

Editorials & Comments

Districting Is The American Way

After months of hiding his identity as the leader of the anti-district representation movement, County Commissioner Bill Booe has emerged as the force behind the drive to return to a full at-large City Council.

At a news conference last Friday, Mr. Booe presented the names of the 45 member committee and noted that while none of the members are black, blacks are welcome to join the committee. Regardless of the reason Mr. Booe made his remark about the absence of blacks on the anti-district committee, the ultimate result is to convince some narrowminded white people that black elected officials are in some way a threat to their well-being. Thus, Booe's remark is characteristic of the new racism that has emerged in America.

Disclaiming that the committee's intent is to eliminate black representation on the City Council, Booe said "It's simply what form of government is best for the people." Booe and his committee therefore are contending that they know what form of government is best for the people.

Carrying the anti-districting argument to its logical conclusion, we should eliminate city, county and state governments and reduce the number of national elected officials to, let's say, 25 Senators, elected at-large. In this way, according to Mr. Booe and his followers, we

would not have a large governing body or bodies unable to function in the citizen's best interest.

Undoubtedly, that would not satisfy Mr. Booe either because it would mean too much government which he's consistently complaining about all the time. If our assumption here is right, and Booe's actions appear to indicate that we are, then his real argument is not with district representation but rather with the fact that he is personally in disagreement with the actions of those on the present 11 member City Council.

While a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board, and now a County Commissioner, Mr. Booe has constantly been in disagreement with his colleagues. In fact, some have referred to the County Commission as the 4-1 Commission - the four commissioners and Bill Booe - because he is usually in disagreement with whatever his colleagues decide to do regardless of whether they are Republicans or Democrats.

Therefore, any citizens who oppose district representation is really opposed to democratic government, that is, the kind of government that offers the greatest opportunity for participation in the elective process under which they are governed. Think about it, for only you can preserve your freedom.

The Image Dilemma

Harold Parks, former chairman of the Roots of Charlotte Committee and past director of Project Meet, a federally funded high school completion and job training program, recently criticized radio station WGIV for neglecting to provide cultural enrichment programs for the black community and for its inadequate news coverage.

Specifically, Parks say "All they play is disco music... (and) their news format... doesn't touch on anything in depth." As might be expected, WGIV has attempted to defend itself against these allegations.

From our view point, Mr. Parks' charges are valid and the station is simply a part of the entire electronic media's tendency, whether intentional or not, to show little sensitivity to the needs and concerns of black Americans.

The September issue of "Black Enterprise" magazine stated the problem in these words, "The image of blacks in television is as objectionable today as was once its absence. Now 'The Jeffersons' have found that 'Good Times' is 'What's Happening', the new challenge is to redefine the manner in which blacks are portrayed."

The image dilemma that blacks face is in the quest for writing, directing and acting roles in a medium that is controlled by whites

that too often wants to maintain the stereotype of blacks whether in radio, television or newsprint.

For example, other than being portrayed as a super-cop or as a character actor in a situation comedy, blacks get few, if any, major roles in television programming. Furthermore, the few blacks who are writers, directors or producers of TV shows too often must operate under the same black stereotype policies.

Tony Brown, host and producer of "Tony Brown's Journal," puts the issue in clear perspective on one of his weekly shows that examined the image of blacks on television. He noted that of a poll of 100 black leaders, 94 of them expressed the feeling that black situation comedies have a negative impact on black family life. Mr. Brown himself said it clearly, "I wouldn't want a black bigot like George Jefferson for a neighbor."

Therefore, while a people with a specific characteristic show a sense of maturity when they're able to laugh at themselves, black stereotyping is requiring too much laughing. What we need to do is stop sitting down comfortably week after week in front of the TV set and

It's our image, if we don't demand a positive, more real-life change, nobody will.

PRESIDENT CARTER STATED IN ACCEPTING AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S RESIGNATION, HE PRAISED HIM FOR: 'HAVING EARNED FOR THE UNITED STATES THE FRIENDSHIP, TRUST, AND RESPECT OF MANY NATIONS WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED THE UNITED STATES SUSPECT AND UNWORTHY OF SUCH A RELATIONSHIP.' AMBASSADOR YOUNG CAN TAKE CREDIT FOR THE AGREEMENT WITH NIGERIA TO PROVIDE 50% OF ITS EXPORTED OIL AT FAVORABLE RATES TO THE UNITED STATES, ALSO, THE AGREEMENT FOR NIGERIA TO SEND 1,000 YOUNG NIGERIANS TO THE UNITED STATES FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING.



"I Hate To See Him Go" President Carter

TO BE EQUAL



Young Served U.S. Well

Andrew Young's resignation as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations is a blow to America's diplomatic efforts and a bitter shock to black people, whose respect and admiration Ambassador Young will always enjoy.

A lot has been written and said about the immediate circumstances surrounding his resignation. Regardless of the wisdom of the "no-PLO contact" policy of our government, Ambassador Young felt he could no longer follow formal government procedures at the expense of his effectiveness.

Therefore, his resignation was an act of conscience. His actions were motivated by his intense desire to implement the broad principles of American policy. The meeting with the PLO representative that led to the State Department reprimand, for example, was designed to delay a Security Council vote that would have embarrassed the United States and its allies.

Ambassador Young's transgression—if that's what it was—has been in context. Other American diplomats have conferred with PLO representatives—and not just about UN procedural matters either. Andy Young wasn't the target of responsible protests surrounding the meeting—the U.S. policy and the mistrust of America's real intentions were. Andy Young was caught in the crossfire.

The Ambassador admits he did not reveal the entire truth of the meeting to State Department officials. The first rule of diplomacy is not to embarrass your government, and by keeping the meeting somewhat under wraps, Ambassador Young said, he was hoping to protect the State Department in case of a leak.

But that is water under the bridge now. Andy Young is gone. He leaves an outstanding record compiled during his term in office.

Almost single-handedly Andy Young reversed America's low standing among the nations of the Third World, including resource-rich nations whose friendship is important to the United States.

He helped shape and implement a new, more realistic and effective policy toward Africa. His patient and creative diplomacy paved the way for present efforts to end the bloodshed in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

Through his warmth, his personal style and his diplomatic acumen, Andy Young became a symbol of America's concern for human rights and for the aspirations of the poorer nations of the world.

There's no doubt about it - Andy Young has served his country honorably and well, and his accomplishments will be remembered long after his critics crawl back into oblivion.

What about critics? It's important that Andy Young's effectiveness was not fatally harmed by the State Department's reprimand, or by critics of American policy in the Middle East.

What made Andy Young believe his presence at the UN was hurting an Administration he strongly supports is the longstanding campaign of unfair criticism he has been subjected to from the day he became Ambassador.

It's sometimes said that the measure of a man is who his enemies are.

as i see it

Black Male-Female Controversy

The on going saga of the rift in black male female relationships is being publicized more and more. The black female has become quite vocal on how insecure and intolerable black males have become since the women have become economically independent.

Ironically, as blacks become more economically stable, the more socially unstable in terms of marital relationships they become. The reason for this instability according to black females is the inability of the black male to accept her new role in the relationship. That role is one where the black female is aggressively pursuing a career, a role she acquired out of necessity to economic stability.

The seriousness of this situation can be demonstrated by the high divorce rate among black couples and the increasing interracial marriages. Though this problem is not unique to blacks, its recent impact has made it a topic of conversation in most circles.

The problem is (1) women refuse to be career people, housewives, mistresses, and mothers. (2) men refuse to understand why women refuse to be career people, housewives, mistresses, and mothers. Men have allowed



Gerald O. Johnson

women to accept this additional role as wage earners without accepting the additional responsibility of household help. Until both parties can sit down and work out a schedule of responsibilities, then the problem will persist.

Why, just the other day my wife said "Gerald I am getting ready to do dishes", "why don't you give me a hand?" So I got up and gave her a standing ovation. I even threw in a few hurrahs for the heck of it. What are husband's for?

Seriously though, it is difficult for black males to be domesticated in the home. Historically, the black male has been this societies whipping board. By not being allowed to feel like a man but being forced to be the

head of the household the black male has lived a life of confusion.

Being forced to do menial labor for little or no money and having to come home a face a family trying to hold your head high has put undue pressure on black males. But suddenly civil rights lifted some blacks out of the doldrums of oppression and suddenly it looked like the black man was going to feel like a man. But unfortunately civil rights boosted the black female out of the doldrums with as much if not more impetus. So, instead of the black male being made ruler of his house hold he is just an equal partner.

Consequently, the black male has never been able to be the sole bread winner. He hasn't had the pleasure of being the Robert Young of "Father Knows Best". He has never been the ruler of his own castle. Instead of his wife meeting him at the door with a beer asking "how was your day dear," she is dragging in behind him telling him she is too tired to fix dinner.

The women are not to blame for the problem. They are to blame for not helping to cure it. Abuse, name calling, and harassment is not the approach. Understanding is.

see Blacks on page 11

The Black Beat

State Of Florida Appears To Be Having Serious Problems?

BY MILTON JORDAN
Special to the Post

It seems reasonably easy to understand that if you put people in prison for a crime they didn't commit, and keep them there 12 years, 9 of them on death row, that when you discover the mistake, you should pay them for the injustice.

But in at least one case, the state of Florida appears to be having serious problems with that premise.

Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee, two black men, were convicted in 1963 and again in 1972, and sentenced to death both times for murdering two white gas station attendants in Port St. Joe, Florida.

Following a Pulitzer Prize winning investigation by Gene Miller, a Miami Herald reporter, and a subsequent 18-month investigation by the governor's office, then Florida governor Reubin Askew pardoned the two men.

But since 1976 when Florida Senator Jack Gordon introduced a bill to compensate Pitts and Lee \$100,000 each for their time in prison, Florida lawmakers have danced around the

issue, now saying they need to retry the case over the summer to determine the men's guilt or innocence.

This latest shuffle around the question caused Pitts to blast the legislators during a May press conference, saying: "I cannot keep taking time off from work to play the song and dance of a nice guy trying to get a bunch of backwoods' bigoted rednecks to do what they know they're supposed to do. I'm fed up with pan handle redneck politics."

My own review of the facts in this case leads me to the same frustrated conclusion Pitts and Lee have obviously drawn: Florida legislators don't want to pay these two black men because it would be an admission that the state put these two men on death row for nothing greater than being black.

So it seems that to avoid that admission, Florida legislators are willing to deny these men just compensation for unjust imprisonment, also because they are black.

The two men have said they will sue the state in federal court on grounds that their constitutional



Milton Jordan

rights to due process have been violated by the three-year denial of compensation.

Florida legislators who don't openly support the compensation bill, also don't say directly they're opposed to it. Most of them refuse to comment on the issue at all, referring all questions to the "select committee" that will study the case this summer. The select committee has clamped a gag rule on the proceedings, refusing to comment on the case, and their positions. They also have barred Pitts-Lee supporters from lobbying in behalf of the bill.

It sure sounds like racism

to me, but then racism has been a cornerstone of this case from the very beginning.

On August 15, 1963 Pitts and Lee were indicted by the Gulf County (Fla.) Grand Jury on two first degree murder charges. The two men faced the Florida electric chair despite the fact that the state produced no physical evidence to link them with the double murder. According to state allegations, the two black men robbed the attendants, forced them into their car and drove the victims several miles from the station to a wooded area where they shot the two white men to death. But no fingerprints of the two dead men were ever found in Pitts' car. Neither Pitts' or Lee's fingerprints were found on the cash register or in the service station. No weapons, or money were found in Pitts' or Lee's possession, and no blood stains or soil samples were found on their clothing.

But they indicted the two men. Then they assigned the two defendants a court-appointed lawyer who was family attorney of one of the

murder victims. This lawyer urged, and the police coerced Pitts and Lee to plead guilty.

Presumably to save their lives, the two black men pleaded guilty, and an all-white jury sentenced them to the death chamber.

The state's chief witness against the two men, Willie Mae Lee, told several conflicting stories about the incident, finally admitting that she knew nothing about the case, and agreed to testify out of fear that she would be implicated in the case. She worked in the home of one of the deputies assigned to the case.

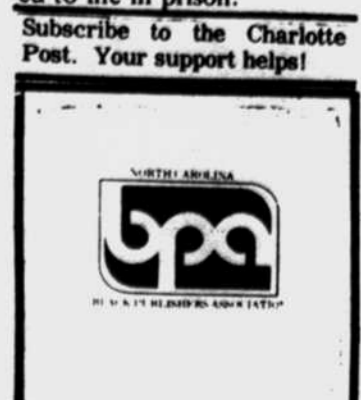
Then, in 1965, while Pitts and Lee waited to die, just steps from the death chamber, a white man, Curtis Adams admitted that he killed the two men in the service station robbery.

On August 29, 1969, the Florida Circuit Court set aside the convictions of Pitts and Lee, and two years later the same court dismissed the 1963 indictments because they had been issued by a Grand Jury from which blacks were systematically excluded.

In January, 1972 another grand jury again indicted Pitts and Lee in the murders, and in March that year a jury convicted them and they were again sentenced to die. At the second trial, none of the information concerning the chief state witness's denial of knowledge in the case, or the confession of Adams, or the corroboration of that confession by Mary Jean Adkins, with whom Adams lived at the time he said he killed the two white men, was presented to the jury.

On June 29, 1972 the two men got a reprieve from the electric chair when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Florida's death penalty unconstitutional. Pitts and Lee's sentences were changed to life in prison.

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