

Black United Front meets with school district

The Black United Front held a preliminary meeting with School Board Chairman Frank McNamara and Deputy Superintendent Donald McElroy Monday to present and clarify their demands and to discuss a negotiation procedure. The meeting was called at the request of McNamara.

Ronnie Herndon, chairman of the Black United Front, expressed "outrage at what has happened to Black children under a destructive desegregation plan and its resolve that there will be a change." Herndon told the *Observer* that there was a "frank exchange on our part." Following the meeting McNamara

told the press that many white people are not ready to participate in a mandatory busing program. Herndon believes McNamara underestimates the sense of fairness in the white community. "What he is saying is that white people will not abide by the Constitution. I would have to believe that is true." The district was asked to address

the issue of its "abusive busing pattern" first. McNamara is to report back to the Black United Front. He estimated this would take place in about a week. Further negotiations and how they will be conducted will depend on his reply. In the meantime preparations are continuing for the boycott. Parent

committees are planning the logistics and educational plans for alternative programs for students during the boycott. Students are also meeting and formulating their plans. Public meetings are held every Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. at King Neighborhood Facility. According to the boycott planners,

community interest is intensifying and the group has received greater response at each meeting. The planned boycott is a response to the school district's refusal to discuss with the Black community alternatives to its current desegregation program that would be equitable and effective.

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Vernon Chatman of the Urban League of Portland with students that he assisted in finding their jobs with the Corps of Engineers Portland District: Alan Batiste, Ronda Monroe, Karen Bell, Jerome Parham

and James Winters. Chatman was honored for his work in support of the corps' Equal Employment Opportunity program. (Please see page 9)

Some thoughts on the problem

by W.H. McClendon

"Instead of being led and defended by others, as in the past, Blacks are gaining their own leaders, their own voices, their own ideals."

—W.E.B. DuBois

"If you really want to know where the loyalties of Black politicians are, observe whether they will publicly support just Black causes rather than accommodate themselves to white expectations."

—Samuel G. Mays

PART III

Although there are many crises situations in the human relations complex of this nation, the most significant from historical and contemporary perspectives, nationally and internationally, is that of white versus Black. For as long as white racism is the system and all of the institutions are infested with it, concrete changes in Black-white relations are unlikely to improve. Inasmuch as the Portland Public Schools served as spawning and nurturing compounds for institutional racism for more than four generations it is commonplace for this operation to be understood by Black people as atrocious and deserving of challenges and confrontations whenever talent and resources permit. The Black United Front of

this period is just one more of these efforts.

The Black United Front seeks to change the *status quo* which locks Black people into circumstances where they are under the absolute domination of whites. Blacks are not involved in trying to take anything from whites. Blacks are determined to set new limits as to what white authority can do to them arbitrarily and capriciously.

Analysis

The Portland School District's busing practice as applied to Black students amounts to a complete renegeing on desegregation by the School Board and the administration. This busing with its scattering tactics contains Black children in school holding patterns the same as if they were under quarantine.

Contemplate:

Why is it that white bureaucrats never take any notice of Blacks except when there are some indications that Blacks are developing clannishness?

What group of people in this country is most notoriously known and recognized for its Klans and clannishness?

Why are white officials always wanting to learn about Blacks but never willing to learn from Blacks?

Why are Black struggles that are antithetical to white domination always attacked with viciousness?

The education of Black students in the Portland School District for the past four decades has been fouled up in an atmosphere of educators' and politicians' confusion over things such as teaching, remedial/compensatory education, innovative programs, desegregation, model schools, busing, middle schools, early childhood education and schools for the seventies. The merits/demerits of these labels and what they symbolize in their programmatic forms are not to be evaluated at this point. The more intense concern now must be directed towards ending the destruction and waste of Black potential that has followed in the wake of all these perpetrations. This is a responsibility that the Black population must assume. This will not be easy but it can be rewarding.

In this community there are those few Blacks in public and private sectors who are eager to demonstrate to whites that they are expert niggerologists, willing to serve as intercessionists. They will accommodate whites without a doubt but can they con Blacks?

Public employee union works for social justice

William Lucy, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), was in Portland this weekend to address the union's regional women's conference. Lucy told the *Observer* that although the conference specifically addressed the problems of women in the work force many of those same problems effect Blacks and other minorities.

Blacks are found in great numbers in public employment in other parts of the county and comprise about 25 per cent of the membership of AFSCME. Lucy credits the large number of Blacks in public employment with the fact that after World War II, when many had migrated to western and northern cities for the war industry, they did not return to the South. With a history of blue collar employment, they were absorbed into the low levels of civil service—levels where education and professional training were not necessary. "Blacks, as well as women, are still confined to those areas of employment. You find them in dead end

jobs—custodial service, health care, child care, garbage collection. They are in the least desirable jobs and the ones with the lowest pay and the least benefits."

AFSCME has been working for several years attempting to get public agencies to define career ladders so persons who begin in entry-level positions could gain education and training and work their way into better positions. They are encouraging the government to create public service positions to hire persons who are unemployed, to get them off public assistance and into jobs.

If those already working in low-level jobs could be promoted through a career ladder, room would be created at the bottom for federally assisted trainees, who would later move up also.

"We don't believe the answer to inflation is more unemployment—the economists are wrong. We aren't like some of the unions who protect their members' jobs by not letting anyone in. We want to include everyone as long as we can protect our

members, also." Lucy does not believe unemployment should be solved entirely by government, that private employers should do their share.

In spite of a national decline of union membership, AFSCME is growing rapidly. Its members are employees of government and of non-profit organizations, school districts, hospitals, etc.

"Most people are more concerned about how well they can do their job than they are about earning another nickel," Lucy explained. "Social workers, for example, are concerned with caseloads that are too large, or policies that keep them from helping people." He credits much of the union's growth with the fact that it is concerned with social issues—employment, housing, child care, minority and women's rights, etc.

Lucy, who is a civil engineer, became interested in the union movement when as a public employee in the Bay Area he observed the power of other unions. "We were (Please turn to page 2 column 1)

Judge finds pattern of discrimination, 1977

Emanuel Hospital wins employment discrimination suit

In a verbose and introspective opinion, U.S. Circuit Court Judge James M. Burns determined that Emanuel Hospital did not discriminate against Naomi Wrighten, Wilma Graham and Jesse Blocker. He did find that a pattern of discrimination in firing of Blacks existed in 1977, but not in 1976.

Mrs. Wrighten told the *Observer* that she will appeal the decision. She did not expect to receive a fair determination in Oregon, she said. "I will appeal all the way to the Supreme Court if I have to."

The class action suit was filed in 1976 following the discharge of Mrs. Wrighten and Mrs. Graham from the hospital. The two nurses had charged the hospital with discriminating against Black employees and not providing equal care to Black patients.

Following the complaints, Roger Larson, president of Emanuel, appointed a committee from the community to investigate the charges. The committee disbanded when Mrs. Wrighten refused to provide them with her data. She later explained that she considered Larson to be using the committee to obtain infor-

mation she would later use in her trial.

In describing the case, Judge Burns compared it to an iceberg—"Beneath the surface lurks centuries of racial tension and human turmoil—largely concealed history of emotions vast, forbidding, and difficult to identify and describe..."

"Few facts are so shrouded from perception, so deeply hidden within the mind and heart, and so much a part of overall personality as that of human motivation. Nevertheless, I must search out and try to correctly identify and characterize motivation in ruling upon these claims of racial employment discrimination in this case."

Describing the atmosphere of the trial: "Thus, the parties come to court hurt, resentful and defensive. They remain so throughout. In this emotionally charged atmosphere witnesses usually tend to share or express the same feelings. Indignation, resentment and defensiveness typically do not improve a witness' memory. Testimony colored by such emotions tend to cloud rather than clarify the perceptions of a fact-finder."

Describing the hospital: "It is one of the major health care providers in the Portland metropolitan area. It has been a neighbor, an employer, and a health care provider to the surrounding community for many years. During recent years the hospital has also forced the economic and social problems common to all medical facilities while at the same time dealing with the charges which have occurred within the inner cities of this country as well..."

In short, simply by the nature and complexity of its hospital operation, Emanuel employs a number of low-salaried and low-skilled persons. It is inevitable in the course of events that some individuals will be more keenly dissatisfied with these jobs, more sensitive to the low esteem with which their contributions are regarded, more deeply frustrated with their lack of skill and low educational level, or even more inclined to ascribe personal grudges and animosity to their supervisors when reprimanded than will other individuals.

Describing Mrs. Wrighten: "Bound in the testimony and my own close personal observation and

evaluation in the courtroom, I find that these witnesses (Emanuel personnel), could not have failed to react with considerable intensity to the threat of disruption in the hospital routine inherent in Wrighten's abrasiveness, strident demeanor and blunt efforts."

Mrs. Wrighten is a registered nurse with a two-year associate degree in nursing. Her problems at Emanuel came to a head when in January of 1976 Mrs. Wrighten charged that Black patients at Emanuel were not provided proper care by the white nursing staff. After a series of private and public meetings with Larson, accompanied by much publicity, Mrs. Wrighten and Mrs. Graham were suspended with pay, then terminated.

Mrs. Wrighten, in her testimony, expressed the opinion that white personnel neglected to attend to Black patients' grooming and hygiene needs, thus providing a lower standard of care for Blacks than for whites. Several witnesses, offered supporting testimony.

Judge Burns concluded: "The medical records, doctors' testimony, testimony of three other RN's and a

family member of a deceased patient were overwhelmingly persuasive to the court that these named individuals."

Describing Mrs. Wrighten: "Bound in the testimony and my believed they saw differences in the attitudes towards, and the overall treatment of black patients by white (and even some black) personnel. These witnesses, some quite vehemently, attributed the differences to racial discrimination."

"In general, the consensus of these individuals received adequate care... Wrighten, and a number of other witnesses, no doubt saw or believed they saw differences in the attitudes towards, and the overall treatment of, black patients by white (and even some black) personnel."

Mrs. Wrighten also charged that she was the object of racial discrimination in several respects. In 1976, when the nursing staff was reorganized, she believed she was passed over for a supervisory position. She also charged that she was assigned more work and patients requiring more care than white nurses were, and that she and other Black staff members were given more in-

voluntary "without pay" (WOP) time—sent home due to lack of work—than white staff members.

Mrs. Wilma Graham, a licensed practical nurse (LPN) had been employed at Emanuel for 14 years. She was assigned to the unit which had patients requiring the most medical attention. She also charged that Black patients received inadequate care and that she was pressured into taking involuntary "WOP" time. She testified that her supervisor was more stringent and critical of her than of her white co-workers and that her license renewal was delayed.

She was terminated with Mrs. Wrighten, but hospital personnel testified that they attempted to restore her position.

Black staff members also testified as to discrimination at the hospital. Ms. Velma Ellis, an aide, said she had been forced to take involuntary "WOP" time and believed Mrs. Wrighten and Mrs. Graham were dismissed because of race. Frances Adam, employed since 1952, said Mrs. Wrighten consistently had the heaviest work load and race relations were particularly bad in 1975 and (Please turn to page 2 col. 1)