

# Editorials

## Educational System's Direction

With the recent opening of another school year, many government officials, school administrators, teachers, parents, and, yes, some students, too, have had thoughts about the needs, status and direction of our nation's educational system.

Such concerns and interests have arisen from a number of factors. These include labor disputes resulting in public school teacher strikes in two cities, significant cuts in federal loans to college students while tuition and fees at both public and private institutions of higher learning have increased, and growing criticisms of public school education. In the latter situation, much of the problem has occurred from controversial issues created more by political forces outside of the public schools than within. Among these issues are proposals about school health clinics and numerous other proposals, some good and some bad, but all controversial, from the U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett.

In each of the past two weeks were comments in this column on two of these controversial issues. First, we noted Secretary Bennett's defense of the idea of allowing public school students to choose the schools they would attend. We noted also that Albert Shanker's opposing view that to grant students such choices provide little incentive to maintain even quality inner-city schools, simply because of their locations. We added too that in our view such unnecessary few choices would result in the resegregation of many school systems along racial and economic lines.

Secondly, we wrote about "first lesson," a national report, also from Mr. Bennett's office, that deals with the status of elementary education in America. In summary the report calls for more vigorous elementary school curriculums and less traditional ways of selecting school principals.

## Illiteracy Issue

Another controversial issue is illiteracy. Many literacy advocates bluntly blame the nation's school systems. For example, a recent study of high school seniors revealed that 60 percent could not read a standard textbook well enough to draw conclusion from what they had read.

"Even more dismal," a USA Today newspaper cover story stated recently, "are the prospects of children in urban ghettos where poverty and illiteracy are passed from one generation to the next. Blacks are three times more likely to be illiterate; the percentages are even higher for poor Hispanics." It was within this context that Beverly Cole told the NAACP members of Winston-Salem State University last weekend that "blacks are losing ground in the education arena at an alarming rate. If we continue at the same pace, the consequence for the race will rival the famine in Ethiopia."

The gravity of the problem does not stop here. In April 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented a report, "A Nation at Risk," which spoke of

the now widely quoted "rising tide of mediocrity" in our educational system. Other authorities on the subject of illiteracy claim that the deficits in our public school system is so serious that approximately "one-third of our nation's youth are ill-educated, ill-employed, and ill-equipped to make their way in American society."

In John Naisbitt's number-one bestseller, "Megatrends," this sad issue is placed in clear perspective in these words, "It is more and more apparent that young high school—even college—graduates cannot write acceptable English or even do simple arithmetic. For the first time in American history the generation moving into adulthood is less skilled than its parents." This may explain why and estimated 23 million American adults cannot read or write well enough to perform simple everyday tasks.

It is comforting to know that the ABC and PBS television networks have joined some businesses, newspapers, community groups, and government agencies to launch a ground-breaking effort to reduce the nation's illiteracy rate. Let us give a note of special thanks to these television networks for their efforts because they get plenty of criteria for the sex and violence on the television screen.

Finally, let us hope that the collective efforts of all concerned will begin to reduce the nation's 23+ million illiteracy rate. Black people can make a significant dent in this problem by giving greater support to school-age children to reduce the drop-out rate.

## Bitter Battle Ends

Civil rights leaders and companions Julian Bond and John Lewis, aides to Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s, recently ended a bitter bid for Georgia's 5th District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The political race provided the best opportunity for a black to be elected to Georgia's 10-member delegation to Congress — and the first since 1977 when Andrew Young left to serve as U.N. Ambassador during the Jimmy Carter presidency.

The Bond-Lewis campaign got very bitter in the final days and reportedly threatened to end a 25-year friendship that had begun when the two were involved in civil rights organizing activities in the South in the 1960s.

Lewis won the run-off election with 51 percent of the vote with combined support from blacks and whites in the district. Bond, who ran ahead of Lewis in the primary, was tagged as a representative of the black upper class political machine that is viewed as not being sufficiently responsive to the average citizens' concerns resulting in a black-white coalition allowing Lewis to win the run-off.

Black politicians need to take heed of this interesting political race to assess its long-term political implications.



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

As I See It

## Why Is Voter Apathy So Prevalent?

By Gerald O. Johnson  
Special To The Post

We are fast approaching another voting season when politicians will start coming out of the wood work to woo our votes. But as I talk to people, I'm finding that nobody really is that enthusiastic about any of this. The political apathy seems to fall into two categories. First, there are those individuals who feel that the current policies are to their liking. Hence, the need to participate is not critical. Secondly, there are those who feel that their participation will have no affect. Therefore, the need to participate is useless. What a sad state of affairs.

The majority of people seem to fall into the latter category. They seem ostracized from the political process. The need to vote only becomes important when candidates can be tied directly to issues that affect them. Unemployment, Social Security, higher taxes, and racial issues are the primary issues that stir the dandruff enough to make people vote. Even then the issue has to be blown out of



Gerald

proportion to get voter turnout.

Why is voter apathy so prevalent? No one knows with any certainty. Therefore my opinions are just as good as any. It appears to me that politicians are on a different level than us common folk. They seem to talk at you, instead of to you. I'm beginning to realize that it is not the politicians' fault. We have allowed the mass media to do our thinking for us. Our politicians spend more time learning how to

project themselves on television than they spend on issues and you. We have reached an era where our politicians are groomed for the job much like actors are groomed for starring roles.

Hence, the political factory is developing politicians on their mass appeal, not on their ideals. Many people feel that the mass media has allowed politicians to become impersonal with those who they are supposed to represent. Therefore, the common-Joe doesn't really know who he is voting for. It's sort of like watching the local news. Very little is different about the local newscasts. Let's see - you have a white male anchor with a charming white female co-anchor. You have a white male weatherman and a white male sports director. Then you add black male weathermen substitutes and you've got it. Same show, different names, different stations. Boring! Ol' Harold adds a little flavor to an otherwise bland diet of news. Everybody is trying to do the same things for fear of being different. What's so stupid about this is all of us want variety.

It is apparent why apathy exists. Unfortunately, apathetic attitudes perpetuate the problem rather than helping it. If only one person voted in an election month, someone would still win. The one person would in effect control the destiny of everyone else. Basically, our apathy allows the governing of the many to be controlled by the voting few.

It's really not important that politics is boring, our party affiliation is immaterial, our rationale for voting a certain way is irrelevant. What matters is that we exercise our right to vote. If we don't exercise this right, then we are perpetuating a self-inflicted apartheid.

## Opponents Debate

Congressman Alex McMillan (R incumbent) and D.G. Martin (D), candidates for U.S. Congress in the 9th District, will engage in a TV debate on Sunday, September 28, from 1-2 p.m. The debate will be carried live by WSOC-TV.

The debate is being sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. "We are pleased to be doing this in our time-honored tradition of sponsoring political debates," declared Bernadette Parker, president of the local League.

Recalling the very close outcome of the 1984 election between these two candidates, a very lively and exciting debate is anticipated. Important issues which affect the 9th District will be debated, including national security, trade, domestic policies and local matters.

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## As Shaw Struggles, Questions Scream For Answers

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The Carolina Times  
As Shaw University  
struggles to come back from  
the depths of financial  
insolvency, to pay its debts,  
and continue its educational  
mission, at least two  
questions, among many  
others, scream for answers.

Why Shaw?  
Several answers to that  
question are quite obvious.

Beyond a shadow of a  
doubt, Shaw has suffered  
from poor, short-sighted  
financial stewardship.

Some students, justifiably  
or otherwise, have  
abused the university's  
generosity by not paying  
their bills, and leaving Shaw  
holding the bag.

To some extent, the  
university's board of  
trustees must shoulder some  
of the blame because they  
apparently did not move with  
sufficient power and  
authority to stem the tide of red  
ink.

But there are some other  
possible answers to that  
question "why Shaw," that  
are not quite so obvious.

Shaw University occupies  
a choice piece of real estate  
in southeastern Raleigh. It is  
easily accessible, from High-  
way 70, from I-40 and from  
downtown. Frankly, that

piece of property where  
Shaw is located could well be  
one of the important anchors  
of a revitalized downtown  
Raleigh.

With new life pumped into  
downtown and southeastern  
Raleigh as a whole, as the  
capital city's next center of  
growth, Shaw could become  
a very important urban  
university, rather than a  
financially strapped,  
struggling, historically  
African-American college.

There are some in Raleigh,  
we're sure, who would rather  
see those opportunities to be  
a vital part of downtown  
revitalization and south-  
eastern Raleigh growth go to  
some other institution rather  
than Shaw.

In other words, why Shaw?  
It appears that the land  
this university occupies has  
suddenly become potentially  
too valuable to be left in the  
hands of African-Americans.

This brings us to the  
second question, why now?  
Again, same answers are  
above.

Now, because the U.S.  
Department of Education  
said enough is enough.

But again, as well, some  
answers are not quite so  
obvious.

Now, because in years  
past, southeast Raleigh

didn't figure prominently in  
the city's future. The  
excitement and dynamics of  
Raleigh growth flowed north.  
But now north Raleigh is  
virtually saturated. And with  
the explosion of growth  
expected in northern  
Johnston County with the  
completion of I-40 through  
there, southeastern Raleigh  
suddenly becomes an im-  
portant area in the city's  
future.

The big players have  
entered the game.

The Raleigh Chamber of  
Commerce recently moved  
into its new building on the  
border of downtown and  
southeast Raleigh.

The NCNB Development  
Corporation recently  
announced plans to put  
several million dollars into  
southeast Raleigh to  
revitalize the area  
residentially.

Other developers, other  
plans are sure to follow.

Thus, the answer to the  
second question is virtually  
the same as the answer to the  
first one. The land that  
Shaw NOW occupies has  
NOW become too potentially  
valuable to leave it in  
African-American control.

Therefore, Shaw's  
struggle to come back is  
more than an effort to save a