

Editorials & Comments

Women Caucus Offers Needed Direction

By Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Editorial Writer

In a challenge to the Charlotte community, and particularly the black community, the Black Women's Caucus has unveiled in perspective a series of problems faced by black Charlotteans.

In a two-hour workshop last Sunday at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church on Beatties Ford Road, about 80 blacks listened as articulate workshop leaders outlined four significant problems: (1) the vast majority of eligible black voters are apathetic, that is, they are either not registered to vote or if registered too often don't vote, (2) black teenage girls are having babies and abortions in ever increasing numbers, (3) over 75 percent of the black students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools failed the reading and math competency tests and (4) thousands of local black youth use drugs.

These problems are not new nor are they something that was unknown. What is significant is that a concerned group - the Black Women's Caucus - brought concerned people together as a means of identifying an in-depth meaning of each problem and allowing the participants to voice opinions, debate, air grievances and offer suggested solutions.

We applaud and salute the Caucus for initiating the workshop. We hope too that as the Caucus marshals its resources to take the necessary

follow-up steps, parents, older brothers and sisters and other relatives will attempt to create in the home environment forces and values that will help to diminish these problems. Furthermore, black ministers and other church leaders should demonstrate their interest and concern by encouraging parents and young people themselves to begin dealing objectively with the problems at hand.

However, let us not forget, that one of the four problems deals with political apathy. The Post has said so much so often about this problem that we are not sure what else can be said except to repeat that a voteless people are a hopeless people.

It appears to us then that the first line of attack on these problems should be with the adults who won't register or if registered won't vote. We make this suggestion because adult or parent apathy influences in a negative way the apathy of the youth using drugs, the teenage girl engaging in premarital sex or the student who lacks the motivation to try a little harder.

The Post calls upon all Charlotteans, black and white, young and old, to respond to the challenge that the Black Women's Caucus has set before us. These are our neighbors, our children, our friends, and our community. Let's help them get into the "main stream." After all, we too have a personal stake in these problems. If they loose, we loose. Think about it.

Blacks Need Health Insurance

Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), a supporter of President Carter on nearly every major legislative matter to date, has split with the President on the issue of national health insurance.

As announced by Joseph Califano, HEW secretary, the Carter Administration plan aims to hold the line on inflation while phasing in health insurance. He added that the \$25 to \$40 billion annual cost would be shared by government, employers, private insurers and workers when put into effect in 1983 if approved by Congress. Califano quickly added with emphasis that the phased-in plan would clearly be linked to economic conditions such as the option to spend \$10 billion on creating jobs instead of on health. Kennedy sharply broke with Carter on this saying he couldn't support such a cautious approach.

While Carter's 10-point guideline for a national health insurance plan is vague at this point, it appears doubtful that blacks will oppose his plan considering the option proposal because poor health and unemployment each affect black people.

The plight of black unemployment is well documented but few probably know the extent of black health

problems.

Blacks, Dr. Therman E. Evans, tells us face "quadruple jeopardy" in that they are admitted to the hospital more frequently than whites, and, once admitted, must stay longer. This happens because blacks suffer to a greater degree from nearly all the major diseases.

Evans adds that blacks are faced more frequently with the high cost of medical care particularly when it is noted that poor blacks have a 50 percent higher rate of days loss from work due to illness. For example, between 30 to 40 percent of all blacks have high blood pressure which increases the chances of suffering a stroke or having a heart attack. Furthermore, 31 percent of all black women are obese. Obesity, said to be most common among poor black women, increases the chances of developing diabetes and related problems.

These facts are enough to illustrate our need for a meaningful national health insurance plan. However, jobs too are important for blacks, thus, Carter's plan however developed may get strong black support when in final form.

"IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO ME THAT WE HAVE PREVAILED IN SPITE OF THE BARBARISM OF WHITE PEOPLE SHOULD IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 20th CENTURY, STAND AS MUTE SPECTATORS TO OUR OWN DOOM."



We Talk About Community Control While The Black Community Becomes The Most Dangerous!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Response To "As I See It" Column

Dear Mr. Johnson:

In response to your "As I See It" column in The Charlotte Post on July 6, 1978, may I offer a few statistics and information to clear up your misconception that "most employed women work to supplement another income."

A majority of women work because of economic need. About three-fifths of all women workers are single, widowed, divorced, or separated, or have husbands whose earnings are less than \$7,000 a year. Statistics show that of all female heads of household, approximately 70 percent are living at or below the poverty level.

Women are not new comers to the job market. Not every woman in early America churned butter. With the coming of the Industrial Age, women worked in textile mills, in cigar factories, in sweat shops. In 1840 they earned \$1.50 a week; in 1910, \$700. In Lowell, Massachusetts, they threatened cotton spools for 14 hours a day; in New York, they sewed seams on men's underwear for 11 hours a day... the list goes on and on. Women in North Carolina between the ages of 20 and 65 have a higher participation rate in the labor force than do women throughout the nation.

Some roots causes for women working in low paying jobs include poor career-oriented education and training; vocational education still limits women to low paying jobs, and there is little attempt to open up non-traditional areas; and a lot of apprenticeships remain closed to women out of custom

and discrimination. There is also a tremendous lag in enforcement of sex discrimination laws - few, if any, Federal contracts have been canceled because of it.

We keep hearing how we have laws already on the books to "protect" us against discrimination. That is some small comfort to a person, male or female, who has filed charges of discrimination and who must wait two to three years for their cases to be heard or settled, due to the tremendous backlog of cases. In the meantime, that person has to survive and provide for their families. Many times they have lost their jobs or endured harassment because they have filed charges, even though the law says this must not happen. While they are waiting for their cases to be heard, how do they survive? How can they put food on the table for their children and a roof over their heads?

There is still a wide gap between male and female earnings with approximately 80 percent of females concentrated into low-paying, dead-end jobs and earning less than males. Contrary to popular belief, women's relative progress in the labor force has been deteriorating in recent years. For example, in 1955 women's median year-round, full-time earnings were 64 percent of men, whereas by 1975, their earnings had dropped to 59 percent. The average annual income of men is almost twice that of women in North Carolina. Men make over \$3,000 a year more than women in the same occupation. A woman with

three to four years of college makes less per year than a man with only an eighth grade education in far too many instances.

Taking married women out of the labor force would not create more jobs for men. If all the married women stayed home and unemployed men were placed in their jobs, there would be approximately 17.3 million unfilled jobs.

A salary such as Barbara Walter's is a rarity for women in any field. How many more women are there like Catherine Mackin, also a TV correspondent, who captured national attention as "crackerjack interviewer" while covering the Democratic National Convention, but whose salary was \$300,000 less than the lowest paid male correspondent at the convention, even though her job responsibilities were greater and her qualifications higher?

I hope this information is of benefit to you. There is much more that could be said on this subject, but I will stop at this point. The statistics I have given you, plus many more, are available from many sources. I would be most happy to put you in touch with them if you so desire. Please feel free to call on us any time we may be of service. Sincerely,

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By Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

TO BE EQUAL



Competency Tests Inadequate

Every so often educators get hooked on a new fad that's supposed to cure what ails public education. This year's panacea is something called the minimum competency test.

Essentially, that's a test that's supposed to measure whether a student can successfully perform basic arithmetic and reading skills. If such tests were only guides to student performance - signals to parents and teachers that children who do poorly in them need special help to master basic skills - then there would be little concern.

But that's not the way they're being used in many states. In Florida, for example, high school students who fail the test don't get their diplomas. Youngsters who went through twelve years of school and then fail this one test are thus victimized by the very educational system that failed to teach them basic skills. The system didn't educate them, but it's the students who are penalized by deprivation of the diploma.

Florida's test results points to another danger. Schools in higher income neighborhoods showed few children failing the tests. Schools in low-income and minority neighborhoods had high failure rates.

This indicates the real danger of such tests for the black community - disproportionate numbers of black children will leave school without a diploma. Instead of being a tool for locating learning problems, the tests become a tool for sorting and sifting and labelling minority children as failures.

Like so many other supposedly "neutral" elements in our national life, competency tests work to the disadvantage of minorities. Black students are placed in a double bind. First the schools don't do a proper job of educating them, and then, even when they successfully complete their course of study, failing the one test results in loss of the diploma.

Simplistic reliance on competency tests is a political response to citizen concern about the schools' inadequacy. But despite the rhetoric by tests' supporters, there's little evidence that competency tests will result in better remedial programs or improved school accountability. Yes, schools may become geared to "teaching the test" at the expense of a broader education, but reducing educational experience to passing a single test makes a mockery of the educational process.

It doesn't have to be that way. Tests are all too often capricious, ill-conceived and culturally-biased. But testing can be a useful tool to measure a student's mastery over subject matter. The purpose of a test shouldn't be to label the student; it should be a teaching guide to help instructors meet the individual needs of their students.

Thus, competency tests introduced in early grades, and used as tools to help teachers who believe in their pupil's potentials improve the education given children, have their place. Such tests are positive teaching tools, not mechanisms to label kids as failures or to track them into paths of failure and push them out of school.

Such tests should be within the context of intense parental involvement, in which the rights and responsibilities of parents are encouraged by school systems.

Our New Day Begun

NAACP Affirmative Action Mobilization

By Benjamin L. Hooks
Special to the Post

In response to the NAACP's call for a conference to examine the implications of the Supreme Court's decision ordering the admission of Allan P. Bakke to the University of California, Davis Medical School, more than 300 lawyers, affirmative action officers, educators and other concerned people attended the symposium in Detroit July 20 through 22.

The extensive interest in the historic case that was displayed was one indication of the concern, if not worry, that many blacks have about the future of affirmative action. The realization was that, if we lose this struggle, the impact of other civil rights programs will be significantly reduced.

The Bakke decision was evaluated in six workshops: legal, government, education, religion, employment and corporate. Drawing upon the spirit of these discussions we prepared "A Call to Action for a National Affirmative Action Mobilization."

The symposium also called attention to the Walker-Levitas Amendment to the Appropriations Bill for the Departments of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare. This measure would "prohibit

funding for any quota system... so that practices of reverse discrimination can be stopped.

Americans should express their alarm over this exceedingly destructive measure. For, despite its seeming simplicity, it would effectively cripple all Federal affirmative action programs. The amendment (House Bill 12929) was recently passed by a 232-177 vote in the House and will soon be brought before the Senate. It must not pass.

The NAACP has sent out a red alarm to its branches and members across the nation to demand that their Senators vote down the amendment. We also urgently call upon our supporters to join us in this endeavor. The following is a summary of the Affirmative Action Mobilization Call:

1. NAACP branches and State Conferences should work with churches, labor, fraternal, educational, legal and other similarly committed organizations to begin monitoring affirmative action programs of all educational institutions.
2. Corporate, business, labor and government leaders should publicly reaffirm their commitment to affirmative action.
3. The NAACP shall mobilize

and elsewhere and file "friend of the court" briefs.

6. The NAACP declares war on all attempts to weaken or

destroy affirmative action and civil rights enforcement

Critical For Minority Groups

Civil Service Reform Actions

Washington - The Carter Administration is preparing for a difficult battle in Congress to achieve civil service reform - a struggle in which blacks and other minority groups have a major stake.

President Carter, who announced his civil service reorganization and reform proposals last March, has said the package now being considered in Congress is the "centerpiece of government reorganization during my term of office."

Crucial votes on the President's proposals are expected in early August, with much of the attention focused on the House of Representatives. Blacks and other minorities have a stake in the outcome of the proposals. The Carter Administration has said that civil service reform, if adopted as proposed by President Carter, would help blacks and

through the attachment of such riders and amendments as that sponsored by Representatives Robert S. Walker

(R-Pa.) and Elliott Levitas (D-Ga.), and another by Sena-

tors Joseph Biden (D-Del.) and Thomas Eagleton (D-Mo.). The Biden-Eagleton amendment, also to the Labor-HEW Appropriations bill would again prohibit public school busing for intergration.

Administration hopes to convince the Congress to change the so-called "rule of three" procedure in the civil service system, whereby hiring selections must be from a list of three persons who scored highest on merit tests. The Carter Administration favors expanding the list to seven names, thus opening up more opportunities for others.

Under the President's plan, veterans preference in civil service hiring would be limited to disabled veterans and would provide such preference on a one-time only basis within 15 years of discharge. This would focus preference benefits on Vietnam era veterans. Minorities comprise a higher percentage - 14 percent - of Vietnam era veterans than earlier veterans, estimated at 8 percent.

In addition, the Carter



Benjamin L. Hooks
...NAACP Director

its Youth and College Chapters to call a conference on Bakke.

4. The NAACP should organize a national Task Force to evaluate trends revealed by the monitoring reports and develop appropriate means for challenging any efforts to weaken affirmative action programs.

5. The NAACP legal structure, in cooperation with the National Bar Association, the National Conference of Black Lawyers and other similarly committed groups should catalogue cases in which affirmative action programs are being attacked in the

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