

EDITORIAL/OPINION

No School Board unity

The call for unity has been made in the press and among School Board "Watchers." This call comes from the apparent confusion and indecisiveness of the "New Board."

Some blame this on the fact that the new Board is made up of seven highly independent people, each of whom sometimes finds it difficult to subordinate his own goals to those of the six other individualists. Board members are being urged to unite and present a unified front in order to gain the confidence of the public.

We don't want a unified board. The "old Board" was a unified board, with the decisions made by the superintendent and one or two Board members, with automatic approval by the remainder of the Board - often without public discussion.

Theoretically, at least, seven individuals, each with their own unique background, in open and free discussion, and with equal status and respect, will reach the best decision. Isn't that how democracy is supposed to work?

The confusion on the Board is not the result of having seven independent members. It has several sources:

- Insufficient material provided by the staff too late for Board members to make independent studies and without the facts, figures, justifications and projections necessary to make sound decisions.

- A shift in leadership and influence on the Board. The new "majority" are under pressure to produce, especially in the vital area of desegregation, and chairman Bill Scott has to prove his worth by firming up the process as his predecessor was unable to do.

- Lack of confidence in the Superintendent.

Several members of the school Board have serious questions as to the Superintendent's ability and even willingness to adapt to new policies and changed priorities. On the other hand, the Superintendent has strong supporters on the Board. Should a new Superinten-

dent, one who will eagerly anticipate and participate in educational and structural changes be selected? Until this question is addressed and resolved, the tensions within the Board will continue.

This unresolved question not only affects the Board's relationship with its superintendent, but causes instability within his staff. Those who have not yet determined where the power lies are still walking a tightrope.

These conflicts have come to a head during the past month's deliberations over Merriwether Lewis School. Most of the Board members considered the information presented by the Area II staff to be insufficient, yet the Superintendent and staff members angrily and hostilely defended their performance. Outbursts of anger toward the Board in public meetings do not add to the public confidence. Neither does the excuse that Board members are new and inexperienced and therefore are at fault.

The "New Board" is having its problems - but most of those problems are related to the question of taking the power that is theirs as elected representatives of the people.

To judge the candidates

The Congressional Black Caucus has adopted a set of guidelines for evaluating presidential candidates. (See page one) These guidelines cover a broad spectrum of issues of vital importance to Black voters; employment, housing, health, energy, education, civil rights, budget priorities, etc.

The *Observer* will use these guidelines - which in the most part parallel our own editorial positions - in the endorsement of political candidates. These guidelines - which can also be extended to local and regional issues - can provide the voter a method to evaluate the candidate's statements and promises.



AFRICANA

By N. Fungai Kumbula

Zimbabwe: The election countdown has begun. The British appointed governor, Lord Soames is still doing his best to bar Robert Mugabe from contesting the elections. When he was appointed, his job, ostensibly was, to make sure that the elections were conducted freely and fairly, with a minimum of intimidation. He was supposed to be no more than an impartial observer. Since he arrived in Zimbabwe, he has made no pretense at impartiality.

Far from formenting unity, he has created and encouraged rivalry among the Black candidates. He has tried to drive a wedge between the two wings of the Patriotic Front, Mugabe's ZANU and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. While he has deployed Rhodesian troops against ZANU "holdouts," he has turned a blind eye to Bishop Muzorewa's private army which continues to harass and intimidate the people. Time and time again, Mugabe has threatened to walk out of the agreement and go back to the bush to resume the war unless some of these injustices are redressed. Some of Mugabe's top lieutenants have been barred from campaigning and as many as 2500 of his supporters detained.

It is admitted this background that Zimbabweans will go to the polls

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week. Whether Mugabe will be in the running is not yet clear. Soames is so afraid that if Mugabe wins, then the Africans would really be in control. On the other hand, if Nkomo or Muzorewa wins, then the status quo will be maintained.

East Africa: The three East African Neighbors Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda used to be united in an economic entity called the East African Community. This was the brainchild of Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Milton Obote and Jomo Kenyatta, then president of Uganda and Kenya respectively. After the overthrow of Milton Obote in 1971 and, as each country began to follow a different ideological path, relations among the three countries steadily deteriorated culminating in the breakup of the EAC in 1975.

With Idi Amin gone, the chill has begun to thaw. Recently, Nyerere met with Uganda's Godfrey Binaisa and Kenya's Daniel Arap Moi. This was the first meeting of the three countries leaders in ten years. So, understandably, hopes that the EAC is about to be revived were resuscitated.

West Africa: Guinea, which for years isolated itself from the rest of the world, recently joined Sierra Leone and Liberia in another economic union called the Mano

River Union. Hopefully, this venture will prevail despite the very different ideologies followed by the three member countries.

Namibia: Lt. Gen. Prem Chand, appointed last month to command the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG), arrived in Windhoek, Namibia, last week to confer with South African "authorities" on the future of the disputed territory. However, not much progress can be expected as everybody is watching to see how the "drama" in Zimbabwe will end. In the meantime, the buildup of South African troops within the country seems to be accelerating. The figure is well over 65,000 already and still growing.

Zambia: The recent raids into Zambia by both Rhodesian and South African troops exposed the alarming vulnerability of that southern African nation. The outdated anti-aircraft batteries that Zambia bought from England were of very little use in shoring up the country's defenses. Recently, however, Zambia purchased 16 MiG 21s from the Russians. Over 200 Zambians air force pilots and ground crews have been training for more than two months to fly the MiGs. These new planes are the equivalent of the Mirages used by South Africa.

Tribute to a Blackman

by Asmar Abdul Seifullah
a.k.a. Joe West #40404

In the past Black people have been grossly negligent in acknowledging and supporting their Black leaders. Too often has such acknowledgment been after the death or exile of a dedicated Black leader. Dr. Martin Luther King was a great man while he was alive but it seems as though we've attributed further greatness after his death. The same is true about Malcolm, Garvey, DuBois and others. Such an attitude is like finding a cure after the disease has run its course—the cure may be great but it doesn't help yesterday's victim.

Then there are Black leaders on the community level that live rather obscure lives nationally and die obscure deaths because as a people, Black people are very slow in recognizing their contributions to the liberation struggle. As it stands now—the only real leaders that Black people have are dead. I've often heard brothers and sisters say things like, "Had Martin lived things would be different," or "Malcolm was just coming into his own." When in actuality had we supported them fully, their deaths may have been avoided. Had the white world been put on notice as to the well being of Malcolm and Martin and the possible consequences involved if something were to happen to them, they might still be alive today. What I'm saying is that we must protect our leaders with full support and acknowledgment to the ninth degree.

What do you think would happen if Khomeini or Castro were assassinated by some unknown cracker. You don't see the leaders of the great world powers knocking each other off because the consequences are too great. If Jomo had been murdered by the colonialist government in Kenya, Mau Maus would still be taking heads. There would have been war without compromise or quarter.

When the country recognizes that Black people won't tolerate any more happen-chance executions of its leaders they'll stop killing them. We must support our leadership to the maximum—national support is the only thing that will spare us the grief we've experienced in the past. Support is protection and a means to the realization of freedom for all oppressed people.

I write these lines because within our own community there are Black leaders who need our support and protection. There are many brothers and sisters that I could call attention to but I don't have the space or expertise to mention them all. However, I would like to mention one brother who stands a little taller than the rest. Brother Ron Herndon, the co-chairman of the Black United Front, deserves such recognition. He's been active and committed to the struggle since the late sixties. Ron gave the community its first Black bookstore and was the founder of the Black Educational Center.

The B.E.C. is geared to address the needs of Black children in terms of education with a chocolate flavor. Ron Herndon should be commended for the work he's done with the Black children of our community. For too long we have neglected the importance of a healthy education for our children. We've left the future and immortality of the Black community in the hands of the white educational system. If this continues the best we can hope for is a bunch of Black children singing God Bless Amerika and feeling inferior for the rest of their lives.

Many of us are beyond redemption but damn, "What about the babies?" There is a commercial on TV about the United Negro College Fund which says "A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE" but it seems as though too few Black people identify with its importance. I'm sure that Ron Herndon understands its importance and on behalf of the three hundred-plus Blackmen inside O.S.P. I'd like to say thanks for caring, thanks for being so damn Black and beautiful. We really appreciate the work Ron is trying to do in assuring that our children receive a quality education—brother, we're with you in spirit and soul.

It's important that we remember that Blackmen have been killed for doing less than what Ron is trying to achieve. It's not really that far-fetched for Ron to be the victim of an unfortunate accident. When you're talking about a quality education for Black children, you're talking about whitefolks spending money. If a cracker will kill a nigger about a white woman, what do you

think he'll do about a nigger messing with his bankroll? They've already proven how vicious they can be and if you think about it Martin didn't get offed until he started talking about Vietnam and the dollar bill.

History as a way of repeating itself and historically we've lost a lot of our leaders because we didn't fully support them. Have you ever thought what would happen if a Blackman killed Carter or even a racist like Wallace? Man, there would be Black blood spilled from Oregon to New York; we'd need passes to go to the store. What I'm saying is that it's the threat of violence that prevents violence, like having the bomb to protect yourself. When people know you'll defend yourself and your leaders they'll leave both alone.

A white racist policeman could shoot Ron Herndon down tomorrow for a traffic violation. The verdict would be justifiable homicide and most of us would be gullible enough to go for it. The movement would have a dead hero and Ron's children would be just as fatherless as Martin's children. As a Blackman that's not able to assure anything to anybody, I can say with assurance that should the community lose the like of Ron Herndon and people like him, the loss will be greater than the passing of one man. Our development has been such that we can't afford to lose another soldier without resisting.

Don't be misled by my word play—I'm not advocating violence for the sake of violence. What I'm talking about is an attitude that has been lacking in Black people. An attitude that transcends the monkey business and deceitful games that society plays on us, an attitude that will allow us to defend our struggle for freedom and equality without the needless and wasteful death of Black leaders. There is no hope without support and your presence carries greater weight than your absence. Support Ron Herndon and the members of the Black United Front—it's our children they're fighting for and if they lose our children lose.

Thank you for reading these lines and may Allah bless those who believe in and support the community beyond rhetoric.



Notes from City Hall

By Charles Jordan,
Commissioner of Public Safety

It is late night. You've just witnessed a crime. A police officer is urgently needed and you're wondering how do I get a police car to the scene right away?

Call the Police Emergency number 760-6911 and first tell the operator the address of where you are, the reason for the call and the telephone number of the phone you are using.

Don't hang up!!!
The operator may need more information for your safety and the safety of the officers responding to your call. So, stay on the line and answer all the questions. (If it's safe to do so.)

Be prepared to provide a physical description of the suspect; i.e., male or female, height, weight, hair color, skin color, type of clothing, type of car, anything odd or unusual about the suspect and the time of day you saw the incident.

A police officer will respond in most cases within 3 to 5 minutes.

This is one of many questions I will explore in this column each week. It is of vital importance that citizens know and understand what

their police officer's job is and how he or she goes about it. It is equally important that citizens understand what their rights are and how to conduct themselves during a "stop" to receive the best service from a police agency.

It is evening. You're in a hurry to the grocery store. You look in your rearview mirror and see red lights flashing. Nervous and a little upset, you pull over to the curb. The officer turns on the bright overhead spotlights. You don't like it. It is embarrassing to you and you're wondering, what next? Do I get out of my car? Will the officer approach my car? What information will he want? What information must I provide? Can I be arrested? Can the officer search my car? What about confiscating my property?

The grocery store on the corner was just robbed by a person wearing a green jacket, blue gloves, grey pants and a cap. You're coming home from a friend's house and you're wearing a green jacket, black gloves and light blue pants. Does the police officer have probable cause to stop you? Restrain you? Question

you? Arrest you as a possible suspect?

You feel an officer has violated your rights...during your encounter with a police officer any number of things may have happened that you feel were a violation of your rights as a citizen. Who do you call? Where do you go? What information will you need? How will your complaint be processed? How long will an investigation take? What alternative do you have?

Your guilt or innocence is a matter of the courts. The street is not the place where the law should be debated or decided by citizens or officers. It is my hope that these scenarios will serve as a valuable resource to those who choose to read them, need them and use them.

In response to much community concern, I hope that each week you will find answers to your questions in several key areas. I believe that our citizens and police will work together so that conflict will be minimized when they both understand one another's expectations, rights and responsibilities.



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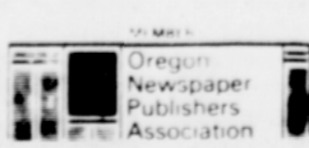
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