

# EDITORIALS & COMMENTS

## The Challenge Of Change

In his address as the keynote speaker to the recently concluded 27th annual SCLC convention in Charlotte, The Rev. Joseph Lowery said blacks have made civil rights gains but cautioned that they still face roadblocks to equality. "Everything has changed, but nothing has changed." This seemingly paradoxical statement is, in reality, a truism which unfortunately is not well known and is even less understood.

The paradox has been recently demonstrated here in our own city where some blacks have expressed a degree of disappointment the Mayor Harvey Gantt has not fulfilled their expectations for visible changes in more housing, quicker improvements in neighborhood development and faster economic change resulting in more jobs for blacks.

What some people, especially blacks, are apparently not aware of is that during Mayor Gantt's eight months in office two 50-unit City-financed housing projects have been occupied by low income families, at least half a dozen new single houses are under construction with low interest loans available to the buyers, many owner-occupied houses have benefited by low-interest home improvement City loans, and similar low interest loans have enabled many middle income families to purchase homes in the Fourth Ward and Third Ward neighborhoods.

Furthermore, with some assistance from Mayor Gantt, the General Tire and Rubber Co. gave full-time jobs to 25 jobless people, the Marriott City Center motel employed 45 people, and the City has surpassed last year 176 summer job placements as it moves toward a goal of 300 for 1984. In addition, Mayor Gantt has asked the 130 companies of the Arrowood Association in the southern part of the county to help provide jobs for the unemployed in exchange for improved public transit service.

While all this and more are being done by the mayor to help improve the quality of life for Charlotteans, it is certainly expected that blacks would benefit by such gains just as whites would. It is a fact, well known by Mayor Gantt, and should be well known by the black community, that he was elected to serve and represent the interest of all Charlotteans. In this representing-all-the-people role, we believe Mayor Gantt has nevertheless attempted to be sensitive to the needs and wants of blacks.

### First Black Mayor

We are reminded that after Carl B. Stokes was elected mayor of Cleveland in 1967, becoming the first black mayor of a major American city, he made a visit to Charlotte to address a religious group. In responding to a Post interview question Mr. Stokes said, "too many black voters assume that once a black mayor is elected all their problems are over and all they have to do is sit back and wait for swift and rapid change." This "black-Moses-mayor mentality" is totally inconsistent with the dynamics of the American political system. Black mayors or other chief elected execu-

tive officers are not powers unto themselves. For example, Mayor Gantt's power is limited primarily to presiding at City Council meetings, voting on issues only to break tie votes, making committee appointments and signing legal documents.

A Charlotte Observer story states eloquently that "Eight months after Gantt took office December 5, community leaders say he has used the mayor's limited power to accomplish much of (his) agenda with a contagious enthusiasm, a deft grasp of issues, sometimes stubborn determination and quiet persuasion. A key, many say, is consensus." Therefore, the Mayor has not unlimited power, and if he did, to use such power to benefit one group, one race, one issue in disproportion to others would be an abuse of power.

Councilmember Herb Spough Jr., who at one point considered challenging Gantt in a Democratic Party primary, undoubtedly paid Mayor Gantt the highest of compliments when he was quoted in the same Charlotte Observer article as saying, "He's done a better job than I expected him to do. I think he's been more of a moderate than I thought he could be. He really will try to get two sides together. And the guy's a man of principle and he shows that."

We must hastily add, however, that black mayors or other similarly elected officials need not be apologetic nor shy away from promoting causes or the interests of blacks or other minorities among their constituencies. They should nevertheless be sensitive to the broader community needs in order to assure a balanced approach to serving all areas of the community.

### Black Involvement

Returning to Rev. Lowery's paradoxical statement we need to note too that many blacks throughout the nation are somewhat disillusioned about what black elected officials have been able to accomplish, yet they remain optimistic about black involvement in politics and what can be accomplished in the future.

The optimism undoubtedly arises from the accomplishments mayors like Harvey Gant, Maynard Jackson (former mayor of Atlanta), Coleman Young (Detroit), Thomas Bradley (Los Angeles) and Ernest Morial (New Orleans) to name a few.

The disillusionment arises from the reality that the people who hold power in America, who just happen to be white, are not going to voluntarily give it up to blacks or other minority groups. This, however, is not a question of black versus white but rather a question of simply who are the power leaders.

It is for this reason that blacks or other civic-minded groups can ill afford to assume that an elected black mayor is necessarily a super politician who can get his way on any issue at any time. If people don't continue to vote and seek to elect candidates - black, white and others - generally supportive, the mayor's policies and programs he cannot be successful in responding to any kind of community need or want.

### From Capitol Hill

## Rights Act Changes And Challenges Assessments

By Alfreda L. Madison  
Special To The Post

After years of boycotts, sit-ins, imprisonment, water hoses, police dogs, bombings and killings, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed. Blacks became filled with hope and expectations of becoming fully integrated into American life - enjoying all the privileges, equality and rights of full American citizenship. Twenty years have passed since passage of the Act, and while all blatant segregated signs have been outlawed, subtle discriminatory segregating methods are used and are even being initiated by the Reagan Administration through its influence on the courts.

The Joint Center for Political Studies held a National Conference on Assessing Change and Challenge of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The enactment of the legislation twenty years ago had as its goals, the elimination of discrimination in public accommodations, education, employment and the achievement of equality of the races in all aspects of American life.

Dr. John Hope Franklin, the author of several books and an outstanding historian, gave revealing facts about the historical and ethos depth in this country, which inhibits implementation of the 1964 Act goals. He emphasized that there has never been any intention to treat Blacks as equals. When whites were fighting against taxation without representation, Patrick Henry, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, great advocates of the injustice of taxation imposed by England as tyranny, they felt that even free Blacks during those Colonial days, should remain



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victims of taxation tyranny. Citizens of the District of Columbia which is 70 percent Black are victimized by those same tyrannical taxation feelings today.

Dr. Franklin said the Bill of Rights did not guarantee equality for Blacks. The Reconstruction Amendments really laid the foundation for states to deprive Blacks of what few civil rights they did have. During that period economic, political and social status of Blacks deteriorated to the point where a Chief Justice said, "Blacks had no rights that whites had to respect."

In 1875 Congress passed a Civil Rights Act against discrimination of Blacks in public places and public accommodations, but there was no attempt at enforcement. This Act was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1883. Even when the Supreme Court rendered its separate but equal decision, no official in the country attempted enforcement.

Dr. Franklin said no element in American society has suffered the deprivation, humiliation, scorn and debasement as have American

BLACKS WHO THROUGH THEIR SLAVE LABOR BUILT THIS COUNTRY SHOULD NOW UNITE TO REBUILD OUR COMMUNITIES FOR THEMSELVES.



## Teaching Reaching Crisis Levels?

The cost of education may be going up but the quality of education is reaching crisis levels. This is due to the fact that the "least academically able" become teachers - unless far more is done to increase the professionals' status and pay.

The United States is facing severe teaching shortages by the year 1988 unless extensive steps are taken to professionalize the field. A report done by the Rand Corporation (based in Santa Monica, California) recommends that teacher starting salaries start at \$20,000 a year and reach career goals of \$50,000. At the present, starting salaries range around \$13,000 - lower than starting for almost any other job requiring a bachelor's degree.

Teacher salaries have dropped 15 percent between 1971 and 1981.

Also in the Rand Report, a growing list of more than one dozen educational reform proposals issued since President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education warned 16 months ago of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in U.S. public schools.

Aside from increasing starting and ending salaries, the Rand report calls for:



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1. Improving working conditions by allowing para professionals to assume non teaching duties;
2. Requiring teacher internships before tenure is granted;
3. Establishing a career ladder allowing experienced teachers to assume responsibility for supervising new teachers and developing programs; and
4. Offering recruitment incentives such as scholarships and forgivable loans for academically talented college students to enter the teaching field.

According to the report, if these and other steps are not taken then the least academically able students will become the tenured teaching force for the next two generations of American school children.

It was cited by the National Education Association (NEA) that of those teachers

polled - 10 percent in 1971 regretted career choices and in 1981 40 percent regretted the choice. What happened?

Basically speaking and realistically speaking, teachers have left and are leaving the system for higher

paying jobs, better working conditions and more prestige.

In the past it was taken for granted that the teachers supply would be adequate - wrong. Today no longer is a

group of women and men willing and wanting to go into the field. The seduction no longer exists.

A price tag cannot be put on the proposed reforms.

The cost of the reforms may and can be off set by cutting back on the layers of bureaucracy that stagnate some school districts.

State efforts designed to increase educational standards may cause more problems than lessening them.

Many states believe that increasing student and teacher competency-testing and stiffer course requirements will help - who knows - for some yes and others no.

A surplus of teachers from the last decade has turned to a shortage this decade; especially in the fields of

math, chemistry, data processing, bilingual education, special education, earth science, biology and English.

Nine percent of 200,000 math

and science teachers have left the profession between 1982-83; 30 percent are not fully qualified to teach these subjects and 40 percent of the remaining few are due to retire by 1994. This is the

primary reason why school officials in the states of Georgia and Texas are going abroad - mainly to Germany - to recruit qualified teachers who are willing to be dedicated professionals.

The slogan of the United Negro College Fund reads "The mind is a terrible thing to waste." Well, the fact of the matter is that it does not wait for age 18 to begin

wasting - the success or failure of that mind begins at day one and is to be enhanced by education. As parents and graduates it is our responsibility to perk up the standards and demand excellence in education - so what are you waiting for? Get out there and become intelligently involved.

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