

The Metcalf legacy: A personal remembrance

by Rep. John Conyers

Ralph Metcalf was a good and honorable man who served the citizens of Chicago and the nation with distinction, eighteen years as a Chicago Committeeman and Alderman and eight years as Member of Congress from Illinois' First District. He leaves behind him a legacy of supreme courage, both physical and political, which millions of citizens will never forget.

Ralph had two careers which reinforced and strengthened one another. In the first part of his adult life he won fame as a great athlete, a national intercollegiate champion in sprinting during the early 1930s, a silver and bronze medal winner at the 1932 World Olympics in Los Angeles, and at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 a gold medal winner in the 400-meter relay and silver medal winner in the 100-meter, finishing second to the legendary Jesse Owens. Following upon his military service in World War II, he devoted himself to the advancement of Black Americans and to the education and physical development of youth. To this end he created the Ralph H. Metcalf Youth Foundation, which has supported over the years numerous athletic, educational and cultural programs. He was a source of inspiration to millions of young people.

Ralph devoted his second career to

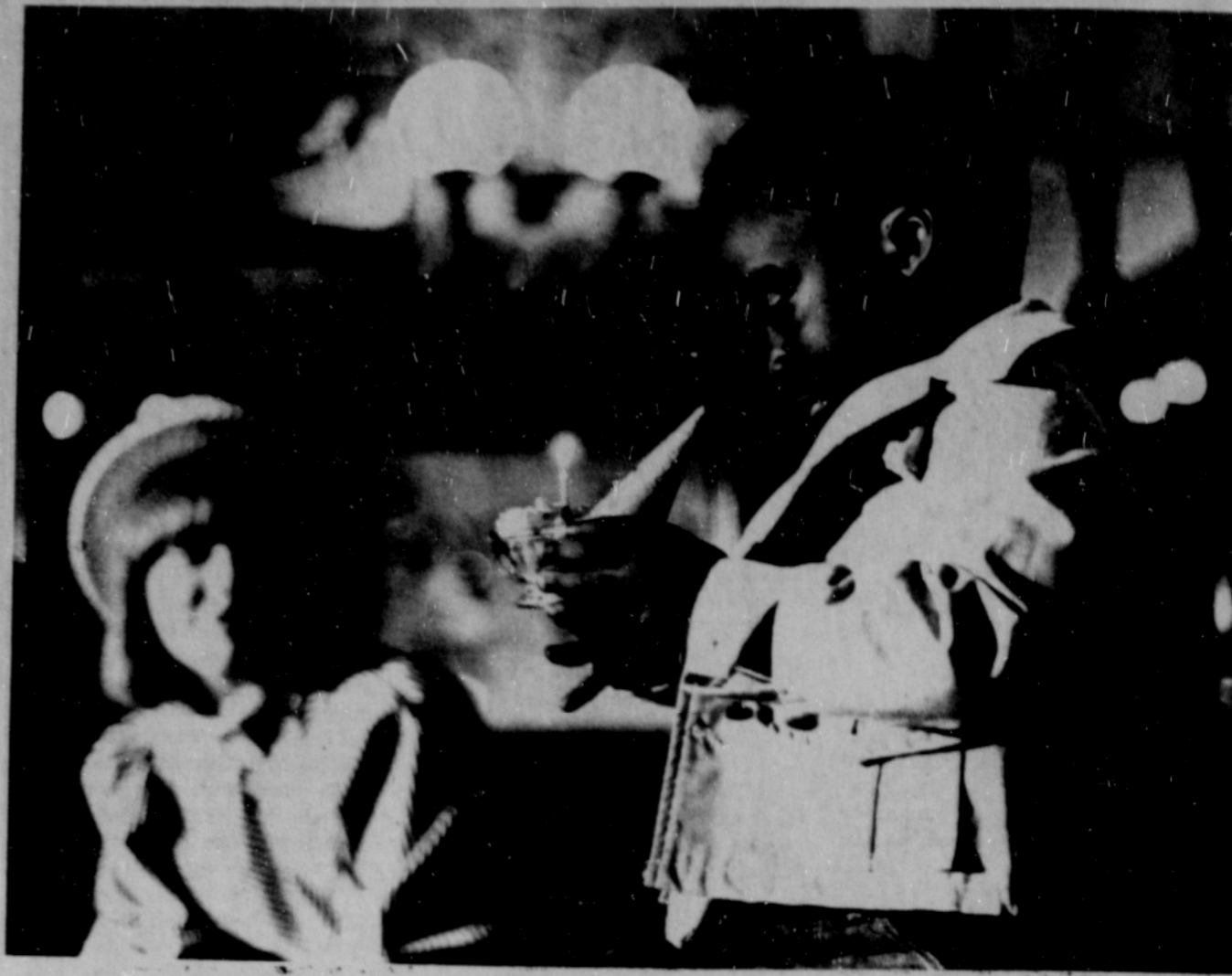
public service, starting as director of Chicago's Department of Civil Rights, and later as a leading figure on the City Council. In 1969 he became the council's president pro tempore, and a year later won the Cook County Democratic Party's nomination for, and election to, Congress.

Inescapably, in every public figure's life the question arises: what did he or she stand for? What did he or she leave behind? It would have been entirely appropriate and adequate if Ralph Metcalf's legacy revolved solely around his athletic accomplishments and community service. To an extent, of course, it does. But to the millions whom he represented, he will be remembered and revered for something more than even his physical courage. He will be remembered most for his political courage, following in a great tradition of struggle in behalf of equality and justice set a half-century earlier in Chicago by Debs and Darrow.

During the early 1970s the City of Chicago was overrun by police brutality. No one in the highest reaches of the political establishment addressed the issue. There was uniform and unanimous silence at City Hall. At first, Ralph Metcalf sought to bring the issue before the leadership. As a reasonable man, his first course of action was an attempt to solve the police problem from

within. He could not, however, elicit a response. As more and more citizens became victimized by police behavior, Ralph concluded he could no longer work effectively within the leadership and the party. His integrity demanded that he speak out as forcefully as he could on the issue that most affected the citizens whom he represented. The political establishment, that once favored him, turned against him in full fury.

For a long time Ralph Metcalf stood alone against the most powerful political machine in the nation. Every attempt was made to silence him, but he persevered in his conviction and his courage. He won reelection in the subsequent years, but he had paid a considerable price. His health suffered. Life-long friendships were disrupted. He was made the object of constant attack. Nevertheless, he went on to serve in Congress with great dedication and effectiveness. He was a leader in the fields of consumer protection and health care. Against great odds, Ralph had summoned up the same courage that earlier had won him the admiration of the world for his athletic achievements. In the end, Ralph stood his ground, a moderate and reasonable man up against an immoderate and unreasonable political system. His stand in Chicago was his finest hour, for which he will always be remembered.



Orlando Ramon Colbert celebrates his fourth birthday at Farrels. He is the son of Carolyn and Al Williams.

Task Force proposes State Bank

The 'Interim Task Force on Housing Costs' wrapped up its findings on ways to reduce the cost of housing. Unanimously approved was the recommendation:

"That the 60th Legislative Assembly (the 1979 Legislature) further study the creation of a 'state home loan bank', including the investigation of the experience of similar types of financial institutions in other states."

State Representative Wally Priestley, D-Portland, pushed support for the state bank idea said, "It would operate much the same as loans now made by the State Department of Veterans Affairs which now make home loans at 5.9% but would be available to all home buyers in Oregon rather than just to veterans. With 10% home loans now being made by private banks this 4% plus savings would amount to over \$100* savings per month to home buyers

and offer the chance at home purchase to families now having their loans denied. Only the State of North Dakota has such a bank and it has served the people well since it was established in 1919."

Priestley said he would like to organize a 'citizens' army' to support this proposal at the legislative session beginning in January. "We'll need an army of faithful citizen believers to chase the 'money changers' from the Capitol Building."

Priestley credited State Representative George Starr, D-Portland #17, with this positive solution to rising costs of home ownership and the 'Commander-in-Chief' in an expected fight with private banking interests.

* With a loan balance of \$30,000 a 4% interest savings equals \$1,200 per year or \$100 per month.

South African fish

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words of the runaway, white editor, Donald Woods, "The fact is, whether it's Krugerrands (gold coins) or share, every dollar invested in South Africa provides tax revenues to the (South African) government, which buys planes, tanks and guns; and it is only through force that the (South African) government can repress the Black majority." (Oregon Times, July 1978.) More and more Blacks in America are aware of the race war raging in South Africa today. The impact of "Roots" and daily reports of Black people being slaughtered by whites, have been heavy on the minds of the descendants of enslaved African people. Now, these Afro-Americans are willing to act against "the Brotherhood" of international racist thugs, by at least educating their Black communities.

Boycotting and picketing Safeway is continuing in Seattle, but when Portlanders asked a threatened Safeway management to remove the product on October 3rd, it was reportedly off the shelves of all Portland stores within twenty-four hours. Al Neish, public relations assistant for Safeway Inc. in Portland, stated on Wednesday, October 4th, that 355 cartons of the frozen fish (priced at \$1.36 each) were removed. Neish said he didn't know how much of the food was sold, but added that the fish was of "... poor quality, because it comes from warm waters and that's just not good fish." Neish indicated that "Fairest Cape" whiting was used to complete an order for a Safeway brand product not in stock. The demand, however, is for:

1. The removal of the products of South Africa from the shelves of Safeways across the nation.

2. A public apology through the media it uses to advertise, and;

3. Encouragement of all U.S. businesses to stop their economic support of South Africa and end their racist, underworld "Brotherhood", according to the Seattle spokesman, Omari Tahir. Locally, these demands "... are

fully supported and urged by us," in the words of Fungai Kumbula, student at Portland State University.

More questions remain, however, for the Safeway corporation to answer:

1. If the objections of Black patrons in Seattle were known, why didn't Portland's management act first and remove that product voluntarily?

2. How widespread is this "substitution" of inferior food in our communities? Why?

3. How much death (profits) have white supremacists in South Africa made from uninformed Americans of good conscience?

4. Can the New York distributor ("Specialty Seafoods Ltd.") of South African fish be found guilty of a human rights violation for pushing other death food?

5. How long has this been going on?

"More research is needed on this carefully managed economic support of ruthlessly brutal and racist government. Because South Africa is condemned by every civilized nation of the world, continued U.S. economic support through American corporate investments and sale of diamonds, gold, and, yes, FISH, is a continuation of white supremacist practices. The Black people get pennies a day for the millions they provide the white racists from gold mines stolen from African people. We are asking for the help of people who seek social justice to act now, to monitor this one identifiable affront to Black people everywhere," said Kumbula. "We need to know more about the Safeway corporate structure, monitor the products sold by Safeway and other corporations, and we must be prepared to boycott or shift our buying habits, to slap the face of arrogant white supremacy that strangles our people on bad food here and maintains slave labor in Africa. After 'Roots' there is no excuse." It seems that the South African war is going to come home to America also.

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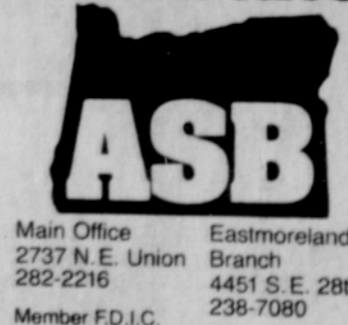
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