

The Charlotte Post

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EDITORIALS

Hold High The Flag

By HOYLE H. MARTIN
Editorial Writer

Over the past few weeks, the U. S. Supreme Court has made a number of split decisions, most by a 5-4 conservative majority. These decisions included the dismantling of civil rights affirmative action programs and allowing the execution of teenagers and people with mental disabilities for capital crimes. Furthermore, with the same 5-4 vote, the high court ruled earlier this week that states are empowered to impose new limitations on abortions but left the historic *Roe vs. Wade* ruling (1973) - which first gave women the constitutional right to have abortions - intact for the present. The ruling is expected to create chaos and, in the views of both the pro-choice and anti-abortion forces, will change the direction of American politics.

In spite of the life and death Supreme Court rulings, nothing the Court did has created quite the initial uproar as allowing people to desecrate the American flag as a "right" under the First Amendment's "freedom of speech" provision.

"The flag," in the words of Tom Wicker, "is only a symbol - cherished, of course, but ... (something) desecrated and cheapened far more often by sleazy commercial and political exploitation than by some impassioned person burning it in protest." Nevertheless, it is a symbol of the highest order because it represents our nation's commitment to liberty, freedom and justice for all. It represents, too, all the good that America has been, now is, and ever will be. No matter how much an individual, an ethnic group, a religious body or even an unpopular political organization may feel oppressed or discriminated against, the American flag symbolizes that justice and

equality will in the final analysis prevail even in our imperfect courts and other institutions. Therefore, the American flag is, or should be, that one symbol of hope that we can all look to for the freedoms, justice and equality of opportunity that we all have a right to cherish in this, the greatest nation on God's earth.

Unfortunately, much of the current uproar about the Court's mistaken decision to cloak flag desecration in the free speech provision of the First Amendment, is in part a reaction to some other controversial decisions of the Court and the immorality clouds over the nation's capitol - the HUD pay-off scandals, the fall of House Speaker Jim Wright and the Oliver North, Ed Meese and other improprieties during the eight years of the Reagan White House has made many Americans mad as hell.

However, we would venture to say that after emotions have cooled and clearer thinking arises, there will be no amendment to the Constitution to protect the flag. Why? There would be so many attempts to add riders to any such amendment - from abortion and civil rights to the banning of smoking and alcohol, to pro- or anti-gay rights, to the pros and cons of nuclear disarmament and so on - that the First Amendment itself would be desecrated.

In the final analysis, protection for the flag comes from the degree of respect that we have for it and how we react to those who dare to burn or in any other way deface that symbol of our nation's heritage. Protection for the flag is more a matter of the heart and soul than that of constitutional law. Let's keep it that way and hold the flag high as a symbol we can all rally around no matter what issues we believe in or support.

A Business-Like Approach To Helping Education

In a bold, new look at education in America, a businessman with 20 years of experience in corporate educational programming, not a professional educator, has written a thought-provoking book *Educating America: Lessons Learned in the Nation's Corporations*. Jack E. Bowsher, director of education external programs for IBM, retired, says that the objective of his book is to describe the following results (and others):

- Most students would learn enough to earn A and B grades.
 - The successful method of learning would build self-esteem and good citizenship.
 - Twice as much learning would take place.
 - The American work force would again be the most competitive in the world.
 - The number of dropouts could decline from 30 percent to "as low as a few percent" (*Newsweek* magazine reports that North Carolina ranked 35th among the states with a 32.2 percent dropout rate from its 1987 graduating classes).
 - Teachers would receive well-paid, professional salaries.
 - Everyone could lean - rich, poor, black, white, Hispanic, urban, rural, and old.
- In summary, Bowsher suggests that his

plan for restructuring the nation's education would cut deeply into the dropout rate, raise teachers' salaries, and give every American a solid education with opportunities for advancement.

Bowsher states that his "workable program" for upgrading the quality of American education calls for (1) a comprehensive look at what is wrong with our educational system, (2) a step-by-step revamping based on the successful elements of corporate education, and (3) an argument against throwing more money or more teachers into an already failing system.

Having been the first director of adult and continuing education at UNC-Charlotte for four years and worked closely with people in similar positions to Jack Bowsher, I can identify with the value of some of his ideas.

Interestingly, of the eight people quoted on the back of the book's jacket, the nearest one to being an educator is Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, all of the others are corporate people. School board members, school administrators, teachers, corporate executives, parents and anyone else concerned about the quality of American education needs to read carefully what Jack Bowsher has to say.

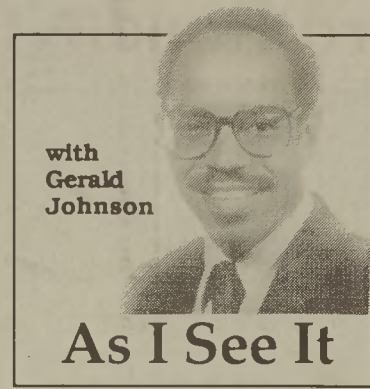
CMS: A System Going Sour

The mood of the country has shifted from "attempting to do what is right" to "doing whatever and making it appear right." The Supreme Court that used to be leaders of justice and fair play, has begun taking a hands off approach to serious issues facing this country. Instead of being the force that starts the wave for public opinion to ride, members of the high court have become surfers riding the tide of public opinion.

The insensitivity for doing what is right has not bypassed Charlotte. The Charlotte Mecklenburg School System (CMS) continues to reflect the insensitive nature the country has drifted to. Within a very short time span, several minority issues have been brought to the attention of the public. A little more than a year ago, Derek Barnes and his parents had to fight the system that was unwilling to bend to allow Derek a rightful place in the National Junior Honor Society.

Then there was a stir by black assistant principals about being overlooked for principal positions. The situation caused a temporary stir with cursory results.

Then a group of black CMS warehouse workers filed a discrimination suit against the school system for unfair treatment. The mishandling of this situation was quite alarming. The Charlotte Post's editor found numerous contradictions and misinformation during her investigation of this story. Moreover, we had a video tape of the school board meeting where school board members said one thing in the meeting and completely contradicted themselves during subsequent interviews.



with Gerald Johnson

As I See It

No sooner than the heat from this situation cools, the Carlton Anderson episode pops up. Carlton was denied admission to the National Honor Society due to an error made by the school system. Even after the school admitted making the mistake, it took public disclosure and a fight just to get results.

We know about these incidents because brave individuals would not allow the system to brush them aside. But what about those incidents that are never made public? Are the incidents we know about just the surface of a system going bad? My biggest fear is we may never know!

My deepest concern is this system seems bent on saving its public image even at the cost of public justice. It appears to be okay to treat a class of individuals through the cracks as long as the public doesn't know about it. Initial complaints from concerned parents are given cursory treatment until they demonstrate a willingness to fight back. Then the system becomes defensive rather than assisting with getting the situation re-

solved. Once the media gets involved, the image becomes threatened, and what occurs is an all out effort to save face. This is not the type of system a city like Charlotte deserves. Too many people (black and white) have fought and struggled to make this a system of which to be proud.

Consequently, it will take an all out effort of school board members and administrators to become sensitive to the concerns and issues facing all of its citizens. Moreover, they will have to become more responsive to the calls and complaints they are receiving.

Without question we have received more complaints about School Board chairman Ashley Hogewood and Area Superintendent Sam Haywood in their handling (or mishandling) of sensitive situations.

Surprisingly, they are closely followed by the Rev. George Battle and Peter Relic. Many people say Battle seems aloof on dealing with the problems, while Relic rarely gets involved.

Glowing comments have been given to Arthur Griffin and Joe Martin. Both men were given high praises based on their responsiveness and their genuine interest in individual problems.

If the school board is concerned about its image, then it is time they realize that an image based on a faulty foundation will soon crumble.

A segment of the public is quickly becoming disenchanted with the reality underlying the illusion of this system. Restoration of this tainted image can only be accomplished through what is done for the public, not through what is said to the media.

Hopkins Letter Was Mostly Inaccurate

By PEGGY ANDERSON
Guest Editorial

Ms. Madge L. Hopkins wrote a letter to *The Charlotte Post* ("Applaud The Tenacity Of The Andersons," June 22, 1989) stating that she was concerned that the public receives an "accurate account" of the circumstances that recently affected my son Carlton Anderson's installment into the National Honor Society.

Ms. Hopkins is the Area Program Specialist of the East/West Charlotte Area Center. Essentially she works under the supervision of Area Superintendent Sam Haywood.

In her letter to *The Post*, Ms. Hopkins claimed that she was relating this information "in all fairness to the school officials, Dr. Sam Haywood and Mr. Louis Layne, principal of West Charlotte High School." Then, she attempted to portray these officials as individuals who cared about my son.

As the mother of Carlton Anderson, I must point out that Ms. Hopkins included in her letter misleading information about the conferences that took place to get my son installed in the Honor Society.

The truth is neither Dr. Haywood or Principal Layne, initially, expressed any real concern about the injustice that was done to my son when a miscalculation of his GPA (grade point average) resulted in his being denied induction into the National Honor Society in his junior year.

On one occasion, Mr. Layne told my son and I that he did

not have the power to induct Carlton into the National Honor Society." In turn, Dr. Haywood said he could not change any decision that Mr. Layne made concerning the induction of my son. I even placed a call to Superintendent Peter Relic, who never returned my call. As far as they were all concerned, the matter was a closed issue.

That is, until I was forced to call on the assistance of School Board member Arthur Griffin, Danita Goodwin of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Equal Opportunity office, and *The Charlotte Post* to bring the necessary pressure to have my son receive the honor that was rightfully his.

Ms. Hopkins mentions none of these facts in her so-called attempt to give an "accurate account" that led to the conference.

The reason is Ms. Hopkins cannot possibly give an accurate account of what took place. The first time I met Ms. Hopkins was at the second conference I had to attend that included Principal Layne, Dr. Haywood, Ms. Goodwin, myself and my son. Ms. Hopkins stated in her letter that she "was present as a representative of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, as a West Charlotte alumni, and most importantly as a black parent." But I believe Ms. Hopkins was only present because she works under the supervision of Dr. Haywood.

I also believe that is the reason Ms. Hopkins wrote that misleading letter.

For example, she wrote that after it was decided that Carlton should be included in the Honor Society and after he wore the gold stole of the Honor Society at graduation exercises that she approached us and congratulated us on Carlton's accomplishment.

In part, that is true. But what Ms. Hopkins neglected to say was that after she congratulated us she added, "I am so glad that you did not let them get away with that."

The "them" she spoke of, of course, was the same school officials she so wanted to defend in her letter to *The Post*.

I cannot say for sure what motive was behind Ms. Hopkins letter to *The Post*. I even question whether she actually wrote the letter herself, or merely signed her name to a piece of Sam Haywood produced propaganda.

But the message that I am sending to parents is if your children are enrolled in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, please do not think the system is going to do right by them.

We, as parents, have to take an active part in our child's education and not trust officials to do as they should in clearing up errors. Most importantly, do not be afraid to question officials when an error has been made.

Fight to the end, because there are people like Mr. Griffin and Ms. Goodwin who will stand by you and not ignore your concerns the way Dr. Haywood and Dr. Relic ignored mine.

Civil Rights Community Lacks A Winning Strategy To Deal With Issues

"Night has fallen on the Court as far as civil rights are concerned," a prominent civil rights leader said following one of the recent Supreme Court affirmative action rulings. "The clock is turning back," said another.

This is hardly surprising, considering the leaders made similar statements following the first two affirmative action rulings earlier last month. On June 23, the NAACP lamented the Court's decision in a Dallas, Texas case, placing more burden on plaintiffs to prove discrimination. Other leaders will, no doubt, engage in more hand-wringing as the Supreme Court announces additional mandates.

What is surprising is that the civil rights community apparently did not see all of this coming. They had plenty of warning.

The *Bakke* decision in 1978 and Reagan's landslide victory in 1980 which began the shift toward conservatism were the initial indicators. If they missed those signals, Reagan's appointment of three ultra-conservative justices to the Supreme Court made the trend crystal clear.

But civil rights leaders must have been on vacation for the past 10 years because they appear genuinely stunned. It's almost as if they are sitting around waiting for the next axe to fall. And if they are, this points to a fundamental problem within the black community--the absence of an offensive strategy.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was successful in breaking down barriers to voting rights and other opportunities. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was considered the eminent leader of the movement, created a void in the leadership structure within the black community. Without one prominent leader behind whom the black community could unite, civil rights organizations inherited the leadership role and have retained it ever since.

Unfortunately, the organizations provided no blueprint for what to do after the rights were attained, and none evolved with time. Most damaging, though, is that none of the civil rights leaders would publicly acknowledge that even with some residual barriers to achievement still in place, 80 percent of what an in-

National Minority Politics

by Gweneveve Daye Davis



dividual achieves in life is based on his own efforts. The other 20 percent is due to circumstances beyond his control, such as acts of God, racism and Supreme Court decisions.

Instead, for the past 20 years, civil rights leaders have concentrated on the 20 percent factor that is beyond their control. They have espoused the following message to the black community, particularly to the poor and uneducated: You are the descendants of slaves and victims of past transgressions; therefore, 1) you are not responsible for your actions; 2) society owes you something; and, 3) standards should be lowered for you indefinitely until there is a level playing field. They have also im-

plied that blacks do not have the power within their own community to solve their problems, rather they can only be solved by government intervention. Meanwhile, there has been no voice countering this message, addressing the 80 percent that black Americans can control: Their own behavior, aspirations and achievements.

This is analogous to a football team which only has a defensive squad and no offense. The defense tries its darndest to defend its end zone, but the opposing team's offense occasionally slips through. Meanwhile, the team has no offensive squad which can score points, yet its coach and players are miffed as to why they don't win games.

The result of this has been devastating, to say the least. Nearly one-third of those in the black community, known as the "underclass," do not believe their destiny lies in their own hands. There is a perception that most blacks are either on welfare or would like to be, when in reality the majority of black people work hard and have no desire for government intervention in their lives.

When competing for jobs in corporate America, blacks are

perceived as being less qualified for positions which should go to more qualified whites. Worst still, however, is the fact that blacks, when compared with other ethnic groups, do not take full advantage of entrepreneurship, the one arena where there are no restrictions on who can enter and excel.

Obviously, this cannot continue. What must occur in the black community over the next 20 years reflects one principle of group dynamics: As a group expands and matures it breaks into smaller groups.

There can no longer be one group or faction which serves as the mouthpiece for all blacks. This projects the black community as being one-dimensional and implies that all blacks are alike; they clearly are not. The factions that must dominate are those which address the 80 percent that is controllable.

The offensive strategy doesn't have to be elaborate or complex; something simple will suffice. The one that I propose goes something like this: Yes, we still have some problem areas that need to be addressed in the courts, but here's what we'll do in the meantime. One, we'll raise our standards so high and pro-

duce so many overachievers that we can't be denied higher positions. Two, we'll rebuild businesses in our own community, thereby creating opportunities for employment and upward mobility. Three, we will no longer allow deviant, callous and irresponsible behavior to run rampant in our communities. There is no excuse.

A first-rate public relations effort would be required, since this message would be competing for air time with that of the doom-sayers. The effect, however, will be that black America will be able to stand on its own and will be viewed as a model for the entire country; an example of what can happen when a group of people takes its destiny out of the hands of the Supreme Court, and returns it to its own hands where it belongs.

Civil rights organizations have their place, but the importance of civil rights should be kept in perspective. It is should be only a small portion of a multi-faceted program to rejuvenate black America.

Ms. Davis, based in Houston, is publisher/editor of the monthly newsletter, *National Minority Politics*.