

Human Relations: Playing a preventative role

by Herb L. Cawthorne



ARMANDO LAGUARDIA

Ask Nick Barnett why the work of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission is so important today, and he would say, "The key to our work now is that we can develop the ability to plan for long range development. We can take a more rational approach to very emotional problems." Barnett explains that "this is far better than the short-sighted, crisis oriented approach which characterized some of the Commission's activities in the past."

In 1969, the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission was created, as a joint city-county venture. The agreement which established it is unique. It's one of the few times a large metropolitan area, both city and county, have taken the initiative to combine efforts in the struggle against prejudice, inequality, institutional discrimination, and other forms which strip people of opportunity in life. In 1969, it was a good beginning - but only that.

The Commission, like many other organizations begun in the heat of the

late 60's, got off to a poor start. Now that times have changed, there is a worry in some quarters that the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission may not be supported as actively as it once was.

In the agreement establishing the Commission, the focus at the time is clear: "WHEREAS, because of the present day stress arising out of tensions or discrimination on account of race, color, religion, or national origin or decent, the problem of human relations is necessarily metropolitan in scope." Barnett argues that because the "Present day stress" has changed, the need for the Commission has not.

And several of the MHRC Commissioners agree. Armando Laguardia is one good example. He says, "While some of the legal basis for prejudice and discrimination has been eliminated, there is no reason to think they don't exist in reality. Their impact is still operating."

Laguardia, an employee at PSU's General Assistance Center which provides technical assistance to Portland's desegregation program, thinks it would be a mistake to lull ourselves into believing

such an organization is no longer vital. "There will always be problems of human concerns," he says.

According to Laguardia, the Commission's obligation to the people of this community will be on-going. "We may, or may not, have a lot of overt racism anymore; but the MHRC is interested in addressing systems of government or education or economic or social programs which in some way harm or oppress people. So when racism and overt prejudice are no longer problems, there will always be a need to focus on broader problems of human relations."

Charles Jordan, the Commissioner of Public Safety who oversees the work of the MHRC, expresses strong support for the Commission. He cautions against a false security. "These are the most critical times for human relations in this city," he pointed out to me by phone.

Jordan went on to say, "Now is the time at which we can perform major surgery, then organize the forces to continue the preventative work which avoids more riots and more destruction."

I believe the City Council should get involved now. The Commission will

receive the leadership it needs from this office. Some want to believe that there is no longer a real problem in race relations and human relations. This is a myopic perspective."

Then, Commissioner Jordan paused, thought a second, and began again with a question: "Why should we wait? Why should we wait and find ourselves in a reactionary position again? Now we can deal with the real causes. For those who will listen, we can still hear the symptoms crying out - I need attention."

The work of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, like that of the NAACP and the Urban League, will be important to the people living in this community. As we do with the Urban League and the NAACP, we ought to buy stock in the MHRC. The stock we purchase will be certified by our participation, support, and influence upon the work of the Commission. The dividends will be paid over time, written on the checks of progress which will say at the top, "This Community Will Be A Better Place For Our Children To Live Because Of The Work We Did Today."



COMMISSIONER C. JORDAN

Boise students seek school roots

The Boise School student newspaper staff is calling for help. They are preparing a Golden Anniversary year book and need the assistance of former students to locate old pictures, programs, and clippings that will help tell the story of their school's fifty years.

The young journalists have begun interviewing former principals and teachers, including Miss Marguerite Kerr and Miss Dagmar Jeppeson, who were on the school's original staff when it opened in September, 1927 and who still reside in the community.

Donna Cotton, editor of the anniversary book, asks all former students: "Would you please contact Boise School? The reason is that we need to talk to somebody that went here long ago. If you could come up to the school, that would be nice. We need some old pictures of long ago, for our 50th Anniversary yearbook. Thank you, and we hope you can be a part of the celebration."

Several events are being planned to celebrate Boise's 50th Anniversary but no dates have been set yet. The staff plans to inform the community as soon as plans are settled.



Donna Cotton interview Ms. Dagmar Jeppeson and Mrs. Marguerite Kerr (above).

Boise Speaks staff members: Donna Cotton, Suzette Bryant, and Delphine Voley discuss Boise history with Mrs. Kerr (below).



Mitchell

(Continued from P.1 Col.3)

summer in Gonaives, Haiti (West Indies), where she will work with young children in the Maranatha Mission School. She plans to write about her experiences there. Cathy feels that her inspiration and determination comes from a secure and loving family and her belief in Jesus Christ.

Cathy's mother is Dr. J. Virginia Mitchell of Sherwood. Her father died when she was fourteen. Her brother Gregory attends George Fox College in Newberg; Ron graduates from Newberg High School and plans to attend Portland Community College; Brian and Kenneth attend Mabel Rush Elementary School, Newberg. Her sisters, Linda and Sharon, attend Newberg high School and Kim, formerly attends Mabel Rush Elementary School. All are active in church and community activities.

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Bethel features Jordan, youth

On June 12, 1977, at 3:00 p.m., Bethel A.M.E. Church, 5828 N.E. 8th Avenue, Youth Choir will be presenting an afternoon of spiritual inspiration featuring the Commissioner Charles Jordan as guest speaker and youth choirs from various Churches throughout the community.

The theme for the afternoon is: "Spiritual Change: A Dilemma." The Reverend L. Fisher Hines, Pastor, and Bethel's congregation invite the public to attend and share in what will be a rewarding experience....

"He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate." Henry David Thoreau

Black Catholics honor Dads

The Portland Black Catholic Lay Caucus will hold a special "Dads' Day Breakfast" June 19 at the Immaculate Heart Parish Hall, 2926 N. Williams Ave., from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The breakfast is to raise funds for the Caucus and this special Father's Day event will include a raffle.

Tickets for the breakfast are \$2.00 for adults, senior citizens \$1.50, children under 12 \$1.00, pre-schoolers free, and a family of 5 only \$6.00.

More information and tickets can be

obtained by calling Mrs. Clara Johnson at 284-3856.

The regular monthly meeting of the Portland Black Catholic Lay Caucus will be Thursday, June 16, at St. Andrew, 806 N.E. Alberta Street, with the business meeting starting at 7 p.m.

Father James Lyke, of Memphis, Tenn. at 8 p.m., following the business meeting, will show color slides of "Black Married Love." Everyone is invited to the breakfast and the meeting and presentation by Father Lyke.



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