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Union members fight for better wages at Thonet-A Simmons Company in Charlotte: Karen Cureton, Cecilia Adams, Chuck Wilson, Harvey Bogan, and supporter Dione Adams. Their strike lasted 6 weeks. (photo by Eileen Hanson)

Karen Cureton Says:

"These Northern Companies Are Trying To Break Our Union"

by Eileen Hanson
Special To The Post

"These northern companies come down here, pay us half as much and now are trying to break our union." This was the opinion of Karen Cureton of 500 Cama St. after being fired September 14 from Thonet-A Simmons Company, where she has worked for 8 months.

Cureton has a perfect record. According to fellow employees she was a hard worker. She was never late and had missed only one day when her sister was hospitalized.

"They really fired me for union activities," said Cureton. She was a leader in the recent 6-week strike of the Upholsterer's International Union against Thonet-Simmons that began in mid-July when the company refused to negotiate with the newly elected union. (See The Charlotte Post Aug. 3, 1978).

The firing of two black employees sparked the strike that eventually led Charlotte's Thonet employees to picket two of the company's northern plants. Union members shut down plants for three days in Sheboygan, Wis. and York, Pa. when they refused to cross picket lines set up by the Charlotte strikers.

Thonet-Simmons is a subsidiary of a national company that makes Simmons mattresses and other furniture. It is based in Pennsylvania and owns 22 plants, including another Thonet plant in Statesville and a Simmons mattress plant in Atlanta.

"A year ago the company closed its Munster, Indiana plant and moved to Charlotte on Old Steele Creek Road. Employees complain that up north the wages were \$6 to 12 an hour, while in Charlotte the company starts \$3.25 and top pay is \$4.07 an hour.

"I was making \$3.75 an hour," said Cureton. "Up north the same job is paid twice as much."

Union members believe they would be able to earn more money if they had a union contract with the company. Unionized employees generally have better wages

and more benefits.

The union called off their strike on August 28 and asked to return to the bargaining table to negotiate a contract. The company refused.

Since then the company has fired 5 more employees, most of them active union members. Four are black.

"They think they can scare us. Other blacks believe they have no place else to go and feel intimidated if one of us gets fired," said Cureton.

Cureton was fired after refusing to work overtime on the days she attends classes at Hamilton College where she is studying business administration.

She brought her school schedule at the company's request, and added typing, which was actually a private tutoring session to help her qualify for the school's data processing program. The company fired her for allegedly giving false information.

"They said my job came before school," said Cureton. "But to me, school comes before the job. It's my future."

Cureton was elected financial secretary of the local union two weeks ago.

Roginald Harris, a member of the negotiating team for the union, was fired Sept. 6 allegedly for poor work performance.

Bobby King was fired the week before for reporting to work late after the strike

ended.

Chief Steward and negotiator Willie Parker were fired for refusing to come in an hour early every day.

"I told them when I started that I have a heart condition and could not work overtime," said Parker.

"It's against the law to change conditions of work without consulting the union," said union vice-president Harvey Bogan. "They are just trying to find the weakness of every strong union supporter and fire them to intimidate the rest."

The union has filed a number of unfair labor practice charges against the company with the National Labor Relations Board. The Board found merit in several charges and has issued complaints against the company which will be heard by an administrative law judge on Nov. 2.

The company has also filed charges against the union, but refused to comment.

It is illegal to fire employees for union activity or for a company to refuse to bargain with a duly elected union.

Thonet-Simmons General Manager Randy Marks refused to comment on the recent firings. He asked Andy Anderson of the Central Piedmont Employers Association to make a statement to the press. But Anderson, whose organization represent Thonet-Simmons in negotiations, also refused to comment.

See NORTHERN on Pg. 12.

Funeral Directors Respond To Regulations Proposal

19-Member Committee To Advise ESC

A 19-member committee comprised mostly of local business executives has been named here to advise the North Carolina Employment Security Commission on how to improve its services to employers and workers.

Heading the Charlotte ESC office's Employer Advisory Committee as co-chairmen are Frank Mansfield of Goodwill Industries and John Gray of Cummins Carolinas, Inc.

Organization of the committee was announced by Claude Lewis, Jr., manager of the ESC's Charlotte office. Other officers are Mrs. Sue Garcia of First Union National Bank, vice chairperson, and Bill Hill, a personnel specialist with Mecklenburg County, secretary.



LOVELY DORIS L. STARKS
...Waiting For Right Break

Doris L. Starks Is Beauty Of Week

by Monica Brown
Post Staff Writer

"Natural is best" says Doris L. Starks, the Post's Beauty of the Week. Doris, an 18-year-old charmer from South Carolina is very interested in the aspects of becoming a model. Doris says, "I first became interested when I met some professionals during a show when I was in High school. They said I had the features and possibly the making for a model if trained. So with that kind of encouragement in mind, Doris enrolled in the Barabazon School of Modeling and is very confident that she will be a success."

"I know that the system is unfair, but that's life," she stated. To be black trying to crack the system is even harder, but I know with time the right breaks will come.

Doris has coal black hair that is shoulder length which she likes to wear in various styles. "The trick to having a good looking hairstyle is a good haircut and of course proper hair care. If not you lose a lot of hair," she explained.

As far as makeup, she wears not even a dab. "Why hide what mother nature gave you?" she asked. "Oh yes, as a model I wear a minimum and that's all. If one is naturally photogenic the makeup becomes secondary, always."

Clothes are very casual for Doris, but she always rises to the occasion by dressing the part, whatever the event.

Doris stands 5'8" and weighs 110 pounds. She says she has always been slim, and that she is proportionately built considering her height, body build and, above all, professional objective.

Doris is a graduate of Independence High School and CPCC where she was a student of commercial design. At present, she is employed by Hydro Print. In her spare time, she may be found in the kitchen preparing barbecue ribs, one of her favorite dishes, or performing modern dancing for relaxation.

"One should try to get ahead, no matter how stiff the opposition," she said. "Today's Black woman is on the rise to even greater heights and they are going to achieve the impossible," she concluded.

New Rule Would Increase Cost And Hinder Consumers

The nation's black funeral directors authorized a formal response to regulations proposed by the Federal Trade Commission that would alter the way the undertaking industry operates. The action was taken at the forty-first annual convention of the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association (NFDMA) that was held in Philadelphia in August.

Charging that some of the new rules, if adopted would increase costs and hinder instead of help consumers, the NFDMA named a committee to draft its objections as determined from the delegates.

Assigned to formulate the association's position were Herlis Tillman and Larry Williams, NFDMA legal counsel, both of Washington, D.C., and Robert H. Miller of Chicago, the association's executive secretary. The committee has until November to complete and file the association's statement with the FTC that proposed the regulations after a study of the industry for two years during which it received comments from consumers and other segments of the undertaking industry.

How the other decisions, reached during the convention are to be implemented will be determined at an unprecedented meeting of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee at Atlanta, Ga., November 3 and 4. The meeting has been called by John R. Steward of Richmond, Calif., who succeeded James R. Couch of Chicago as the Association's new president. Couch was elevated to chairman of the executive committee.

Other new officers are Herlis Tillman of Washington, 1st vice president, Mrs. Lois Lee Dorsey of Pittsburgh, Pa., secretary; Louis T. Perry of Battle Creek, Mich., treasurer; Jerome Primm, New York City, 2nd vice president, William S. Hutchings, Macon, Ga., board chairman; J. C. Scarborough, Durham, N.C., vice chairman, board of directors.

75 Persons Demonstrate In Siler City

Seventy-five persons demonstrated in Siler City on Saturday, Sept. 16, demanding the local schoolboard release Paul Braxton School for community programs and calling for an immediate stop to the N.C. Competency Test program. The marchers were joined for the rally by a number of senior citizens from the Siler City area.

The committee to Save Paul Braxton School for the People, organizer of the march was formed of citizens and community groups who have been fighting for over two months for use of the school. The near-empty school building is controlled by the local school board and partly used by the Central Carolina Technical Institute. The Hoint Chatham Community Action Agency has requested use of a kitchen and six classrooms for programs for preschool children (Headstart) and for its senior citizens' nutrition program, seriously threatened by the present cramped facilities. The School Board has repeatedly refused to grant the request despite widespread community support including a mass meeting of over 200 persons. The requested space will stand empty this year while a "Facilities study" is being planned.

The Chatham County Committee for Human Rights, with other groups and individuals, has been organizing opposition to the Competency Test Program since June. The Human Rights Committee has been actively involved in the Save Paul Braxton campaign and the Test Campaign was taken up as focus of the Saturday march.

According to a committee spokesperson, "The Paul Braxton School and Test Competency Test issues are closely linked.

Charlotte Region Will Hire 12

Community Services Specialists

by Sherleen McKay
Post Staff Writer

Bernard W. Douglas, a 43-year-old native Washingtonian has been living in Charlotte for two and a half years while working as a Community Services Specialist for the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Presently he is the Charlotte Regional Coordinator for the Census Community Service program. The Charlotte region will hire 12 Community Services Specialists before 1980 and he is responsible for seeing that the program is run smoothly.

Douglas stated that blacks were undercounted by as much as two million people by official estimates. "These estimates could be far short of the real number of blacks and minorities who were not counted in the 1970 Census," he said. "More plainly stated, every black person who was not counted in the 1970 Census cost America's black community in this country a chance of having enough people to be declared a congressional district and electing a black congressman to send to Washington."



Bernard W. Douglas
Regional coordinator
The Community Service Program is hiring minorities to go into their communities and lecture about the benefits that one can receive from being counted in the Census.

Douglas said that the twelve Census Regional Offices will hire a total of about 200 Community Services Specialists to work in certain areas of communities to prepare the residents for the 1980 Census. They will form the liaison groups in the communities to spread literature about the census and help prepare minorities for the 1980 Census.

The Community Services Office is located in the Northwestern Bank Building at 230 South Tryon Street in Charlotte.

Douglas has worked in several U.S. and District Government Agencies in Washington, D.C. which included the Department of the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Treasury Department, Department of Public Welfare and the District Unemployment Compensation Board, mostly in the Personnel Offices. He was also the Assistant Director of the Uplift House, Work Experience Program, Banquet Sales for LaFont Plaza, an American Federation of Musicians Booking Agent, manager and disc jockey. He is married and has one child.



Courtesy is too cheap for some people to be interested in it.