



We see the world
through Black eyes

Board ignores chance for citizen input

The Portland School Board once again rejected an opportunity to include the public in its deliberations. The Board must now appoint a person to replace Robert Ridgley, who is resigning from the Board June 30th.

The position of School Board member is, of course, elective and had the Portland district not have asked the legislature to change its election date, this position would have been filled at the May 1978 Primary Election. The last session of the legislature, at the request of the PPS Board, changed the election date from May to April -- then rather than shorten existing terms by one year they were extended one year.

The Committee for Quality Education for All Children asked the Board to include citizens in the election process by inviting community organizations to name members to a selection committee. This committee would screen applicants and refer a limited number to the Board. The Board, as carefully explained by Board member Jonathan Newman and others, has the responsibility of naming the new member. No one would question that -- they merely would like to have participated in the first steps of the process. But, as Frank McNamara explained, no one else could be trusted to share this important responsibility.

So the Board appointed three of its members -- predictably Jonathan Newman, Frank McNamara and Gladys McCoy -- to bring three nominees to the full board.

A backward glance and a forward step

This is Black History Week and although little has happened in Portland to remind us of this annual event, it is a time that we should use to look back on our history in order to gain courage for difficult decisions ahead.

Oregon's record is not good. Although Black people played important roles in the discovery and settlement of Oregon, the framers of the Oregon Constitution were careful to legally bar Blacks from economic, political and social participation. Our early history is not only a blot in the reputation of this great state, but it established an atmosphere of racism that still pervades our society.

It is in looking backward at the hardships and indignities forced upon Oregon's Black citizens and the long struggle to overcome this history, that we can not only gain insight on the present but a vision of the future.

1978 will be a crucial year to Black Oregonians. It is election time again. We will see a stream of political candidates trekking into our community, asking for our votes. Some of these people will never be seen again; some will appear in another two or four years when it is election time again.

Black citizens are becoming more sophisticated and more demanding. The political process has been learned through broken promises. This year those votes will be much harder to get. This year's candidates will be judged not only on the record but on firm, hard public proposals and the power to deliver those proposals. Nebulous platitudes about equal opportunity and serving the poor will not be enough this time around -- we will want to know the specifics of the offer and will set the price high.

Black History Week 1978



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Through the eyes of Mr. W . . .

by Harold C. Williams

The year 1978 is an election year for Oregon, the Governor's race, city and county races, school boards, etc. In this election year it is important that people of color re-examine the issues that affect their lives. Jobs, housing, and education are the primary areas that affect people of color. What must be asked in this election year is, who has given the most in the past and present in support of your needs and interests?

Have politicians knocked on your door

only during election time, or have they kept your concerns in mind after they are in office? Has the rate of employment decreased in your community? Have the elected officials helped to improve the housing environment in your community? Have they addressed the basics in education for your children, not just the arts? These areas are important, but they are not enough. Have the basics, reading, writing and arithmetic been addressed fairly in the schools in your community?

Don't let your attention be attracted by the politician's pretty words and fancy promises, but look at the bottom line; can they produce, will they produce, have they produced? If these things tally up in the Black, you know who to support. If they tally up in the red, which is the lost column, then you know who not to support.

The bottom line is the issue for people of color in the election year of 1978.

Republican Party beckons Blacks

by Bayard Rustin

The Republican party is showing a new interest in Black voters, until now the most solidly Democratic group in American politics. The most dramatic indication of this is that the Reverend Jesse Jackson was invited to address a recent meeting of the Republican National Committee. In addition, party chairman Bill Brock has announced a well-financed program to recruit Black candidates and convert Black voters.

It is my conviction that Blacks should always be ready to re-examine our political behavior, to explore new alternatives, and to entertain novel ideas. We can only benefit from a serious discussion of every conceivable political strategy. If this Republican initiative helps to spark such a discussion, it could make an important contribution to the development of an effective Black political strategy even if, as I suspect, the initiative is rejected as offering very little to Blacks.

There is as yet no rush of Blacks to the Republican party. But that there is a willingness to consider the idea says something important about the present political situation. Blacks are disappointed with the performance of the Carter administration. Many feel that the Democratic party is beginning to take Blacks for granted. Consequently, there is interest in discovering some means to regain political leverage.

Although it is a break with their recent past, the Republicans have reason to be interested in Black votes. If they hope to compete on even terms, with the Democrats, they need to seek votes wherever

they can find them. With the passage of the Voting Rights Act and growing political participation, Black votes have become decisive in more and more elections, most dramatically in the last Presidential election.

The possibility that Republicans might be able to win more Black votes is not inconceivable. There have always been some Republicans, such as New York Senator Jacob Javits, who have won -- and deservedly so -- large numbers of Black votes. And like other voters, Blacks are increasingly willing to split their tickets.

The road from deciding not to concede the Black vote to the Democrats to actually winning significant numbers of Blacks to the Republican ranks is likely to be a long and difficult one. It will take more than an attractive candidate here and there. It will require more than the tokenism and public relations gimmickry of inviting a civil rights leader to speak to Republican meetings. The decisive factor will be the program, policies, and direction of the Republican party. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the Republicans will be able to attract Blacks only by moving closer to Democratic positions. The prospects of this happening are not great. The Republicans have, if anything, become more, not less conservative in recent years and there is no solid indication that this course is about to be reversed. Even Republican National Chairman Bill Brock, who is spearheading the drive for Black support, rarely voted correctly on any civil rights issues as a Senator from Tennessee. There is no sign that the Republicans have recognized the fundamental incompatibility between their traditional programs and the interests of their consti-

tuency, on the one hand, and the needs of the Black community on the other.

It might even be speculated that the Republicans do not really hope to win a majority of Black votes and that their goal is actually much more modest: to increase their share of the Black vote from less than ten percent to perhaps twenty or twenty-five percent. With the declining importance of traditional civil rights issues, those Blacks whose class interests largely coincide with the Republican philosophy may well be attracted to that party. It would not be surprising, if for instance, Black businessmen join white businessmen in finding the Republican party a more congenial home than the Democrats.

For the overwhelming majority of Blacks however, there are serious limitations to the Republican option. It would seem both counterproductive and foolish to attempt to punish Jimmy Carter for being too conservative, too much like a Republican, by embracing real Republicans who are likely to be even more conservative, even more unwilling to undertake the ambitious, activist programs necessary to overcome the problems afflicting Black Americans. While we should welcome the newly-discovered Republican interest in Black voters and help them to understand our problems, our main hope for salvation is likely to lie in other directions.

As of now, the Republican party, (though not all Republicans) is rightly considered the enemy of Blacks in the working class and Blacks who are economic outcasts. If and when the Republican party stands for progressive measures that will alleviate poverty and social injustice, then we can take their wooing seriously.

Letters to the Editor

Defends Priestley record

To the Editor:

I just read Herb Cawthorne's column supposedly about Evie Crowell. While I usually find his ideas to have value and to show insight, I was amazed by the lack of information he presented about Ms. Crowell and by the unsubstantiated "perceptions" of Representative Wally Priestley from District #16.

I am not Black and I do not know Ms. Crowell, though I have heard her track record and qualifications discussed by Black people. I have come to know and respect Representative Priestley. The perceptions of him presented in Cawthorne's column are in error in several respects.

Representative Wally Priestley, if one bothers to check, has a consistent record of putting forth socially meaningful proposals. In the last legislative session 28 House measures introduced by Repre-

sentative Priestley were passed and/or adopted by the House. This compares with 25 for Representative Howard Cherry, and 24 for Representative Vera Katz. In the Senate it compares with 21 for Senator Bill McCoy and 34 for Senator Steven Kafoury. The charge that Representative Priestley is unable "to introduce legislation and get it through" appears to be refuted by these figures, unless other Portland legislators are equally ineffective.

Priestley's legislative philosophy is based on the belief that it is preferable to vote for and initiate that which over the long term has relevance in accomplishing the social change necessary in a society with an economic system valuing profits over people. Many legislators have neither his insight nor his courage, so some of the things he advocates will not come to pass in the short run.

But if there is value in raising issues and in making us consider alternatives to what is presented by many public officials and much of the media in our daily diet of mediocre pabulum, then Representative Priestley is most valuable to us all. And, he is willing to engage in the unglamorous tasks and grass-roots work required to raise social consciences and make hopes into realities.

Priestley is by choice a busy man. Unlike many legislators he, at an economic loss to himself, chooses not to be employed outside of the legislature. Instead he spends his non-legislative hours concentrating on the issues that concern him. Certainly, as Cawthorne contends, his board of education duties are demanding, but so are the money-making jobs and outside activities of many other legislators which no one questions.

Ms. Crowell is a question mark. She has a small community track record. She and others have been encouraged by the powers that be to run against Representative Priestley because of the headaches he causes them and because of the values he represents. Often attempts are made to discredit Priestley, and thus to avoid the necessity of refuting his ideas. I am a woman who likes to support women and minority candidates. But, Representative Priestley is too valuable to be sacrificed for someone who has not proven herself just because of her sex and ethnicity.

Priestley has for years proven himself to be quite able and pure in motive. He has a forthright manner and a friendly, non-vindictive personality. He keeps as alert with his constant monitoring of happenings, keeps us entertained with his wit and humor, and keeps us inspired with his courage to do battle for us at risk to himself. A spark brings forth a flame. Wally is our spark.

Sincerely,
Ms. Lillie Walker,
Chairperson
Committee for Quality
Education for all Children

Claudia Fisher

Open Letter

Dear Representative Priestley,

We are expressing our appreciation for your interest and concern about the issues in the community that affect parents and their children. Your continued support and representation under often difficult circumstances helps us to keep going.

We are appalled at the insulting way in which you are addressed by other members of the School Board and Administration. We consider these insults directed to you, our elected representative, as a direct affront to us the electorate.

Although the board meetings are undoubtedly painful for you, you are being heard and appreciated.

Woodlawn

(Continued from Page 1 Column 3)

do the job. Rather, in designing curriculum, well-conceived, systematic, organizational plans must be employed that allow for ethnically specific content to become integral parts of all aspects of the schools' education program.

The plan is a response to declining enrollment and increasing minority concentration at Woodlawn. Currently there are 228 students enrolled in the first five grades. Minority enrollment has risen from 40.7 in 1973 to 58.3 in 1977-78.

When renovation of the school for an Early Childhood Center is completed there will be five empty classrooms.



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