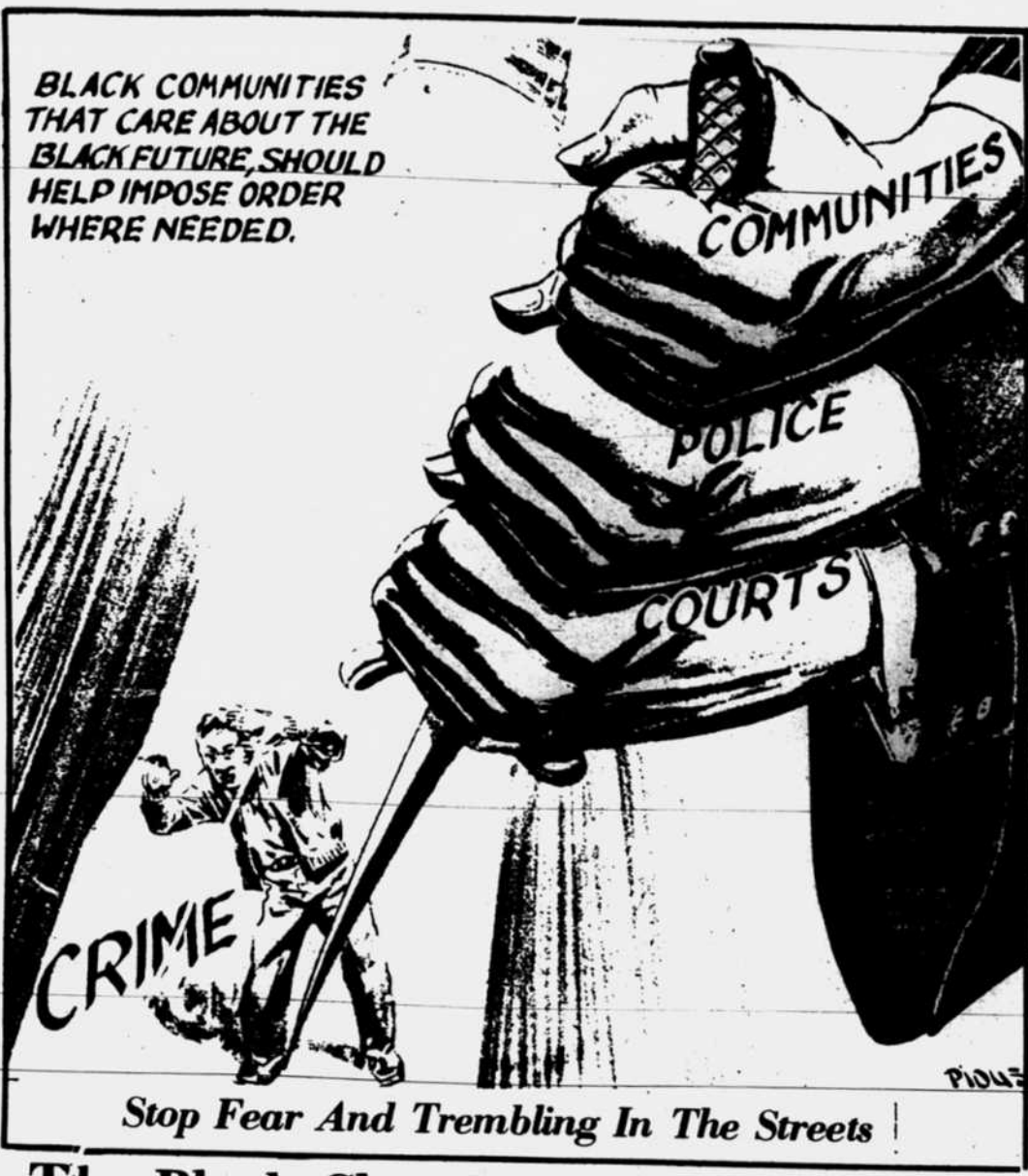
Finally, we must instill in the minds of black youth the pursuit of excellence. This means that in spite of racism, sexism or other road blocks to the better life, black youth must have a will to succeed academically, economically and politically if they are to have hope for the future.

We can, in the final analysis, only be equal if we are individually and collectively in pursuit of excellence.

reasons of race or family income, they'll get little on test scores or anything else.

Furthermore, a recent study shows that for every 14 whites who accept educational opportunities paid for by their employer, only one black accepts such opportunities.

Do such factors convenience many youth to not make the effort to succeed, to not be willing to pay the price of success? Do we often choose to fail rather than pay the price - study, work, create - to succeed. Ask yourself this question about yourself, "do you choose to fail?"



The Black Church And The NAACP

By Benjamin L. Hooks
Special to the Post

As the oldest, continuing Black institution, the church has been the most sustaining source of inspiration for America's largest minority population. During the darkest days of slavery, the Black Church provided spiritual strength as well as social development.



Protected as well as rescued the victims of slavery and human oppression from depraved marauders. It led in economic development through property ownership as well as in providing schooling for large numbers of Blacks.

The common bonds between the nation's principal civil rights organization and the principal religious institution for Blacks were therefore evident. Consequently, the NAACP, since its founding in 1909, has worked very closely with the Black Church. Such an umbilical relationship was natural since Blacks, as a strongly religious people, represented the indispensable linkage.

Benjamin L. Hooks, NAACP Executive Director

Other reasons include such crimes as the sordid Watergate affair that led to the resignation of a President and the imprisonment of many members of his Administration. Continually, we learn about the illegal activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which spearheaded the destruction of lives and institutions.

As the two principal institutions which have survived the destructive forces of recent years, the NAACP and the Black Church must therefore lead a crusade of moral awakening in this land. The pillars of this drive must be the strengthening of the social, economic and political fabric of America's poor.

The example of the Rev. Leon Sullivan of Philadelphia in establishing a nationwide network of Opportunities Industrialization Centers to provide job training should be followed. In education and international affairs, economic development and communication, health and social welfare, the Black Church could be partners with the NAACP, working for the freedom and betterment for our people.

Bus Schedule Revised
The Saturday in-bound schedule of the Route 2 Ashley Park-Independence Boulevard bus timetable has been revised to show that the end of the route no longer terminates at Dresden Drive West and Woodland Drive.

By Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

TO BE EQUAL

The Triumph Of Selfishness

The so-called "tax revolt" spearheaded by the action of California voters in voting for the infamous Proposition 13, a massive reduction in local property taxes, represents the triumph of the politics of selfishness.

It reflects the growing tendency of middle class voters to favor personal gain over the public good. If this trend continues, effective government could be severely hampered and the fragile ties that bind a pluralistic nation weakened.

Stripped to its essentials, the tax revolt represents a shell game, in which middle class voters fall for meat-axe slashes in taxes that benefit the rich while saving a few pennies for themselves, if that, and reducing the public services that benefit the poor.

The'll also find themselves hurt by a reduction in public services. Their kids' schools will lose teachers and books, their garbage will be picked up less often, and there will be fewer firemen to respond to emergencies.

Why then, did they vote for something so potentially destructive? Part of the reason lies in the peculiarities of the California situation - a real estate boom that has sent housing prices skyrocketing and an assessment policy that put property taxes on the same escalator.

That legitimate gripe doesn't exist everywhere else, so there is hope to excessive California reaction won't be duplicated elsewhere. But in fact there is a nationwide trend. Some states have similar tax limitation drives. Twenty-three state legislatures have passed a call for a constitutional amendment to ban federal budget deficits.

And spineless political leaders are scrambling to get aboard the anti-tax bandwagon. They are abdication the responsibility of leadership, which is to govern effectively and to educate the public to the fact that taxes pay for the services the public demands. Poll after poll shows public expectations of government is high. People want better schools, a strong defense force, better roads and transit, and even health insurance programs.

If the tax revolt gathers strength those things will be out of reach of government's ability to provide them. But you can bet that the tax breaks and hidden and overt subsidies that benefit rich people or favored special interests will remain intact.

But talking of the tax revolt in terms of its impact on government revenues and services only obscures what may be the real meaning of this negative movement. For the tax revolt amounts to a major escalation of the war between the classes.

America's dirty little secret, carefully hidden from view and denied by almost all, is that we have a class system. There are people on top who call the shots, there are people in the middle who identify their own interests with the powerful, and there are people on the bottom, effectively excluded from America's riches.

THE CHARLOTTE POST
"THE PEOPLES NEWSPAPER"
Established 1918
Published Every Thursday
By The Charlotte Post Publishing Co., Inc.
1524 West Blvd.-Charlotte, N.C. 28208
Telephones (704) 376-0496, 376-0497
Circulation, 9,915

60 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE

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Second Class Postage No. 965500 Paid At
Charlotte, N.C. under the Act of March 3, 1878

Member National Newspaper Publishers
Association

North Carolina Black Publishers Association

Deadline for all news copy and photos is 5 p.m.
Monday. All photos and copy submitted becomes
the property of the POST, and will not be returned.

National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.

45 W. 5th Suite 1403 2400 S. Michigan Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10036 Chicago, Ill. 60616
(212) 489-1220 Calumet 5-0200

as i see it

Overhaul School System

By Gerald O. Johnson
I am a strong believer in education.

A good education can take you a long way in life. But there is nothing more discouraging or more disappointing than the type of educational system we have now. The current system has many downfalls, including not providing an education for the mass of students. There are many reasons for our educational system being in such a shambles. I would like to highlight a few of the problems.

There is a lack of appreciation for an education. Most people view an education as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. Students are misguided into believing that an education is the key to success. Consequently they pursue an education with the objective of getting a degree or diploma and they are not concerned with learning.

If it were true that an education was the key to success then every educated person would be employed. This is clearly not the case. An education should be viewed as an enriching and broadening experience of the mind. Just to know facts, ideas, and opinions on varied topics makes it easier to deal with everyday situations. A good education will enhance your chances for good employment but does not guarantee employment.

The forced education of the masses has a direct affect on educational appreciation, also. It is stupid, expensive, and ineffective to feel that every child under 18 years of age has to be educated. This forced education creates the crime problems currently existing in our systems and it forces institutions to be more than inane baby sitting facilities.

The mere fact that education is legislatively required of all its constituents is proof that we lack an appreciation for it. It is impossible to educate anyone who is forced to receive it. Any proposal offered that would suggest that we not educate everyone would be met with the immediate reply "What would we do with all of those kids?" Education never is the point.

Another problem with the system is it's isolation from the real world. Though education is suppose to be the hub of

the rest of our society there are no direct lines of communication to or from the system. Businesses are not knowledgeable of what's going on in the schools and vice-versa. How can teachers prepare you for a society that they have no experience in. Of course, this applies to high schools and post secondary schools.

This problem is easily rectifiable simply by allowing all students to participate in "Co-op" programs and internships. This is simply giving students the opportunity to work in meaningful jobs during certain months of the year. This experience will

give the student the opportunity to see his class work being applied. Thus he will appreciate the fact that education is a useful and worthwhile tool.

Moreover, teachers should be required to get outside work experience in their field of expertise. This will make for a better teacher because the course won't be so book oriented. Finally, people working in areas other than education should be required to teach periodically. This type of exchange program will improve test day education 100 percent and make it a meaningful experience for all involved. Furthermore the society as a whole is involved with the educational process.

School systems lack adequate counseling procedures. Never have I seen so many mis-informed students in all my life. The few students in that endeavor to abuse education for career opportunities are misled into career objectives. The single motivating factor is money. For instance, I've been teaching mathematics and computer science for the last four years. Students come to me saying that they want to pursue a career in data processing because

that's where the money is. Unfortunately, the student has no idea what data processing is about nor does he know what he is all about. He has been misled to pursue a career for money instead of on ability. It is without a doubt that any field you can master will reward you financially, but more importantly it will fulfill you. Hence, it is the school system that is responsible for finding out a student's ability and interest. Without these two inputs it is impossible to counsel a student effectively.

The process of obtaining this information is both tedious and time consuming, but it is mandatory. Each student should be required to visit the counseling center periodically for talks, testing, and evaluations.

Most importantly school systems lack competency based measures to insure performance at the administrative and teaching positions. Unlike a business that is measured by profitability, educational systems seem to be intangible as far as evaluation is concerned.

New programs are implemented on a trial and error

