

# Strike

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"The company had been violating the employees' rights guaranteed by federal law," said Hanson. "We had no other choice but to file charges to protect the workers' rights."

The union filed unfair labor practice charges in July with the National Labor Relations Board. On Aug. 23, the Board's General Counsel issued a complaint against Avante. A hearing is scheduled for Dec. 12 before an administrative law judge.

According to Hanson, this is the first strike at a nursing home in North Carolina his-

tory.

Union Steward Cora Williams, who represents dietary workers, is a member of the negotiations committee and said the committee has "gotten some things settled, but we still have a long way to go."

Williams has worked at the nursing home for 11 years. Williams requested Thanksgiving vacation time Oct. 3, well within the six week notification time for vacation request. She was denied immediately without explanation.

"In 11 years I never thought I would be facing what I'm facing now," said Williams.

Strikers are being compensated by the Union on a

weekly basis for their salary for as long as the strike lasts.

Organizations from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia have donated food.

Strikers have had a lot of support from the community and their families since the strike began. Gladys Bland, who has worked at the nursing home 6 years, said her family has been very supportive. "They feel I'm doing the right thing," she said. "I'm very sure everything is going to work out in the end. I have no doubt about it."

William Fletcher, a retired union worker, has volunteered to walk with the strikers since Nov. 9. Fletcher is a native of Mount Vernon, N.Y., and has lived in Char-

"I think it's a shame. This could very easily happen to any worker in Charlotte."

Retired union worker William Fletcher, a supporter of the Avante strike, on how the worker have been treated by the nursing home.

lotte for four years. "I think it's a shame," he said. "This could very easily happen to any worker in Charlotte."

Fletcher's wife and a friend also volunteered their support by carrying signs and with monetary contributions. "Every time I come out I'm just hoping someone will come out from the community to show their concern."

Fletcher sympathizes with the workers.

"These people don't want much," he said. "They just want to restore what they had."

There will be a fish fry to support the strikers at Avante on Nov. 16 from 12 p.m.-8 p.m. at the Fire Fighters Union Hall, 4419 Monroe Road.

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## Mecklenburg DSS: A Ball Of Confusion

Continued From Page 1A trash cans turned over, their papers scattered about the desk and floor." Black employees believe this to be both harmful to the adoptive children and disruptive of efforts to ultimately find them permanent placement.

A White employee routinely invokes the name of a relative who is a City Council member "to intimidate Blacks and extort favoritism." Sally Gordon, an adoption specialist with DSS, admits she is a sister-in-law of Republican councilman Pat McCrory. However, McCrory said he had "no knowledge of any such happenstance whatsoever."

White supervisors authorized advertising in the National Enquirer several months ago in an effort to find prospective adoptive parents. There were also plans for appearances on the "Gerald" television show, apparently aimed toward the same purpose. Gordon admitted one National Enquirer listing took place but said the television appearances never materialized. "That approach was subsequently abandoned," she added.

"I put a stop to the National Enquirer thing as soon as I heard about it," said Marie Shook. "It seemed exploitive of the adoptive children. Also, they should have at least flown such a national media effort past me before implementation. I sent the adoption unit folks back to the drawing board--to put together a more thoughtful media plan. They've never gotten back to me on it. The County Commission was never informed on this because it never was an actual policy thing."

Pat Martin, whose Youth and Family Service Department originated the Enquirer ad, said Shook never ordered the media campaign killed. "She expressed concern--but did not direct us to refrain from it. We first thought it a good strategy, when it didn't require substantial justification. When unanticipated concern arose, we simply decided it wasn't worth it and abandoned the whole thing."

Black employees criticize the apparent lack of communication throughout the vast bureaucracy as one of the chief problems. One sore point is a 1989 reorganiza-

tion inaugurated by Laurie Bettinghaus, head of the Permanency Planning adoption unit. Many also criticize Bettinghaus for her management style and lack of depth of experience in adoptions. "Very few of the chiefs have any significant experience," one black employee said. Bettinghaus could not be reached for comment.

"I've heard that Ms. Bettinghaus is prone to leaping to try new things--sometimes apparently without much forethought," Shook said. "Regarding experience levels, it's probably true that many department heads have little prior experience in adoptions. Regarding racial bias or lawsuits--I have an open-door policy. The employees can come to me."

"Ms. Bettinghaus--the whole bank of bosses up there--are very hard to deal with," said Sylvia Grier, head of Mecklenburg Friends of Black Children. Her community group acts as a facilitator of adoptions. "It is a nightmare. They stonewall about vital information and are usually very uncooperative. They've forgotten completely about the children."

"Ms. Bettinghaus is innov-

ative," said Martin. "Some of her innovations I've approved, some I haven't. She was brought on board by John Walton, who reports to me. I'm not aware of the experience level in the adoption area--but I, too, have an open-door policy. Nobody came to me."

Wall said that Martin brought Bettinghaus into the permanency planning area. The finger-pointing and bureaucratic gridlock seem to bear out many of the criticisms of the adoption system put in place by Mecklenburg County. It is so labyrinthine that many of the workers themselves don't understand how it operates.

Wall said she makes almost weekly visits to the downtown adoption unit, but knew nothing of the problems or complaints. Shook admitted she had never visited in six years as Assistant County Manager. Now she plans to do so.

Meanwhile, the tensions bubble. The unhappy employees want to form a group to meet with Bob Walton and perhaps other County Commission members to redress grievances.

deCueilar, should be filled by an African. Since the world body's birth in 1945, no Black person has headed the organization. Six Africans are among the candidates to replace deCueilar.

"The reality of the UN since its inception is that no African has been secretary general," he said. "We do believe there are Africans who are imminently qualified."

As director, Spearman, 39, will coordinate a staff of 19 and an annual budget of almost \$1 million to provide procurement services for all City and County government departments. He will also be responsible for supervising the city's Minority/Women's Business Enterprise Program; operating the central supply warehouse for City and County agencies and, managing resource recovery efforts.

Spearman has been director of purchasing for the City of Savannah since 1986.

## Namibia Looking For Friends Ambassador Was In Charlotte

Continued From Page 1A population -- than the rule. With so many illiterates, it's

difficult to attract high-tech businesses.

"The ability to absorb technology is very low," Kalomoh said.

Since gaining independence, Namibian officials have tried to make friends around the world, with the U.S. a major target. Kalomoh's visit to Charlotte was part of the process, especially in extending the hand of friendship to African Amer-

icans.

"We hope to cement the relationship between this country and Namibia," he said.

Africa's emergence as a world power has yet to be translated politically, at least among the leadership at the United Nations. Kalomoh said the secretary general's position, soon to be vacated by Javier Perez

## Spearman Named Purchasing Chief

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Gregory Kirk Spearman, director of purchasing in Savannah, Ga., has been named director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Purchasing Dept. effective Dec. 2.

## Local YMCAs Celebrate

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A couple of established YMCAs will have celebrations in the coming week.

The McCrory branch will re-name its gymnasium Nov. 16 at 5 p.m. The facility will be called the Alexander-Martin Gymnasium, after long-time Charlotte residents Zack Alexander and Thomas "Jack" Martin.

The dedication is part of a banquet and awards presentation that will also honor the organization's original board. Admission is \$25, with proceeds to go to YMCA programs.

The Johnston branch at 3025 North Davidson St. will celebrate its 40th birthday Nov. 21 at 4 p.m.

There will be a recognition program and cutting of cake as well as remarks from board members and games.

The Johnston YMCA was recently selected by the United Way's Success By Six program as the lead agency for the North Charlotte neighborhood.

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