

# Editorials

## The Charlotte Post

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### Jackie Robinson, A Pacesetter

Probably too few Americans are aware that the civil rights movement of the 1960s was ignited on December 1, 1955. On that historic day, Rosa Parks, a black domestic worker, boarded a Montgomery, Ala., city bus and took a vacant seat in the front of the bus. Tired from her day's hard work, Ms. Parks refused to comply with the law to give her seat to a white man and move to the rear of the bus. She was arrested and fined \$14. The next day black women throughout the city of Montgomery organized and called for a boycott of the city buses. A few days later, on December 5, 1955, Martin Luther King accepted the job of seeing that the black community of over 50,000 was informed about the boycott.

Another small but significant step leading to the event of the 1960s occurred in 1947 when Jackie Robinson became the first black American to play on a major league baseball team, the then Brooklyn Dodgers. Yet, in spite of these beginnings, it is ironic that with the flood of highly successful black athletes in major league baseball and as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's entry into the major leagues, we are faced with the reality that big time baseball remains one of the nation's ugly reminders of the continued existence of racism in America.

While a positive step, but a lingering reminder of ongoing racism, Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth reportedly urged the 26 major league team owners to begin to take a more aggressive approach toward affirmative action. The hard reality is that there are very few black coaches or scouts, no black team managers (there have been a few black managers, past years), no black general managers, public relations officers, traveling secretaries, or even typists in the main office. Reports have been noted too that you rarely if ever see a black sports reporter in the press box.

The fact is, from baseball's inception in 1887 through the emergence of Jackie Robinson 60 years later "the national pastime" has been as lily-white as any institution in America. Nevertheless, in many of these 60 years, post-season interracial games were played by black teams against all-star bands of white teams. Many of the great players of yesteryear - Josh Gibson of the black Baltimore Elite Giants and Babe Ruth of the white New York Yankees, to name a few. Interestingly, the black teams won 268 of these interracial baseball games while the whites only won 168.

### Profits Realized

Interestingly also, it was not until the years of World War II that the black baseball teams began to realize a little profit as they began to draw large crowds of 30,000 to 50,000 at many of their games. Undoubtedly, it was this success that influenced the major leagues to open their doors to blacks; that is, white owners began to see more money and profits from a previously untapped source of income - black fans.

As if directed by the hand of God, Sen. Happy Chandler, a southerner from Kentucky, was named Commissioner of Baseball in 1945, the year that World War II came to an end. With the spirit of equality and equal jus-

ice capturing the imagination of the nation as American soldiers returned from Europe and Asia, major league baseball caught the new spirit, too. Therefore, when Happy Chandler was asked could blacks play in the major leagues, he replied delightfully, "If a black can make it on Guadacanal, he can make it in the American and National Leagues."

This was the opportunity that Branch Ricky had been hoping for. Ricky, the general manager of the Brooklyn (NY) Dodgers had joined the Dodger organization after successful years with the St. Louis Cardinals. Ricky was very alert to identifying young baseball talent and was constantly searching for ways to increase gate receipts at Dodger games.

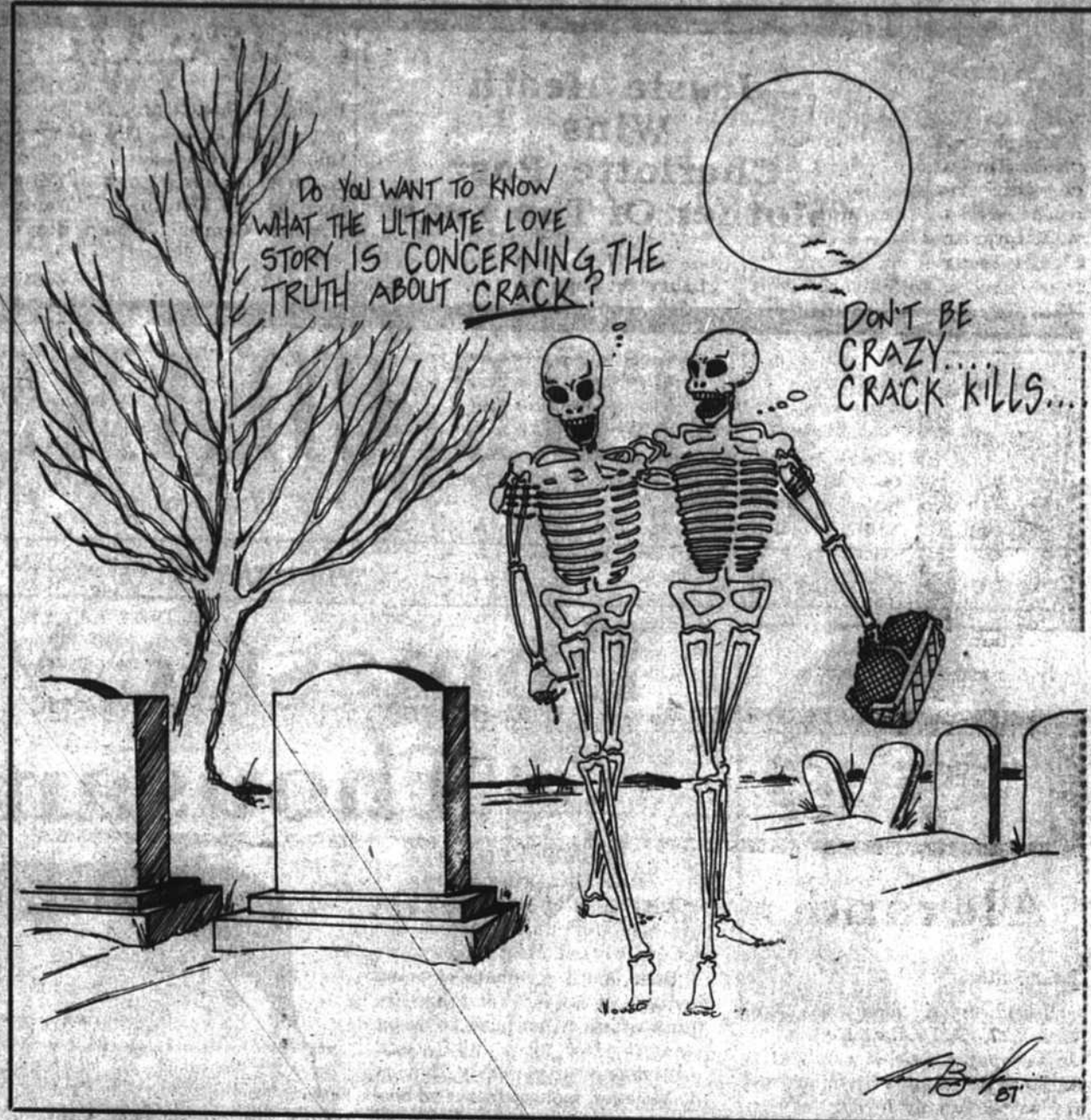
Taking a lead from Commissioner Chandler in 1947 the then 16 owners voted 15 to 1 against allowing Jackie Robinson to be promoted from the Dodger's Montreal farm team. Chandler supported Ricky at the cost of being fired from his job. Despite the negative vote majority, major league owners began to compete black baseball talent at a very minimum cost, even by salary levels in these years of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In addition, Robinson, a second baseman, Ricky signed Roy Campanella (a catcher) and Don Newcombe (a pitcher) without paying their former black teams any money. The New York Giants signed Monte Irvin for a mere \$5,000, the Cleveland Indians hired Larry Doby for only \$10,000 and Luke Easter for a like amount. Thus, even with the door opening for blacks to play in the major leagues, racism in a new form arose. Apparently because of a lack of strong binding contracts held by the black teams, the top-black players were hired away by the major leagues without any compensation to the black teams. This led to the quick death of these black baseball teams. This resulted, too, in the major leagues getting most of the black baseball fans.

### Black Baseball Heroes

Initially, black fans flooded the major leagues' parks to see their black heroes in competition with and against white players. Unfortunately, this all led to the quick death of the black baseball teams. Today, in the 1980s, comparatively few black fans attend major league baseball games.

John Holway tells us in his book, "Blackball Stars" that the Baseball "Hall of Fame is a white memory bank. It devotes just one small corner to black baseball history, the same space it devotes to American Legion (high school) ball." Holway reminds us also that comparatively few black players are enshrined in Cooperstown. Nevertheless, with changes in the major leagues' upper leadership, the future looks brighter on all fronts. The overriding point is that while we hear much about the black superstars with megabuck salaries, we hear little about the slights the blacks in organized baseball are faced with. There is hope for a better tomorrow in the national "pastime" - Major League Baseball.

"Play ball," America, on the field of life with fair play for all because it is the stuff of which great nations grow strong and endure. Do it now for tomorrow may be too late.



Gerald Johnson

### As I See It

## The Truth On Defense Spending

I have always been fascinated by the debates on defense spending. It is probably one argument that both sides start with illogical premises to base their viewpoints. The true premise of defense spending is not America's national security, but America's economical stability.

Each year we spend hundreds of billions of dollars on defense. Each year the spending increases. It would stand to reason that we should have a whole lot of weaponry warehoused somewhere, since their hasn't been a major war since the early seventies. What are we doing with the

old weapons, since we warehouse new ones every year? More importantly, why do we need new ones, since we never get a chance to use the old ones.

Moreover, what do we do with all of these weapons during peace-time.

This situation creates an obvious problem of stockpiling arms for no good reason.

This problem can be easily solved by selling some of the

access arms to other countries. This, of course means that we must promote war.

When we are not in a military crisis, we better hope someone, somewhere is. If not, we have a lot of arms to warehouse.

Unfortunately, this situation

creates a dilemma for our society. You see, we are a nation of peace loving people. We constantly publicize our sincerity for world peace. Yet, we constantly build arms that must be sold in the name of peace. It doesn't add up, unless you dig for a logical answer.

I learned a long time ago that whenever political answers do not add up, usually you can find an economical answer. Defense spending is a classic example of this.

There is no company in our country that can come close to matching the dollars spent by our military.

Every industry in our society is directly or indirectly tied to defense spending. Every State in our Union depends heavily on Defense contracts

either directly or indirectly. The jobs that are created and maintained by defense spending help us have a healthy economy. Without this spend-

ing subsidy our economy would be in a mess (an ever bigger mess).

The proponents of huge defense spending sell us on the need to protect ourselves against Communism. They somehow relate defense spending with National Security. The two are not directly related.

The opponents of huge defense spending ignore the economical implications of a budget cutback. A cut in the defense budget to help fund entitlement programs could not have the same economical payback.

I contend that if the U. S. Government would help the public understand the whole truth behind defense spending, then the matter would not be such a political football year after year. That is unless you are more adverse to working than you are to promoting war.

## America's Youth Or Iron Collar Workers

By Sherman N. Miller

The proverbial struggle over America's minimum wage structure has been rekindled. Political and business pundits are positioning themselves to grab control of America's long-term wage structure.

Dr. Richard L. Leshar, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, attempted to capture the momentum by pointing out, "The last time Congress raised the minimum wage in 1977 - by more than 46% overall - that hike cost the economy 644,000 jobs."

Leshar's comments brought to mind an experience where I had helped some domestic workers get their wages raised to the minimum wage level. We believed these ladies' efforts were worth more than the market was paying and we were hell-bent on their gaining professional dignity. Yet our strategy ignored any efforts to upgrade these ladies' skills to encourage the market to reevaluate their labor offering.

William G. Giery, executive secretary of the Foodservice, and



By Sherman Miller

Lodging Institute, offered me little comfort in corroborating Leshar by pointing a finger at U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Ma.), sponsor of the minimum wage bill. It should be noted that the Institute's membership includes such companies as McDonald's Corporation, Shoney's, Inc. Wendy's International, Denny's, Inc., Hardee's Food System, Pizza Hut, Inc., etc.

"If past statistics hold true, and there is no reason to believe any different, the members of the Institute, whose employment force exceeds three million people, will reduce their work force between

30,000 and 75,000 persons for each 10% increase above the current minimum wage," contends Giery.

Since U.S. Representative Augustus Hawkins (D-Cal.) is a mover of the minimum wage legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, he is also sharing in the wrath of the business community. The powerful National Retail Merchants Association (NRMA), whose membership has annual sales exceeding \$175 billion and who employ nearly four million workers, offered plenty of food for thought for the purported sponsors of the minimum wage legislation.

"The likely response by retail stores to a mandated increase in the minimum wage of the magnitude recommended by the legislation would be to hire fewer workers, reduce the number of hours of those already employed, lay off the less productive workers, and increase consumer prices," claims James R. Williams, president of the NRMA.

In these days when pay cuts

and minimal pay raises have become the norm, the National Restaurant Association claims the minimum wage legislation would mean a 62.2% pay raise and it elevates "the minimum wage of \$5.43 per hour."

Nevertheless, I have had the dubious honor to work for low wages during my youth and therefore I see merit in raising the minimum wage a prudent amount. On the other hand, American labor must compete in an international market place where low cost and high quality foreign producers have decimated our industries. Thus any legislation that raises the minimum wage must be accompanied by programs or techniques to increase workers' skills to the level that they justify these increases.

Let us hope that an exorbitant rise in the minimum wage does not become the catalyst that ushers in the age of robotics where the Iron Collar Worker makes more economic sense than offering opportunity to America's youth.

