

# Editorials & Comments

## We Need Political Clout

by Hoyle H. Martin, Sr.  
Post Editorial Writer

Former Senator Edward Brooke, then the only black among the nation's 100 U. S. Senators, told an "Operation Push" audience in Chicago early last year that there were seven million unregistered black potential voters in the nation. He added, "Can you imagine that potential...influence, power, and impact on this nation?"

Shortly after Brooke's comment, an article in Black Enterprise magazine said in part, "Blacks have been able to erect a rather sophisticated political system that has become a power broker in Kansas City politics." This has happened, the article continues, because blacks in that city "have managed to agree on issues."

These observations appear to be dealing with the two opposite ends of the spectrum called "CLOUT." By clout, we mean strength, political strength and influence in your community, your city, your state and your nation. Such strength can enable people to determine their own destiny.

An even more dramatic example of the opposite ends of clout, or more accurately, political clout, is evident in two more recent developments. In the November 1978 general elections, the nation experienced one of the lowest voter turnouts in history. Only 37 percent of the registered voters went to the polls. In North Carolina the voter turnout was an even lower 29 percent.

Elected officials, aware of the degree of voter apathy, often feel no sense of responsibility because they feel no sense of support by or demands from the voters.

This was evident in a June 7, 1979 action in the U.S. House of Representatives, whereby, a 245 to 145 vote, a bill containing new enforcement powers for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be used against fraudulent land developers was lost.

### Political Contributions

The bill lost, Common Cause reports, because the National Association of Realtors (NAR) had put more than \$1 million into political contributions. In fact, NAR was the second largest interest group to give to political campaigns in the nation during the 1978 Congressional elections, according to Common Cause.

Clout then, as revealed in a Common Cause study, focuses on the campaign contributions made by the Political Action Committee (PAC) of the NAR to the 390 House members who voted on the offer by Rep. Carroll Campbell (R-S.C.) to eliminate the new enforcement provision from the bill.

More than 300 Representatives presently in the House received NAR contributions in their 1978 campaigns. In the Senate, 32 of 35

Senators who won in 1978 received NAR contributions.

The Common Cause study reveals further that 203 (83 percent) of the 245 House members who voted for the MAR-supported Campbell amendment - received campaign contributions from NAR. The average contribution from NAR to each of the 203 Representatives receiving contributions was \$3,665 (for a total of \$743,911).

On the other hand, 74 of the 145 Representatives who voted against the NAR backed amendment received no contributions from the NAR during the period noted. The remaining 71 Representatives who opposed the amendment received NAR contributions substantially smaller than those who supported the amendment. The average NAR contributions for the 71 Representatives were \$1,440 as compared with the \$3,665 for those supporting NAR-favored amendment.

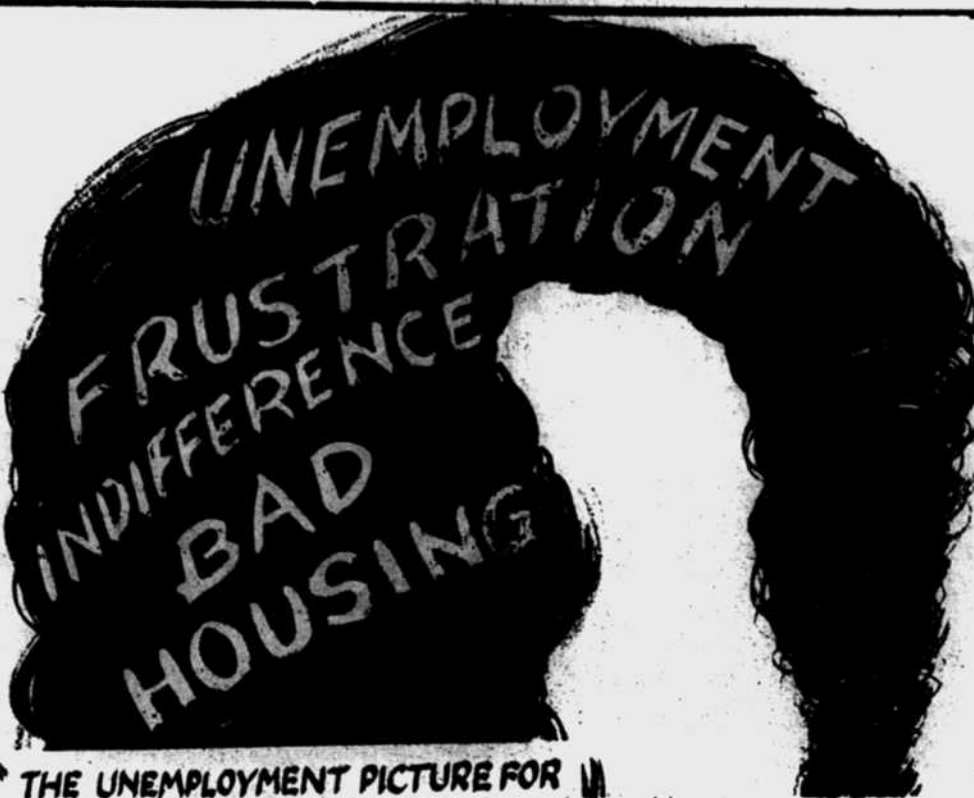
The point in revealing these facts from the Common Cause study is to point out a way in which one form of clout can and is being used. However, because we believe financial campaign support of the magnitude that appears to be nearly buying loyalty or votes and because the average American cannot, and we'd hope would not use such a method to get clout, we strongly believe citizens must find other means of exercising clout. We believe such alternatives is in fact vital to the democratic process.

### Black Charlotteans

We have repeatedly said in this column, for example, that in spite of the relative degree of success black Charlotteans have had under district representation, more needs to be done to retain and strengthen that system. We have suggested too that we need to develop a cadre of black leaders who will develop a philosophical state of purpose and intent designed as a framework for improving the quality of life through greater economic and political effort and opportunity for blacks. We have noted too that building a clout foundation requires a major effort of a planned systematic attack on black voter apathy and vocal support for voter registration and voting.

We are suggesting that a new political strategy is vital to our survival today and for a better tomorrow. The clout acquiring strategy must include (1) long term planning, (2) an investment of time and money, (3) getting more black business and professional people involved in politics and (4) creating an awareness of the fact that an improved quality of life for black people must begin and be developed by black people.

Mayor Maynard Jackson of Atlanta has said, "We are the one who must change our situation"



"THE UNEMPLOYMENT PICTURE FOR MINORITY YOUTHS, PARTICULARLY BLACKS, IS NOW ROUGHLY WHAT IT WAS FOR THE ENTIRE NATION IN THE DEPTHS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE EXPERTS SAY." JOHN HERBERS... N.Y. TIMES

1979

It's Time For Blacks To Do Something About It.....

### Letter To The Editor

#### Statement By The City Of Charlotte

Special to the Post

During the evening of Wednesday, June 20, through television and other press accounts, we and the community became aware that a group of City employees stated in a union meeting that night, if the City did not meet certain demands, they would go on strike Monday, June 25. These employees, essentially "blue collar" in nature, are supposedly members of Local 64, Laborer's International Union, AFL-CIO.

After thoroughly evaluating the situation, which included a direct attempt by the union to get the City to violate the North Carolina Law, we find we have no choice but to completely reject the union's demands.

The union has demanded the City change its current grievance process, and enter into an agreement with them to provide a different employee grievance process that includes among other things, a requirement for binding arbitration by a third party. A meeting was held today with the union to review a second proposal of the union, but the same problems existed as with the union's first demand.

The City of Charlotte has long recognized the benefits for an effective employee communications program, and there are numerous methods we follow. As part of this program, we already have a formal and informal grievance process, which are both highly effective. In the formal process, an employee or a representative of the employee's choosing may submit a grievance to a supervisor and if it is not settled, it can, after other processes, be submitted to the City Manager. Also, the City Manager

may refer the grievance to a mutually acceptable third party for recommendations. The informal process is one whereby an employee may contact the Personnel Department directly and two personnel employees, or more if necessary, work with these grievances.

We feel our grievance procedure is a good one, and allows for a fair and effective system of recourse for an employee. This does not say the system is perfect, but then, we are not aware of a grievance system that is perfect.

In addition to finding no reasons to change our grievance process, to enter into an agreement with the union would be a violation of the Law. While in this state a public employee may join a union, the Law is very clear that a public jurisdiction shall not enter into an agreement or contract with a labor organization. Also, in addition to binding arbitration meaning that management authority to administer numerous functions would be abdicated, there is a serious legal question as to whether a public jurisdiction in the state can enter into an arrangement whereby its responsibility for making decisions can be vested in an independent third party.

We hope that a strike does not occur, and that any City employee who is considering participating in any form of job action carefully considers whether it is really worth it. City policy provides, "strikes and work stoppages by City employees will not be permitted. Investigation of participation in, or giving leadership to a strike or work stoppage shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action up to and includ-

ing dismissal." Should any type of job action occur, we are prepared to deal with it accordingly.

We are concerned about the effect of a strike on the community and we'll assure all citizens that should a strike occur, we are ready to implement plans to provide for as high a level of service as possible. We would also ask the community to support us in this matter.

While we will not agree to the union demands, in view of the interest shown in this matter by some City employees, we plan to review the application of the grievance process to insure it is administered as it should be. To allow us to obtain needed input, the City Manager will appoint a group of several City employees to function in an advisory capacity. Also, we shall continue to provide training to supervisory personnel and communicate the aspects of the process to employees.

#### This Is The Law

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The Clerk of the Court

One of the most important county officials in North Carolina is the Clerk of Superior Court.

The Clerk is responsible for the clerical and record-keeping functions of the Superior Court and also the District Court. He files and maintains the paperwork in the civil and criminal court cases. He is also ex officio judge of probate. That means that the Clerk handles matters pertaining to the probate of wills and the administration of estates of decedents and matters concerning minors and incompetents.

## TO BE EQUAL



### Carter Makes Right Decision

President Carter acted boldly and decisively in deciding to maintain economic sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

He was bold because he acted in the face of an overwhelming Senate vote in favor of lifting sanctions. The Senate bought the idea that since that country's elections were nominally fair, sanctions ought to be lifted.

The President said there were three basic reasons for his decision. Keeping the sanctions would be in the best interests of the United States and in the best interests of the people of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Finally, the progress made there has not been sufficient to justify lifting sanctions according to the guidelines set by the Case-Javits amendment.

Those guidelines require free elections open to all political groups, and demonstration of willingness to negotiate with the Patriotic Front whose armies pushed the old Smith government into making concessions the black majority.

There's been a lot of talk about the fairness of the April elections in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. But parties opposed to the new Constitution were not allowed to participate in any meaningful sense.

Whatever the conduct of the elections themselves, there hasn't been much attention given to the fact that the black majority was excluded from the real decision - to approve or disapprove the new Constitution.

That document provides for real power to reside in the white population - four percent of the nation's people. The 96 percent who are black were not allowed to vote. The Constitution was imposed upon them. Those April elections were for Parliament, not for the Constitution. So they were rigged long before any blacks went to the polls.

The merits of providing some temporary assurances to the white minority that their rights will be recognized is not the issue. The issue is that minority advantage - disproportionate representation in Parliament, control of the army, courts, police, and the civil service - is frozen into the Constitution blacks could not vote on. And future reforms will be impossible because of the built-in veto power enjoyed by the white majority.

So the fairness of the April elections is a phony issue. The real test is whether the country has a majority government, and that test cannot be met by simply having blacks installed in top government posts. Ian Smith's continued presence in the government is symbolic of the power he and the small minority he represents still wield.

If the President had gone along with the Senate's inclinations, the United States would have been the only country in the world, aside from South Africa, to formally recognize the new government and to break the UN ban on trade.

That would have been disastrous to American foreign policy. The long, patient process of overcoming our past racist image on the continent would have been destroyed.

And it would have been an invitation to the Russians and the Cubans to escalate the military struggle in Southern Africa, with all the bloodshed and suffering for black Africa that would mean.

## A Sneak Attack On Black Construction Workers

by Bayard Rustin  
Special to the Post

In an odd way, people like Bull Connor, George Wallace, Lester Maddox and other outspoken racists unwittingly provided black people with some useful tactical advantages.

First, the bitterness and harshness of their rhetoric alienated them from many decent white people. And, second, their unambiguous and starkly honest support for segregation helped to unify and mobilize the black community. Moreover, we had no difficulty in distinguishing our friends from our enemies.

Today, however, much of the bombast, crudity, and overt racism of the recent past has disappeared. Discussion of "racial issues" has become more refined and civilized. But this "cooling-off" of racial rhetoric raises a new and perplexing problem: many

subtle, almost invisible assaults on black people now slip by us unnoticed and therefore unchallenged. Such a "sneak attack" on black people is now underway within the construction industry. Allow me to explain.

After years of difficult and painstaking work, blacks have finally begun to obtain their fair share of good-paying, relatively secure jobs in the unionized skilled trades. Indeed, black youngsters now fill nearly 20 percent of all new apprenticeship slots among cement masons, steamfitters, plasterers and operating engineers. Significant progress has also been realized in other trades as well, trades which back in 1940 had something like 1 black for every 20 whites.

But now, just as we begin to see some encouraging advances, we also witness the emergence of a bold move-



Bayard Rustin

ment among employers to undermine the wages, job security and working conditions of their new black workers by promoting something known as the "merit shop." This course is not done in the name of racism, it is done in the name of competitiveness, cost-cutting, and economic necessity.

What exactly is the "merit shop" and how does it affect black workers? Stripped of its alluring trappings, the merit shop is nothing more than a non-union shop in which the em-

ployer - and the employer alone - sets wage rates, working conditions, vacations, fringe benefits, and work rules. Workers have no say, and they lack the protections afforded by a solid collective bargaining agreement. In short, blacks who flocked to the unionized construction trades in the hope of finding job security, dignity, and a good income are now discovering that non-union construction employers - who are expanding every day - are becoming as arbitrary, and tight-fisted as "Old Massa" on the plantations.

It is no surprise - and certainly no coincidence - that the low-paying "merit shops" have become so popular in areas with large black populations and high unemployment rates which make labor cheap and docile. Data in a recent issue of Fortune magazine, confirmed

this point by noting that "merit shops" account for 85 percent of all construction work in the Baltimore area, 83 percent in Houston, and 75 percent in Washington, D.C.

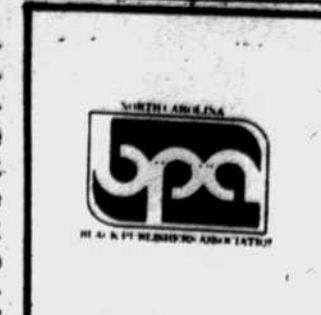
All this is just the beginning for the "merit shop" proponents who are organized in the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). This powerful, well-financed organization - which has two full-time lawyers in Washington, and the services of 60 law firms across the country - now hopes to significantly increase the number of "merit shops" in urban areas, which of course have the largest concentrations

of black union construction workers. By focusing its anti-union, wage-cutting efforts in the cities, ABC will in effect be undermining the position of black workers, workers who have enjoyed the benefits and high wages of

union jobs for such a short time. Additionally, ABC has launched a major - and so far unsuccessful - campaign to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act, a law which requires contractors on federal projects to pay prevailing union wage rates.

By describing the activities of ABC, and the adverse economic effects of the "merit shop" on blacks, I am not asserting that ABC and its member companies are consciously racist. Most are not.

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