

# Will Blacks vote?

by Bayard Rustin

Over ten years ago, Martin Luther King boldly speculated about the great potential of a united, well-organized, and militant Black electorate. "The Negro vote," he said, "is only a partially realized strength." With massive registration and mobilization efforts, Dr. King predicted that Black electoral "pressure can achieve measurable results, the Negro citizen will make his influence felt."

## Analysis

Throughout the last decade, many of us have followed Dr. King's sensible advice. Yet, after innumerable registration drives, voter education conferences, and "get out the vote" campaigns, the Black community continues to short-change itself politically. Indeed, with each passing year, the enormous political potential of the Black electorate dwindles even further. For many politicians, the Black community is now viewed as a political paper tiger, unable to mobilize voters, and unable to organize intensive lobbying efforts.

Consider for a moment some disturbing statistics about Black political participation. Since 1968, the Black vote has steadily declined at an alarming rate. Ten years ago, 58% of all eligible Blacks voted in the Nixon-Humphrey election. In 1972, only 52% voted in the presidential election. And in 1976, barely 50% cast their ballots in the Ford-Carter contest. The figures for state and local races are even lower.

As our political strength continues to diminish, the power of our traditional adversaries continues to grow. Business and conservative groups — never friends of the civil rights movement — have successfully capitalized on the generally conservative mood of America. Their political aggressiveness is reminiscent of the wheeling and dealing of the old Robber Barons. While their tactics and ideas might seem outmoded, they won numerous legislative victories during the last year. Sensing a conservative resurgence in the November elections, the New Right and its business allies anticipate even sweeter victories when Congress reconvenes.

To a large extent, these expected victories will be engineered by business-dominated PAC's, short for political action committees. Since

1974, over 500 corporations have established well-financed, and smoothly-operating PACs. Armed with computerized lists of employees, and seemingly unlimited funds, PACs have already demonstrated their clout, at the ballot box, as well as in Congress.

ARCO's Civic Action Program is a prime example of corporate political muscle. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, ARCO spends approximately \$750,000 per year on its amazingly effective political action program. ARCO uses its PAC to mobilize thousands of employee-voters. Additionally, the political action committee actively lobbies for company-backed legislation, and showers "friendly" candidates with generous contributions.

Some corporations and professional organizations shy away from the more innovative political techniques, such as ARCO's program. Instead, they simply provide candidates with lavish political contributions. For example, during 1977-78, the American Medical Association's PAC, the Real Estate lobby, and the Auto Dealer's PAC each raised over a million dollars. So far, the fourteen largest business committees and New Right groups have amassed nearly \$14 million for political activities.

Aside from formidable financial resources, business and conservative interests have another strategic advantage — mass apathy, especially among minorities and workers. Unfortunately, the conservative forces — who hope to make a real killing in November — are far from apathetic and moribund. On the contrary, they have once again discovered that political action pays off handsomely.

A prominent conservative lobbyist summarized the current political situation with a brilliant one-liner: "Congressmen first learn how to count and then to think." And developments during the last session of Congress certainly confirm that simple though highly insightful analysis.

To remain in office, politicians must count votes as well as dollar bills. While money is highly important, even the richest and most heavily financed candidate comes to the electorate as a pleading supplicant. Regardless of slick advertisements, plus cocktail parties, and \$500-a-plate dinners, we — the Black electorate — can make a "life or death" decision for a politician whether he be friend or foe. Our political power is there; we need only use it.

# Groups oppose automatic utility rate change

Ten community groups have demanded that Public Utility Commissioner Charles Davis deny Portland General Electric's request to make automatic rate changes.

PGE had requested authority to adjust electric rates quarterly according to varying costs production or purchase of power. The organizations signing the letter to Davis fear that this would allow the utility companies to pass the costs of plant breadowns on to ratepayers. "It is absolutely unacceptable for PGE to have in its hands a way automatically to pass mismanagement costs on to us", they wrote.

Commissioner Davis recently denied a request by PGE for a surcharge to cover increased cost of purchasing power while Trojan is shut down. The groups state that "if the power cost adjustment were in place at this time, PGE would not even have had to ask for a surcharge." Currently, the utility companies must ask the Public Utility Commissioner for permission to increase rates.

Organization signing the letter were Columbia Environmental Council, Coalition for Safe Power, Consumer Power League, Forelows on Board, Gray Panthers Utilities and Taxes Task Force, Mobilization for Survival, New American Movement, Trojan Decommissioning Alliance, Portland Citizens Against Racism and Radical Women.

# School Board hears Coalition

The Community Coalition for School Integration will appear before the School Board, Monday, October 23rd to discuss: November 27th date for presentation of findings and recommendations to the Board; a time line for consideration by the Board; opportunities for the Board to raise questions about the findings and data. The Board meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at 631 N.E. Clackamas.



Felicia Robertson practices her new clarinet. Felicia, ten, is a fifth grader at Multnomah Elementary School. She is the daughter of Mrs. Edna Robertson.

# Portland NAACP seeks candidates

The Portland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has chosen a five person nominating committee for the purpose of nominating a slate of six officers and thirteen board members for the 1979 elections. Members of the nominating committee are: Mr. James Lee (Chair), Mr. C.A. White, Ms. Brenda Knapper, Ms. Florice Walker, and Ms. Pina Williams.

Offices to be filled are (1) President, (2) 1st Vice President, (3) 2nd Vice President, (4) Secretary, (5) Treasurer and (6) Parliamentarian/Sergeant at Arms. The thirteen

positions on the board will be filled by persons who are willing and/or capable of chairing the thirteen standing committees as outlined by the constitution.

All communications of intent or desire to serve in any of these positions must be received in the NAACP Branch office no later than 3:00 p.m., November 1, 1978.

Please forward all correspondence to: NAACP — Nominating Committee, 2752 N. Williams Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97227, Phone 284-7722. Branch hours are 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. — Monday through Friday.

# Domestic violence workshop set

A Portland Conference on Violence Against Women and Children will be presented by the Women's Night Watch, October 27th-29th, at Portland State University. The conference is designed to illuminate the problems of violence and will serve as the ground-breaker for creating a Portland Commission on Violence Against Women.

The conference will be preceded by a benefit concert Friday evening, October 27th, for Yvonne Wanrow and Mary McGuire, two Northwest women fighting for their right to defend themselves and their children against violence. The concert, featuring Niobeh, Izquierada, and Melanie Kaye, will begin at 8:00 p.m. Friday, at PSU's Smith Memorial Center Ballroom (\$3 donation).

The conference will begin Saturday morning, October 28th, with a special panel on "Government, Women, and Violence." Panelists include Charles Jordan, Portland Commissioner for Public Safety; Dan Mosee, Multnomah County Commissioner for Public Safety; Gretchen Kafoury, State Representa-

tative; Kathleen Nachtigal, candidate for Domestic Relations Judge; and Pina Williams, Vice President of the Oregon Women's Political Caucus, who will moderate the panel. Saturday and Sunday workshops will focus on domestic violence, rape, incest, child abuse, working interracially, tactics, working with men, women in prisons and mental institutions, forced sterilization, and anti-violence legislation.

A women's art show of poster and leaflet art from anti-violence programs will be on display at the conference.

Anyone who has ever been effected by or concerned with violence against women and children is invited to attend — including groups serving the community, and individuals who want to help themselves, their friends and family, or the community in general. Registration fee is \$5. Childcare and housing for out-of-town participants will be provided. For further information, childcare, or housing, call Women's Night Watch, 236-9738.

# Ron Brewer

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What skills do you have that will make your adjustment smoother? "I'm quick and very poised," he said softly. "When matters get tight some people crack up, not me. I've been tough to endure dark moments and to stay strong in all of life's situations — or get lost in your own emotions, the same principles apply to basketball."

Ron's mother Helen is rumored to have been quicker than he was when she starred at Fort Smith High School years before him.

On Jack Ramsay's system Ron says, "It's similar to the one in college, because both coaches stress tight defense and a structured offense. Now that I know the plays I'm becoming more assertive in my game," he said. "Every day is a new learning experience."

The man who has been tabbed by coaches as one of the premiere big guards in years to come was a physical education major at Arkansas. He plans to establish a com-

munity center in his old neighborhood.

"I'd like to create new outlets and give youngsters motivation to be somebody. Pro athletes can be a great help in uplifting community spirit and development."

Brewer's advice to youngsters caught in the "Jock-trap" is to get all the education that's possible. "Being talented doesn't always get you to the pros, I'm not saying that it's all political but only a chosen few will ever make it. Look at all the fine players cut during NBA pre-season. If an athlete has a marketable degree, he's still a winner..."

# City sued

(Continued from Page 1 Column 6) organizations," and that none of the minority organizations responded. Spokesman for the group that has filed suit maintain that community organizations representing the minority communities should have been a part of the planning process and should be represented on the CEDS advisory committee.

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